

Abiram Chamberlain

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Abiram Chamberlain of Meriden, the present Governor of Connecticut (1904), is a fine example of the self-made man, and his career in business is similar in its results to that of Huntington, the elder Griswold and English, all famous predecessors in the important office of Chief Executive of this Commonwealth. The Governor comes from the best New England stock. On his paternal side he is descended from Jacob Chamberlain, who was born in New Town, now Cambridge, Mass. in 1673, and on his maternal side the Governor is a descendant in the eighth generation from Henry Burt of Roxbury, Mass. His father's name was Deacon Abiram Chamberlain, and he was for many years a resident of Colebrook River, with a reputation for goodness uprightness that was a byword for many miles in each direction. Deacon Chamberlain was a civil engineer and farmer, and his ability in the former profession was marked and well known. Governor Chamberlain was born at Colebrook River on December 7, 1837, and spent his early years in that town where he attended the public schools. Later he studied at Williston Seminary at Easthampton, Mass. and made a special study of civil engineering. In 1856, Governor Chamberlain's father and the rest of the family removed from Colebrook River to New Britain, then a growing village. The Governor took up civil engineering for a time in company with his father. Then he learned the trade of rule making; but his career in life was not destined to be at a factory bench, but in the more important world of finance.

When a young man, he entered the New Britain National Bank, commenced in a subordinate position and was soon teller of the institution, an office he held with success for five years. His ability as a banker was such that at the age of thirty, in 1867, the Governor was elected cashier of the Home National Bank of Meriden, and he then removed to the city that he has made his home ever since. His career in the Meriden bank and his extensive financial experience of many years has made him one of the leading bankers, not only of the state, but of New England as well. During the time that he has been connected with the Home National Bank, Gov. Chamberlain has also been deeply interested in other financial institutions of Meriden and has been for some time vice president of the Meriden Savings bank.

On the death of Eli Butler in 1881, Gov. Chamberlain was elected president of the Home National Bank, a position he still holds, and the duties of which he has performed with eminent ability and success.

In all questions that have had the welfare of the city of Meriden at their foundation, Gov. Chamberlain has been a persistent champion. Those enterprises that have been the means of developing the growth of Meriden have found in him a ready helper. He was one of the promoters and subsequently a director of the Meriden, Waterbury & Cromwell Railroad; of the Winthrop Hotel Company, is a director of the Meriden Cutlery Company, the Edward Miller Company and of the Stanley Works of New Britain.

In politics Gov. Chamberlain has always been a staunch Republican, but he never sought public office, and all the honors that have come to him were conferred by an

admiring public, who saw in him an ideal public official. Gov. Chamberlain's first public office was as a member of the City Council of Meriden; then he represented his town in the General Assembly in 1877.

From then until 1900 Gov. Chamberlain did not hold public office, nor could he be persuaded to enter the ranks of office holders.

When the Republican State convention met at New Haven on September 5, 1900, and put George P. McLean of Simsbury in nomination for Governor, Mr. Chamberlain was also nominated unanimously for Comptroller of the state. This he accepted, and at the subsequent election received a large vote, being elected to the office. His career as Comptroller of the state was so successful, and his popularity so great, that on the announcement in 1902 that Governor McLean was not a candidate for reelection, the name of Comptroller Chamberlain was at once decided upon by the party managers and the public as the man who could carry his party to victory. He was nominated for Governor at the convention that was held in Hartford on Sept. 17, 1902, and at the polls received a vote that not only elected him Chief Executive of the state, but was of sufficient size to demonstrate beyond any doubt the confidence the people reposed in him.

Gov. Chamberlain was inaugurated on the first Monday in January of 1903, and his first address as Governor of the state called forth liberal praise from newspapers and citizens of all shades of political belief. His determination to be Governor of all the people while he is in office was abundantly shown when soon after his inauguration he called out the armed forces of the state and sent a sleepless night in his efforts to quell the lawless spirit that infested Waterbury during the famous trolley strike of 1903. For this action he received the unqualified praise of all, and he set an example for other chief executives to follow when similar occasions arise, and have to be summarily dealt with.

Gov. Chamberlain's administration has been characterized by a conservative spirit, and he has fully justified all that his friends said of him previous to his election.

Wesleyan University conferred upon the governor in 1903 the degree of doctor of laws.

Gov. Chamberlain is a brother of Mrs. Charles Elliot Mitchell of New York, wife of the former patent commissioner of the United States under President Harrison. His brother was the late Valentine Chamberlain of New Britain, whose death is still lamented by thousands in Connecticut.

A biographer has said of Gov. Chamberlain: "He is kind, genial, and courteous, and his dignity, fidelity, and ability peculiarly fit him for the high office of Chief Magistrate of Connecticut. The same proverbial success that has always crowned his efforts in whatever he has undertaken to do for the good of the public has already won for him the proud distinction of being a model governor."