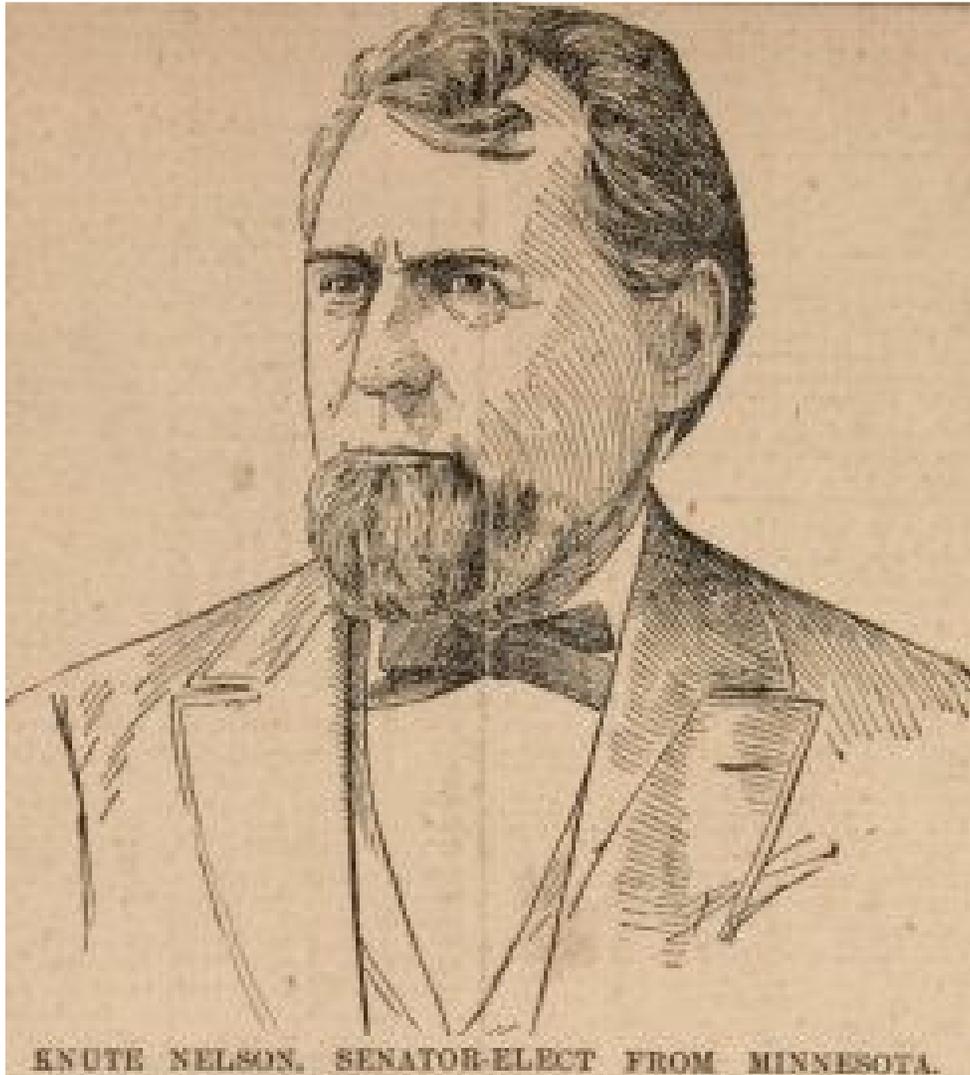


# The Washburn - Nelson Senatorial Campaign of 1894-1895

By

Elmer E. Adams



Drawing purportedly created on December 31, 1894, published in 1895.

Artist unknown.

Source: Wikimedia Commons.

## Foreword

By

**Douglas A. Hedin**

Editor, MLHP

From the 1860s through the 1890s, Minnesota was very close to being a one-party state, the dominant party being the Republican party. The Democrats were a feeble opposition and it was not until the rise of Populism and third parties in the late 1880s and 1890s that the Republicans faced serious challenges. The party's hegemony ended with John Lind's election as governor in 1898 and John Albert Johnson's elections in 1904, 1906 and 1908.

Because of its dominance during these decades, men with political ambitions sought advancement through the Republican party — usually by winning the endorsement of a party convention. Those wanting to serve in the state legislature vied for the endorsement of the county or district convention; lawyers who wanted a district judgeship competed for the endorsement of the judicial district convention; and those seeking statewide office campaigned for the endorsement of the state convention. Conventions varied in size — a judicial district convention typically had a few dozen delegates while the state convention had over a thousand. An endorsed candidate had a very good chance of winning the general election in November. Thus only a small number of the electorate — party regulars at party conventions — selected those men who held elective office. When, at the end of his term, that official sought re-election, his strongest challengers came not from opposition political parties but from within the Republican party itself, at the party convention. Many times, there were only slight differences over substantive issues among the candidates for endorsement — they were, after all, members of the same political party. What separated them (and their supporters) were their personalities, sectional ties, ethnic pride and resentment, work for the party, the lure of patronage appointments, Civil War service and many other considerations that had little to do with their positions on the economic and social problems of the day.

On November 1894, Knute Nelson was re-elected to his second term as Governor of Minnesota, crushing rivals in the Democratic and People's parties.<sup>1</sup> Two months later he announced his candidacy for United States Senator, a post held by William D. Washburn, a fellow Republican, who was seeking re-election. On January 23, 1895, Nelson was elected Senator by the state legislature.<sup>2</sup> He resigned the governorship on January 31, and was sworn as Senator on March 4. He was re-elected by the legislature in 1901 and 1907; he won a popular election required by a unique state law in 1912; and was re-elected by popular vote in 1918.<sup>3</sup> He died in office on April 28, 1923, at age eighty-one.

In January 1924, Elmer E. Adams, a Fergus Falls businessman and newspaper owner, published an account of the battle between Nelson and Washburn for U. S. Senator in the *Fergus Falls Journal*. Adams admired Nelson's conservative politics and his decades of public service but he also saw that to fulfill his political ambitions Nelson sometimes acted disingenuously, even deceitfully. Indeed, after reading Adams's article, it is hard not to conclude that during this campaign Nelson was a master of political duplicity.

In the fall of 1894, Nelson actually waged two political campaigns, one openly, the other "underground," as Adams put it. To the public he was running for a second term as governor but to a few, close supporters he was also running to be U. S. Senator. To Senator Washburn and on the hustings, he stated that he was not a candidate to be senator. But in private, he and his supporters concocted a scheme to unseat Washburn:

[T]he game was to bring as many candidates into the field as possible, the object being to draw away the members of the Legislature from Washburn and create a deadlock and then, at the proper time, precipitate Nelson into the field without subjecting him to criticism of being a candidate.

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<sup>1</sup> The results of the gubernatorial election on November 6, 1894, and other elections in which Nelson was a candidate are posted in the Appendix, at 37-39.

<sup>2</sup> Article I, §3 of the Constitution of 1787, provided: "The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof, for six years; and each Senator shall have one vote."

<sup>3</sup> The Seventeenth Amendment, ratified on April 8, 1913, required that "The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, elected by the people thereof..." It applied to all future elections of Senators. However, in 1911, the Minnesota legislature passed a law requiring popular election of U. S. Senators. 1911 Laws, ch. 388, at 572-75 (effective April 21, 1911).

Receiving Nelson's assurance that he was not a candidate, former Congressman Solomon G. Comstock announced just before Christmas that he would challenge Washburn; he was followed by Congressman James McCleary's entry a few days later. Nelson's supporters became alarmed and urged him to announce before it was too late. He did so on January 3, 1895. A shocked Washburn hurried to the capitol to meet Nelson. Adams quotes a newspaper account of their meeting:

"Well, Governor, I am expecting that you will come out and give my cause a big boost."

Scratching his head for a moment and looking down at the carpet the Governor replied: "Well I don't know about that. Last night I made up my mind to be a candidate myself." Senator Washburn expressed his surprise and referred to the Albert Lea speech and numerous letters from Nelson saying that he was not a candidate and the impression which Nelson had allowed to go over the state before election that he was a candidate for Governor and Governor only.

"I never said that I would support you," said Nelson.

"Very true," replied Washburn, "but you said you would not be a candidate against me and in a letter told me that you would lay no obstacle in my path."

Nelson admitted he had made that statement in a letter and then began to talk about the way in which the newspapers had been abusing him.

Washburn, though suspicious, had let his guard down, had naively accepted Nelson's word and was outflanked in the legislature, which was dominated by Republicans.<sup>4</sup> Nelson almost won a pre-emptive victory when the Republican

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<sup>4</sup> In the Twenty-ninth Legislature that convened on January 8, 1895, there were 46 Republicans, 3 Democrats and 5 Populists in the Senate, and 95 Republicans, 9 Democrats, 9 Populists and 1 Independent Republican in the House of Representatives. Frank Holmes ed., *4 Minnesota in Three Centuries, 1655-1908* 197 (1908).

legislative caucus convened to make a party nomination; he was nearing a majority when a vote to adjourn passed. The contest then moved to the full legislature. On the first ballot of the joint session of the House and Senate on January 23, Nelson prevailed.

Adams does not list political, economic and social issues on which the two men differed, though he does mention actions of Washburn that led to opposition from the Chicago Board of Trade and James J. Hill. He describes some of the tactics Washburn and Nelson used to bring legislators to their side — promises of patronage appointments, appeals to Scandinavian voters, Nelson’s perfidy and so on. The best account of the combatants’ tactics during the “Three Week War” is by Millard L. Gieske and Steven J. Keillor in *Norwegian Yankee: Knute Nelson and the Failure of American Politics, 1860-1923*. Here are excerpts:

To counter Scandinavian Americans’ and state employees’ work for Nelson, Washburn had money, well-placed friends, and *past* appointments to federal positions. However he could not promise *future* federal jobs, then controlled by a Democratic president [Grover Cleveland] and a Democratic Congress. He could offer campaign contributions to legislative candidates. . . . For three weeks — all day and most of the night — Nelson and Washburn fought for legislators’ support by flattery, pressure, and intimidation. . . . Both Nelson and Washburn promised government jobs in exchange for votes, though Nelson had more votes to offer. . . . Constitutents’ opinions were the main weapons used to convince legislators. . . . In fact, the people did have an indirect, limited role in the Three Week War. Washburn and Nelson “wirepullers” strained every nerve to pull public opinion to their side. They used several tactics. County-seat leaders circulated pro-Nelson or pro-Washburn petitions. . . . More effective were personal visits, group or individual, to the hotel lobbies. . . . The arguments used to sway public opinion were many. Pro-Washburn men accused Nelson of “bad faith” in reneging on his Albert Lea pledge and “hoggishness” in seeking two offices at once. . . . Nelson’s supporters countered

that [he] deserved the Senate seat for his valiant rescue of Republicanism from Populism. They circulated stories of his Civil war heroism, and contrasted it with Washburn's wartime patronage job. . . . They argued that rural Minnesota deserved a United States senator. . . . The one argument rarely used openly was that Scandinavian Americans must have a United States senator. During the three weeks, the Norwegian-American press in particular was noticeably silent on Nelson's ethnicity — except to defend it against Yankee sneering about the "little Norwegian." <sup>5</sup>

Adams noted that the battle did not inflict lasting damage to the party. True. Nelson had unusually strong support in the party as evidenced by being re-elected to the Senate four more times.

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Adams continued to publish occasional articles on county history in the *Fergus Falls Journal*. He seems to have found Knute Nelson an irresistible subject. Two days after Nelson's death he published "Incidents in Nelson's Life" in that newspaper (it is posted separately on the MLHP). In May 1923, his colorful account of Nelson's battle in 1882 against Charles F. Kindred for the Republican nomination for Congressman of the Fifth Congressional District was published in the quarterly journal of the Minnesota Historical Society.<sup>6</sup>

More information about Adams and his family is found in his profile in a history of Otter Tail County published in 1916:

As the editor of Otter Tail county's leading newspaper for many years, and as a banker and business man, Elmer Ellsworth Adam is one of the best-known citizens of Otter Tail county. His life and

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<sup>5</sup> Millard L. Gieske & Steven J. Keillor, *Norwegian Yankee: Knute Nelson and the Failure of American Politics, 1860-1923* 205-6, 210-16 (The Norwegian-American Historical Society, 1995) (emphasis in original).

<sup>6</sup> Elmer E. Adams, "The Nelson-Kindred Campaign of 1882," 5 *Minnesota History* 88-107 (May 1923). <http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHHistoryMagazine/articles/5/v05i02p087-107.pdf>

career are intimately identified with almost every phase of the development of this great county.

Elmer Ellsworth Adams, journalist and business man, is a native of Waterbury, Vermont, where he was born on December 31, 1861, a son of Daniel K. and Ann (Hale) Adams, both of whom also were native of the state of Vermont. Daniel K. Adams, who originally was an iron manufacturer, emigrated to Minneapolis in 1879, and engaged in contract building. His death occurred in St. Paul in 1912, he and his wife having reared a family of four children, Dayton, Elmer E., Wilbur and Alice.



ELMER ELLSWORTH ADAMS.

Elmer E. Adams was educated in the public schools of Morrisville, Vermont, and at the University of Minnesota, being graduated from the latter institution with the class of 1884, and on the 17th of February, 1884, arrived at Fergus Falls, this county, as the editor of the *Fergus Falls Daily Telegraph*. In March, 1885, the *Telegram* was consolidated with the *Fergus Falls Journal*, and Mr. Adams became editor of the consolidated newspaper, continuing in that capacity until 1912, when

he was succeeded by W. L. Robertson.

In addition to the presidency of the Fergus Falls Journal Company, a position which Mr. Adams now holds, he is also president of the First National Bank, president of the Northwestern Building Association, and of the Otter Tail Loan Association, and secretary of the Red River Milling Company.

In 1890 Elmer E. Adams was supervisor of the federal census for the fifth Minnesota district, and in 1900 he was supervisor of the census for the seventh Minnesota, district. For many years he was a member of the board of regents of the University of Minnesota. He also has served as a member of the state Legislature for four terms and is a member of the lower house of the Minnesota Legislature at the present time. While a student at the University of Minnesota he was a member of the Chi Psi fraternity.

In 1890, Elmer Ellsworth Adams was married to Fanny Cowles, at Rochester, Minnesota, and to this union have been born three children, daughter of Nels J. Mortensen, a retired druggist of Fergus Falls. Dr. and Mrs. George E. Bell have one daughter, Catherine Watson. T. Bell is a member of Corner Stone Lodge No: 99, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, the Knights of Pythias, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks and the Modern Woodmen of America.<sup>7</sup>

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As interesting as this senatorial battle may be, the question remains: what does it have to do with Minnesota's legal history? First, in the history of the state, the legislature is as important as the judiciary, though it receives less attention from legal historians. Here Adams provides a case study in how the state legislature elected a U. S. Senator before passage of the Seventeenth Amendment.<sup>8</sup> Next, several of the contestants were lawyers — Washburn, Nelson and Comstock. For politically ambitious lawyers, a Senatorship was the highest rung on the political ladder. Third, Justice William Mitchell received four votes in the balloting in the legislature, surely against his wishes as he had served on the supreme court since 1881. No judge, it seems, was protected from being thrown into the political vortex at this time. Finally, to understand how district court and supreme court judges were nominated and elected before judicial elections became non-partisan in 1912, it is necessary to

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<sup>7</sup> John W. Mason, 2 *History of Otter Tail County, Minnesota* 80-81 (1916) (photograph reduced).

<sup>8</sup> C.f., Gieske & Keillor, note 5, at 78 ("Electing United States senators in the legislature involved a Byzantine intrigue in which factional alliances formed and faded like twilight mists in prairie muskeg.").

understand the Republican party. To a slight extent Adams helps penetrate the maze of the party in the late nineteenth century.

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The “Washburn-Nelson Senatorial Campaign of 1894-1895” was published first in the *Fergus Falls Journal* in January 1924. Adams later had it reprinted as a pamphlet, a copy of which is at the Historical Society. It follows. It has been reformatted. Several grammatical changes have been made; a few words capitalized (i.e., Republican). The photographs have been added by the MLHP.<sup>9</sup>

In the Appendix are 1) Chapter Thirty-Six of *Harlan’s P. Hall’s Observations: Being More or Less a History of Political Contests in Minnesota From 1849 to 1904 (1904)*, which is his account of the Washburn’s defeat by Nelson. Hall was a prominent St. Paul political journalist and newspaper publisher during the four decades after statehood. And 2) the returns of Nelson’s popular elections to the State Senate, the House of Representatives, the U. S. Senate and as Governor of Minnesota.

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<sup>9</sup> Credits: Photographs of Senator Washburn and Congressman McCleary are from the *Biographical Dictionary of U. S. Congress*, the others are from *Men of Minnesota (1902)*.

—*The*—  
Washburn - Nelson  
Senatorial Campaign  
*of 1894-1895*



*By* ELMER E. ADAMS  
FERGUS FALLS, MINNESOTA

# The Washburn-Nelson Senatorial Campaign

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Reprinted from Fergus Falls Journal January, 1924.

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Senator Knute Nelson participated in two very important campaigns in Minnesota. The first was when he was a candidate for Congress against Charles F. Kindred in the Fifth Congressional District. The other was when he was a candidate for United States Senator against Senator William D. Washburn, before the Legislature of 1895. In one he was as highly commended as he was severely criticised in the other but in both he was successful.

Some time ago, I prepared for the State Historical Society an account of his campaign for Congress; a portion of which was published in one of the publications of that Society.

There will, doubtless, be equal interest in a review of his campaign which resulted in his going to the United States Senate, where he served with credit and distinction for twenty-eight years. In order to get a proper background for this, it is, perhaps, worthwhile to sketch briefly Senator Nelson's political history.

Returning from the Civil War to Dane County, Wisconsin, he studied law under William F. Vilas, afterwards Postmaster General in Cleveland's Cabinet. Shortly after being admitted to the bar, he was elected to the Legislature of Wisconsin. At that time there was a movement to Minnesota and Knute Nelson, about twenty-five years of age, joined the caravan. He located at Alexandria, Douglas County, on the farm where he lived all his life and which is to be given to the Lutheran Home for the Aged after the death of his only daughter. He was elected County Attorney and, later in a rather notable campaign was sent to the Minnesota State Senate. At that time, there was but little settlement north and west of Alexandria and his district comprised a large section of Northwestern

Minnesota. While serving in the Senate during the session of 1881, the State was re-apportioned as Congress had allotted the State two additional Congressmen. Practically all of Minnesota north of St. Paul formed the Fifth Congressional District. There were a number of ambitious men in this District who wanted to go to Congress and among them was Charles F. Kindred of Brainerd who had made a large amount of money handling the lands of the North Pacific Railway Company and who had been educated in the Pennsylvania School of Politics. He attempted to buy his way into Congress but the opposition under the lead of Nelson succeeded in defeating him at the general election of 1882. Senator Nelson served three terms in Congress and did a large amount of work for the people of his district. He was as efficient then as he was later when he served the State in the United States Senate. His Congressional career was during the regime of Grover Cleveland and tariff reform was one of the foremost issues of the day. It was while Nelson was in Congress that the Mills Bill was put forward by the Democrats. Nelson took a strong stand against the policy of the Republicans on the tariff question and voted for the Mills Bill.

Lieutenant Governor C. A. Gilman, who at that time was very prominent in Minnesota politics, told me that he rode the baggage car all the way from Alexandria to St. Paul trying to convince Nelson that he should resist the tariff stand of the Republicans at that time.

After serving three terms in Congress, Nelson voluntarily retired to private life in order to take up the practice of law again. This was apparently good politics as he had been very successful while in Congress and carried his party by a large majority. About this time, the Farmers Alliance movement got under way and was merged into the People's Party under which caption it deteriorated and disappeared. This voluntary withdrawal of Nelson while still strong with his own party centered the attention of the Republicans on him in 1892 when it became necessary to have a strong candidate in order to defeat the third party movement. The Democratic Party then, as ever since was ineffective and failed to assert the leadership which it could have obtained under a vigorous policy.

Nelson was elected governor in 1892 defeating Ignatius Donnelly, the People's Party candidate by a decisive vote but it was necessary to keep Democratic candidates in the field so that the Democrats would not flock to the Third Party.

In 1894, the People's Party nominated Sidney M. Owen for Governor who, at that time, was the Editor of the *Farm, Stock and Home*, a very forceful speaker on the platform and a man who vigorously assailed the railroads, the elevator systems and those lines of business which were unpopular with the farmers at that time. The Democrats of the State fearing the success of Owen put Gen. George L. Becker into the field to hold the Democratic vote and this saved the day for Nelson as Becker drew enough Democratic votes which would have gone to Owens to accomplish Owens' defeat.

In the Legislature of 1889, Senator William D. Washburn of Minneapolis defeated Dwight M. Sabin, then one of the United States Senators from



William Washburn

Minnesota. Sabin had previously defeated William Windom after a hard and vigorous fight which left a lot of unpleasant feeling. In the meantime Senator Cushman K. Davis had been elected to succeed McMillan and he and Senator Washburn were colleagues, during the general campaign of 1894, when it was necessary to elect the Legislature which was to reelect Senator Washburn or to choose someone to succeed him.

When the Republican State Convention met in September, 1894, to nominate a ticket, it re-nominated Nelson for Governor and David M. Clough of Minneapolis for Lieutenant Governor. That convention passed resolutions indorsing the course of Senators Washburn and Davis and praised their work in very complimentary terms. The followers of

Nelson, however, later called attention to the fact that the Nelson men saw to it that the convention did not designate Washburn as the candidate of the party and claimed, therefore, that there was no party obligation to support Washburn when the legislature met. The rank and file of the Republican Party assumed that the indorsement of the State Convention given to Washburn put him into the field as the candidate of the party and expected, if the Legislature was Republican, it would re-elect Washburn to the United States Senate.

In the November election, Nelson was elected Governor by a vote of Nelson, 147,943, Owen, 87,890 and Becker 53,581 and the Legislature was very strongly Republican in both Houses. In that election, Nelson was beaten very badly in a large number of townships and counties where the People's Party movement was strong, getting practically no votes at all but Minneapolis and St. Paul and Southern Minnesota turned out strongly for him. Later the Washburn men claimed that the very large vote which Nelson received in Minneapolis was due to the Washburn influence.

As soon as the election was over, the *St. Paul Globe*, which was at that time the only Democratic Daily in the State and always very vigorous in fomenting



trouble for the Republicans started to create the impression that there was a large amount of opposition to Washburn and that he was going to be defeated and that there was a splendid opportunity for an ambitious man to go to the United States Senate. The *Globe* kept up this propaganda continuously. The Washburn organization, however, was very confident that the Legislature was certain to re-elect Senator Washburn and refused to take cognizance of the work which was going on. Senator Sabin whose defeat had been brought about six years previous by Senator

Former Senator David M. Sabin

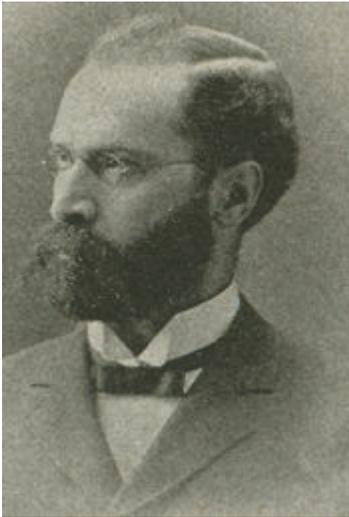
Washburn was on hand with his tomahawk and was one of the most forceful politicians and businessmen in the State at that time. James J. Hill was a strong backer of Nelson in his senatorial campaign. He did

not like Washburn. There had always been more or less rivalry between them. Both were extremely dictatorial in their manner. But when Washburn had the nerve to run his "Soo" railroad right up between Hill's two lines—the Breckenridge and Fergus Falls division—it aroused Hill's enmity to a high degree. He therefore contributed most freely to the fund which helped to bring about Washburn's defeat. Mr. Hill not only did not care for Washburn but he liked Dave Clough and he made a double play in getting Washburn out of the United States Senate and getting Clough into the Governor's chair. Hill liked Clough better than he did any other man who has filled the executive office. Clough never dreaded to do what Mr. Hill wanted to have done. As he used to put it Clough would "stand without hitching."

Another factor which cut some figure in beating Washburn was his anti-option bill to prevent the gambling in grain. Washburn was a pioneer in this legislation and the Chicago Board of Trade is said to have contributed liberally to the fund to bring about his defeat.

With more than a majority of Republicans in the Legislature pledged to Senator Washburn many of whom he had aided both financially and otherwise in their various campaigns, the Washburn people felt perfectly confident of his success but they did not know of the underground methods which were being worked to accomplish his defeat. Those who were out to defeat Washburn knew full well that there was only one man in the State who could defeat him and that was Knute Nelson who had been re-elected Governor. Time showed that the game was to bring as many candidates into the field as possible, the object being to draw away the members of the Legislature from Washburn and create a deadlock and then, at the proper time, precipitate Nelson into the field without subjecting him to criticism of being a candidate. Among the men who were constantly played upon to become a candidate was S. G. Comstock of Moorhead who had succeeded Nelson a Congressman from the Fifth Congressional District but who had been defeated two years later by Kittel Halvorson, who was a Magnus Johnson in his day.

**Congressman James T. McCleary of Mankato, known as the schoolmaster**



James T. McCleary

**Congressman and a very ambitious man, was also offered the bait to become a candidate for Senator and took the hook. O. D. Kinney of Duluth and Thomas Lowry of Minneapolis were also both brought forward but they refused to fall for those who, were attempting to manipulate them. The real dynamo in the contest against Washburn was Lieutenant Governor D. M. Clough, who early saw that if Senator Nelson could be elected to the Senate, he could thus become Governor. Allied with him were Tams Bixby, Governor Nelson's private secretary and Chairman of the State Central Committee at that time, Timothy E. Burnes, John Good-**

**now and Hiram Foote, then prominent in politics in Hennepin County, and Ex-Governor Merriam.**

**Some of the keener of Washburn's friends realized that the real danger was in the possible candidacy of Governor Nelson but Senator Washburn always refused to believe that Senator Nelson would become a candidate against him. He brushed all intimations to that effect away and said that he would not have his friends insinuate that Governor Nelson was not loyal to him. Time showed that he was in error. Subsequent events have proven beyond a reasonable doubt that all through that general campaign of 1894, Nelson had a hope that he might go to the Senate when the Legislature convened. It was afterwards admitted that when the Committee on Resolutions in the State Convention failed to designate Washburn as the party candidate, the preliminary plans were then laid to defeat him with Senator Nelson.**

**During the campaign, Nelson and Washburn were together more or less and their presence at a Republican rally at Albert Lea became an important episode in the later developments. The nearest to any public stand that Nelson took in regard to his possible candidacy against Washburn was made on the platform in that city and, later when the battle was on, a great deal of stress was laid on Nelson's statement made in his Albert Lea speech.**

The fomenting against Washburn continued from the time of the general election up to Christmas week without any candidates being brought into the field, but two days before Christmas, Mr. Comstock of Moorhead announced that he was going to be a candidate and he did this only after he had received the personal assurance of Governor Nelson that, if he did become a candidate, he, Governor Nelson, would give him material assistance. During those days, Comstock was constantly urged by the coterie which was secretly for Nelson, realizing that Nelson was the only man with whom they could accomplish the defeat of Washburn. It soon became apparent that the candidates then in the field could not hold the ball as against Washburn. Congressman McCleary announced his candidacy a few days after Christmas and the campaign began to be very vigorous.

In the meantime the Republican daily newspapers of Minneapolis and St. Paul and throughout the State were not only calling upon Nelson to stand by Washburn but were severely criticising his attitude for not doing so. On the third of January, Nelson formally announced his candidacy for, the United States Senate giving as his excuse the criticisms and abuse of the Republican papers.

There are many rumors and reports which cannot now be verified because many of the participants in that contest have gone to their rewards but one of the rumors that was current at that time was that the *Minneapolis Tribune* was prevailed upon by some of Nelson's adherents, to score the Senator and, thus incense him so that he would take the field in time to defeat Washburn. There was another rumor to the effect that on the night before Nelson announced his candidacy, there was conference of his close-in supporters and for several hours they worked upon him to show that it was necessary for him to get into the open or Washburn's election would become certain on account of the weakness of the men in the field against him.

Senator Nelson's announcement that he was a candidate resulted in most severe criticism by every Republican newspaper in the state and, notably by the *Minneapolis Tribune*, the *Minneapolis Journal*, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and the *Duluth Tribune*. Even the *St. Paul Globe* which had worked very vigorously

to create a movement against Washburn and to get Nelson into the field denounced his conduct as most treacherous and unworthy as will be seen from an editorial published the day after Nelson announced his candidacy.

When it finally sunk into Senator Washburn that Nelson was a candidate against him which was the day after his candidacy was announced, Washburn hurried from Minneapolis to St. Paul and going directly to the Governor at the Capitol, had an interview with him.

It was on the 3rd of January that Governor Nelson formally admitted that he was a candidate. It is understood that there had been an important session at the Merchants Hotel the preceding night and at that time his close associates were impressing upon him the necessity of not delaying longer as it was plain to then that the candidates already in the field could not hold the insurgents against Washburn.

Former Lieutenant Governor Yale of Winona, who at that time was a state senator, was the first of the Washburn forces to call upon the Governor for a definite statement. The interviews with Governor Nelson as reported in the daily newspapers at that time were subsequently as follows:



WILLIAM HALL YALE  
ST. PAUL.  
LAWYER; LIEUT. GOVERNOR (1870-73).

"Former Lieutenant Governor Yale of Winona, who was state senator and a Washburn supporter, went to the Governor's office and asked him frankly if he was a candidate. The Governor told him he was and that he had made up his mind the night before. While Governor Yale and Senator Nelson were talking Senator Washburn arrived from Minneapolis having come over on an Interurban car. He sent his card in to the Governor and was admitted without

delay. He had tried to see Governor on the preceding day but failed."

The first definite statement he had about the candidacy of the Governor he got from the Governor's own mouth. Senator Washburn's interview with Nelson

was interesting. After an exchange of formal greetings Senator Washburn said smilingly:

"Well, Governor, I am expecting that you will come out and give my cause a big boost."

Scratching his head for a moment and looking down at the carpet the Governor replied: "Well I don't know about that. Last night I made up my mind to be a candidate myself." Senator Washburn expressed his surprise and referred to the Albert Lea speech and numerous letters from Nelson saying that he was not a candidate and the impression which Nelson had allowed to go over the state before election that he was a candidate for Governor and Governor only.

"I never said that I would support you," said Nelson.

"Very true," replied Washburn, "but you said you would not be a candidate against me and in a letter told me that you would lay no obstacle in my path."

Nelson admitted he had made that statement in a letter and then began to talk about the way in which the newspapers had been abusing him.

"But I am not responsible for the newspapers," said Washburn; "In fact they have not been under my control at all. Much that they have said I also cannot endorse."

"But you do not imagine, do you," broke in the Governor, "that you have a prescriptive right to the place?"

"Of course not, but I do say that so far as you are concerned I have a prescriptive right. Your statements in public and in private have justified me in saying everywhere that you were not a candidate and I have said that all over the state. So have my friends."

Nelson then began to talk of what he had done for the party in Minnesota in 1894 intimating that he was entitled to some reward for what he had done.

"In '92 and '94," said Washburn, "there was good work done for the Republican party in the state. You did your share of the work and I did my share. Others too

did what he could. I think I am safe in asserting that the sinews of war in both campaigns came from my friends in Minneapolis. They furnish the best speakers, not including yourself, and were on duty in all stages of the campaign, fighting your battles and the battles of the party."

Speaking to a *Minneapolis Journal* reporter, Senator Washburn said: "The Governor offered no excuse for his candidacy beyond the opposition of the newspapers and the fact that his work for the party deserved recognition."

A little later Governor Nelson speaking to a reporter said: "I am a candidate for United States Senator and I have but one other statement to make; I have never at any time agreed to support Mr. Washburn."

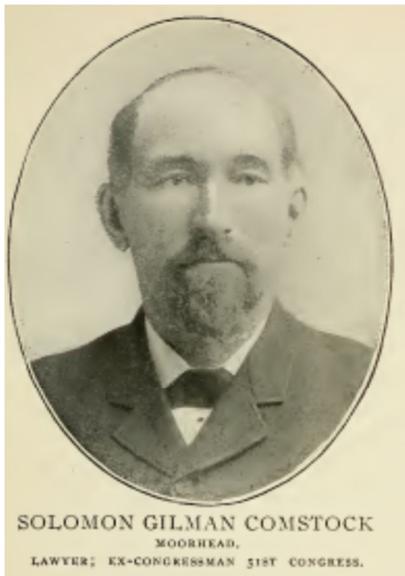
Senator Washburn gave out a statement as follows:

"I am surprised at Governor Nelson's candidacy for he has led me to believe on numerous occasions that he would not be a candidate. My friends practically understood that he would not be a candidate and based their statements on assurances which he made to me both verbally and by letter. For several weeks there have been rumors to the effect that he would come out against me but I have taken no stock in them and only yesterday was interviewed to the effect that I believed that Governor Nelson would be true to his word. His attitude today upsets me in these calculations but it does not affect my opinion in any way. I believe I will be elected by a big majority. My election I believe was an issue in the campaign last year and the people understand it all over the state. If there is any dependence to be placed in men's words and certainly there is, I will succeed myself without difficulty."

Uncle Loren Fletcher, who was then a Congressman from the Minneapolis district was interviewed and his interview shows, how strong the feeling was at the time.

"We have smoked out the only real candidate against Washburn and are to be congratulated on doing it so far in advance of the election. Nelson has been a secret candidate for months and all of us have known it. We will now have to fight him openly which is better than to fight under cover. I have tried in vain to

convince Senator Washburn that Nelson was untrue to him and I am glad that affairs have taken their present turn. I had expected that he would defer the announcement until after a speaker had been elected but it is better it could come now. I always prefer to conduct warfare in the open rather than in the brush. Senator Washburn will be reelected. It has been the policy of the opposition all along to bring out all the candidates they could get and break matters up as much as possible. They have made the same proposition to fifty men that they have made to these that they have led into the race."



Mr. S. G. Comstock who had been induced to enter the contest on the promise of support by Governor Nelson expressed surprise when the Governor's candidacy was formally announced. He knew nothing of Nelson's purpose to declare himself until he heard his announcement.

Mr. Comstock said: "I am still a candidate and propes (sic) to be to the end. Governor Nelson may take away some of my votes but he cannot take me out of the race. I am running in my own interest and not in his."

"Lieutenant Governor D. M. Clough who was as much interested in the success of Nelson as anyone because Nelson's election to the Senate meant his succession to the Governorship, was interviewed and said:

"I think that Washburn has a very hard fight before him. Governor Nelson is a very powerful opponent and has splendid backing throughout the state I made up my mind yesterday that if the Governor had any sand, and I knew that he had, that he would declare himself at once. I have not been down to St. Paul lately and have taken no hand in the fight but I know from statements made by members of the legislature that a great many of them wish the Governor to be a candidate."

Governor Nelson's announcement that he was a candidate at once made the so-called Albert Lea speech a matter of the greatest importance. There was no stenographic report of that speech which was made on Saturday evening, September 22nd, 1894. Senator Washburn sat on the platform with Nelson. The best account published at the time was in the *Minneapolis Journal* of September 24th, 1894. That dispatch read as follows:

“Albert Lea, Minn., September 24.—There was an incident at the political meeting here Saturday night which throws a strong light on the senatorial situation. It was nothing less than the first public utterance of Governor Nelson defining his position on the question of who is to succeed to Senator Washburn's seat. The Governor declared frankly and unequivocally and in the most public way that he was not and never had been and should not be a candidate for the United States Senate. He urged the necessity of electing a Republican legislature as there was a United States Senator to elect. He had been accused, he said, of being a candidate for the Senatorship and the Governorship at the same time. That was not true. He was a candidate for Governor. He wanted to be elected Governor and if elected he expected to serve out his term. He hoped that some such man as Senator Washburn would be elected to fill that seat.”

As soon as Governor Nelson had announced his candidacy, he took personal charge of his campaign and sent for members of the legislature to come to his hotel headquarters. The *Minneapolis Times* gave an interesting account of an interview between Governor Nelson and Senator Roverud of Houston County who went to the Governor's headquarters at the Merchants Hotel as soon as he got a summons. The *Times* gives the meeting as follows:

On entering the room the Senator was cordially received by his excellency and after the customary salutations the Governor remarked: "I have sent for you Senator, to learn how you feel on the senatorial situation."

With perfect frankness Senator Roverud replied: "I shall support Senator Washburn." Governor Nelson seemed to be astonished at his outspoken

position and proceeded to remonstrate with the Houston County man. "I am surprised at this," he said, "for I have always regarded you as my friend."

"I am your friend, replied the Senator, "and did my best to nominate and elect you Governor and I am also Senator Washburn's friend and my constituents are largely in favor of sending him back to the Senate." This had the effect of a red rag on a mad bull. "I know better," Nelson ejaculated. "You are not representing your people." To this insulting suggestion the Senator made no response, taken by surprise at the rude remark of his excellency. The conversation followed at some length and finally Governor Nelson said "Roverud, I have always looked upon you as a loyal son of Norway and had thought as our countryman you would be found supporting me for the Senate."



ELLING K. ROVERUD  
CALEDONIA.  
EDITOR CALEDONIA JOURNAL; STATE SENATOR.

Senator Roverud replied as follows: "I am amazed that you of all men should begin the nationality argument to induce a friend to desert the cause of a man I have promised to support. You have had the opportunity to ask my support for the Senate ever since I was nominated and you have never done so. Four weeks or so ago I was here in St. Paul and you said nothing. After that I told Senator Washburn that I would vote for him. What would you think of me if I was capable of violating my promise? Suppose I had promised you my support and then gone into another camp. What would you think of me?"

Governor Nelson grew pale with passion as he responded: "You had no business to commit yourself to Washburn or anybody else. You should have known that one of your countrymen might be in the field and that your people would expect you to support him."

Putting on his hat Senator Roverud said, "I was but fourteen years when I came to America and I believe I am an American. I have run for office a great many times in Houston County and always as a Republican, not as a Norwegian. I

could not ask a living man to vote for me because of my nationality. Norwegians, Swedes, Irish, Germans and American citizens have all been my friends. I am an American citizen, Governor Nelson, good night, sir."

Senator Reverud, who, at that time was about forty years of age, stood six feet four and one-half inches in his stocking feet and weighed two hundred and fifty pounds. After his interview with the Governor, Roverud was quoted as follows:

"I have always been a friend of Governor Nelson and proud of him as an intelligent, progressive citizen of a race of people of my own ancestors. I have promised to vote for Washburn but I made a mental reservation that if after voting for him a few times it became apparent he could not win, I would vote for Governor Nelson, but I shall not do it now."

It will be of interest to know that on the first ballot in the caucus Senator Roverud voted for Nelson. One of the campaign tactics of the Nelson managers was to send men into the townships all over the state and secure signers to petitions requesting their senators and representatives to vote for Nelson. There were townships in which Nelson had not received ten per cent of the votes for Governor where they got petitions signed by ninety per cent asking their representatives to vote for him for Senator. It is always easy to get signatures to a petition and they made such a showing that in Houston County that Senator Roverud broke from Washburn to Nelson.

In Senator Nelson's long politic[al] career, he never worked and fought as hard as he did in this brief campaign. He wanted to go to the Senate and having started, he did not want to be defeated. But above all else, he was thoroughly mad clear through. The lashings and excoriations which he received from the Republican press both of the Twin Cities and throughout the state infuriated him to the last degree Gov. David Clough had said, "I thought if the Governor had any sand, he would get in." Those who urged him to get in knew that if he got in, he would have plenty of sand.

It was the intention of the Nelson forces to keep him in the background until after the speakership contest was settled. Governor Van Sant, who had

represented Winona in the previous session of the Legislature, was an active candidate for speaker and he outwitted the other candidates by travelling throughout the country and getting promises from the members of the Legislature before they arrived in St. Paul. As he recently said, "They called him the 'Go-Around Candidate.'" In any event, he was successful and he had a majority when the Republican caucus convened. It was usually the case when there was a senatorial contest on that the speakership fight be made a part of it but, apparently it was not in this case. Governor Van Sant, who was for Washburn, recently told me that he did not know that Nelson was going to be a candidate for Senator until his announcement came out, although, he know that many of Nelson's friends were making a vigorous fight on Washburn. From the day when Nelson opened up his senatorial headquarters, they began to make inroads on the Washburn strength but it seems that Washburn never realized this. The leaders of the Republican party and the strong party men favored Washburn but he was never a favorite with the rank and file so that it was easy for the Nelson forces to weaken Washburn in the country districts and to create an impression on the members committed to Washburn that the people back home did not insist on their voting for Washburn no matter what their campaign pledges were.

Nelson was perfectly unreasonable with many of his old-time friends and supporters because they did not support him in this contest. He assumed that no matter what their commitments might have been they should support him and when they did not, it meant a breaking of many long-time friendships. A notable instance of this was the case of Hon. E. E. Corliss of Fergus Falls. Mr. Corliss had been a follower and supporter of Nelson from the day that he arrived in Alexandria. During the general campaign, he went to Nelson and asked him if he was going to be a candidate for the United States Senate and Nelson said that he was not. Washburn later asked Corliss to help him and, assuming that Nelson would not be a candidate, Mr. Corliss pledged his support to Washburn. When the fight started after Nelson's announcement that he was a candidate for United States Senator, Mr. Washburn asked Mr. Corliss to come to St. Paul. I saw Corliss as he boarded the train for St. Paul and he told

me he hated to go down and work against Nelson but that he had pledged his support to Washburn and a man had to be either a mouse or a man and no one had ever accused him of being a mouse. He ran across Nelson in the Windsor Hotel, where the Nelson headquarters were, and went to shake hands with him as usual but Nelson refused to shake hands and for many years their relations were entirely severed, although, later they were resumed in a limited degree.

Nelson was intensely grate[ful] to everyone who helped him in this contest. An



WILLIAM ALEXANDER CANT  
DULUTH.  
JUDGE DIST. COURT, 11TH JUDICIAL DIST. (1897-).

instance of his was shown in connection with the Duluth delegation. The Republican leaders and the press of Duluth were for Washburn. William A. Cant, a young lawyer, serving his first term, was on the House Delegation and with him were Messrs. McInnis and Smith. Mr. Cant joined the Nelson forces early and carried with him the rest of the House Delegation from Duluth. Senator Nelson never forgot that assistance and on the day that he died, he went to see President Harding and got his promise to appoint Judge Cant United States Judge. He remarked to a friend, on that day in Washington he had paid his last political debt, although

it was twenty-nine years after Judge Cant had aided him.

Nelson announced his candidacy on January 3rd. The Republican caucus by the consent of all the contestants, was called for Friday, January 18th. Long before the caucus met, it was perfectly apparent that the Nelson's managers had made heavy inroads on the Washburn strength. There were a number of whose support Washburn was confident, who were still talking for Washburn but it was well known that at the proper time, they would vote for Nelson and it was charged by the close friends of Senator Washburn that certain men were kept in the Washburn camp in order that they might keep tab on what was done and the information used for the benefit of Nelson.

In the old days, when a United States Senator was elected by the Legislature, the members always regarded their vote for Senator as a personal perquisite. A great many of the Federal appointments which are made on the personal recommendations of the United States Senators went to members of the Legislature who had helped the different Senators in their campaigns. Federal appointees have always been important factors in senatorial campaigns and during the sessions of the Legislature they came to be known as the "Federal Guards" when they gathered to help re-elect a man who had befriended them.

When the Republican caucus was convened, Hon. John L. Gibbs by mutual consent was selected as Chairman. He was always a good, presiding officer and



EDWARD T. YOUNG  
APPLETON,  
LAWYER, STATE SENATOR 18TH DIST. (1901—).

was recognized as fair. Sen. E. T. Young, afterwards Attorney General of the State, was the leader of the Nelson forces. As soon as the caucus was organized, he moved that seventy-two votes be required to make a nomination, there being one hundred forty-one republican members. The Washburn men tried to amend this so that a majority of those present and voting would nominate, which is the regular rule of conventions. This was resisted by all the other candidates who recognized Washburn as the leading candidate and

who had to be beaten before any of them had a chance so they voted with the Nelson men and it resulted in the motion made by Mr. Young prevailing. The roll was called and each member announced his choice as his name was called. The first ballot resulted as follows:

Washburn.....	61
Nelson.....	45
Comstock.....	14
McCleary .....	4
Scattering.....	7

The Nelson men lent Congressman McCleary of Mankato the four votes which he received and they had some voting for Washburn. On the second ballot, the Nelson men determined to make a showing of strength and so they took McCleary's four votes and pulled a couple from Washburn and four from Comstock and the scattering vote was absorbed. The second ballot stood as follows:

Washburn.....	59
Nelson.....	55
Comstock.....	10

This showed a gain for Nelson of ten votes and a weakening of the Washburn forces. From that time on, it was very apparent that Washburn was defeated. Six ballots were taken in the caucus without a choice. The sixth ballot was as follows:

Washburn.....	55
Nelson.....	60
Comstock.....	14

At the conclusion of the sixth ballot, Henry Feig, who at one time was a candidate for Congressman from the Ninth Congressional District and who in this caucus had divided his vote between John Lind and Congressman McCleary, moved to adjourn. As Nelson had gained and was now in the lead, his men did not want to adjourn but the motion prevailed. The failure of the caucus to nominate threw the election of Senator into the Legislature without a party nomination.

The first vote in the Legislature was taken on Tuesday, January 22nd. The Senate and House voted separately as was the custom during the time that a senator was elected by the Legislature. The law provided that if a candidate received a majority in both branches he was elected and the two bodies convened in joint session the next day to hear the report of the ballot. In case there was no choice then the joint session proceeded to vote until one had a majority.

The vote of the Senate the first day stood as follows:

Washburn.....	23
Nelson.....	17
Donnelly.....	5
Comstock.....	3
Scattering.....	6

While in the House, it was, as follows:

Washburn.....	32
Nelson.....	45
Comstock .....	11
McHale.....	9
Donnelly.....	7
McCleary.....	7
Scattering.....	2

This resulted in no choice. On the next day, the Legislature met in joint session. When Senator Frank Day's name was reached in the call, he was the first of Washburn's men to go to Nelson and his remarks, at that time were, "I believe that Senator Washburn is honestly entitled to re-election but I believe that his case is hopeless and to prolong the strife will only be to sacrifice the interests of the State with no benefit to society or politics. There is not a man who does not recognize the inevitable result and we might as well face it now as later." The Washburn people never felt just right that Day made the change at this time and when he was elected President Pro Tem of the Senate succeeding Lieutenant Governor Clough, they were very sore. The result of the first joint ballot was:

Nelson.....	103
Washburn.....	36
McCleary.....	9
Donnelly.....	13
Mitchell.....	4
Lind.....	1

Nelson was therefore elected.

**Governor Nelson was sent for and made a brief speech which was largely confined to thanking the Legislature for the honor which it had conferred upon him. Governor Nelson resigned in a very few days and David M. Clough became Governor of the State.**

**The people of the State did not like the idea of a man running for Governor, securing the office and turning it over to some one they had not elected and did not want.**

**The only time when they have had an opportunity to pass upon such an action they disapproved by an overwhelming majority as Magnus Johnson's vote showed. It is true that Governor Clough was nominated by the Republican convention but he won over John Lind by only 3552 while McKinley for President had 54,000 plurality.**

**There was so much bitter feeling after this senatorial contest that it was felt that it would have a serious effect upon the Republican party but those were strenuous days and the struggle here in the State was on with the Populists, and Bryan and his Free Silver campaign was but a short time ahead. It was the old story, "The King is dead. Long live the King."**

**Nelson went to Washington and took up his work and for twenty-nine years, made the State and Nation a most useful Senator. There has, perhaps, never been a Senator who has done the great variety of work and service for the people of his state that Nelson did with his tireless energy. When the time for his re-election came, all the rancor and bitterness had passed away and he was the unchallenged choice of his party, as long as he lived.**

**Hon. W. D. Washburn, Jr., the son of the Senator a short time before Nelson's death said that while he did not feel that Senator Nelson had used Senator Washburn right, nevertheless Nelson had made the state a very useful Senator and said that he felt that his father's defeat was very largely the result of mistakes which could have been avoided.**

**Perhaps one of the finest tributes which was paid to Senator Nelson after his death was sent to me by President Coolidge which he asked to have given to the**

press of the state. Coolidge had served as Vice President for two years and in presiding over the senate had a splendid opportunity to know and appreciate Senator Nelson. He saw his rugged manner of standing up for whatever he thought should be done regardless of consequences to himself and this appealed strongly to President Coolidge as is shown in the following tribute:

"All of the elder generation of the Congress were grief stricken to learn of the loss of Stator Knute Nelson of Minnesota. He had the love and respect of all who came in contact with him. He was a powerful influence for sound legislation in the Senate, one who always sought, first and foremost, the public welfare without subserviency to the supposed interest of any class or section. He did not hesitate to disagree with those who were powerful, nor was he backward in supporting those who were weak. He considered the cause, rather than those who advocated it, and sought for approbation by promoting the welfare of his country. He was a leader in the highest and best sense of the term. He thought, out what was right and in announcing his position drew to it public support, rather than undertaking to give all heed to the transient clamor of the hour and yield support to it with the lip service of a servile mind.

"Senator Nelson was a great man. He had a broad comprehension of national problems and a facility in providing practical remedies. He was a tower of strength to his party. He kept his head when others were confused and he did right when others thought it was expedient to do wrong. It would be difficult to select a more representative American in thought and speech and action. He kept his own counsel and represented his own opinions."

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## Appendix 1

*Harlan's P. Hall's Observations:  
Being More or Less a History of Political Contests in Minnesota  
From 1849 to 1904 (1904)*

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### OBSERVATION THIRTY-SIX.

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W. D. Washburn's Defeat for the Senate by Gov. Knute Nelson.

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"As ye sow so shall ye reap." I do not know that a sentiment of this kind has anything to do with politics, but it seems to me that when Senator Washburn relegated Senator Sabin to private life after one term, he laid the ground work for having Governor Nelson serve him in the same manner when the proper time came. When Washburn defeated Sabin in the winter of 1888 he established a one-term precedent which Governor Nelson and his friends were not slow to profit by. The consequence was that in the winter of 1895, when Washburn's term was about to expire, he received a hypodermic injection in the neck, of his own medicine, and it proved fatal. Senator Nelson was then governor, and in the fall election preceding the senatorial election was a candidate for re-election, succeeding, as a matter of course, as nothing but success has marked Senator Nelson's career from the initiative.

There were rumors all through the gubernatorial campaign that he would blossom out as a candidate for a senator in January, and he did. Washburn and his friends laid great stress upon the speech Governor Nelson made at Albert

Lea on the same platform with Senator Washburn, in which he was reported as saying this:

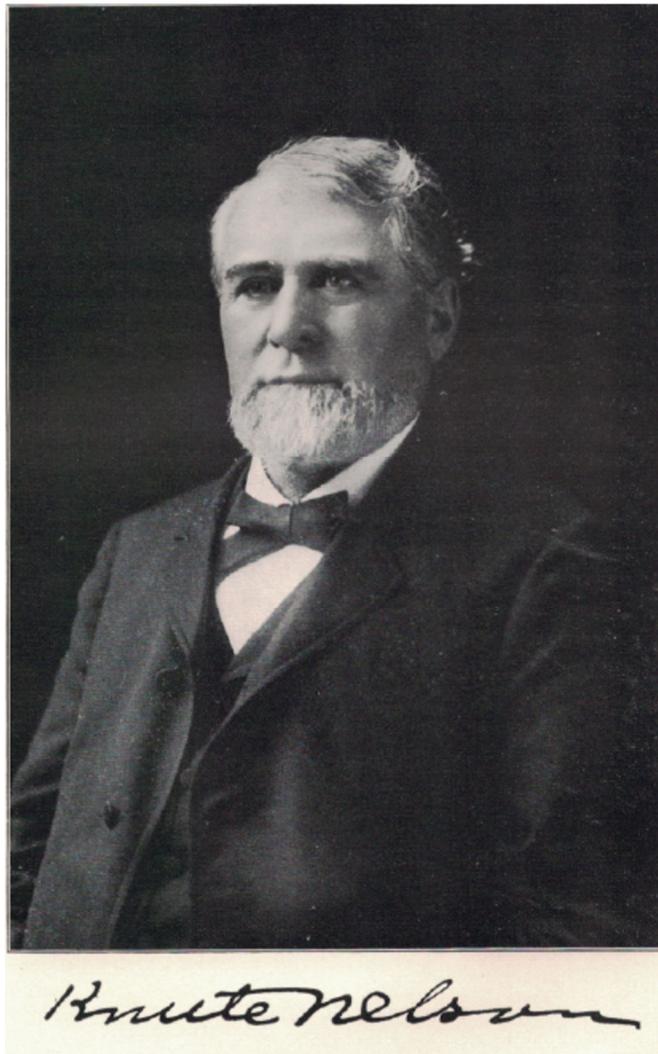
It has been reported that I am a candidate for United States senator, but this is not so. I am not a candidate and do not expect to be. I am a candidate for governor and want to be elected governor, and if elected, expect to serve out my term as governor. But elect your Republican legislative ticket, so as to send my friend Washburn back to the United States senate, or if you do not like him, send some other good Republican.

I do not say personally that Governor Nelson was correctly quoted, but the words which I have given above were alleged to have been uttered by him, and a committee of Washburn's friends signed a statement to that effect and printed it in the newspapers. I accordingly record it on that authority and not my own.

When he really became a candidate it was urged that his Albert Lea speech was entirely consistent with his candidacy for the senate, the argument being made that senators are not elected by the people, and consequently he was not in the direct sense a candidate for the senate at that time, and also the very county where he was making the speech subsequently elected representatives to the legislature in favor of Nelson, and, of course, in opposition to Washburn.

Along about the time the legislature was meeting petitions sprang up from all over the state to Governor Nelson, asking him to be a candidate. A public meeting was held at Frazee City on Jan. 10, 1895, devoted to bringing Nelson out as a candidate for the senate. He would certainly have been less than human if he had refused the prize, which was seemingly offered him on a silver platter; and still it was almost up to the last moment before Washburn and his friends could really believe that they were to have Governor Nelson for a competitor. Senator Washburn was credited with having the Canadian Pacific Railroad at his back, which was really no particular advantage to him, for, as a matter of fact, there was no evidence near or remote that they expended a dollar to aid Mr. Washburn in his campaign. It is perhaps no discredit to Mr.

Washburn to say that he possesses aristocratic tendencies, and consequently was not as popular personally as the bluff farmer, Governor Nelson. I do not consider it any discredit to a man to be aristocratic if he has the money and brains upon which to rest his cause, but if you are in politics it is not advisable to let anybody know it, and Washburn did not make any special concealment of this fact, though he was courteous and polite to his humblest constituent, especially if that constituent was in any danger of getting into the legislature.



As the time approached for a caucus there was a great deal of discussion about having an open caucus with a viva voce vote, and practically this is what was done. The caucus was open to the reporters, and the roll was called for each

man to give his choice publicly. The galleries were thrown open to the newspaper men from the country; and, as the State Editorial Association was just then convening in St. Paul, the country newspaper men filled the galleries to overflowing. The caucus met at 8 p. m. January 18th. There was no contest for chairman, John L. Gibbs of Albert Lea being selected to preside. Gilbert Gutterson of Blue Earth county was chosen secretary, and Chris Ellingson of Hennepin county assistant secretary. Governor Nelson had scored by having two of his countrymen in a position to count the votes, which, at times, determines the result.

The roll call showed 141 present at the caucus out of a possible 142, and the first question which agitated the body was to determine whether 72, a majority of all the Republicans in the legislature, should nominate, or whether 71, a majority of all those present, should be allowed to nominate. It was finally decided that the successful man must have 72 votes. Senator Wyman of Minneapolis nominated Mr. Washburn, and Senator E. T. Young of Appleton, Swift county, nominated Mr. Nelson. Mr. Douglas of Moorhead nominated S. G. Comstock of that city, and Mr. Lockwood nominated Congressman McCleary. Those were all the entries in the race. Six ballots were taken that night, without nominating anybody, but they settled the question that Senator Washburn was defeated. The ballots were as follows :

	1st.	2nd.	3rd.	4th.	5th.	6th.
Washburn.....	61	59	60	60	57	55
Nelson.....	45	55	57	58	58	60
Comstock.....	14	10	9	10	14	14
McCleary.....	11	11	10	11	9	8
Scattering.....	7	6	5	2	3	3

It is notable that Washburn polled his entire strength the first ballot; then he lost two, regained his loss, then lost three, and closed up the last ballot with six

votes less than he began with. Nelson, on the other hand, gained 10 on the second ballot, two more on the third, and still one more on the fourth, and closed on the sixth ballot with 15 more than he began with. The handwriting was on the wall large enough for a bill-board. The Nelson men were anxious to continue the caucus, but Washburn's friends were strong enough to secure an adjournment after the sixth ballot. They had something to think about. The caucus did not adjourn to any fixed time, and for the next two or three days almost the entire talk of the city was, will there be another caucus? The Nelson men were anxious for another caucus, but the Washburn men were not, and Nelson and his friends did not press the caucus matter, but went into the open legislature to finish the contest. When the first vote was taken in the legislature Nelson had 27 in the senate and 75 in the house — a total of 102, 98 of whom were Republicans. Four Democrats had also voted for Nelson, notably among them being Hon. P. H. Kelly of St. Paul. Washburn had 16 in the senate and 20 in the house, a total of 36; Comstock 3 in the senate and 6 in the house, a total of 9; McCleary had 2 in the house and none in the senate; Lind had 1 in the senate and none in the house; Donnelly had 5 in the senate and 8 in the house, a total of 13. Judge William Mitchell received 2 in the senate and 2 in the house, a total of 4. There was 1 absentee.

There was the usual joy and jubilation of the victors, though it was not as pronounced as it sometimes is, because the result was not reached in a caucus, and there is a trifle more restraint in the open legislature than there is in the caucus. Still, everybody seemed to be happy except the Minneapolis newspapers. They raved violently for a day or two; but as it is useless to tear your hair after the other fellow has taken your scalp, their agony was not long prolonged, and the state settled down to the view that Governor Nelson was thoroughly competent to take care of our public interests at Washington — a statement which his career there has more than verified, as he has now become one of the leading senators of the country.

## Appendix 2

### The Elections of Knute Nelson

#### State Senate.

Nelson was elected to the Minnesota Senate on November 3, 1874, defeating a fellow Republican who had the party's endorsement. The results were:

Knute Nelson (Republican with- out party nomination).....	1,287
F. B. Von Hoesen (Republican).....	906 <sup>10</sup>

#### U. S. Congress.

Nelson won three successive elections to represent the Fifth Congressional District in the mid-1880s. The results were: <sup>11</sup>

##### November 7, 1882:

Knute Nelson (Republican).....	16,956
Charles F. Kindred (Republican with- out party nomination).....	12,238
Edward F. Barnum (Democrat).....	6,248

##### November 4, 1884:

Knute Nelson (Republican).....	25,609
Luther L. Baxter (Democrat).....	13,176
Scattered.....	61

##### November 2, 1886:

Knute Nelson (Republican).....	43,937
J. Henry Long (Democrat).....	1,239
Scattered.....	111

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<sup>10</sup> Gieske & Keillor, note 5, at 358-59 n.39.

<sup>11</sup> Bruce M. White, et al, *Minnesota Votes 76-78* (Minn. Hist. Soc. Press., 1977).

## **Governor.**

The results of Nelson’s first election as governor on November 8, 1892, were:

Knute Nelson (Republican).....	109,220
Daniel W. Lawler (Democrat).....	94,600
Ignatius Donnelly (People’s).....	39,863
William J. Dean (Prohibition).....	12,239 <sup>12</sup>

The results of the gubernatorial election on November 6, 1894, were:

Knute Nelson (Republican).....	147,943
George L. Becker (Democrat).....	53,584
Sidney M. Owen (People’s).....	87,890
Hans S. Hilleboe (Prohibition).....	6,832 <sup>13</sup>

## **U. S. Senate.**

Nelson was elected United States Senator by the state legislature in 1895, 1901, and 1907. The Seventeenth Amendment, ratified on April 8, 1913, required that “The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, elected by the people thereof...” It applied to all future elections of Senators. However, in 1911, the Minnesota legislature passed a law requiring popular election of U. S. Senators.<sup>14</sup> The first section provided: “At all general primary elections next preceding the election of a senator in congress by the legislature of this state” the secretary of state shall place the names of all candidates for senator “on the official primary ballots.” Section 9 provided:

At each general election referred to in this act the votes for the nomination for senator in congress in this state shall be canvassed by the state canvassing board in the same manner as the votes for state officers, and the candidate for senator in congress receiving the greater number of votes shall be declared to be the choice of the people of Minnesota for senator in congress from this state for the next vacancy in said office to be filled; and a certificate to that

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<sup>12</sup> 1893 Blue Book, at 462-63.

<sup>13</sup> 1895 Blue Book, at 462-63.

<sup>14</sup> 1911 Laws, ch. 388, at 572-75 (effective April 21, 1911).

effect shall be delivered by the secretary of state to the said candidate and to the presiding officer of each house of the ensuing legislature when that body shall be organized.

As a consequence, Nelson was required to win a popular election in 1912 to serve a fourth term. He won the Republican primary on September 17, 1912:

Knute Nelson.....88,145  
James A. Peterson.....63,431

In the general election on November 5, 1912, he swamped Daniel Lawler, a St. Paul lawyer whom he defeated in the gubernatorial race twenty years earlier:

Knute Nelson (Republican).....173,074  
Daniel W. Lawler (Democrat).....102,691 <sup>15</sup>

Running for a fifth term, he easily won the Republican primary on June 17, 1918:

Knute Nelson.....229,923  
James A. Peterson.....89,464

The general election on November 5, 1918, his last, was another landslide:

Knute Nelson (Republican).....206,428  
Willis G. Calderwood (Democrat).....137,334 <sup>16</sup>

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Posted MLHP: January 16, 2016.

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<sup>15</sup> 1913 Blue Book, at 342-43, 502-3.

<sup>16</sup> 1919 Blue Book, at 250-52, 514-668 (the results of the general election are also found in Grieske & Keiller, note 5, at 317.