

William Alfred Pepper

William Alfred Pepper was the first Populist senator elected to U.S. Congress. He was born in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, on September 10, 1831. As a young man he traveled across the country, living in California, Indiana, Missouri, and Illinois. After the outbreak of Civil War, Pepper enlisted in the 83rd Illinois Infantry, entering as a private and working his way up to the rank of second lieutenant. He read law while still in the military, and after his discharge in 1865 he was admitted to the bar and began practicing law in Clarksville, Tennessee. Five years later he moved to Fredonia, Kansas, where he established another practice and edited the Fredonia Journal. Pepper served as a state senator from 1874 to 1876, and during his tenure he relocated to Coffeyville, Kansas, where he assumed editorial control of the Coffeyville Journal. Then, in 1881, he launched the Populist publication Kansas Farmer, one of his best-known contributions to this agrarian reform movement. Pepper was instrumental in the creation of the People's (Populist) Party, serving as a Populist U.S. Senator from 1891 to 1897 and running again (unsuccessfully) for re-election in 1896. Two years later, he ran an unsuccessful campaign for Governor of Kansas, losing the election to Republican William Stanley. Pepper died in 1912 in Grenola, Kansas, at the age of 81.

Creator: Leonard, J. H.

Date: Between 1891 and 1897

Callnumber: B Pepper, William A. *2

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