

JOHN J. CRAIG

1920 - 1924

John J. Craig grew up in Covington and attended public schools there. He graduated from Covington High School.

He was the son of A. John Craig and Ann J. Davis Craig and was one of eight children. A. John Craig came to America from Ireland at the age of sixteen and became a builder and contractor in Covington. His company built the old federal courthouse in Covington as well as the old Covington City Building.

John J. Craig joined his father's construction firm and worked on the construction of the Covington City Building, the Covington Public Library and Covington High School.

John entered public service in the early 1900s and served as the city clerk of Covington for four years. He became active in the Kenton County Republican party and was chairman of the party's executive committee in 1907.

In July 1907 Craig announced his candidacy for the mayor of the city of Covington. His intention was to lead a ticket of Republican candidates for all city offices. Craig won the race but the other offices were all captured by Democrats. Craig ran on a platform of cleaning up the pervasive gambling and other vices in the city. He was under constant pressure and scrutiny from the press to do more to end gambling and the related criminal activities. The Kentucky Post ran a large, front-page picture of Craig on July 16, 1907, giving his address and both home and business phone numbers. Citizens were encouraged to lobby him to stop the gambling activities. Craig was active in promoting William Howard Taft of Cincinnati as the Republican nominee for president.

John and his wife, Ella M. Griffith Craig, had four children. Their eight year old daughter, Mary Jane, died on January 14, 1912, of diphtheria. Mrs. Craig never recovered from the tragedy and she died on November 26, 1915. John Craig was left to care for the other three children. (Craig's father died at the age of 66 on September 13, 1913). Craig went into semi-retirement from public life for a number of years.

He eventually remarried in November 1918. His second wife was Mattie Crowe of Walton.

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In 1920 John J. Craig was appointed state auditor by Republican governor, Edwin Porch Morrow.

At the end of his term as auditor, Craig ran for a second term as mayor of Covington but was defeated. He remained active, however, in the Kenton County Republican party and was elected chairman of the group in 1925.

In 1927 Craig was appointed a master commissioner in the Kenton County Circuit Court.

Craig was active in the Masons and Elks clubs. He was appointed a member of the board of directors of the First National Bank of Covington and was active in various civic and community projects.

Craig died on September 23, 1930, at the age of 56. The cause of his death was a heart attack.

His funeral was attended by hundreds of people and the Kentucky Post wrote that his death "will be mourned by thousands as he was a man who made and kept the friendship of the masses throughout all the years of his political activity." City and federal offices were closed so employees could attend the funeral. Governor Flem Sampson served as an honorary pallbearer.

He was survived by his wife, Mattie; a son, John J. Craig, Jr., and two daughters, Mrs. John A. (Florence) Schramm and Mrs. Harold (Virginia) McLean.