Governor
Walter S. Goodland

1862-1947

One of the truly great Americans and a man that all of Wisconsin can be proud of was one of our local residents, Walter S. Goodland. Mr. Goodland was a man of many talents. He was an educator, newspaper publisher, lawyer, postmaster, mayor, state senator, lieutenant governor, governor and Franksville farmer.

He was born in Sharon, Wisconsin on December 22, 1862 and attended public schools in Appleton and spent a year furthering his education at Lawrence college. Working as a newspaperman and publisher he continued his education and was admitted to the Wisconsin bar in 1885. He gave up law the same year, however, and moved to Ironwood, Michigan where he founded the Ironwood Times. Goodland, then a Democrat, was appointed Postmaster of Ironwood by President Grover Cleveland. In 1889 he returned to Wisconsin, buying a half interest in the Beloit Times. A year later he moved to Racine and purchased a half interest in the Racine Call which was later sold to the Racine Times and for many years was published as the Racine Times-Call.

Mr. Goodland’s first venture into politics came in 1911 when on his first attempt he was elected Mayor of Racine. His battle with a private water utility ended up in the courts and resulted in a municipally owned water system. Mr. Goodland served two terms as mayor of Racine and then moved on to the Wisconsin State Senate serving Racine County until 1934. It was then that he “retired” to his 150 acre farm on Highway 41 just west of Franksville.

His retirement was short lived, however, because in 1938 he was asked to become the coalition Democratic-Republican candidate for lieutenant governor. After winning the primary, he ran on the Republican ticket with Julius Heil to defeat the LaFollette Progressives. He was reelected in 1940 and again in 1942, however, Orland Loomis, with whom he had been elected, died before taking office and Goodland was appointed acting governor by the state supreme court.

Goodland was elected governor in his own right in 1944 and again in 1946, the later making him the “oldest” governor in the history of the nation. He died in the executive mansion on March 12, 1947 at the age of 84. An estimated 10,000 persons filed through the state capitol to see his body lie in state.

Governor Goodland will long be remembered by local residents. Inspite of his many responsibilities, he always had time to chat and pass the time of day. At the time of his death he had a keen and alert mind and inspite of his 80 plus years, did not require glasses for reading. He loved animals and along with his good wife, Marge, lived and enjoyed life to the fullest. We are proud to say that the Governor picked our community to call his home during the most exciting time of his brilliant career.