

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

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**John G. Carlisle**

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## *John G. Carlisle*

1835 - 1910

### *Lieutenant Governor and Statesman*

John Griffin Carlisle was born in a log cabin in the small community of Key West, Campbell County (now part of Kenton County), Kentucky. He was the eldest of eleven children of Lilborn and Mary Carlisle.

Carlisle left home at the age of sixteen to work as a teacher in Covington and in 1853 became the main support of his family when his father died. He gave up teaching in 1856 to study law under John White Stevenson, a highly respected attorney in Covington. At the age of 23, Carlisle joined the law firm of William Kinkead in Covington.

As a state legislator from 1859 to 1861, Carlisle voted with the majority to keep Kentucky in the Union during the Civil War, but his vote was based more on the preference of his district than on his personal choice.

Carlisle remained neutral while others his age enlisted. His stand did not make him popular. Nevertheless, he ran for the state Senate in 1865. His Republican opponent collected the most votes, but the Senate threw out the results, saying the election had been influenced by the U.S. Army soldiers. In a special election, Carlisle won. He was re-elected in 1869, and resigned two years later to run for lieutenant governor. The thirty-six year old Carlisle won the lieutenant governor's race, serving with Governor Preston H. Leslie.

When his term as Lt. Governor expired, Carlisle ran for the U.S. Congress, and won in 1876. He was re-elected six times, serving from March 4, 1877 until May 26, 1890.

By 1880, Carlisle's popularity was such that the *Covington Daily Commonwealth* speculated that he might make a good Democratic presidential candidate. The article praised Carlisle's ability as a constitutional lawyer and described him as a statesman with the "Jeffersonian qualities of honesty and capability."

He was one of the most influential northern Kentuckians in politics. He served as Speaker of the U.S. House and as Secretary of the Treasury (one of the last Kentuckians to serve in a cabinet post).

In both 1880 and 1884, Carlisle was considered as a presidential candidate.

He was also considered one of the commonwealth's best attorneys.

John G. Carlisle was born on September 5, 1835. He and his wife, Mary Jane Goodson, had five children all of whom preceded Carlisle in death. Carlisle lived in Covington for the majority of his life. Carlisle died July 31, 1910. He is buried in Linden Grove Cemetery, Covington.

Nominated by James C. Klotter, Director and State Historian of the Kentucky Historical Society.

