

IN MEMORIAM

JOHN LIND

March 24, 1854 • September 18, 1930



**Minneapolis Bar Association
Minneapolis, Minnesota
April 10, 1931**

*Memorial to a Meeting of the Minneapolis
Bar Association by W. Helander*
JOHN LIND
[1937]

Of the 1,100,000 Swedish immigrants since about 1840 when the Swedish immigration commenced, I think the career of none in this country has been so interesting as that of John Lind. I would say the career of none of them has been so distinguished if it were not that people differ greatly about what constitutes distinction.

Outwardly most in Mr. Lind's career was common enough. His coming as a boy of 14 with his parents to Goodhue County, where the family made their way as poor newcomers 3 or 4 years and where the boy received a little of what a country school could give in those days; that the family then moved out to Sibley County, where the father took land and where the boy had a little more of country schooling; that he then took up teaching school himself, in those days the first step towards the bar, and studied law in an office at New Ulm and was admitted to the bar in 1876 – all this was only common at that time in the careers of young men, whether native or foreign-born.

It was somewhat out of the ordinary that when Mr. Lind had practiced at New Ulm for 3 to 4 years he was appointed receiver of the United States land office at Tracy, not that there was any distinction about it, for those land offices were usually held by politicians of meager attainments, but in Mr. Lind's case his four years in that office (1881–85) made him, I think, the best posted man on our public land laws outside the office of the Secretary of the Interior.

Within two years after quitting the land office Mr. Lind was sent to Congress from the Second District three consecutive terms

(1887–93). We have seen too many men of ordinary ability in the House of Representatives to warrant saying that this was any notable distinction.

Mr. Lind did not seek the nomination for a fourth term, but resumed practicing law at New Ulm. The reason was probably that he now had come in conflict with his party on the currency question. He became classed as a Silver Republican, and apparently then gave up all political ambition. But in 1896, when the currency question became more acute, the Democrats nominated him for governor, and he accepted the nomination. Being defeated by a small margin, they nominated him again in 1898, and this time he was elected by a liberal majority, and held the office one term (1899–1901).

Both in this and other states we have seen too many governors of ordinary ability to class the election of one in Minnesota as of itself a special distinction, but being elected as a Democrat in a state overwhelmingly Republican, and after he had broken with his Republican friends of many years, certainly made that part of his career unusually interesting.

That the Republican who defeated Mr. Lind for the governorship in 1900 appointed him chairman of the Board of Regents of the University is highly interesting, for it shows his high standing in the State at that time. The offer itself may not be classed as one of much distinction.

Upon leaving the governor's office in January, 1901, Mr. Lind moved from New Ulm to Minneapolis to live and practice law. That in the fall of the following year, when he was barely become a resident of Minneapolis, and now an avowed Democrat, he should be elected to a fourth term in Congress from this overwhelmingly Republican Fifth District against so strong and popular Republican

as the late Lauren Fletcher, certainly shows that here Mr. Lind was considered to be more than an ordinary politician.

After finishing that term Mr. Lind's law practice remained uninterrupted until August, 1913, when he was sent as President Wilson's personal representative to Mexico to untangle the difficulties with Huerta, and incidentally between Huerta and Carranza. That mission lasted nearly a year, and terminated a law partnership in Minneapolis which had lasted fourteen years. From what we later learned about Huerta and Carranza, we could see that the mission to Mexico was bound to fail, as it did, no matter how skillfully conducted. It was at the time when Huerta was saying that he had only two American friends left – O'Shaughnessy and Hennesey. His persistent friendship with Hennesey may have made Mr. Lind's mission more difficult than it otherwise would have been.

In his public career this mission to Mexico was one of true distinction, for it cannot be ignored in the diplomatic history of our country, with Lind's name in it after most of us who knew him shall long have been dead and forgotten.

With nearly all the events in Mr. Lind's career outwardly undistinguished, why do I say it was more interesting than that of any of the other 1,100,000 Swedish immigrants? I do so because behind it all was an outstanding personality – outstanding in brilliancy of mind, in dominant will, in honesty of purpose, in emotional sympathy for common people, and in manner so genial and charming is to make those with whom he came in contact his personal friends.

That emotion was an element of weakness as well as strength. When the currency question came up, Mr. Lind thought the gold standard had a tendency to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. He was mistaken, because it was and is to the best

interest of rich and poor alike to have as standard what varies the least possible, and that is gold, not silver. But his emotional sympathies overcame his judgment and made him first a Silver Republican and afterwards a Bryan Democrat. What I call his emotional sympathy cannot fail to appeal to us even though we think it was in conflict with wise statesmanship and sound economic law.

This emotional nature had much to do in making Mr. Lind an impressive, though perhaps not polished speaker. Cicero says an orator is a great man who can talk. I shall attempt to show how impressive Mr. Lind could be by describing one of his speeches, as described to me by several who heard it and compared it to other noted speeches they had heard, such as Bryan's on the Cross of Gold at the at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1896.

It was while Mr. Lind was governor. Leading Democrats in the State had arranged a dinner at one of our Minneapolis hotels and invited Lind and Bryan to speak. Lind told how as "a political orphan" in the governor's chair, he had been thwarted in most he had tried to do, and spoke of it with a feeling which made his whole body vibrate as if charged by an electric battery, and with a voice trembling with emotion. The effect upon the listeners (said my informers) made their bodies also vibrate and for time made them oblivious to all their surroundings. Bryan's speech in Chicago (they told me) had no such effect upon them, and as to Bryan's speech that same evening, they said that compared to Lind's it was tame and commonplace. Had Cicero been present he would probably have said that here was a real orator.

With Mr. Lind's law practice at New Ulm, so much broken up by public duties, it was inevitable that he should not become as conspicuous as a lawyer as he otherwise would have been, and

yet it is not overstating it to say that he came to be recognized as one of the strongest, and perhaps the very strongest lawyer in the southwestern part of the State. After he came to Minneapolis, his practice was also interfered with too much by public duties to make him rank here as a leader of this bar. This was in part because he brought many of his country-lawyer habits with him into Minneapolis. One coming into his office would find him sitting at a big table on which was heaped a pile of papers about one foot high, and in it he would see many letters which had never been opened. Mr. Lind seemed to know instinctively whether they are worth opening, for I never found any checks or money orders going into the pile. When he had to take up a case or other matter he seemed to have no difficulty in finding the papers he wanted from that mass on the table; he would find them, work fast and with great energy, but he could not stand the drudgery in the office and therefore when he was through with the matter in hand he would go to that nice farm of his at Lake Minnewashta, or make some other excursion into the country. This did not help to make his law practice so remunerative as it otherwise might have been, yet his income after he came to Minneapolis was by no means contemptible, but sufficient for all his needs, even for enough more so that with some income from small investments he felt perfectly free of all pecuniary cares.

What a rich life that was compared to that of the pedantic practitioner who never leaves his office! When I say a rich life I include what he learned outside of law. A noted botanist once told me in conversation with Mr. Lind he had found an excellent botanist; an expert mineralogist told me he found him a good mineralogist; I found myself he knew much about forestry and that he had read widely in history, and in other literature outside of art, music and belle-letters. How rich a life that must have been from the time when he landed in Red Wing at 14 to the time he

died at in his comfortable and beautiful home on Emerson (sic) Avenue at 76! Time forbids I should say what that life must have been to others than himself, except to note that Sweden made a valuable contribution to the United States, and especially in Minnesota, when her poorest district, Småland, she sent that rustic over here in 1868.

April 10, 1931

A. Ueland

[the eulogist was Andres Ueland, a partner in the Lind, Ueland and Jerome law firm.]

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APPENDIX

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The following profile takes Lind up to his diplomatic mission in Mexico, which was not successful.

**It is from Henry A. Castle, editor,
3 *Minnesota: Its Story and Biography*
Pages 1676-1677 (1915).**

HON. JOHN LIND. While John Lind has been known throughout the State of Minnesota for many years as a prominent lawyer, a member of Congress, fourteenth governor of the state, and in many other important civic relations, it was through his effective service as the personal diplomatic representative of President Wilson in Mexico in 1914 that his name became permanently fixed in national recognition. While at this time it is impossible to estimate or understand the full extent of Mr. Lind's service in the adjustment of the difficulties between the United States and Mexico, there is no question that Mr. Lind performed his exacting and delicate duties in such manner as to win the unqualified approbation of President Wilson and other high officials, and in the history of this international controversy his part will always have a prominent place. Mr. Lind returned to Washington after this important mission on April 13, 1914. Until his services were thus called into the national administration, Mr. Lind had for more than ten years, since leaving state politics, been identified with the practice of law at Minneapolis, and is senior member of the firm of Lind, Ueland and Jerome.

As one of Minnesota's leading public men, the biography of John Lind is not only an interesting story of the rise of a poor boy to eminence but also reflects many important features in the state's politics and civic affairs during the past quarter of a century. John Lind was born in Sweden March 1854, a son of Gustav and Catherine (Johnson) Lind. His father was born April 11, 1826, and died August 11, 1895, and his mother was born April 26, 1831, and reached a ripe old age. She was a woman of unusual intellect, devoted to her church, the Methodist, kept herself thoroughly posted on current affairs and was a good business woman. In the early generations Mr. Lind's forefathers were farmers, freemen

owning the soil which they tilled, and have been identified with their home province in Sweden for many generations. The older men on both sides had always been connected with the administration of communal affairs and as peace officers. They were neither wealthy nor poor, and their record for character was without stain. They were proud of their standing, and resented an insult with a promptitude that commanded respect.

In 1867, incited by the stories of American opportunities, the Lind family emigrated to the United States, and settled in Goodhue County, Minnesota. When the family located there John Lind was thirteen years old. Born in a humble home, with a comparatively limited education, he raised himself by his talent and industry to a controlling position in the affairs of the state. Soon after locating in Minnesota and at the age of thirteen years, he lost his left hand by the accidental exploding of a gun while hunting. This was one of those misfortunes which are often blessings, and turned him from manual labor to intellectual pursuits. He entered the public schools, and at the age of sixteen was given a certificate entitling him to teach. He taught in Goodhue County one year, and then moved to New Ulm. By hard work and study in a local law office and the exercise of close economy he was able to enter the University of Minnesota in 1875. Later he passed the examination for the bar in 1877. Beginning with a limited practice, he eked out his income by serving as superintendent of the schools of Brown County for two years. In 1881 President Garfield appointed him receiver of the United States Land Office at Tracy in Lyon County. In a short time his legal ability began to be recognized, and he won reputation by his success in some important cases against the railroad companies.

For a number of years John Lind was one of the energetic workers in the republican party of Minnesota. In 1886 he was nominated for Congress in the Second District, comprising nearly all Southwestern Minnesota. It was an exciting campaign and Mr. Lind was elected by a majority of nearly ten thousand. In 1888 he was elected over former United States Senator Morton S. Wilkinson by a majority of over nine thousand. By 1890 when Mr.

Lind was nominated for the third time, the alliance party had gained great strength in Minnesota, and he contested the campaign against Gen. James H. Baker, who received the votes of both the democrats and the alliance, and Mr. Lind was elected by a plurality of less than five hundred. Mr. Lind was the only republican in the state in that year elected to Congress. During his six years in Congress Mr. Lind took much interest in Indian affairs, securing the passage of a bill establishing seven Indian schools in different parts of the country, and secured the payment of many long standing claims for Indian depredations to citizens in his district. Another measure was the "Lind Bill," for the reorganization of the Federal courts in Minnesota, as a result of which Federal courts were held at Minneapolis, Mankato, Winona and Fergus Falls as well as in St. Paul, thus saving long journeys and great expense to litigants. Mr. Lind also upheld the integrity and enforcement of the Interstate Commerce Act, had charge in the House of the original bill providing automatic couplings and air brake and similar devices for the protection of human life in railway service. It was due to him that Minneapolis was made a port of entry. He became an acknowledged authority on all questions relating to the public lands. Mr. Lind resisted a tariff on lumber because he believed it hastened depletion of the forests of the United States. He favored free sugar, free material for binding twine, and showed himself progressive in many tariff measures. In 1892 Mr. Lind absolutely refused to become candidate for reelection.

During the early '90s Mr. Lind allied himself with the free silver wing of the republican party, and by his position on that issue he naturally and gradually became identified with the populist movement, and in 1896 accepted the nomination for governor at the hands of the populist and free silver convention, and his nomination was endorsed by the democrats. The popularity of his candidacy was illustrated by the reduction of the republican majority to a little more than three thousand. In 1898 Mr. Lind abandoned his large law practice and offered his services to the United States Government during its war with Spain. He was made quartermaster of the Twelfth Regiment, commanded by

Colonel Bobleter of Uam, and was commissioned with the rank of first lieutenant. Though the regiment did not reach the scene of actual hostilities, Mr. Lind performed important service in keeping the men well equipped and provisioned during their stay in Camp Thomas and Chickamauga National Park. While still in the service of the army, Mr. Lind was nominated in October, 1898, by the people's silver republican and democratic organizations for governor. Though he had formally retired from politics, the call from these different sources was too pressing to decline, and though the time left before election allowed him the opportunity of making only two short speeches, his well known position on the financial question and other reforms, his splendid record in Congress, and his popularity with the Scandinavian people and with the best classes of Americans in the state, gave him a decided majority over all the other candidates, and thus he began his term as the fourteenth governor of the state on January 2, 1899, and served until January, 1901. In 1900 Governor Lind was a candidate for reelection, but was defeated by Samuel R. Van Sant.

In the history of Minnesota state politics the noteworthy fact about Mr. Lind's election to the office of governor was that he was the first candidate to break through the continuous possession of power by the republican party, which had been vigorously maintained in all the important campaigns for forty Years. During his term as governor Lind's views and policies as expressed through his messages were of particular interest as concerned taxation and the regulation of railways and state institutions.

On retiring from the executive office, Governor Lind took up his residence in the City of Minneapolis, where he has since enjoyed one of the, largest clientele given to any lawyer in the state. Though he had no desire for further political preferment, Mr. Lind was nominated and elected on the democratic ticket to Congress from the Fifth Congressional District in 1902, and served during the following term. In 1907 Governor Johnson appointed him a regent of the State University, and he was a member of that body and president of the board until relieved by Governor Eberhart in

February, 1914, at which time he was sent to Mexico by President Wilson. After his return from Mexico in April, 1914, the Navy League of the United States at its annual meeting elected Mr. Lind a director, this honor being paid him in recognition of his interest in the navy and the men in the service during his experience in Mexico.

On September 15, 1879, Mr. Lind married Miss Alice A. Shepard, a daughter of Richard Shepard, of Mankato, who had seen service as a soldier in the Union army. Mrs. Lind was educated at Mankato, and while teaching in Brown County formed acquaintance with John Lind. To their marriage were born the following children: Norman, Jenny, Winifred, and John Shepard.

Mr. Lind in his private and personal character possesses those sterling qualities which entitle a public man to confidence and respect. His life has been one of personal purity, his family ties are such as to enhance the domestic virtues which should govern every true American home, and whatever his relations in the course of his active career he has never deviated from the path of high rectitude and his convictions of right and honor.

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ELECTIONS OF JOHN LIND

Congressional Elections

1886 (2nd District)

John Lind (Republican).....	22,908
A. H. Bullis (Democrat).....	13,260
George J. Day (Prohibition).....	2,114

1888 (2nd District)

John Lind (Republican).....	25,699
Morton S. Wilkinson (Democrat).....	16,480
D. W. Edwards (Prohibition).....	2,924

1890 (2nd District)

John Lind (Republican).....	20,788
James H. Baker (Dem. & Farmers' Alliance).	20,306
Ira B. Reynolds (Prohibition).....	1,146

1902 (5th District)

John Lind (Democrat).....	19,863
Loren Fletcher (Republican).....	17,809
Spencer M. Holman (Socialist).....	215
A. H. Nelson (People's).....	76
George D. Haggard (Prohibition).....	350
Martin Hanson (Socialist Labor).....	421

Gubernatorial Elections

1896 (Governor)

David M. Clough (Republican)	165,906
John Lind (Democrat-People's)	162,254
William J. Dean (Prohibition)	5,154
A. A. Ames (Independent)	2,890
William H. Hammond (Socialist-Labor)	1,125

1898 (Governor)

John Lind (Democrat-People's)	131,980
William H. Eustis (Republican)	111,796
George W. Higgins (Prohibition)	5,299
William H. Hammond (Socialist-Labor)	1,685
Lionel C. Long (Midroad-Populist)	1,802

1900 (Governor)

Samuel R. Van Sant (Republican)	152,905
John Lind (Democrat-People's)	150,651
Bernt B. Haugen (Prohibition)	5,430
Sylvester M. Fairchild (Midroad-Populist)	763
Thomas H. Lucas (Socialist-Democrat)	3,546
Edward Kritz (Socialist-Labor)	896

Sources:

Congressional races: Bruce M. White, et al, *Minnesota Votes* (Minn. Hist. Soc. Press., 1977).

Governor races: 1897, 1899 and 1901 Blue Books.

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AN ALBUM OF PHOTOGRAPHS OF JOHN LIND



**Governor John Lind House in
New Ulm, Minnesota.
It is on the National Register of Historic Homes.
Date of photograph: August 5, 2009.
Source: Bobak Ha'Eri, photographer.
Creative Commons, Wikimedia.**



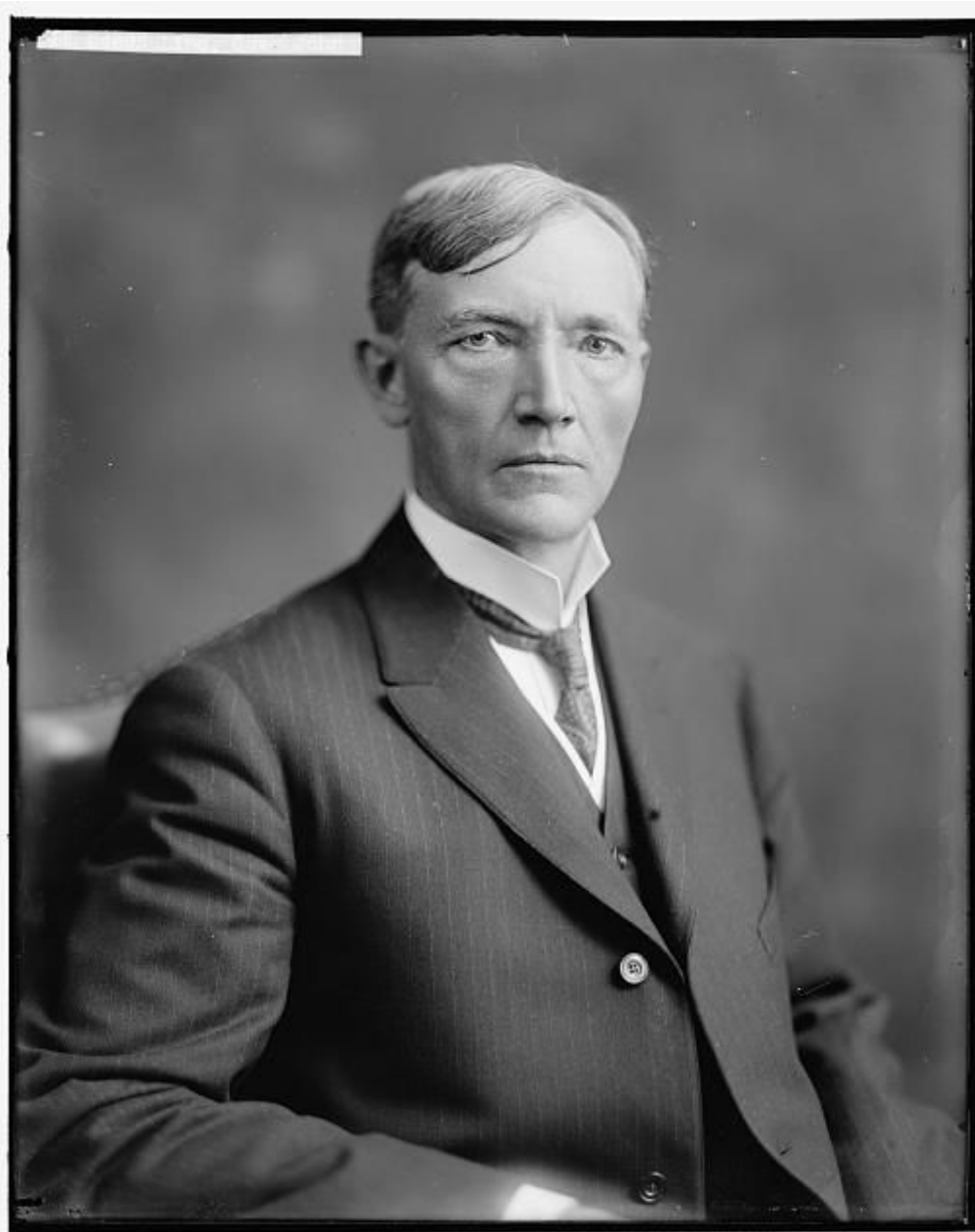
John Lind.
Date of photograph: ca. 1873-1890
(probably taken while in Congress).
Source: C. M. Bell, Library of Congress.



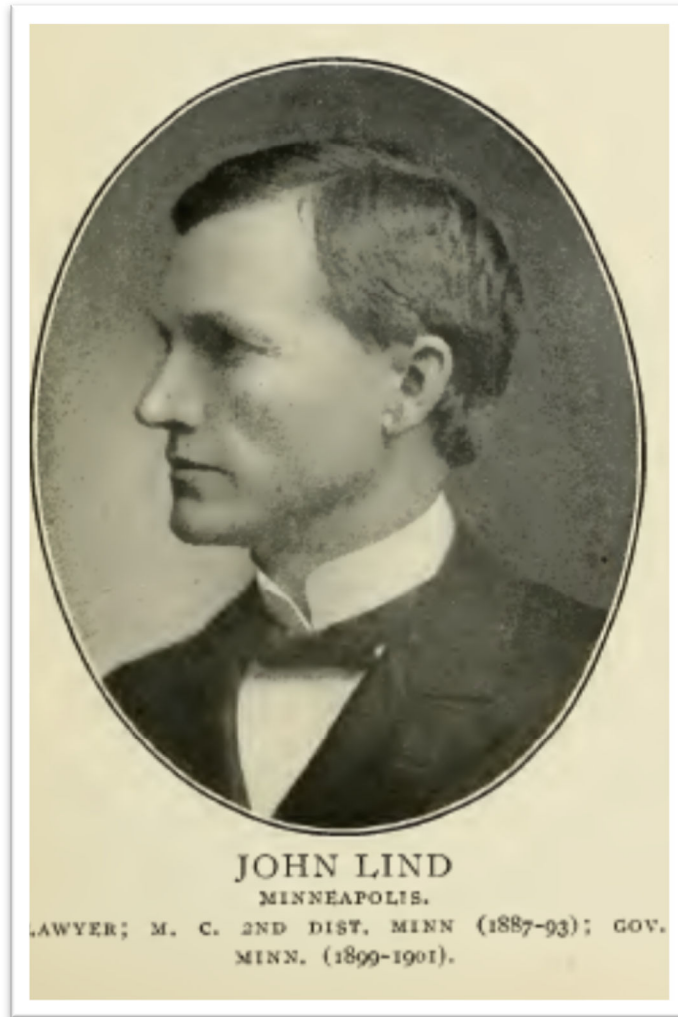
John Lind.
Date of photograph: ca. 1873-1890
(probably taken while in Congress).
Source: C. M. Bell, Library of Congress.



John Lind
Date of photograph: not dated.
Source: University of Minnesota Archives Photograph Collection.
(posted with permission).



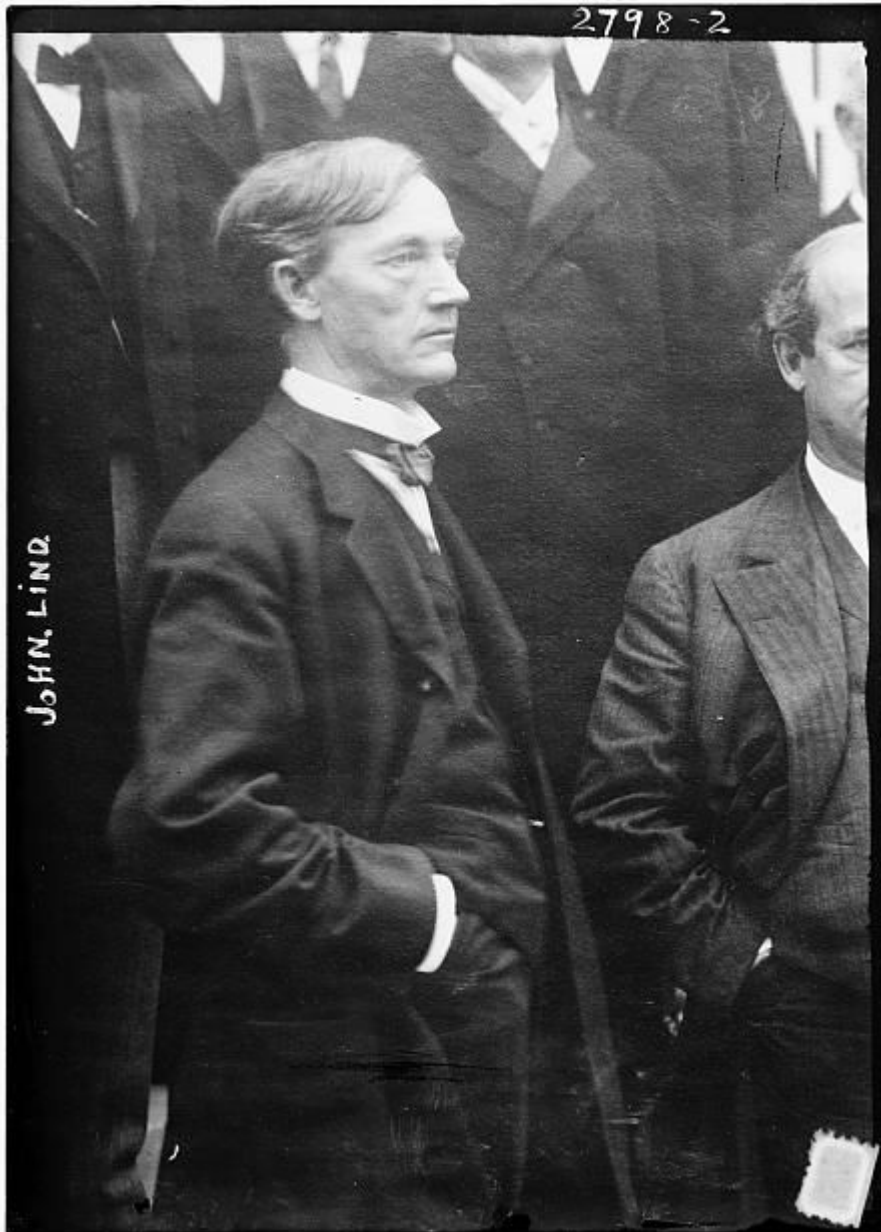
Governor John Lind
Date of photograph: unknown.
Source: Harris & Ewing Collection, Library of Congress.



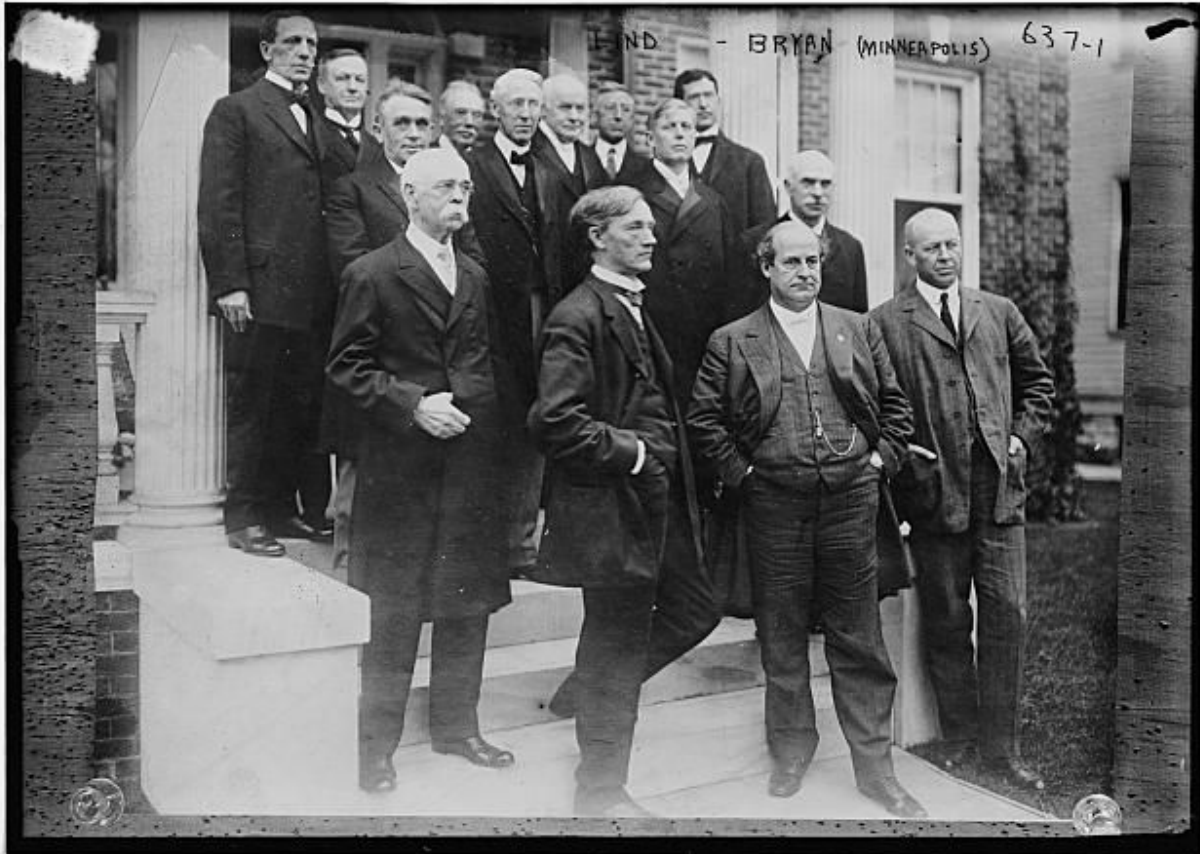
Men of Minnesota (1902).



**Former Governor John Lind.
Testifying at a hearing.
Date of photograph: ca. 1909-1923
Source: Library of Congress.**



**Governor John Lind
in Minneapolis.
Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan is on right.
Date of photograph: August 8, 1913.
Source: Bain News Service, Library of Congress.**



**Governor John Lind, middle, in Minneapolis with
Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan on right.
Date of photograph: ca. August 8, 1913.
Source: Bain News Service, Library of Congress.**



**Former Governor Lind.
Probably in Washington D. C.
Date of photograph: 1914.
Source: Harris & Ewing Collection, Library of Congress.**



**Former Governor Lind.
Probably in Washington D. C. to discuss Mexican diplomatic assignment.
Date of photograph: 1914.
Source: Harris & Ewing Collection, Library of Congress.**



Mrs. John Lind.
Date of photograph: ca. 1910-1915.
Source: Bain News Service, Library of Congress.



**Governor Lind in carriage with Mrs. Lind.
Date of photograph: 1914.
Source: Harris & Ewing Collection, Library of Congress.**



**John Lind's home at
1775 Colfax Avenue South, Minneapolis,
from 1907 to his death in 1930.
Date of photograph: 2017.
Source: © Richard L. Kronick, photographer.
(posted by permission).**

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Related Article

"The Lind Libel Case" (1897) (MLHP, 2021).

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