

# Michigan's Presidential Timber

By TIM RICHARD  
Sunday Editor

If Gov. George Romney can win the Republican nomination for President in 1968, he will have done something no Michigander has done for 120 years.

And if he wins, he will be Michigan's first contribution to the White House ever.

Michigan, a great producer of timber, has never produced much presidential timber. Only one Michigan resident has ever won a presidential nomination from a major party.

Nevertheless, a number of Michiganders have been "mentioned"—as the big time columnists say—as presidential possibilities, and several others have won nominations in minor parties.

New York, Massachusetts, Virginia and Ohio have dominated the list of nominees throughout American history, with California, now the most populous state, statistically destined for a bigger share.

Michigan's contributions to Potomac fever have been Birney, Cass, Knox, Dewey, Vandenberg, Williams, Munn and now Romney.

## BIRNEY? WHO on earth was he?

Well, James G. Birney was the 1840 and 1844 candidate for president of something called the Liberty Party. It was an abolitionist group and later merged with the Free Soil Party, one of the many forerunners of the Republican Party.

Birney got something like 294 votes from Michigan in his 1840 bid. He fell ill and couldn't campaign much in the 1844 election. Sometime in that period, Birney settled in Michigan at Saginaw and ran unsuccessfully for governor in 1843.

Later, Birney served in the State Senate. He was author of an 1859 bill to pay a 10 cent per barrel subsidy for the production of salt. A jokester offered an amendment to make it 10 cents per bushel, and it passed.

Some businessmen in Birney's home district promptly began the evaporation of brine and made a killing. Whereupon, the Legislature repealed the subsidy.

And that's all you'll find in state histories about James G. Birney.

## LEWIS CASS was probably the most prominent man nationally that Michigan produced in the 19th century.

At one time he held military rank, and during the war of 1812 he was appointed territorial governor. He served until 1831, concentrating on exploring the wild young state, encouraging new settlement, negotiating with the Indians.

From 1831-36 he was secretary of war in the Jackson Administration, his first jump into the national political sphere. It was for this service—not his direct work as a Michigan official—that a county was named after him; a southern county was an county was named after every prominent person in the Jackson cabinet, which was in office at the time Michigan became a state.

Cass held the nation's top diplomatic post—minister to France—from 1836-42. The next two years he was a regent of the University of Michigan, but in 1845 the Legislature elected him to the U.S. Senate.

It was as a senator that he won the Democratic nomination for president in 1848. His opponent was war hero William Henry Harrison, "Ol' Tippecanoe." Cass was hurt by his authorship of the idea of "popular sovereignty," under which each state was to decide for itself the issue of slavery. This concept was a concession to the South and unpopular with the anti-slavery vote. Many of Cass' fellow Democrats deserted him at the polls, and Gen. Harrison won.

Cass' service wasn't ended. He was re-elected to the Senate in 1848 and served until 1857, when he lost his seat because of his stand with Sen. Stephen A. Douglas in support of the Kansas-Nebraska bill.

At this point, President James Buchanan tapped Cass for secretary of state. When Buchanan refused to act strongly to end southern secession, Cass quit in December of 1860. He retired to Michigan and died in 1866.

He came closer to the presidency than any Michigan resident, before or since.

## A MAN WHO BOBS and weaves through Michigan history is Frank Knox, Republican vice presidential nominee under Kansas' Gov. Alf Landon in the 1936 Roosevelt landslide.

Born in Boston and raised in Grand Rapids, Knox graduated from Alma College in 1898, joined the Rough Riders and fought at San Juan Hill in the Spanish-American War. After the war, he joined the now-departed Grand Rapids Telegram as a reporter, and in 1900 he purchased the Sault Ste. Marie News from Chase S. Osborn.

Knox shows up next as Osborn's campaign manager in the 1910 gubernatorial contest. When Osborn won, Knox became GOP state chairman.

In the 1912 split between the Taft regulars and the Teddy Roosevelt Bull Moose wing, Knox lined up with the Bull Moose. The national convention, however, seated the Taft delegation. He rejoined the GOP fold in 1916.

Knox pops up next in 1917 in New Hampshire, joining an infantry regiment. He fought at San Miel and the Meuse-Argonne campaigns. After the war, he was president of something called the Military Training Camps Association.

From 1927-31 Knox was general manager of the Hearst Newspapers, and in 1931 he bought the Chicago Daily News.

History pays little attention to how Knox became the No. 2 man on the Landon ticket. All eyes were on F.D.R.

Knox's great achievement, however, was still to come. Roosevelt tapped him for secretary of the Navy in 1940, and Encyclopedia



CASS



VANDENBERG



DEWEY



WILLIAMS



ROMNEY

Americana praises his work in public relations after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and for expansion of the Navy for war. Knox died in office in 1944.

THOMAS E. DEWEY was born in the little Michigan city of Owosso; attended the University of Michigan, where he was an editor of the Daily; and graduated from the U. M. law school.

But his entire adult life is associated with the State of New York. A crime-busting district attorney, Dewey won the first of three terms as governor in 1942.

Dewey won the 1944 and 1948 GOP presidential nominations but lost the elections to incumbents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman.

Dewey became a king-maker in 1952. He got one of the loudest roars in convention history when he announced in his deep baritone: "New York casts four votes for Taft"—short pause—"and 92 for Eisenhower."

Now 65, Dewey is making a lot of money practicing law in New York.

He won't talk politics. When we attempted to call him to ask his reaction to Gov. Romney's candidacy, we were unable to get past his secretary. We enlisted a former Dewey associate to intercede, but he brought back the message that Dewey would make no political statement and would discuss no other politician.

And so, if Tom Dewey has any political or nostalgic reason for wishing George Romney well, he is keeping it to himself.

ARTHUR H. VANDENBERG, U.S. senator from Michigan, twice was in the running for the Republican presidential nomination.

A conservative Grand Rapids Dutchman, Vandenberg was an isolationist candidate in the pre-war days of 1940. He picked up only a scattering of convention votes.

Vandenberg rose in the Senate, switched his views on foreign policy to international-

ism, and became a chief architect of the bi-partisan foreign policy.

When the GOP won control of Congress in 1946, Vandenberg became chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. As the time drew near for the Republican Party to pick a presidential candidate, Vandenberg had a lot of unsolicited support.

"I would have reluctantly accepted a draft," he wrote in his diary. "But there was never a chance for a draft . . . Gov. Stassen (of Minnesota) was, I believe, ready" to swing behind Vandenberg on the second ballot.

Vandenberg wrote that he didn't want to destroy his work in the bi-partisan foreign policy field, a work he loved with "a passion," by running for president. Moreover, he was 65 years old, worried about his health, and afraid he might not live out a term.

Nevertheless, he got 62 convention votes—Michigan's 41 and a scattering of others—and privately listed some impressive potential supporters:

"Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. of Massachusetts, Gov. James H. Duff of Pennsylvania, Sen. H. Alexander Smith of New Jersey . . . Sen. Mase of Oregon (then a Republican, now a dove Democrat), Sen. (John Sherman) Cooper of Kentucky, Claire Booth Luce of Connecticut . . . The only direct word I had from Robert A. Taft was his statement to me, a few days before we came to Philadelphia, that he would wish me to be his secretary of state."

Vandenberg died in office in 1951.

G. MENNEN WILLIAMS once had a timetable to his career, and some time a few years back he was supposed to be in the White House.

Williams had been connected with another prominent Michigan Democrat—Frank Murphy, former mayor of Detroit, one term governor of Michigan, attorney general in the Roosevelt Administration and U.S. Supreme Court justice. Williams was his law clerk in the high court. Murphy, though na-

tionally prominent, never seems to have been considered presidential timber.

Williams made Michigan a two-party state by defeating Republican Gov. Kim Sigler in 1948 and former Gov. Harry Kelly in 1950. He didn't enter any of the 1952 presidential primaries, but he was a candidate at the national convention that year.

Although Williams' name figured prominently in the news columns and broadcasts, he had nothing more than a handful of convention votes outside the Michigan delegation.

In 1960 Williams was a favorite son candidate but quickly threw the Michigan delegation behind Sen. John F. Kennedy. When Kennedy won, Williams' name figured prominently in the list of potential Cabinet appointments. But he wound up only as under secretary of state for African affairs—a post so obscure that not one person in 5,000 can name either his predecessor or successor.

A HILLSDALE COLLEGE professor, E. Harold Munn Sr., was a candidate for president in 1964, but his own state never saw his name on the ballot.

Prof. Munn is a Prohibitionist. His party has been unable to muster the approximately 20,000 signatures it needs even to get on the ballot in Michigan, and only a few states had a Prohibitionist ticket in 1964.

The Prohibition Party today isn't even a pathetic shell of what it was a half-century ago. Ideologically, it has moved into far right field. The last time it was on the Michigan ballot was in 1960, when it got little more than 2,000 votes.

## AND NOW Gov. George Romney of Michigan is in the race for the big job.

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