

Switzerland County, Cotton Township Poll Book for 1884 Election

E. A. Lawson and Natalie Burriss

The 1884 Presidential election pitted Republican James G. Blaine against Democrat Grover Cleveland for the highest office in the nation. Cleveland won the popular vote by almost 63,000 votes and secured a majority in the Electoral College, making him the twenty-second president of the United States.¹

This article contains names as they were listed in an 1884 poll book compiled in Cotton Township, Switzerland County, Indiana. A poll book documents the names of those who voted in an election and records the total number of votes each candidate received. In this particular record, neither presidential candidate is listed by name. Rather, Hoosiers voted for their electoral representatives, who in turn voted for either Cleveland or Blaine.²

It should be noted that in Cotton Township at least one Black man voted in the 1884 election. Thomas Kosson is the only man to have a note listed in the comments section to record his race. African American suffrage had been a topic of heated discussion in Indiana long before the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870. Even then, voting rights for former enslaved people and people of color had been slow to take effect. To see a Black voter identified on the roles in 1884 is therefore worthy of notice.³

A poll book is an uncommon but useful source for genealogical research. It can be used to establish a family member's location down to a specific county, or township in this case. And because this poll book was created in 1884, an off-year for the decennial U.S. census, it provides an update on the whereabouts of the voters listed. Additionally, poll books can provide researchers with some narrative for ancestors. What does it mean that an ancestor voted in the 1884 election or in any election for that matter? Questions about democratic participation and how people invested in the political landscape of America enriches the life stories in family history.

Notes:

1. “Presidential Election of 1884: A Resource Guide,” Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/elections/election1884.html>, accessed June 3, 2021.
2. Switzerland County, Indiana Poll Books, 1884, SC 2768, folder 3, Indiana Historical Society.
3. Jill Weiss Simins, “Race, Power, and the Ballot: Early Black Settlement in Sugar Creek Township,” *Indiana History Blog*, Indiana Historical Bureau, June 3, 2019, <https://blog.history.in.gov/tag/african-american-suffrage/>.

Names Listed in the 1884 Cotton Township Poll Book

Martin Barker	Thomas Higham	R. B. Littlefield
C. H. Baseom	Levi H. Seymour	John Armstrong
Charles Moody	Edgar Ford	John M. Sedaur
George Heath		H. D. [Trinker?]
Robert W. Chapman Sr.	[new page]	Perry M. Smith
W. W. Cochran	George Lewis	George W. Potter
Ardeu Heath	Erasters M. Ford	Elhanan Cole
Daniel Heath	William Brumer	[John] Harvey Littlefield
W. M. Sherman	U. H. Stow	John H. McIntosh
Robert S. Cochran	John N. Weathers	Charles Harris
Ahrir M. Sadler	Stephen Ross	Wesley Harris
Daniel K. Vanosdol	John Y. Vanosdol	David C. Conner
John W. Sadler	John Anderson	John Bocoek
Dennis P. Phillips	William P. Truitt	S. W. Mix
Robert Chapman Jr.	Lewis E. Sedaur	Silas Dunning
S. B. Manser	Eli S. Richmond	William Bocoek
George W. Sadler	Samuel E. Smith	Henry Georgell
Joseph G. Melick	T. J. Heath	Fred Baccta Ba[n/u?]ta

D. P. Oak Sr.
P. P. Mix
Lyman Mix

[new page]

George W. Bayne
Harvey T. Oak
William P. Oak
T. M. Cole
Michael Dunning
James McHenry Sr.
Decatur Chase
John P. Dunning
Charles W. Bruner
Jacob Powell
Frank Dixon
George W. Armstrong
Francis M. Manser
Frank R. Fish
J. H. Harris
Harry M. Stow
O. W. Potter
Henry Pendry
E. W. Heath
Thomas J. Boyd
George F. Simpson
Levi H. Smith
Jerome B. Moore

Francis M. Sedan[e/s?]
William Armstrong
Thomas J. Lakeman
John K. Vanosdol
William Ricketts
D. P. Oak Jr.
Charles Tyler
Omar Fowler
George Melick
W. W. Downey
John W. Downey

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Daniel Heath Jun.
James Libbetts
John W. Sedam
Taylor S. Gibbous
S. D. Lockwood
William Oak Jr.
John S. Read
Ezra G. Seymour
Edwin Sanders
Frank Heath
James L. Sedam
Charles Riley
Augustus Dunning
John A. Seymour
Joseph Clement

Lafayette Peelman
Milton Peelman
Cornelius Sedam
Marvin Chandler
Harvey Sedam
James B. Shadday
Bruce P. Whittem
Henry Dibble
John W. Mitchell
William Carunie
James W. McHenry
Perry Lockwood
John Comer
William Oak Sr.
Nelson Tarbox
Daniel D. Mitchell
Lewis Boccock
Alpheus Pangbur[n?]ser
Aldred Dunning

[new page]
Robert Bovard
Solomon Pangbu[ss?]
Hugh McHenry
Howard Stow.
Michael E. Sedam
Bruce Oak
Julius Peelman

William G. Madison
Richard Burns
William McGuffin
John Truitt
Eli T. Croxton
John Higham [sen?]
Charles W. Grant
John Andrews
Lewis Chapman
John March
Stephen J. Dibble
Stephen Ricketts
William H. Melick
Henry C. Graves
Shelometh Stow.
James F. Simpson
Joseph P. Richardson
William McHenry
Samuel B. Hyde
Willard C. Truitt
George Oak
Adam Holdcraft
Thomas Kosson —
colored.
Henry Kuhlman
Clifford McHenry
George W. Brown
Alfred Driver

[new page]
Thomas Van Tyle
Edgar Dibble
Ahrin Driver
William H. Madison
Daniel Melick
George W. Sanders
Orson A. Potter
Charles O. Potter