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Article Summary: During his state career Thayer moved steadily toward the left wing of the Republican Party. He made an effort to curtail great corporations. He supported the University of Nebraska and the expansion of education throughout the state.

Additional sections of Curtis's biography of Thayer appeared in other issues of *Nebraska History*:

for Sections I-II see <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1947JMThayerI.pdf>

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John Milton Thayer (V-VII)

By Earl G. Curtis

V

Governor of Nebraska, 1887-89

JUST when Mr. Thayer began thinking himself as a candidate for the governorship of the state of Nebraska would be a question unworthy of conjecture. On the other hand, to say that the Nebraska G. A. R. was thinking of that very thing, at the time of his election as Department Commander in February of 1886, would hardly be classed as a surmise.

The *Nebraska State Journal* was of the opinion that Thayer was the best and only man it could select who would bring the Nebraska G. A. R. up to the standard of other states.¹

The fact that the ex-senator was elected by acclamation is evidence of his popularity. The *Journal* of the same date continues: "General Thayer, on accepting the office of Department Commander, delivered an address such as he alone can make, full of fraternity, charity, and loyalty, and sat down amid almost deafening applause."

In May, Thayer had occasion to remark that the G. A. R. was a continuation of the tie that bound the soldiers together during the war, and to criticize Jefferson Davis (Davis had recently been loudly praised for one of his speeches on forgetting the war) by saying that some things could be forgiven but not forgotten. One sees, in such a remark, an attempt to hold the Union soldier within the Republican Party. The "Union Party" spirit was in its last stages of prominence within the Republican Party, but it still retained enough strength to warrant attention.²

¹*Nebraska State Journal*, February 19, 1886.

²*Ibid.*, May 16, 1886.

One of the county Grange papers stated that Thayer felt he had the two great qualifications necessary in a candidate for governor—membership in the Union army and dyed-in-the-wool Republicanism. It went on to say that a man who boasts that he has always supported the Republican candidate is about as antiquated as a Democrat who is still voting for Andrew Jackson.³ On August 6th, the same paper said that Thayer was not supporting the principles of Van Wyck; later, under date of August 13th, it gave a reprint from the *Beatrice Democrat* to the effect that Thayer should be “let down” for two reasons, first, because he was *for* Van Wyck and second, because he was *against* Van Wyck.

During the latter part of August the Hall County Republican Convention, meeting at Grand Island, declared for Thayer and even went so far as to ask him to name the delegates to the state convention. Mr. Thayer declined to select the county delegates—no doubt a wise declination.

County after county declared for Thayer during September, so that by September 29th, the date of the Republican State Convention, his nomination was assured. The convention met in Lincoln at the Opera House on the above date, and with A. J. Weaver as chairman, proceeded with the party platform. The platform, besides being devoted to the “party principles” and “National Republican pledges,” declared for labor protection, labor organization, inter-state commerce regulation, and against capitalistic ownership of lands. A minority group had reported a plank against the railroads, but this was disregarded.

Having finished with the above formality, the convention proceeded to select its candidate for governor. Thayer’s strength became obvious as the successive county chairmen announced their votes. It finally was suggested that he be made the unanimous choice by acclamation, but Church Howe objected and the informal call continued. There were six nominees on the informal call, four of whom received

³*Nemaha County Grange* (Auburn), July 13, 1886.

less than fifty votes each, with Thayer and Clarke getting three hundred and six and one hundred and twenty three respectively.⁴ Before the second ballot was taken, Mr. Clarke's name was withdrawn and Thayer was chosen by acclamation.

In his acceptance speech, Thayer said that language was too weak to give the feeling he had in his heart for the flattering testimonial. This honor, he said, filled his fullest ambition. After stating his belief that government rested alike on all—Jews and Gentiles; Democrats and Republicans; natives and foreigners; whites and blacks, and rich and poor—he concluded with the good Republican Party psalm, "I believe its principles to be essential to the perpetuation of our institutions. I believe those principles are the foundation of true republican government."

H. H. Shedd, who was then serving as Lieutenant Governor with Governor Dawes, was again selected for that position. The active campaigning seems to have fallen to Shedd and Church Howe, although Mr. Thayer spoke at several of the county seat towns. In his speeches he advocated just railroad legislation and the rights of the laborers.

In the November election (November 2, 1886), Thayer received 75,956 votes and his Democratic opponent, James E. North, received 52,656. This was a majority of approximately 13,703 over all the votes cast, H. W. Hardy and J. Burrows having received 8,175 and 1,422 respectively.⁵ It was a Republican victory of 23,300 votes over the Democrats, and one in which Thayer carried 64 out of 76 counties (Sioux County, the 77th, returned no legal votes).⁶

The official family during Thayer's first term was as follows:

⁴Thayer 306; Clarke 123; McCall 47; Densmore 37; Gerrard 27; and Appleget 13.

⁵*House Journal*, 1887, p. 48.

⁶*Ibid.*

Lieutenant Governor	H. H. Shedd
Private Secretary to Governor	Capt. J. E. Hill
Executive Clerk	E. R. Mackett
Secretary of State	G. L. Laws
Commissioner of Public Lands & Buildings	Joseph Scott
Auditor	H. A. Babcock
Attorney General	William Leese
Superintendent of Public Instruction	Geo. B. Lane
	(Samuel Maxwell
Supreme Court	(Manoah B. Reese
	(Amasa Cobb

The state legislature convened on Tuesday, January 4, 1887 and remained in session until March 31st, the House showing a total of 62 legislative days and the Senate 61. It was during this session that the amendment to the state constitution to lengthen the legislative term from 40 to 60 days and to increase members' pay from \$3.00 to \$5.00 per day became effective.⁷

On January 6th, Thayer was sworn in by Chief Justice Samuel Maxwell, and after the message of the outgoing governor, James W. Dawes, delivered his inaugural.

Probably the most pertinent point, in contrasting the two messages, is found in the fact that the retiring governor felt enough legislation had been accomplished in regard to the railroads, while Governor Thayer's views were expressed in the slogan, "public interest must be the controlling purpose of the faithful legislator" and his urging of the adoption of a policy of "live and let live."

The type of legislation desired by Governor Thayer may be traced from his inaugural. "Our educational interests should always have the fostering care of the legislature," he declared. "Thoroughness instead of quantity. Practical studies more than ornamental. The languages of the present instead of the aged past. More schools and fewer colleges. Let it be remembered that high sounding titles do not create universities and colleges of the first class. They are the growth of time, experience, hard work, and liberal endowment."⁸

⁷Amendment adopted by vote of people, November 2, 1886, *Nebraska Legislative Manual*, 1893, State Journal Company, Lincoln.

⁸J. G. W. Lewis, editor, *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Nebraska, 1854-1941* (Lincoln, 1942), II, 6-7.

He urged the advancement of tree culture through state aid. (This idea of advancement of tree culture had always been suggested by Thayer while in the United States Senate). He advocated more thorough investigation of our state institutions and more adequate provisions for social outcasts. Not only was he mindful of the social needs of humans, but also of the protection needed for animals. He spoke of a need for legislation in regard to cruelty to animals, saying that "we have human brutes as well as dumb brutes." He suggested the provision of a Board of Arbitration in the interests of labor.⁹

Thayer asked for an improvement of the election laws and for an amendment of the revenue laws:

Let all taxable property, real and personal, be appraised and assessed at its full, fair, actual value. Then let the levy be made on one-third or one-fourth of its appraised value. If there is reason to believe that the owner is concealing any property to evade taxation, make it obligatory on the assessor to put him under oath with the pain and penalties of perjury attached. If the assessor fails to require the oath, let the assessor be punished with imprisonment.¹⁰

The Governor provided for the specific need of responsibility in the above suggestion, and the legislature partially enacted his suggestion. He also asked that the state assume part of the expense for the killing of animals having contagious diseases.¹¹

Two measures which he specifically suggested to the Senate at a later date were provision for a second regiment for the National Guard, and the enactment of a law fixing the maximum number of persons that might be hired by each house of the legislature.

Out of the 156 bills passed by the legislature during this session, the Governor's program was quite adequately enacted. In regard to the railroads, a revised classification of rates was effected with a general level of 3c per mile.

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 6-10.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

A Board of Transportation with increased powers was substituted for the Board of Railroad Commissioners. Children between the ages of 8 and 14 were required to be in school for at least 12 weeks per year and the University appropriation was increased.

Increased inspection was provided for the state institutions and a Board of Pharmacy was created. It is interesting to note that this early pharmacy board consisted of the Attorney General, Secretary of State, Auditor, Treasurer, and Commissioner of Public Lands and Buildings. A Bureau of Labor, Census and Industrial Statistics was established. An industrial home was authorized at a cost of \$15,000 for the site and buildings, also an asylum for the insane was to be located at Hastings, Hastings donating 160 acres of land and the state appropriating \$75,000 for the buildings. Under the provision that the state would share the expense of the killing of animals having a contagious disease, the state paid out approximately \$36,000 at a rate of \$43.00 per head.¹² Thayer's interest in agriculture was further shown by his appointment of a committee to attend the American Agriculture and Dairy Association meeting in New York¹³ and by his writing of a letter to the French Government requesting that it not carry out the order against the exportation of horses from France, so far as to prevent the exportation of Percherons for breeding purposes to the United States. He represented that such an inhibition would be injurious to Nebraska.¹⁴

Governor Thayer strengthened his position with the people during his first term and endeared himself to both the laborer and farmer without alienating the railroad. With the tremendous unrest in labor during 1887, and with

¹²*House Journal*, 1889, p. 96.

¹³*Nebraska State Journal*, February 4, 1887—appointees were R. W. Furnas, Brownville; J. Sterling Morton, Nebraska City; Wm. Stolley, Grand Island; and S. C. Bassett, Gibbon.

¹⁴*Nebraska State Journal*, February 11, 1887.

farming conditions rapidly getting worse, one would expect the people to swing away from a conservative type of governor, but his ratio of votes in the next election remained practically unchanged.

VI

Governor of Nebraska, 1889-91

During Nebraska's eighty one years of statehood she has elected twenty-five different governors, four of whom have been honored with a third term—Governor Butler, 1867-1873 (he was impeached at the beginning of his third term); Charles W. Bryan, who served a single term in 1923-1925, and then two successive terms, 1931-1935; Robert L. Cochran, 1935-1941; and Dwight P. Griswold, 1941-1947. Nine of the governors were honored with a second term, and it is among this group that we find John Milton Thayer, governor of the state from 1887-1891. Governor Thayer actually served a part of a third term due to the State Supreme Court decision rendering the elected governor ineligible. Thayer had not stood for re-election, but held over by a Supreme Court decision based on constitutional authorization.

The pre-convention activities within the Republican ranks were much the same in 1888 as they were in 1886. There were a number of G. A. R. reunions at which Governor Thayer spoke, and the county nominating conventions began declaring for him in August.

An item in the *Nebraska State Journal* of August 22nd stated that the state convention, called for August 23rd, would be one of the largest ever held in the state. It declared there was no contest for the first place on the state ticket and predicted Governor Thayer's nomination by acclamation. The next day 671 delegates assembled in Lincoln and, the rules having been suspended, unanimously renominated the Governor.

Campaign speeches were few until after the middle of August when Thayer began calling at the county seats and speaking at great length. He favored legislation in favor of labor and was of the opinion that the Board of Transportation had full powers to establish rates in Nebraska that would be no higher than those in Iowa or Kansas.

During the summer, John McShane, the Democratic nominee for governor, had charged Thayer with fraudulent dealings. Thayer authorized McShane to publish any evidence he had, and asked him for an open debate on the charge. In the closing days of the campaign, McShane renewed these charges and Governor Thayer used no ambiguous terms in denouncing him. The governor called him a coward and dared him to prove any of the charges: "I denounce you as a malicious falsifier, slanderer and liar,"¹⁵ Thayer continued, and told the Democratic candidate he would die a miserable death in a common jail as Tweed did, if he didn't mend his ways.

In the November election, Thayer again carried 64 counties with a total vote of 103,983. McShane carried the remaining 17 counties (four counties had been added since the election of 1886) with a total of 85,420. Mr. Thayer lacked about 8,000 votes of equalling the majority over all votes cast that he had obtained in 1886, but he still had an approximate majority of 5,000 votes.¹⁶

The heads of the different departments during Thayer's second term were:

Private Secretary	John M. Thayer, Jr.
Lieutenant Governor	Geo. D. Meiklejohn
Secretary of State	C. L. Laws
Secretary of Treasury	Capt. J. E. Hill
Auditor Public Accounts	T. H. Benton
Commissioner of Public Lands & Buildings	John Steen
Attorney General	William Leese
Superintendent of Public Instruction	George B. Lane
Supreme Court	(Amasa Cobb (Samuel Maxwell (M. B. Reese

¹⁵*Ibid.*, November 6, 1888.

¹⁶*House Journal*, 1889, p. 42.

The legislature assembled on January 1, 1889, and remained in session until March 30th, each house working sixty-seven days.

During the early days of the legislative session, Governor Larrabee of Iowa visited the state legislature and spoke to a joint session on Prohibition and its success in Iowa, and on railroad rates. The Governor was returning a visit made by Mr. Thayer the year before. He thought the practice a good one.

Several bills pertaining to the manufacture and sale, or to absolute prohibition of liquor, were introduced during this session, but the legislature refused thus to guard the morals of its constituents.

In the Governor's message to the legislature he recommended a constitutional amendment for the establishment of a Board of Railroad Commissioners with power to make and enforce its regulations. The Governor was following the Grange movement in regard to the railroads, but he still professed his desire to see justice done both parties.

He again spoke of the University of Nebraska as needing the legislature's fostering care.

The Governor again suggested a Board of Arbitration for labor, but none was provided.

Thayer went a step further in his suggested tax program than he had gone before, in recommending that mortgages, bonds and certificates of all kinds should be taxed.

He asked the legislature to pass a measure restricting the activities of trusts and here his wish was granted.¹⁷

It is interesting to note the evident reaction of the Governor towards the "Pinkertons" who had been used against the railroad strikers in 1888. Thayer recommended the passage of a bill which would prevent them from entering the state. The bill was indefinitely postponed on recommendation of the committee.¹⁸

¹⁷Lewis, *op. cit.*, II, 17-41.

¹⁸*House Journal*, 1889, p. 965.

Although the legislature remained in session a week longer than in 1887, it passed fewer bills—42 less.

The thing that caused former governor Butler to get Thayer out of bed, late one night, was the report, on May 24, 1890, that the Governor had issued a call for an extra session of the legislature. The session had been called for June 4th. The *Omaha Bee*, of May 26th, doubted the advisability of such a move, saying that too many of the legislative members were gone. The opinions are many and varied from May 27th until June 3rd. The session had been called for the purpose of enacting a primary law and for suggesting currency relief to the national government. There was much currency agitation throughout the state and the Governor felt it to be his duty, if legislation was what was needed, to call the extra session.

Mr. Thayer took the entire responsibility for calling the session, and said later, that it need not be had if the people didn't want it. Later he withdrew the call.

The Governor was very much interested in the sugar beet industry, which was an "infant" Nebraska industry at this time. Aid had been extended to its manufacturers by the previous legislature and this group also saw fit to grant a one cent bounty on sugar manufactured from sugar beets, sorghum or sugar cane.

Nebraska Hall and Grant Memorial Hall were both built at the University during the biennium at an approximate cost of \$41,000 and \$19,000 respectively.

During the closing months of his administration Thayer was forced to organize relief boards to care for the drought stricken counties in Nebraska. Twenty-five counties were applying for aid and the list of provisions sent to these regions resembles the lists of 1931-32. We find the following record in the *House Journal* of 1891, page 562:

Coal	84 cars	coffee	398 pounds
clothing	137 barrels	sugar	1360 pounds
clothing	70 sacks	Crackers	1494 pounds
boots & shoes	7 boxes	salt	1500 pounds
bedding	5 boxes	Corn	2030 bushels

hats	2 boxes	oats	215 bushels
hominy	315 pounds	wheat	119 bushels
Flour	247,834 pounds	apples	4 barrels
meal	115,650 pounds	groceries	13 boxes
rice	11,875 pounds	oatmeal	324 pounds
beans	29,901 pounds	graham flour	550 pounds
meat	20,137 pounds	potatoes	27 barrels

In his message to the legislature of 1891 (the reason for his "holding over" will follow) Governor Thayer gave a great deal of praise to the railroads for their aid in transporting supplies to the drought stricken areas. We find Thayer saying to the legislature that, "remember the poor and needy" is as binding now as when uttered by the Holy One two thousand years ago. He likened the call of the stricken populace to the call of the Macedonians.

In his recommendations to the legislature of 1891, he forcefully urged the adoption of the Australian ballot and came near to denouncing the policies of the railroad. Thus we see Thayer move from a position of trustfulness (1887) in regard to the railroads to one of mild curtailment in 1889, and from that to near a liberal Republican or semi-grange point of view.

Thayer remained as Governor of Nebraska until February 8, 1892, and this involved a contest with Governor-elect Boyd for the office.

The three principal tickets in the field in the state election of 1890 were: Republican, L. D. Richards; Democrat, James E. Boyd; and Farmer's Alliance, John H. Powers. The votes in the order listed above were 68,878; 71,331; and 70,187; both the Democratic and Farmer's Alliance candidates received more votes than the Republican.

The election took place on November 4, 1890 and on Friday, November 21st, Mr. Boyd was served with a notice of contest. The contest was started by Mr. Powers, who stated in his affidavit, "I was, on and prior to the 4th day of November, 1890, and am now, a qualified elector

of the state of Nebraska, and was a candidate for, and eligible to, the office of Governor of this state."¹⁹

The above notice meant little or nothing to the average Nebraska citizen in the fall of 1890. To the keen politician it was an indication that something was "brewing." It was a short time until the attorneys for both Mr. Powers and Mr. Boyd began taking depositions. Probably every ambitious lawyer in the state was searching his constitutional law books for citations on "qualified electors" during the winter months of 1890.

The public was enlightened by an article which appeared in the *Morning Herald*, December 13, 1890—it was a dispatch from Cleveland, Ohio and ran as follows:

A special from Zanesville, Ohio says a curious complication has arisen in the case of Governor-elect Boyd, of Nebraska. He was born in Ireland in 1834, and came to this city with his father, Joseph Boyd, in 1849. The father filed a notice of his intention to become a citizen, but did not take out his final papers until November, 1890. The son did not take out papers here, and it is stated that he has never been naturalized in Nebraska. The statutes provide that where the father was naturalized his sons under twenty-one years of age are naturalized. In this case the father filed his declaration in 1849, but did not take out his final papers until 1890.

The legislature convened on January 6th, and proceeded with its own organization. There was a question of just where, to the right or to the left, the Farmer's Alliance members should sit. The "Farmers" were in the majority and finally had their way.

On January 7th, the joint session convened for the counting of the votes. The joint session was presided over by both Lieutenant Governor Meiklejohn and Sam Elder, duly elected Speaker of the House. According to the constitution, it was Elder's duty to open and publish the returns—this he refused to do. A motion was made to adjourn without a count, but Meiklejohn would not entertain such

¹⁹*Omaha World Herald*, February 2, 1892.—The *Herald* gives a better account of proceeding than found elsewhere, other than in the Nebraska Reports (31 Nebraska Reports, 682-770).

because of the constitutional question which was involved and which, in his mind, clearly defined the duties of the Speaker. Since the Lieutenant Governor refused to recognize the Speaker, Elder recognized him, and the vote was taken and the House adjourned.

On January 8th, a writ of Mandamus was served on Elder and he was forced to open and publish the returns.²⁰

From this point on Mr. Thayer played an important part in the proceedings. Boyd having been declared elected and sworn in, Thayer announced that he would not vacate his office because Boyd was not eligible to office. The state had two governors for a few days until the Director of Public Lands and Buildings succeeded in directing all the mails, messages and other executive business away from the executive suite. Thayer placed a part of the militia on guard around his offices and stayed all night in order to prevent a surprise. This was not the first time the Governor had remained in a threatened office all night—he had performed the same feat in company with Secretary of War Stanton at the time President Johnson threatened Stanton with expulsion.²¹

Things did not break for Mr. Thayer after having lost the executive business. It became necessary to send the militia to the northern border and he lost his main source of security. On January 14th, Thayer vacated his office and on the 16th the Senate recognized Boyd as Governor. The House did not recognize him until February 5th.

On May 5th, the State Supreme Court rendered its decision in favor of Thayer, and he assumed the duties of executive on the same day.

The case was carried to the United States Supreme Court and filed May 5, 1891.²² It was argued, December 8, 1891 and decided, February 1, 1892. The decision was in

²⁰*State, ex rel Benton V. Elder*—31 Nebraska 169-192.

²¹John M. Thayer to Earl G. Curtis, April 4, 1933.

²²143 U. S. Reports, 135-186.

favor of Boyd and as stated before, Thayer relinquished the office on February 8, 1892.

Justice Field had denied the right of the Supreme Court to decide the case on the grounds that such action was an usurpation of state powers, but the rest of the court was against him. Having decided that the case was within its jurisdiction, the court then decided that Boyd's establishment in the territory of Nebraska at the time it became a state in the Union, entitled him to citizenship. One part of the argument gives the trials and deprivation of frontier life as partial fulfillment of citizenship.

The Supreme Court had made its decision and Thayer was willing to abide by it. It was rather a dramatic close for a public career which had its beginning on the prairies of Nebraska in 1854.

VII

Retirement, 1892-1906

Soon after Thayer's retirement from office he left for the East with Mrs. Thayer, who was in broken health. She died the same fall and was buried there. Mr. Thayer's simple tribute, "She was a faithful wife and mother and one of the most patriotic of women," goes far in explaining the type of person he had chosen for his life's companion.

Mr. Thayer returned to Lincoln and established his home at 1301 Rose Street. He also maintained an office at 210 South 11th for a number of years.

On September 3, 1897, he wrote to Mr. Will Owen Jones, editor of the *State Journal*, from Meadville, Pa., stating that Mr. Bryan was not politically dead even though he had been defeated in the election of 1896. The letter shows Mr. Thayer's deep interest in politics even at the age of 77.²³

²³MS., Nebraska State Historical Society—letter given to the writer by Mrs. Will Owen Jones and now on file in the office of the Nebraska State Historical Society.

Sometime after 1896, Thayer was granted a pension by the government and he passed his last years without the anxiety of a much needed income. He had lost nearly all of his fortune in the panic of 1857, and had not been able to replenish it. This fact is a tribute to Mr. Thayer's honesty throughout his political career. There can be little doubt that many temptations were placed in his way, especially during the 80's when the large corporations were willing to purchase their "rights."²⁴

Some time before his death, Mr. Thayer had made arrangements to be buried in the East, but during the last two weeks of his life he changed his mind, cancelled the plans and arranged to be buried in Wyuka. Besides selecting a lot at Wyuka, Mr. Thayer attended to the plans for a simple funeral, requesting the hymns, *Rock of Ages* and *Nearer My Home*.

On March 19, 1906, the General passed away—the arrangements for his funeral were no longer in his hands and the state for which he had done so much, carried out an elaborate and fitting burial.

The last rites were held at the St. Paul's Church under the auspices of the G. A. R., and with Adjutant General Culver in charge of the funeral.

The body lay in state in the capitol until twelve o'clock noon, Friday, March 23rd, amid decorations of a military character, and guarded by a stalwart young soldier, at which time the hall was closed to make preparation for the removal to the church.

Celia Ellen Harris, seeing the University cadets in the procession, was prompted to write the following poem. It does honor to General Thayer and was a challenge to the cadets.

TO A SOLDIER WHO LIES IN STATE

Far down the mast across the red-paved square,
The flag whose sons you led whips the keen air,

²⁴MS., Nebraska State Historical Society. Letter from Gertrude Hill Welch, daughter of Captain J. E. Hill, Gov. Thayer's private secretary, 1887-88, to Earl G. Curtis, December 27, 1932.

And you lie dead.
But now there passed,
Beneath my window here,
The State's new sons, a solemn, grim-lipped line,
To guard your bier.
Dear Chief, they hold that bier a holy shrine,
You are the last of your good time. Tomorrow
We look for heroes to those boys who wait
Upon your last stern state.
Today we sorrow.

In honor of the General, all business in the city was suspended from 1:30 to 4:00 on Friday. The Lincoln public schools were closed during the afternoon, and no University classes were held from 2:00 to 4:00.

In "summing up" the career of one whose activities lie wholly within the fifty years before the turn of the century one might easily find criticism. The first twenty-five years of territorial government and statehood called for a different type of executive ability, from that required by the second. Thayer moved steadily toward the left wing of the Republican party during his state career—too fast for some, not fast enough for others. His greatest merit is found in his steadfastness and honesty. He was governor of the state during the period when an executive less trusting of the great corporations, might have secured more benefits to his people, but Thayer was not blind to their wrongdoing, and steadily moved to curtail them. Judge Reese, of Broken Bow, Nebraska, says of the General, "He was loyal to his friends, almost to the point of a fault."

His efforts to better the University of Nebraska and enlarge the educational program of the state will ever remain a credit to him. It was with a great deal of pride that he called to the attention of the legislature of 1891 the increased enrollment—408 students in 1887-88; 427 in 1888-89; 475 in 1889-90; and 513 during the then current year, 1890-91.

He was awarded the LL.D. degree by the University of Nebraska in 1902.

For his gallant services at Fort Donelson, Shiloh, and Vicksburg Bluffs, he was deservedly rewarded, and for his state career, military and political, he should be classed with those honored as Nebraska's foremost citizens.