

Chase Osborn, at 87, Still a Fighter

ALBANY, Ga. — (AP) — Down at Possum Poke in Possum lane in Coulan, Ga., lives a rare old gentleman, a public official without office and a self-appointed conscience of the people.

At 87, though blind and chair-ridden, Chase S. Osborn, former Governor of Michigan, still is the hunter of iron ore, the scholar, newspaperman and free-wheeling graduate of the old school of politics.

Knew Nine Presidents

He's the man who knew nine Presidents, who gave away a huge fortune, who fought for prohibition in the days of brewery-owned saloons, the man who wrote one of the first workmen's compensation laws in the country.

He still views split infinitives with the same contempt he displayed when he turned down a \$20,000 bribe—cash under the carpet.

Today the man who called on seven other governors to draft Teddy Roosevelt in the Bull Moose campaign is still fighting. He has a running feud with the census bureau and he's plumping for federal aid to education, particularly for the south, and for the establishment of regionally supported graduate and professional schools in the southern states.

Would Limit Franchise

The governor also is advocating an amendment to the United States Constitution which would limit the franchise. He proposes to bar those convicted of accepting or giving bribes for votes and to place limitations on the mentally unfit and educationally unprepared.

Most of the governor's fights these days are carried on through the pen of his adopted daughter, Stella-nova Osborn, whom the governor met in 1925 and whom he adopted in 1931 when she was 37.

Osborn was born in Huntington county, Ind., Jan. 22, 1860, in a one-room log cabin. His father was a physician and so was his mother. Both achieved their doctors' shingles by the apprentice system.

Learned Fighting Early

Though shy as a youngster Osborn learned to fight early. When he was a newspaper carrier in Lafayette, Ind., a tough gang tried to stop him from delivering his papers. The next day the boy met his tormentors with a revolver. They let him alone after that.



CHASE OSBORN

After leaving school, Osborn has told how he beat his way to Milwaukee, where he became circulation manager of a newspaper by the simple expedient of tossing a couple of rough characters out of the department.

From circulation he moved up to become a reporter with a genius for trouble. Involved in a libel suit, which he won, he went about town with a hatchet in his belt.

Acquires Newspaper

One day he spotted an ad which asked for a fearless man to run a newspaper in Florence Wis. With \$80 in his pocket, he shoved off for the vice-ridden town on the outskirts of the Menominee iron range.

The owner asked how he was going to finance the purchase of the plant. "I'm going to borrow the money—from you," said Osborn.

He got the loan. At the start of his publishing career the windows were shot out of his office.

Angered, Osborn set out to rid the town of the vice ring which ran a brothel on the outskirts of Florence. The house was in a stockade guarded by wild wolves.

Burns Stockade

The new editor formed a vigilante committee, cleaned up the town and burned the stockade. The ring's leader disappeared.

While in Florence, Osborn made his first money. He noticed that

three or four big timber companies were working around a tract, each under the impression it was owned by someone else. Osborn bought the land for \$1.29 an acre and sold it for 30 times that amount.

Eventually Osborn moved to Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., and started the Sault News in partnership with two others. He became sole owner by throwing type quads—jeffing it's called—to see who would leave town.

Covers Boer War

Meantime he found time to prospect for iron ore in Canada—ore which made him rich. He also went traipsing off to cover the Boer war, the Russo-Japanese war and a couple of other fracas.

When Osborn returned, he earned himself a reputation as a fighting editor and a rough and tumble politician. He became Republican postmaster at Sault, then state game and fish warden and railroad commissioner.

As the latter, he fought to end the practice of granting railroad passes to influential people, and for elimination of grade crossings. When a group of railroad men placed \$20,000 under his office rug, Osborn just told them they'd better retrieve it before the janitor came.

Osborn became governor of Michigan in 1911. When he took office, the state was deep in debt. When he left two years later, there was a surplus.

He reduced the number of administrative posts, revised the penal system, introduced the preferential primary, reassessed all properties for tax purposes—and made an enemy of Henry Ford. Osborn upped the valuation of Ford's properties from \$2,500,000 to 30 million dollars. He did likewise to other large firms.

Also during his tenure, telephone companies were declared common carriers, a child labor law was enacted and property rights of women were recognized. But Osborn considers the workmen's compensation law the monument to his administration.

Osborn never held office again, though he ran for governor in 1914 and for the senate against Truman Newberry and Henry Ford. Newberry won, but later was ousted after an investigation of vote-buying charges.

Since then Osborn has beaten his way around the world, writing, studying and becoming an excellent geographer.