

Kentucky
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

EDUCATOR PACKET

PHOTO ANALYSIS

ASSASSINATION OF
GOVERNOR WILLIAM GOEBEL, 1900

www.history.ky.gov

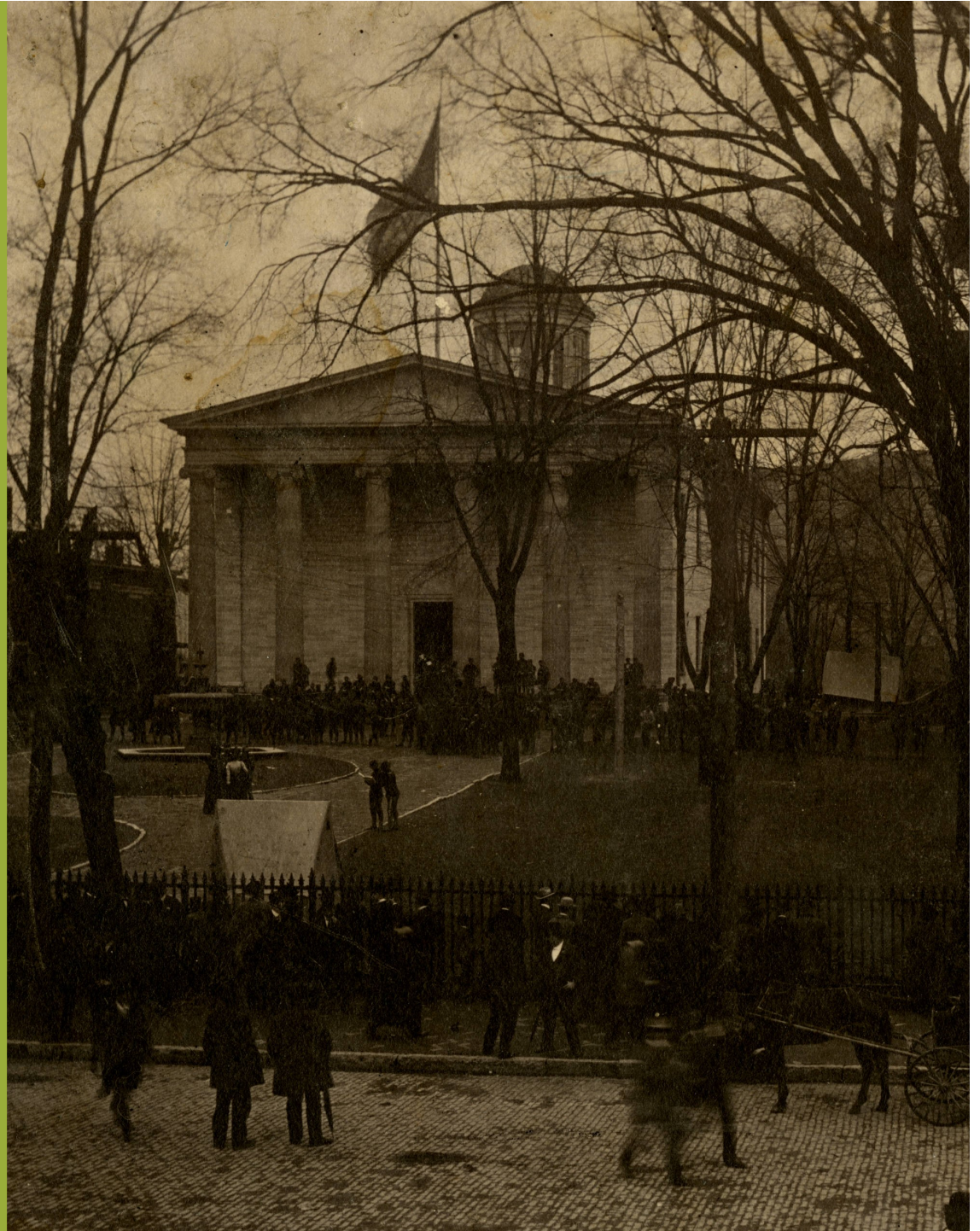


PHOTO ANALYSIS

ASSASSINATION OF GOVERNOR WILLIAM GOEBEL, 1900

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

William Goebel and Politics

William Goebel was born in Sullivan County, Pennsylvania, in 1856. The family moved to Covington, Kentucky, when his father returned from the Civil War. In 1877, Goebel graduated from Cincinnati Law School and went on to specialize in corporate and railroad law. Elected to the Kentucky Senate in 1887 as a Democrat from Kenton County, Goebel became President Pro Tem in 1897. While a senator, he supported such issues and laws as railway rate legislation, anti-lottery laws, end of textbook monopolies, regulation of toll bridges and roads, and extended civil rights for women and minorities. Many have referred to Goebel as “a friend of the common man.” On February 1, 1898, the Goebel Election Law was introduced into the General Assembly which proposed the creation of a Board of Elections Commissioners, who would be chosen by the General Assembly each election year. In turn, they would select an Election Commissioner for each county. This proposal was met with opposition from both sides and was seen by many as a way for Goebel to increase his own political power, similar to what he was accustomed to in the politics of Kenton County. In 1899, William Goebel won the Democratic nomination for governor. The election of 1899 proved to be one of the most corrupt elections in Kentucky history. The final tally was 193,714 for Republican candidate William Taylor, 191,331 for Goebel, and 12,040 for another Democrat, John Y. Brown. Taylor was inaugurated governor on December 12, 1899. A few days later, an investigation was ordered by the elections committee to determine whether the election had been fraudulent. In a vote of 2-1, the elections commissioners certified that Governor Taylor had won. The Democratic majority in the General Assembly was not happy with the results of the investigation, so they launched their own investigation.

The Assassination of Governor William Goebel, 1900

On January 30, 1900, Goebel approached the State Capitol to attend the legislature’s deliberations. An assassin hiding nearby in the annex at the Office of the Secretary of State shot him in the chest. Taylor, serving as governor pending a final decision on the election, called out the militia and ordered the General Assembly into a special session, not in Frankfort, but in London, Kentucky, a Republican area. The Republican minority agreed to meet in London, while Democrats decided to meet in Louisville. Both factions claimed control of the General Assembly, but the Republicans were too few in number to have a quorum.

On January 31, the legislature awarded the election to Goebel and he was sworn in as

THEME *Kentucky Governors*

OBJECTIVE *To analyze a photograph of the Old State Capitol in order to understand what historical gatherings have occurred there.*

governor. In his only act in that capacity, Goebel signed a proclamation to dissolve the militia called up by Taylor, an order which was not heeded by the force’s Republican commander. Despite the attention of 18 physicians, Goebel died the afternoon of February 3, 1900. In the crisis of Republicans versus Democrats that followed, state militiamen occupied the grounds of the building, and soldiers and armed citizens from both parties faced each other, threatening more violence. Soon after, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the deceased Goebel had been legally declared governor, and his lieutenant governor took office.

ARTIFACT LIST

[Old State Capitol, Frankfort KY, possibly following the shooting of Governor Goebel in early 1900 \(FF1.201\)](#)

VOCABULARY

Aftermath	<i>something that results from or follows an event</i>
Assassination	<i>a sudden or secretive killing, especially of a politically prominent person</i>
Capital	<i>a town or city that is the official seat of government in a political entity, such as a state or nation</i>
Capitol	<i>a building in which a state legislative body meets</i>
Fraudulent	<i>a deceptive action, usually intentional</i>
Governor	<i>the executive head of a state in the U.S.</i>
Legislature	<i>an organized body having the authority to make laws for a political unit</i>
Photograph	<i>an image of an object, person, scene, etc., in the form of a print recorded by a camera</i>
President Pro Tem	<i>a senator, usually a senior member of the majority party, who is chosen to preside over the Senate in the absence of the president</i>
Primary source	<i>an artifact, document, recording or other source of information that was created at the time of study</i>
Quorum	<i>the majority, or number of group members required to enact laws</i>

PHOTO ANALYSIS

ASSASSINATION OF GOVERNOR WILLIAM GOEBEL, 1900

PHOTO OBSERVATION

Use the table below to help analyze the photograph. Consider listing things such as the location and people pictured or make a guess at why it was taken. What do you wonder about the photograph?

I See...	I Think...	I Wonder...

PHOTO INTERPRETATION

Answer the following questions in 3-5 sentences.

Why do you think a photographer chose to document this scene?

What does this photograph tell us about the aftermath of the Goebel assassination?

How are events recorded and shared today? Are modern methods more or less effective? Explain your reasoning.



Court House at Frankfort, Ky., where Goebel was killed.

Old State Capitol, Frankfort, KY, possibly following the shooting of Governor Goebel in early 1900 (FF1.207)