



New Hampshire's Historic Ballot Boxes

First used in the State
Election of 1892





New Hampshire's Historic Ballot Boxes

Issued for use in the state's first election using the 'secret ballot'
in the November 8, 1892 Presidential Election

During the January 1891 session, the New Hampshire legislature passed an act requiring the use of secret ballots, also known as "Australian" ballots, because they were first used in that country, "To enforce the secrecy of the ballot," the law said.

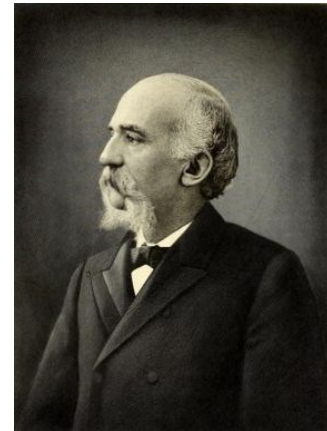
The Secretary of State among other things was to prepare and print all ballots at public expense, and "provide every city and town with a ballot-box for use at each polling place."

Thus ended the practice of political parties and candidates printing and distributing ballots of their own design to citizens, who in turn cast these "tickets" or ballots openly at polling places, for anyone to observe.

Because anyone could see how a person voted, including candidates, their supporters, political bosses and other interested partisans, this system fostered such corrupt activities as vote-buying, ballot counterfeiting and outright intimidation.

Because the law also required guard rails, and "marking shelves or private compartments" (i.e., voting booths) at each polling site, this was the first time New Hampshire citizens statewide were assured a way to cast their ballots in complete secrecy.

Ballot boxes were therefore ordered constructed and delivered by Secretary of State Ezra Stearns of Rindge to the then 272 voting places in New Hampshire in time for use in the November 8, 1892 presidential election. These boxes were each constructed to include a counting device with a hand-crank and a bell to signal each ballot cast.



Ezra S. Stearns
NH Secretary of State 1891-1899

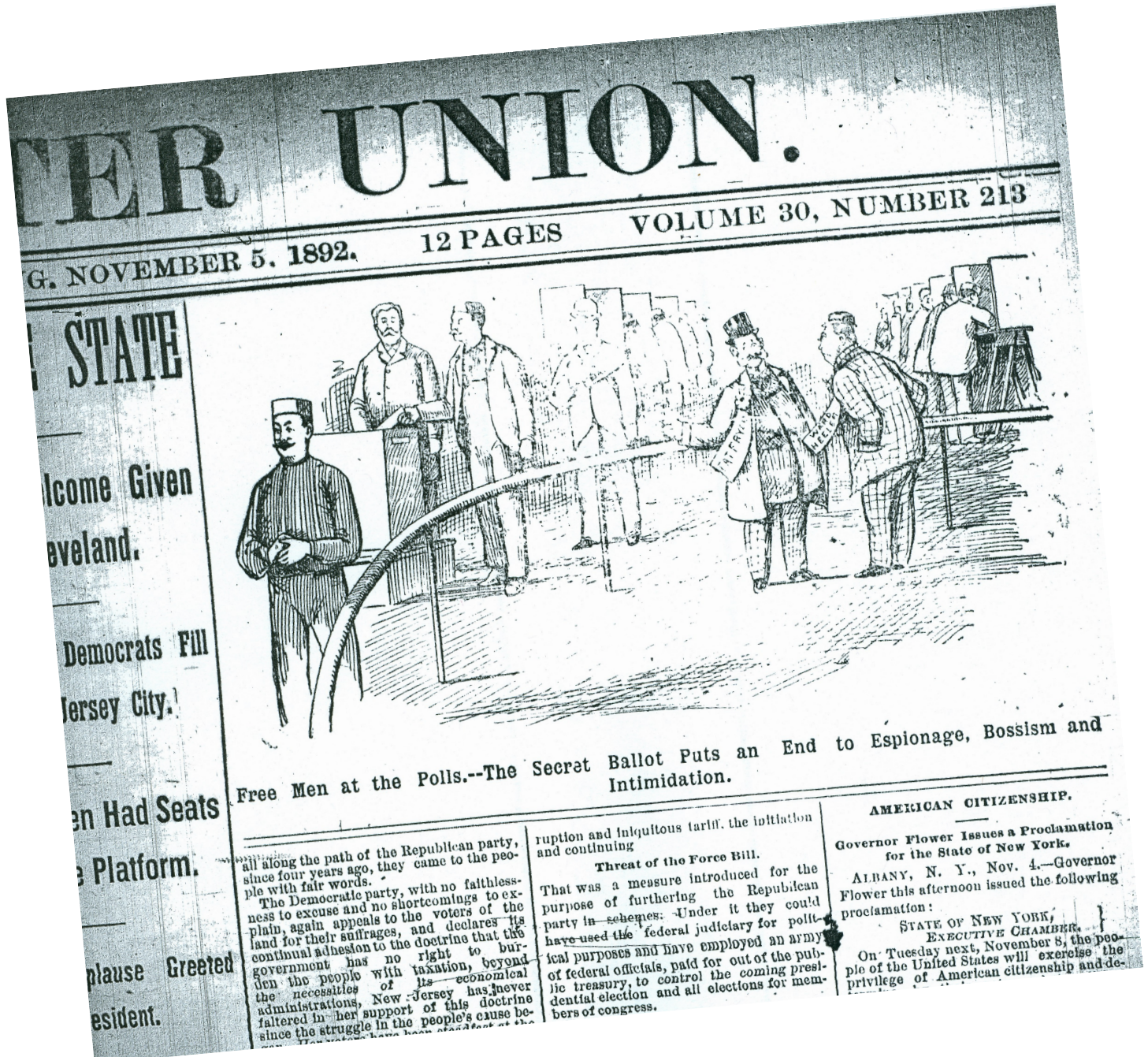


Many of these historic ballot boxes are still in use today in many communities throughout New Hampshire, some have been in service in every election since 1892, several with their internal mechanism in full working order. Other communities put them in service for special elections, voting at town meetings, or have placed them on display in town halls, community buildings or local historical societies.

William M. Gardner
NH Secretary of State



“The Secret Ballot Puts an End to Espionage, Bossism, and Intimidation”



1892 Election Day reporting in Manchester

“The first election in this city by the Australian ballot system is in progress...A visit made to the different polling places showed that the citizens were taking hold of the new system of voting with a good deal of zeal and intelligence...”

“The polling was fair up to noon (in Ward 2 -ed.) and after that increased in intensity...The new system is giving good satisfaction generally, but the patent self-registering, crank-turning, bell ringing ballot box fills up too frequently and has to be opened and the pile of folders inside pressed down.” — *Early edition, Manchester Union, November 8, 1892,*



Views of The Eaton, NH, Town Ballot Box used in all elections since 1892 to present day





The Eaton, NH, Town Ballot Box — Continued Showing Internal Counter and Rollers



Ballots are inserted at the top, where they meet a counting cylinder, which activates a bell as the moderator turns the crank. After the count reaches 999, it resets to 1.





The Eaton, NH, Town Ballot Box — Continued





South Hampton, NH, Ballot Box



South Hampton has used their ballot box in every election since 1892, although the fragile internal mechanism is not. Shown is Town Clerk Andrea Condon, left, and Deputy Clerk Angela Racine.





Windsor, New Hampshire Ballot Box

Used in all elections from 1892 to present day.





Election Day at the Windsor, N.H. Town Hall 100th New Hampshire Presidential Primary



Top: Windsor Town Moderator Patrick Hines, Secretary of State Bill Gardner, and *Los Angeles Times* Reporter Mike Memoli examine the town's antique ballot box, used in every election here since 1892. Right: Curtis Hines, 23, votes as his father cranks the ballot through the counter.





Brookfield, Canterbury, Chichester, NH, Ballot Boxes



The Chichester 1892 town ballot box as it is today with its original counting device removed, and the top replaced with a simple slot to insert ballots. Pictured is Town Clerk Evelyn Pike, who has served Chichester in that capacity for over thirty years. The box is used at town meeting elections.



Wayne Mann of Canterbury's Grand View Farm, has researched the history of the state's 1892 vintage ballot boxes, and had completed 20 years as town moderator by the 2016 New Hampshire First-in-the Nation Primary.



Brookfield Town Clerk Virginia McGinley



L A W S
OF THE
STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

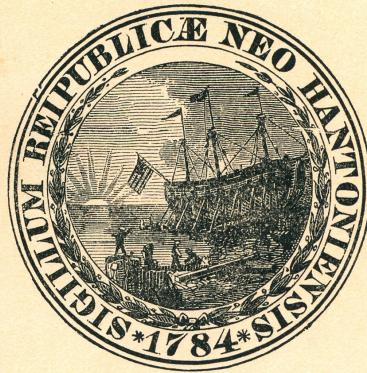
PASSED JANUARY SESSION, 1891.

Legislature Convened January 7, Adjourned April 11, 1891.

WITH AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING THE

LAWS PASSED AT A SPECIAL SESSION, DECEMBER, 1890.



MANCHESTER, N. H.:
JOHN B. CLARKE, PUBLIC PRINTER.
1891.



“Secretary to provide ballot boxes; boxes approved; description of box; kept safely and in good repair.”

marking sheet or compartments shall be kept provided with proper supplies and conveniences for marking the ballots.

SECT. 19. The secretary of state shall provide every city and town with a ballot-box for use at each polling place. Said boxes shall be approved by the secretary, treasurer, and attorney-general of the state, or by a majority of them; shall have sufficient and secure locks and keys, and shall be provided with a bell and mechanical devices for receiving, registering, and canceling every ballot deposited therein; but no such box shall record any number or mark upon any ballot by which said ballots can be distinguished from each other. Said ballot-boxes shall be purchased by the secretary, and shall be paid for out of the treasury of the state. The city and town clerks shall have the care and custody thereof, and shall keep them in good order and repair; and if any of them are lost, stolen, or irreparably damaged, they shall, at the expense of the city or town, as the case may be, replace the same by similar ballot-boxes approved in the manner aforesaid.

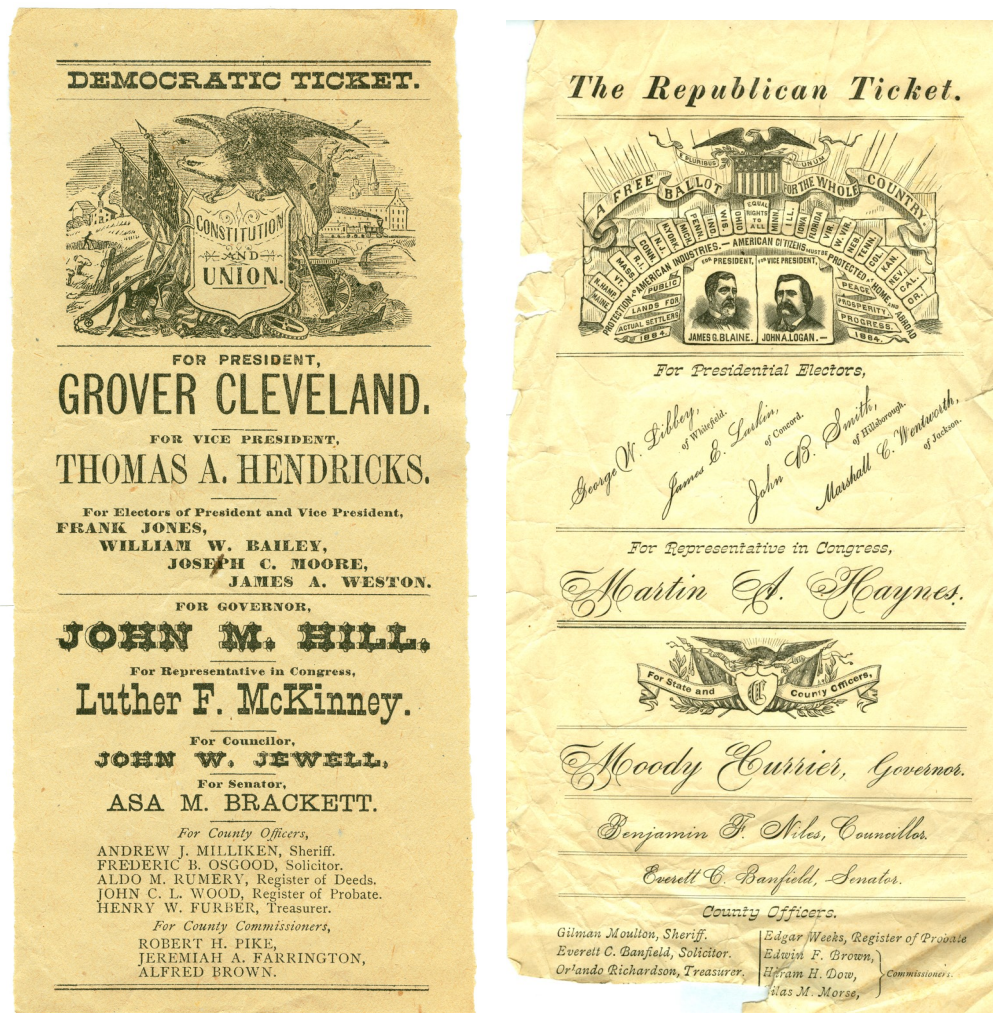
Secretary to provide ballot-boxes; boxes approved; description of box; kept safely and in good repair.

SECT. 20. City and town clerks shall deliver to the moderator of each polling place, before the opening of the polls on the day of any election under this act, the aforesaid ballot-box. At the opening of the polls, and before any ballots are received, the ballot-box shall be publicly opened and shown to be empty, and the election officers shall, by personal examination, ascertain that the same is empty, after which the box shall be immediately locked by the moderator, and a record of the condition of the box register shall be made by the clerk. The moderator shall have charge of the ballot-box and the key to the lock thereof and he shall not suffer the box to be removed from the public view after it is so shown to be empty until all ballots have been removed therefrom and the box has been relocked. No ballot-box shall be opened until the polls are closed, and a record of the condition of the box is made by the clerk, except that in case the mechanism of the box fails to convey any ballot into the box the moderator may, in the presence of all election officers, open the box and pack and press down the ballots therein, or repair the mechanism of the ballot-box. The moderator shall, at the close of each election, return the ballot-box to the city or town clerk.

Boxes furnished to moderator before polls are opened; examined at opening of polls; record of condition made; box and key in charge of moderator; locked while polls are open; when box may be opened; return of box to clerk.



Examples of New Hampshire Election “Tickets” Prior to the 1892 State Election and the “Secret Ballot”



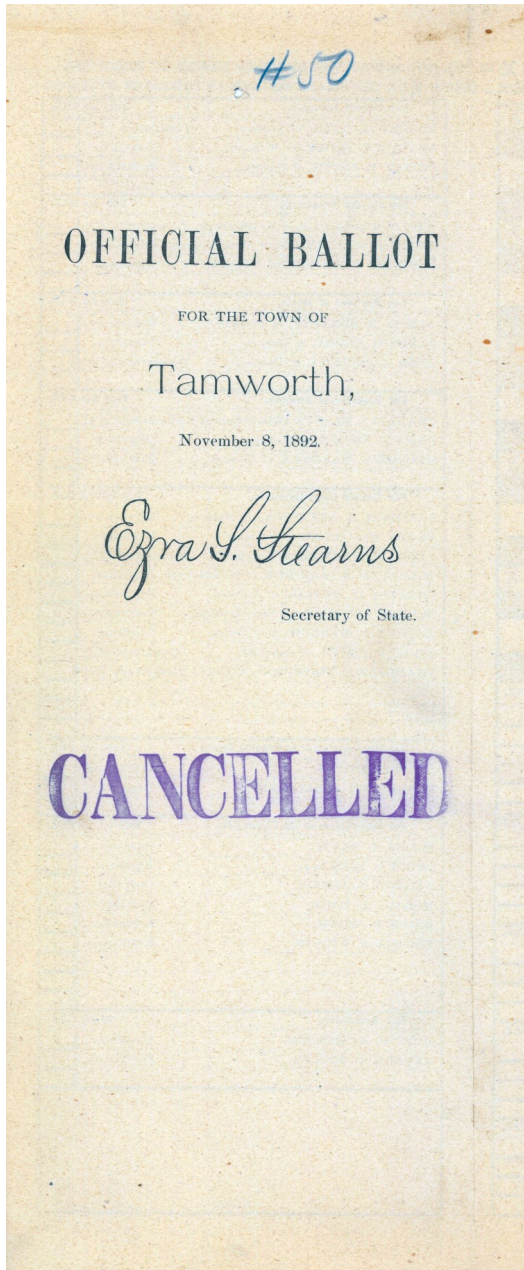
When New Hampshire voters went to the polls prior to 1892, they were required to publicly cast their votes with tickets such as these, printed by the political parties. These examples were produced for use in Carroll County for the state election of November 4, 1884. The Democrat ticket is at left, the Republican at right. Democrat Grover Cleveland won his first term in the White House in this election, although New Hampshire went for Republican James G. Blaine. Besides listing the presidential candidates and their Electoral College electors by name, the tickets list candidates for governor, congress, executive councilor, and state senator, as well as county officers.

Four years later, although narrowly winning the popular vote, Cleveland lost a second term in the Electoral College to Benjamin Harrison in one of the most contentious presidential contests in history. This result helped further spur election reform across the country, including New Hampshire, which involved production of ballots and ballot boxes provided by the secretary of state and cast by the people in the privacy of voting booths.

Ironically, these reforms were in place in time for Cleveland to win back the presidency from Harrison in 1892, to be the first and only president to win two non-consecutive terms in the White House. The ballot for that election from the Town of Tamworth, where Cleveland would later have a summer home, appears on the next page.



Tamworth town ballot issued by the New Hampshire Secretary of State for the November 8, 1892 statewide election



TO VOTE FOR FOUR ELECTORS MARK ONE CROSS **X** IN THE SQUARE AT THE RIGHT OF NAMES OF ELECTORS.
TO VOTE FOR GOVERNOR OR OTHER CANDIDATE MARK A CROSS **X** IN THE SMALL SQUARE AT THE RIGHT OF NAME.

ELECTORS OF PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Harrison and Reid Electors.		Vote for four with ONE X
AUGUSTUS A. WOOLSON, of Lisbon,	REPUBLICAN.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
GEORGE W. ABBOTT, of Concord,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>
JOSEPH A. WALKER, of Portsmouth,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>
ABRAHAM P. OLZENDAM, of Manchester,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Cleveland and Stevenson Electors.		Vote for four with ONE X
MARCELLUS ELDREDGE, of Portsmouth,	DEMOCRAT.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
JOHN M. MITCHELL, of Concord,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>
CYRUS SARGEANT, of Plymouth,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>
JOHN DOWST, of Manchester,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Weaver and Field Electors.		Vote for four with ONE X
GEORGE CARPENTER, of Swanzy,	PEOPLE'S.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
REMLY S. SIDELINGER, of Gorham,	PEOPLE'S.	<input type="checkbox"/>
CHARLES FRED BLANCHARD, of Concord,	PEOPLE'S.	<input type="checkbox"/>
SUMNER F. CLAFLIN, of Manchester,	PEOPLE'S.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Bidwell and Cranfill Electors.		Vote for four with ONE X
LARKIN D. MASON, of Tamworth,	PROHIBITION.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
FRANK J. BROWN, of Laconia,	PROHIBITION.	<input type="checkbox"/>
GEORGE W. BARNARD, of Claremont,	PROHIBITION.	<input type="checkbox"/>
EBENEZER FERREN, of Manchester,	PROHIBITION.	<input type="checkbox"/>

		Vote for four with ONE X
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>

For Governor.		Vote for ONE.
EDGAR L. CARR, of Pittsfield,	PROHIBITION.	<input type="checkbox"/>
LUTHER F. McKINNEY, of Manchester,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>
WILLIAM O. NOYES, of Derry,	PEOPLE'S.	<input type="checkbox"/>
JOHN B. SMITH, of Hillsborough,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>

For Representative in Congress.		Vote for ONE.
HENRY W. BLAIR, of Manchester,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>
GEORGE D. DODGE, of Hampton Falls,	PROHIBITION.	<input type="checkbox"/>
CHARLES F. STONE, of Laconia,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>
JOSIAH A. WHITTIER, of Deerfield,	PEOPLE'S.	<input type="checkbox"/>

For Councilor.		Vote for ONE.
LOREN J. AUSTIN, of Littleton,	PROHIBITION.	<input type="checkbox"/>
STEPHEN EATON, of Franconia,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>
HERBERT B. MOULTON, of Lisbon,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>

For Senator.		Vote for ONE.
RANDALL M. ERVING, of Bartlett,	PROHIBITION.	<input type="checkbox"/>
FRANK K. HOBBS, of Ossipee,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>
FRANKLIN W. RUSSELL, of Conway,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>

For Sheriff.		Vote for ONE.
GEORGE S. HOYT, of Sandwich,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>
HERBERT E. MOULTON, of Sandwich,	PROHIBITION.	<input type="checkbox"/>
ARTHUR E. WIGGIN, of Tamworth,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>

For County Solicitor.		Vote for ONE.
ROBERT H. DAVIS, of Conway,	PROHIBITION.	<input type="checkbox"/>
ARTHUR L. FOOT, of Wakefield,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>
SIDNEY B. SMITH, of Ossipee,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>

For County Treasurer.		Vote for ONE.
WILLIAM B. HODGE, of Wolfeborough,	PROHIBITION.	<input type="checkbox"/>
CHARLES H. JOHNSON, of Wolfeborough,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>
HERBERT E. ROGERS, of Wakefield,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>

For Register of Deeds.		Vote for ONE.
ALMON R. BENNETT, of Freedom,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>
JAMES O. GERRY, of Ossipee,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>
JOHN A. NICHOLS, of Ossipee,	PROHIBITION.	<input type="checkbox"/>

For Register of Probate.		Vote for ONE.
CHARLES E. BLANCHARD, of Sandwich,	PROHIBITION.	<input type="checkbox"/>
DANA J. BROWN, of Ossipee,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>
GEORGE V. EASTMAN, of Conway,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>

For County Commissioners.		Vote for THREE.
LANGDON M. ATKINSON, of Madison,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>
HENRY B. COTTON, of Conway,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>
ALBRA P. HANSON, of Wakefield,	PROHIBITION.	<input type="checkbox"/>
WILLIAM O. S. HODGDON, of Wolfeborough,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>
CHARLES H. HURLIN, of Jackson,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>
ROBERT LAMPREY, of Tuftonborough,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>
ARTHUR P. MERROW, of Freedom,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>
ISAAC D. SMITH, of Sandwich,	PROHIBITION.	<input type="checkbox"/>
THADDEUS E. THOMPSON, of Eaton,	PROHIBITION.	<input type="checkbox"/>

For Representative to General Court.		Vote for ONE.
WYATT BRYANT,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>
FERDINAND A. HUCKINS,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>

For Supervisors of the Check List.		Vote for THREE.
HIRAM T. DAVIS,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>
ORRIN S. KIMBALL,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>
GEORGE H. MOODY,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>
HORACE A. PAGE,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>
ROLFE L. SMITH,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>
THOMAS S. WIGGIN,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>

For Moderator.		Vote for ONE.
JOHN H. NICKERSON,	DEMOCRAT.	<input type="checkbox"/>
ARTHUR E. WIGGIN,	REPUBLICAN.	<input type="checkbox"/>

An example of the official state ballot issued by the Secretary of State after the “secret ballot law” was adopted in 1891 to “regulate elections, enforce the secrecy of the ballot, and provide for the printing and distribution of ballots at public expense.” This was issued for the Town of Tamworth for the **November 8, 1892** state election, the first under the new law. It includes electors for president and vice president, Republicans **Benjamin Harrison** and **Whitelaw Reid**, and Democrats **Grover Cleveland** and **Adlai E. Stevenson I**. Because the Republican electors won the popular vote, the state’s four electoral votes were cast for Harrison and Reid. Cleveland later had a summer home in Tamworth.



A Footnote

President Grover Cleveland and New Hampshire



George Cleveland, the grandson of the 22nd and 24th President, Grover Cleveland, pictured during a visit to the State House in October, 2015. Cleveland served nearly 30 years as Tamworth town moderator, which still uses its original 1892 wooden ballot box issued by the secretary of state. "I wish I'd known all the times I had fondled that box while receiving ballots, that one of the first votes that went into that box was for my grandfather," Cleveland quipped. He is a voice actor and interpreter of history, and the long-time director of the Gibson Senior Center in North Conway.

In 1904, the former president had established a summer home in Tamworth after leaving office, with members of the Cleveland family remaining, including another grandson, the late Francis Cleveland, founder of the Barnstormers summer theater in Tamworth.

Grover Cleveland and wife Frances Folsom, whom he married in the White House when she was 21, had three daughters and two sons. George's father, Richard Folsom Cleveland, was the oldest son, born October 29, 1897, eight months after Cleveland's term ended. George was born in 1952 when his father was in his late 50s.



A family photograph of George Cleveland's father, Richard, at about age six or seven, fishing with the late president on Lake Ossipee. President Cleveland died at the family residence in Princeton, N.J. on June 24, 1908, while his children were at the Tamworth summer home.



Over 80 of the original ballot Boxes issued by the Secretary of State in 1892 are still in use in one form or another in New Hampshire Communities

