



3-15-1988

Country-Boy Governor

Damon Green

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview>

Recommended Citation

Green, Damon (1988) "Country-Boy Governor," *Westview*: Vol. 7 : Iss. 3 , Article 7.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol7/iss3/7>

This Nonfiction is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Westview by an authorized administrator of SWOSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu.



teacher-politician

Country-Boy Governor

By Damon Green

Leon Phillips graduated from the first Arapaho High School graduating class in 1908. After that, he went on to teach at the Keeler School north of present-day Foss, Oklahoma. Later he went to the University of Oklahoma and played on the school's first undefeated football team.

In 1933, he was elected to the State Legislature and in 1935 he became the Speaker of the House.



While he was the Speaker of the House, and in the State Legislature, the bad condition of the state's finances was of great concern to him. So he decided to try to do something about the problem--to become a candidate for the office of Governor.

After leading a field of nine candidates, including the colorful Alfalfa Bill Murray, Leon Phillips won in the largest Democratic Primary Election in the state's history.

Although elected as a Democrat, once in the office, Phillips implemented some very undemocratic policies. Nationally, the Roosevelt campaign was riding high with its new Presidential policies. Phillips tried to get the hospital in Clinton, Oklahoma, to be used to house the mentally insane who were overflowing the other state institutions.

While in office, Phillips didn't go along with President Roosevelt's decree that Thanksgiving would be observed on the fourth Thursday in November instead of the fifth as it had always been. He questioned, "Why should tradition be changed because of the cries of a few people?"

When Leon Phillips retired the Governor's chair to Robert S. Kerr in January, 1944, the state had done a complete about-face. Later, when asked why he ran for Governor, he said that he had just wanted to see if an old country boy could pull the strings and run the state. ■

DAMON GREEN, son of Gerald and Kay Green, is 13 years old. He likes soccer and other sports; he has been a leading scorer for the Lasers, Clinton's under-14 indoor soccer team and a member of the scholastic team.

Frisco Avenue looking west in 1908 - Clinton, OK.

Illustration by ROCKY SHEPHERD

