



WINCHESTER'S GOLDEN GRADUATES

JAMES P. GOODRICH – FROM CLASSMATE TO CLASS ACT!

By Dane Starbuck

James P. Goodrich served as Indiana's 28th governor from 1917 to 1921. Known for his hard-hitting, decisive style, Goodrich would become best remembered as Indiana's "War Governor" due to the impact that the "Great War" (WWI) had on his term of office. During his four years in the state house, Goodrich established the State Highway Commission, the Department of Banking, and the Department of Conservation. Under the latter, many of Indiana's existing state parks were created. In addition, he reorganized the Public Service Commission, signed the document ratifying Indiana's passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (extending the franchise to women), and revamped Indiana's tax law, controlling public expenditures and saving state taxpayers more than \$100 million.

After James Goodrich's term of office concluded, he returned to his first love, business, and was an entrepreneurial genius. He later established himself as a significant philanthropist, especially benefiting Indiana colleges. Goodrich also became a humanitarian because of his efforts to stop hunger and suffering in the 1920s in the recently formed nation of the Soviet Union. Over the years he became a close friend and political adviser to many of the most powerful governmental leaders of the early twentieth century, including Presidents Theodore Roosevelt, Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover. He was also a close friend to Indiana natives Charles Fairbanks, a U.S. Senator and vice president.

James Putnam Goodrich was born on February 18, 1864, in Winchester, Indiana. The future Indiana governor was preceded in birth by a brother Percy Edgar ("P. E") (1861). Three other Goodrich brothers followed: John Baldwin (1866), Edward Shields (1868), and William Wallace (1871).

The Goodrich family came to Indiana in 1832 when James's paternal great-grandmother, Rebecca Pearse Goodrich, a widow, left Virginia with eleven of her fourteen children. They intended to settle in Fort Wayne, near family, when their wagon broke down in Randolph

County. Rebecca, the family matriarch, exclaimed that she had had enough of the arduous journey, and they would go no farther, "one swamp being as good as another." The family purchased ground from a Mormon landowner who left with his congregation for Missouri and, like most early settlers of the time, became farmers.

James Goodrich graduated from Winchester High School in 1881 in a class of nine students. Three noteworthy classmates were James E. Watson, a childhood friend who would later become U.S. Senate Majority Leader from 1929 to 1932, John R. Commons, who became one of the most prominent U.S. economists of the twentieth century, and Cora Frist, whom Goodrich married in 1888.

After graduating from high school, Goodrich, Watson, and Frist each took the Indiana state teacher's licensing examination to teach school. Goodrich had planned on teaching school for one year and then matriculating at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. He dreamed of a life at sea. He received a military appointment, but he had to decline due to a severe injury to his hip (a tree falling on him) which prevented him from passing the academy's physical examination. Goodrich ended up teaching school for two years in Randolph County before matriculating at DePauw University in Greencastle.

Goodrich returned to Winchester in 1885 without a college degree. He had quit college after two years for lack of funds. Goodrich studied law under John J. Cheney, a former circuit court judge, and Watson's father, Enos Watson. Goodrich went on to practice law with his uncle John Winchester (Ches) Macy and became involved with politics at the local level.

By the late 1880s, James Goodrich was described in a Randolph County history as "a rising young lawyer of Winchester." In 1888 his share of his private legal practice with his Uncle Ches Macy earned him \$720. He took an interest in a broad number of organizations, including the National Grange movement that advocated the interests of farmers, the Knights of Labor, and the Knights of Pythias, a philanthropic organization. But his greatest interest was the Republican Party. He became Republican Party County Chairman in 1897 at the age of thirty-three and State Republican Chairman in 1901. For the next ten years he traveled extensively throughout the state in support of local and state-wide candidates.

Goodrich stepped down in 1910 from being State Republican Chairman but remained on the executive committee of the national Republican Party. For the next few years, he devoted himself to his business interests and the practice of law. He and his four brothers had already established a family corporate dynasty in east central and southern Indiana in public utilities

(natural gas, water, electric, and telephone), banking, and grain dealerships. Some of their business interests included the Peoples Loan and Trust Company, City Securities, The Indiana Telephone Company, the Ayrshire Collieries Corporation, and Goodrich Brothers' Company.

But in 1915 Goodrich decided to return to active politics. He threw his hat into the political ring in Greencastle by announcing himself as a candidate for governor. The first thing he did was to write a personal check for \$40,000 and give it to his campaign manager, John McCardla, forbidding McCardla from receiving donations from any other individuals or organizations. Goodrich believed that by bankrolling his own campaign he could avoid obligations to political contributors. He defeated U.S. Representative John Adair from Portland for the state's top position.

Goodrich charged into office, outlining his plans to abolish many positions that he considered nothing more than patronage jobs that added little to the state's bottom line. One of his most pressing concerns was to overhaul the unjust tax system, making it more equitable between real property owners and owners of non-tangible property. Goodrich's attempt to eliminate or consolidate governmental positions caused his policies to be attacked. He claimed that Democratic-leaning newspapers were "venomous" in opposing his proposals, referring to him as a "would-be Czar with a desire to centralize in the hands of the Governor complete control of the state's affairs."

But Goodrich's efforts to overhaul state government were stymied by more than just Democratic-leaning newspaper men. Two other events impeded his major restructuring plans: the first and most important being the outbreak of the World War I; and the second, his contracting typhoid in August of that year after visiting a northern Indiana prison. For several weeks the governor was bedridden at Methodist-Episcopal Hospital in Indianapolis, at times bordering on death.

Goodrich did not return to the statehouse from his illness until November. For the next several months he dealt with the state's coal shortage and the essential role it had in supporting the ongoing war effort. By the war's conclusion, Indiana had supplied more than 130,000 troops, of which 3,354 soldiers and 15 nurses had been killed in battle or died of diseases. On the basis of percentage of population, this was more than from any other state in the nation.

Goodrich's personal misfortunes continued. Almost exactly one year after his bout with typhoid, on August 28, 1918, Goodrich attended a dinner party for a number of medical officers who were going abroad. Upon driving back to his residence, he was struck by a streetcar and

nearly killed. Although the governor eventually recovered, he walked with the aid of a cane for the rest of his life.

In October 1918 Goodrich had to contend with the great influenza epidemic that killed approximately 20,000,000 worldwide and 550,000 Americans. On October 10th the governor issued a statewide prohibition against all public meetings to try to stem the epidemic.

In 1919 two highly controversial amendments to the U.S. Constitution were ratified by the Indiana General Assembly and signed by Goodrich: the Eighteenth Amendment prohibiting the sale or consumption of alcohol and the Nineteenth Amendment extending the right to vote to women, a measure that Goodrich personally opposed. Later in 1919 Goodrich's name was floated as a potential presidential candidate for the 1920 national election. Goodrich certainly had the credentials to be a legitimate presidential candidate. He had been deeply involved with Republican politics for twenty-five years and personally knew most top-level Republican leaders throughout the country. But by early 1920 Goodrich announced that he would not be a candidate for the top position. He later removed his name from consideration as vice president as well. He wrote to his friend, U.S. Senator Harry New in April 1920, "I have no desire or ambition to do anything but finish my administration as best I can and then go back to my business. I am done with politics for ever and a day."

While Goodrich never pursued elected office again, he continued, after stepping down as governor in 1921, to make significant contributions to the state and nation for the next twenty years. In August 1921, Goodrich was summoned by Herbert Hoover, then U.S. Secretary of Commerce and Director of the American Relief Administration, to travel to the Soviet Union to investigate a terrible famine that existed in the Volga region of the recently formed country. Goodrich subsequently made four trips to the "Great Bear." While his initial visits were for the purpose of providing humanitarian aid to millions of starving Russians, later trips took on a political mission as Goodrich met with Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, Leon Trotsky and other senior Russian leaders to investigate the possibility of reestablishing U.S. diplomatic and commercial relations.

The former governor served in many other capacities. For thirty-six years Goodrich was a member of the Wabash College board of trustees, the last twenty-four of which he served as chairman. He also served on the board of directors of the American-Russian Chamber of Commerce, the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Trust, and the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Chicago. During his life, he donated approximately \$1 million to charitable causes, including nearly \$400,000 to Wabash College.

But it was perhaps in the business arena that James Goodrich left his greatest legacy to the state. His was truly a Horatio Alger story. From growing up in penury on a Randolph County farm immediately after the Civil War, he had gone on to become a major owner of a number of businesses with his brothers. In the process, his family formed a financial dynasty that lasted nearly 100 years.

James Goodrich had married Cora Frist in 1888. The couple had only one surviving child, Pierre Frist Goodrich. Their son would become a major figure in Indiana history himself.

James P. Goodrich died on August 15, 1940, of a cerebral hemorrhage in his home town of Winchester, where he is buried in the town's Fountain Park cemetery.

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James Goodrich in 1881



Governor James P. Goodrich

