

Walter Pierce Democratic Candidate for Governor, 1918

By Unknown

'This 1918 campaign card—showing here the front and back—promoted the political candidacy of Walter M. Pierce, a Democratic state senator, in his first bid for Oregon's gubernatorial chair. Pierce lost his first election, but in 1922 won Oregon's governorship with the support of the Ku Klux Klan. He lost his re-election campaign in 1926, but later served five terms in the U.S. Congress.

In the 1918 election, Pierce ran against republican Governor James Withycombe. This campaign advertisement emphasized Pierce's American-born status, in contrast to Withycombe, who was born in England. While Withycombe won the election, he died two months into his second term. Secretary of State Ben Olcott then became governor, but was defeated by Pierce in 1922.

Pierce espoused progressive beliefs, meaning that he supported government reform, women's suffrage, labor unions, prison reform, and prohibition. Like many Oregon progressives of the early twentieth century, Pierce also held nativist and anti-Catholic sentiments. In 1922, Pierce campaigned in support of the Klan's Compulsory School Bill, which would have outlawed all private schools for children, but was primarily aimed at Catholic schools. As governor, Pierce supported Oregon's 1923 Alien Land Law, which prevented Japanese and Chinese immigrants from owning land in the state.

Further Reading: Schwartz, Gerald. "Walter M. Pierce and the Birth Control Movement." *Oregon Historical Society* 88, 1987: 370-383.

Pierce, Walter M. *Oregon cattleman, congressman: memoirs and times of Walter M. Pierce*. Portland, Oreg., 1981.

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