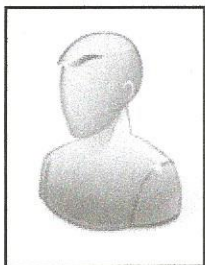


Texas Governor Coke R. Stevenson



- Office Dates: Aug 04, 1941 - Jan 21, 1947
- Succeeded
-
-
-
- Born: Mar 20, 1888
- Passed: Jun 28, 1975
- Birth State: Texas
- Party: Democrat
- Family: Married twice--Fay Wright (one child); Marguerite (King) Heap (one child)
-

- [State Website](#)

Born in Mason County, Texas, Coke R. Stevenson was largely self-educated. An attorney, banker, businessman, and rancher, he served as Kimble County Attorney from 1914 to 1918, Kimble County Judge from 1918 to 1921, a member of the Texas House of Representatives from 1928 to 1938-during which time he was Speaker for four years, and Lieutenant Governor from 1939 until 1941, when he succeeded to the governorship upon the resignation of Wilbert O'Daniel. Elected to two full terms in his own right, he retired the state's public debt, and was known for his strong support of higher education. After serving the longest period as governor of Texas until that time, he left office in 1947, returning to his ranch near Junction, Texas. The following year, he lost the Democratic primary for the U.S. Senate to Lyndon B. Johnson by eighty-seven votes in a disputed election. He died in San Angelo, Texas and was buried on his ranch in Kimble County.

Sources:

Sobel, Robert, and John Raimo, eds. *Biographical Directory of the Governors of the United States, 1789-1978*, Vol. 4. Westport, CT: Meckler Books, 1978. 4 vols.

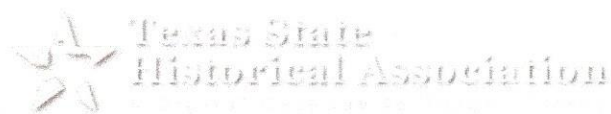
The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, Vol. F. New York: James T. White & Company.

[Texas State Library & Archives Commission](#)

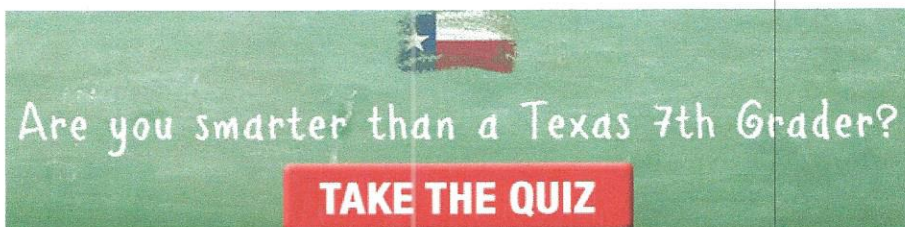
[Governors of Texas, 1846-present](#)



Printed from the NGA Website.



Search

[Handbook](#) [Site](#)

STEVENSON, COKE ROBERT

STEVENSON, COKE ROBERT (1888–1975). Coke Robert Stevenson, governor of Texas, named for Methodist bishop Thomas Coke, was born on March 20, 1888, to Robert Milton and Virginia (Hurley) Stevenson in a log cabin in Mason County, Texas. His father was a schoolteacher and surveyor in various Hill Country areas, including Sutton County, where Stevenson finished his formal schooling (a total of seven years of three-month school terms). His father opened a general store in Junction, Kimble County, and as a teenager Coke went into the business of hauling freight between Junction and Brady. He studied history and bookkeeping by the light of campfires, sold the freight line, and went to work as a janitor for the Junction State Bank. He was soon doing the bank's bookkeeping, and by the time he was twenty he was made cashier. He studied law at night, passed the state bar examination in 1913, left the bank to practice law, and organized and became president of the First National Bank in Junction. As a young man he was involved in many small businesses in Kimble County, including the Junction Warehouse Company, a motion-picture house, a hardware store, an automobile agency, a weekly newspaper, a drug business, and the establishment of the Las Lomas Hotel in Junction. In Kimble County he served as county attorney (1914–18) and as county judge (1919–21). He was elected to the Texas House of Representatives in 1928, and he was a member of that body from 1929 to 1939. He served as speaker of the House from 1933 to 1937, the first person ever to hold that office for two successive terms. Stevenson was elected lieutenant governor of Texas, and served from 1939 to August 4, 1941, when he became governor after W. Lee O'Daniel resigned to become United States senator. Stevenson was elected governor on his own in 1942. He was reelected in 1944 by an overwhelming vote, and his tenure from August, 1941, to January, 1947, was the longest consecutive service of any Texas governor up to that time. Stevenson's record in the legislature showed a concern for soil conservation laws, expansion of and a permanent financing policy for the state highway system (see HIGHWAY DEVELOPMENT), an enlarged building program for the University of Texas, and increases in teachers' salaries. He was a strong believer in fiscal responsibility, and as governor he emphasized conservative financial policies; his administration began with a state treasury deficit and ended with a surplus. Not an extremist on states rights, he was nevertheless against the centralization of governmental power, and he opposed some of the domestic policies of the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration.

Coke Stevenson was married to Fay Wright on December 24, 1912; they had one son. During Stevenson's first year as governor, in January, 1942, his wife died. He remained a widower until January 16, 1954, when

he was married to a widow, Marguerite (King) Heap; they had one daughter. When he left the Governor's Mansion in 1947, Stevenson returned to his 15,000-acre ranch at Telegraph, near Junction. His last political race, for United States senator in 1948, was the only one he ever lost, and it perhaps gave him more national attention than he had ever received before. That election, which he lost to Lyndon Baines Johnson by eighty-seven votes, may have changed the course of history, for Johnson went on to become president of the United States. The contest between Stevenson and Johnson was the closest senatorial race in the nation's history; after Stevenson appeared to be the winner, an amended return came in from Precinct 13 in Jim Wells County, a stronghold of George B. Parr^{qv}, giving Johnson 201 votes and Stevenson only 2 votes; this decided the election in Johnson's favor, with a total state vote of 494,191 for Johnson and 494,104 for Stevenson. Stevenson contested the election, claiming there had been fraudulent votes cast in Duval County and in Precinct 13 in Jim Wells County. The dispute was carried all the way to the United States Supreme Court, but after the voting lists from Box 13 were lost or stolen and the Duval County returns were burned prior to the date set by law, the federal court ruled that it did not have jurisdiction in the case. Stevenson's plea to the United States Senate was refused, and he took the defeat with bitterness. He remained disenchanted with the Democratic party during his long retirement from active politics. For president he supported Republicans Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952 and Richard M. Nixon in 1960, Barry Goldwater in 1964, and Nixon again in 1968. Stevenson, a tall, quiet, pipe-smoking, Western-type man, died at the age of eighty-seven on June 28, 1975, in Shannon Memorial Hospital in San Angelo. He was buried on his ranch in Kimble County. He was a Methodist and a Mason.

See also GOVERNOR; LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Robert A. Caro, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Path to Power* (New York: Knopf, 1982). George N. Green, *The Establishment in Texas Politics* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1979). Booth Mooney, *Mister Texas: The Story of Coke Stevenson* (Dallas: Texas Printing, 1947). Charles E. Simons, "Log Cabin Statesman," *Texas Parade*, March 1942. Coke Stevenson Papers, Texas State Library, Austin. Vertical Files, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

Citation

Eldon S. Branda

The following, adapted from the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition, is the preferred citation for this article.

Eldon S. Branda, "STEVENSON, COKE ROBERT," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fst48>), accessed May 18, 2014. Uploaded on June 15, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

Texas Longhorn BBQ Pits

texaslonghornbbqpits.com

Texas style BBQ Pits at incredible prices. Custom order yours today.

Vital Records

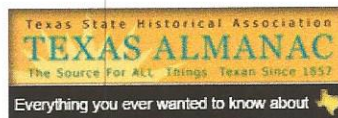
familylink.com/VitalRecords

4,000,000,000+ Names. Birth, Death, Marriage, Divorce. 7-day Free Trial

Find Your Family History

worldvitalrecords.com/FamilyHistory

Search Billions of Records. 7-day Free Trial. Start Now!



Today's Popular Articles

- [Saron, TX \(Angelina County\)](#)

Recent Additions

- [Jordan, Esteban \[Steve\]](#)

TSHA Links

- [About TSHA](#)

- [Capitol Freehold Land and Investment Company](#)
- [Division of Planning Coordination, Governor's Office](#)
- [Robberson, TX](#)
- [Weimar, TX](#)
- [Hacanac Indian Province](#)
- [Kirby, John Henry](#)
- [Mission Valley, TX \(Victoria County\)](#)
- [Plum Creek, Battle Of](#)
- [Texas High School Coaches Association](#)
- [Polk, John](#)
- [Lott, Walter Jerome \[Ed\]](#)
- [Plumly, Benjamin Rush](#)
- [Plato, Nelson](#)
- [Pirkey, Solomon H.](#)
- [Pierson, William C.](#)
- [Perry, Aaron, Jr.](#)
- [Patten, George W.](#)
- [Payne, Jonathan](#)
- [Annual Meeting](#)
- [Partner Links](#)
- [Lone Star Links](#)
- [Awards & Fellowships](#)
- [News & Events](#)
- [FAQs](#)
- [Contact](#)
- [Handbook: Browse Articles](#)
- [Handbook: Help](#)
- [Handbook: Search](#)