

Introduction

The New Hampshire presidential primary is taking place in 2004 for the twenty-second time since the Granite State held its initial first-in-the-nation vote in 1920. In 1916, the year of New Hampshire's earliest official state-run presidential primary, Indiana had held the first primary of the year one week before. At that time, a primary—in which voters choose a delegate pledged to a particular presidential candidate—was a relatively new idea.

Born in the era of progressive reform, the primary offered a new alternative to the party caucus and convention in the nominating process. In contrast to the back-room anointment of a candidate by political party bosses, whose influence and power was fueled by the moneyed elite, the primary system's direct vote enabled states to "let the people decide." New Hampshire began holding primaries for governor and other state offices in 1910. Other states were also experimenting at this time with reforming the nominating process in order to ensure greater participation by the individual voter.

Following the September 1910 primary for statewide office, Governor Robert P. Bass supported legislation in 1911 to establish a presidential primary. Although the legislation was not yet fully in place for a state-run primary in 1912, the New Hampshire Republican Party conducted "something like a primary" that year, according to Governor Hugh Gregg and Bill Gardner, in *Why New Hampshire?* (2003). This attempt paved the way for Democratic Representative Stephen Bullock to introduce House Bill 430, which provided for the state's first official presidential primary to be held in 1916, on the third Tuesday in May. The "Act to provide for the Election of Delegates to National Conventions by Direct Vote of the People" passed on May 21, 1913, in the term of Democratic Governor Samuel Felker.

Two years later, through an amendment offered by Bethlehem Republican Representative John W. Glessner, the date of the primary was changed from the third Tuesday in May to the second Tuesday in March, New Hampshire's traditional town meeting day. Though a vice president of International Harvester in Chicago, a Littleton-area benefactor, and owner of the country estate

now known as "The Rocks," Glessner initiated the change in an attempt to save money by combining the local town meeting with the presidential primary election.

Unlike New Hampshire, where the primary eventually took firm hold, several states opted to return to the old party caucus system. Some party leaders apparently preferred retaining the power to choose delegates, rather than leaving this important matter to the voters. Primaries were expensive, they claimed, and voter turnout was low. But in New Hampshire, the first-in-the-nation primary survived. In 1949, though, Speaker of the House Richard Upton recognized the need to increase voter turnout and introduced House Bill 210 to give the voter the opportunity to choose a presidential candidate directly, rather than by electing a delegate pledged to that candidate. No longer could candidates rely solely on their delegates to generate support in the state. They would need to come to the state and meet the voters one-on-one. Upton wanted to make the primary more interesting and meaningful to the voter, as well as to increase turnout. He accomplished both goals, and today New Hampshire ranks first in the nation in percentage of voter turnout in the primary.

New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation primary has been in place for more than a third of the state's history. It is likely due to New Hampshire's unique political tradition that the primary has thrived. The state's importance in American political history began well before the twentieth century. In 1788, New Hampshire was the ninth state to ratify the United States Constitution, thus casting the deciding vote that made our constitutional government the law of the land.

The state also played an important role in organizing the first national party nominating convention. In 1832, Franklin Pierce, the twenty-six-year-old Speaker of the New Hampshire House, led a movement by Jacksonian Democrats to broaden the nominating process beyond the Congressional caucus by holding a party convention. As a result, convention delegates were able to overcome the Congressional power of Jackson's party nemesis, John C. Calhoun, and to select Martin Van Buren instead as Jackson's running mate. The national nominating



President Dwight David Eisenhower being welcomed to New Hampshire by Governor Hugh Gregg. Behind Eisenhower stands New Hampshire Governor Sherman Adams (in office 1949–53), the man more responsible than any other for Eisenhower's election in 1952. Levensaler Collection, New Hampshire Historical Society.

convention, which continues to this day, had roots, therefore, in New Hampshire.

When elected president in 1853, Franklin Pierce became the national leader of the Democratic Party. In October of the same year, New Hampshire Congressman Amos Tuck organized the first meeting of the modern Republican Party, held in Exeter. From that time forward, New Hampshire has served as a barometer, helping gauge how both of the major parties are resonating with the voters. The depth of New Hampshire's significant role in national politics is fully explored in Hugh Gregg and Bill Gardner's *Why New Hampshire?*

This special issue of *Historical New Hampshire* features the primary in its post-1949 form. The first article, by historian and former *Concord Monitor* journalist Michael Birkner, presents new research on New Hampshire's role in the election of Dwight Eisenhower in 1952. Dante Scala, a specialist in New Hampshire politics at the New Hampshire Institute of Politics at Saint Anselm College, provides a substantive and demographic look at the Democratic primary in New Hampshire from 1968 to 2000. Peter Burr, a veteran of the political vineyards from

the neighboring state of Maine, provides an entertaining set of recommendations to guide present and future presidential candidates. The book reviews presented here also feature recent primary research. A book on the making of presidential candidates in 2004 is the fourth primary-related study written or edited by William Mayer, a political science professor at Northeastern University.

We also review Hugh Gregg and William Gardner's *Why New Hampshire?: The First-in-the-Nation Primary State*. Although we leave a more complete discussion for the review itself, we would like here, on behalf of the board and staff of the New Hampshire Political Library, to respectfully honor the memory of the founder of our organization, Governor Hugh Gregg. At the time of this writing,

all of New Hampshire is still attempting to comprehend the governor's passing on September 24 and reflecting on the massive legacy he left to us.

All his life, Governor Gregg worked to promote New Hampshire. Whether it was rebuilding Nashua in a period of devastating economic downturn after mill closings in the late 1940s, serving as governor from 1953 to 1955, managing New Hampshire presidential campaigns of Rockefeller, Reagan, and Bush, or promoting New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation primary, he set about the task with remarkable enthusiasm, energy, skill, and determination.

We are fortunate to have had him with us in New Hampshire for all these years, making this state a better place. We are especially fortunate that he has left the library he founded with so much still to do to promote and preserve New Hampshire's political tradition.

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