

The WCYR Advocate

Williamson County Young Republicans

April, 2005

Joshua Edlin, editor

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Next Meeting

Tuesday, May 10, 2005
General Meeting: 6:30 PM
Location: Guido's New York Pizzeria
Speaker: TBA

Announcements

- Our meeting location has changed. We will be meeting upstairs at Guido's New York Pizzeria in Cool Springs.
- The Tennessee Young Republican Federation will have its annual rechartering meeting on April 23 in the Senate chambers of the state capitol. The meeting will begin at 10:00 AM.
- The "Just Desserts" fund raiser will be held on May 12. The YRs are hoping to have enough attendees for two tables. If you would like to attend, please contact David Sink.
- The National Young Republican convention will be held in Las Vegas on July 6-10. If you would like to attend, please contact Mark Green at mkgcep@bellsouth.net..

Spring Events Ramp Up

Now that warm weather is here, a number of events are underway.

On the Young Republican front, the Tennessee Young Republican Federation (TYRF) is having their annual rechartering on April 23; the Young Republican National Federation is holding their bi-annual convention the weekend of July 6 in Las Vegas; and the Williamson County YR social committee is planning an exciting schedule of monthly social events.

The Williamson County GOP will be participating in the Franklin Main Street Festival with a voter registration booth in front of the party headquarters. On May 12, the party will hold their annual "Just Desserts" fundraiser.

Additionally, the Senate race for Senator Bill Frist's seat began somewhat early. Williamson County got in on the action by inviting all four Republican candidates to speak at the President's Day dinner. Other counties have followed suit, creating a civil campaign – so far. You can be sure we'll be hearing more from the candidates in the coming months.

It may be an off-year politically, but it won't be a dull year. ♦

James G. Blaine

by Josh Edlin

This is the second in a series profiling past Republican leaders. The individuals chosen for the profiles never achieved the Presidency, and their fame sometimes fades with time. This series is an effort to highlight the contributions and legacies of these important historical figures.

James Gillespie Blaine began his political career when he began editing the Kennebec Journal of Augusta, Maine in 1854. A long-time Whig supporter, it wasn't long before Blaine joined the ranks of the budding Republican Party. As the editor of the state's leading Republican newspaper, Blaine was in a perfect position to advance politically. Blaine served as a delegate to the first Republican National Convention, and he was soon elected to the Maine state legislature. The next year he was made the chairman of the state Republican Party and then made Speaker of the state House. Blaine's career was only just beginning.

In 1862, Blaine was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. After the Civil War ended, Blaine was a strong advocate of civil rights. His belief that Reconstruction was necessary to preserve these rights for blacks in the South led him to campaign hard for Ulysses Grant in 1868. When Grant won, House Speaker Schuyler Colfax became Vice President, and Blaine was the easy choice to replace him as Speaker.

Despite his rapid rise, Blaine wasn't without his enemies. In April, 1866, while debating the Military Bill, Roscoe Conkling, a prominent Republican from New York, made a personal attack on one General Fry, who factored into the bill. Blaine, irritated by the attack, came to the absent Fry's defense. From there, the debate became an argument, eventually attracting national attention and continuing openly in Congress. The conflict came to a head when Blaine presented a letter to Congress from General Fry accusing Conkling of several scandalous acts. Conkling responded angrily, and Blaine issued an impromptu speech – one of his best ever – insulting Conkling openly. Reconciliation was impossible, and the feud would eventually cost Blaine the Presidency.

Going into the 1876 campaign season, Blaine was one of the major contenders to win the nomination. However, just months before the convention, Blaine was accused of accepting a "loan" from a railroad company. On May 31, James Mulligan, a clerk for Blaine's brother-in-law, testified before an investigatory subcommittee and revealed that he had letters from Blaine pertaining to the issue. Blaine soon coerced Mulligan into loaning him the letters. The letters subsequently disappeared, their only remaining record being excerpts read by Blaine in his own defense. Blaine was eventually found free of wrongdoing, but the scandal stuck.

Upcoming Events

Apr 23	TYRF Rechartering
Apr 23-24	Franklin Main St Festival
May 10	May YR Meeting
May 12	Just Desserts
May 20	Charity Softball

Service Opportunities

- ◆ Volunteers are needed to man the voter registration booth at the Franklin Main Street Festival on Saturday, April 23. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact David Sink.

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When the convention date arrived, Blaine was still a favorite to win. However, with certain delegates – most notably Conkling – refusing to support Blaine, he could not gain a majority. The final ballot went for Rutherford B. Hayes with 384 votes to Blaine's 351.

Three days after the convention, the Secretary of the Treasury resigned and was replaced by one of the Maine Senators. The Governor of Maine wasted no time in appointing Blaine to the vacant Senate seat. Blaine was able to leverage his new position and oppose Hayes' policies towards ending Reconstruction and reforming civil service.

When it became clear that Hayes would never win the 1880 nomination, Blaine again became a front runner. This time, however, Blaine faced a more daunting opponent. Ulysses Grant, after four years out of office, was running for a third term. Under the banner of the “Stalwarts”, led by Roscoe Conkling, Grant had significant support. In the end, neither Grant nor Blaine could gain a voting majority, and the nomination was given to dark horse candidate James A. Garfield.

When Garfield was elected President, his natural choice for Secretary of State was his long-time friend, James Blaine. As Secretary of State, Blaine instituted far-thinking policies. He vehemently opposed the British constructing an isthmian canal. According to the British, the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty gave them the rights to build the canal, and while Blaine's arguments to the contrary weren't immediately successful, they would resurface later and eventually lead to the American construction of the Panama Canal. Blaine also envisioned a united Western Hemisphere, with more cooperation between the United States and Latin American countries. To this end, he organized the International Peace Conference, which would be cancelled by Blaine's successor.

Unfortunately, Blaine and Garfield's partnership was to be short, and Roscoe Conkling would again play an important part in the tragedy. Conkling and Garfield clashed on the issue of patronage in New York, and a vicious public battle ensued. Garfield won when Conkling resigned from the Senate in protest, fully expecting the New York legislature to immediately reappoint him. However, Conkling had his own enemies, and the legislature refused. Conkling was out. Meanwhile, a slightly unhinged man by the name of Charles Guiteau, whose importance to the recent Presidential election was mostly in his own mind, had earnestly been seeking employment with the State Department but had been rebuffed several times by Blaine. Guiteau had allied himself with the Stalwarts, and when Conkling was bested by Garfield, Guiteau took it personally. On July 2, 1881, Charles Guiteau shot President Garfield at the Washington train station. Garfield died in September, and Blaine resigned in December.

Despite his setbacks and his worsening health, Blaine wasn't finished yet. When the 1884 election came around, Blaine was once again a front runner for the nomination, and this time, Roscoe Conkling was out of the picture. Blaine received the nomination, despite his stated desire not to run.

Early in the campaign, Democratic candidate Grover Cleveland was discovered to have fathered an illegitimate son. The race looked good for Blaine. However, a new letter surfaced indicating an attempt by Blaine to cover up his earlier “Mulligan Letters” scandal. The race finally came down to New York. At a campaign stop, while introducing Blaine, a Protestant minister called the Democrats the party of “Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion.” When Blaine failed to rebuke the minister, New York's Irish voters, taking offense, turned against Blaine. Blaine lost New York, and thus the election, by 1149 votes.

Blaine was put forward again in 1888, but his interest in the Presidency had waned. Benjamin Harrison won the nomination, and subsequently the election. In return for his support, Blaine was again appointed Secretary of State. Blaine picked up where he had left off, pursuing greater economic ties between the U.S. and the Latin American and South American nations. He reinstated his earlier conference, and in 1889 presided over the First International American Congress.

As the 1892 election approached, Blaine's supporters pushed for his nomination again, but Blaine's failing health and Harrison's animosity had worn on him. He resigned in June of 1892, leaving politics forever. He died January 27, 1893.◆