

The Lehman Family

In 1928, Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected Governor of the State of New York. The man who ran with him for Lieutenant-Governor was little mentioned at the time.

Four years later, when Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected President of the United States the people of the State chose this Lieutenant-Governor to fill the vacancy in Albany.

In 1938, the people confirmed the same man for four more years in office. Thus, he achieved a feat which no one else accomplished before him.

The man who rose so high in the political life of the United States is Herbert Henry Lehman. He is the son of Mayer Lehman who came to this country from Prussia in the middle of the last century.

CORR:
(BANKER)

As many other German jews who distinguished themselves later in the United States - e.g. the Straus's, the Erlanger's - Mayer Lehman did not stay in New York but moved to the South. In Montgomery, Alabama, he opened a cotton business which attained a large significance during the time of the Civil War. Montgomery was then capital of the South, and cotton its main article of export. Mayer Lehman's business flourished, and his prestige in the city and the South grew equally. Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America, was one of his friends.

After the Civil War was over the merchant was attracted by the new metropolis of commerce, New York. Here it was that Mayer Lehman, with his brother Emmanuel, founded the banking house of Lehman Brothers which has developed since to one of the biggest private banking institutions in the United States. He also was one of the founders of the New York Cotton Exchange.

Mayer Lehman did not plan political careers for his sons. Irving (born in 1876) studied law and has been a member of the Supreme Court and the Appellate Court of the State of New York. Today he is one of the highest judicial officers in the State.

Herbert H. Lehman (born in 1878) was a partner in his father's banking business when the World War interrupted his activities there. During the War he was promoted to Colonel and was finally called to Washington to fill an administrative post. It was here that he first met the then assistant secretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

But even after the War Herbert Lehman did little to start a career in politics. Together with Philip Lehman,

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the son of Emmanuel, he lent his entire energy to his banking business. He also belonged to a few political committees and devoted the rest of his ^{time} to manifold benevolent activities.

It was his friendship for "Al" Smith that made him decide at last to enter the field of politics. He ~~w~~ always had a high admiration for Lillian Wald and her activities and had long practised philanthropy in her way. Thus, he could not but approve wholeheartedly of the social reforms which Governor Alfred E. Smith initiated. He was Smith's campaign manager in 1918 and later worked energetically for his re-election. Finally, in 1928, Alfred E. Smith prevailed upon him to run for Lieutenant-Governor.

As Lieutenant-Governor, he was Franklin D. Roosevelt's "splendid right hand" and laid the ground for his subsequent political success. "By the end of his first term (as Governor)", ~~s~~aid the New York Times, "Herbert Lehman, by his quiet modesty and unobtrusive efficiency had won a tremendous following." In 1934, an overwhelming majority of voters supported his re-election; the Republican "Sun" as well as the "Nation", at the other end of the line-up, unanimously spoke up for him.

Today it is almost eight years that Herbert Lehman has been administering the fate of one of the most important States of the Union. Those were, and still are, critical times, starting with the bank crisis in 1933, up to now, when national defense and the newly established compulsory service highly tax the ingenuity of the head of every State.

The general approval that today is given to the work of Governor Lehman makes it easy to sing his praise. But what is the reason for his success? Why did ~~he~~ this friendly and quiet business man become one of the highest officials in the United States?

His quietness is one of the very reasons. What he does he does quietly - and efficiently. Another is his intimate connection with American business life. During his political career Herbert Lehman has sought an integral solution between the community and the business man. He feels that a business man should not work solely for his own benefit, but that he has an obligation to serve society. And he has proven that a successful business man can have much diplomatic skill - and vice versa.

Herbert Lehman stands before us as a man - and we quote again the New York Times -, "who has handled a great trust with deep care, marked success and fine fidelity to principle."

