

# VARE'S RISE TO FORTUNE AND POLITICAL POWER CAME AFTER LONG SUCCESSION OF BITTER BATTLES

### Started From Farm in "The Neck" and Finally Built Up Machine That Waged Successful Battles Although Sometimes Bowing to Defeat

### DEATH MARKS THE PASSING OF LAST REAL "BIG BOSS" IN PRESENT-DAY POLITICS

### Refused to Accept Burdens of State Leadership and Lost in Attempt to Send "Brother Bill" to Seat in the Senate

CONTRACTS and politics were the twin forces that lifted Senator Vare from obscure beginnings to a position of great wealth and undoubted power.

His childhood and early youth were passed on his father's farm in "The Neck" at a point where Fourth street and Snyder avenue now meet. Augustus Vare, the father, raised truck and pigs, and Edwin H. Vare and his brothers helped on the farm like hundreds of other boys in that section.

When the future Senator married he and his wife lived in a little house near the old Vare farmstead. Later "Ed" replaced the little dwelling with a brownstone-front house, subsequently moved to Broad street near Snyder avenue and in recent years built the splendid home in Ambler, where he died.

Senator Vare became active in politics as soon as he was old enough to vote. He was a good "mixer," he was a hustler and he quickly showed his shrewdness as a political fighter.

#### Helped Out Neighbors to Build Up Power

As a means of increasing his political influence, he made the troubles of his neighbors and political co-workers his own troubles, a trait that clung to him through the later and more spectacular stages of his career.

His first venture into the contracting field came when he won a contract for ash collecting in a South Philadelphia district. As his funds increased he branched out into street cleaning and other contracting work until his business activities extended to other cities.

Senator Vare, up to a year ago, described himself as "the biggest street-cleaning contractor in the world." His street-cleaning contracts were ended when the new Charter went into effect and municipal street-cleaning became general through the city.

He gradually extended his political power until he became the recognized leader of South Philadelphia. After the death of Senator James P. McNichol in 1917 Vare was recognized as the chief of the Republican organization.

He virtually was dictator of the Republican City Committee, but time after time he had to fight the Penrose forces here. Occasionally reform movements, led by independent Republicans, gave his organization trouncings that threatened his prestige.

Senator Vare's death has ripped a big hole in the Republican city organization and seriously affected the power of the old Republican State organization, which has been more or less floundering around since the passing of Senator Penrose.

More than that, the Senator's death has precipitated a career in the politics of city and State—a career which is a strange blend of obscurity rising to affluence and influence, of sensational and even violent political conflicts, and of a generous humanity hidden now and then by the bluntness of the ward leader.

Senator Vare's death, among his personal friends and among the thousands who have been helped in various ways, is viewed more as a personal loss than as a political tragedy.

He was serving his fourth consecutive term as a member of the State Senate. His present term would have expired in December, 1924.

He first went to Harrisburg in 1897 as a member of the House of Representatives, but resigned. Although his political power was growing steadily, he held no other office until 1908, when he was elected State Senator. He was re-elected in 1912, 1916 and 1920.

Ed Vare was a boss—a hard boss often—one from whom angry words flowed out, but also he was a kindly boss. Because, after all, the Senator spoke to his aides after their own hearts. Penrose would rage and his followers would rage back. When Ed Vare roared, lieutenants were silent.

#### His Desk Was "Mecca" for Political "Faithfuls"

Senator Vare had had an office in the Lincoln Building for years. There he sat, day after day, and met his ward leaders, mapped out the inner strategy of politics and gave advice on problems touching small division leaders and important officials.

He made it a point to see every man or woman, who called. Often, if he was busy in conferences, he would

#### Vare Is Fourth Leader Lost by State in Year

Senator Vare's death today makes the fourth in little more than a year of men who have been conspicuous in Pennsylvania politics.

Senator Phinander C. Knox died suddenly on October 12, 1921, shortly after his return from an European trip. He was stricken in his Washington home.

Governor Sprout filled the Knox vacancy by the appointment of William E. Crow, Republican State Chairman, who thus achieved a life-long ambition, but who was destined to appear in the Senate chamber only once. He died August 2.

State politics was thrown into a flurry by the death of Senator Knox, but he had never aspired to political leadership, and his passing caused virtually no complications in State politics.

The situation was different when Senator Boies Penrose died December 31, 1921, almost in the last hour of the year. Penrose had been a national figure for years and had a strong organization in this city. He fought the Vares in 1910, when Mayor Moore won the Republican nomination for the mayoralty. Penrose's death caused new political alignments all over the State.

Incidentally, State Senator James P. McNichol died November 14, 1917, less than five years ago. He was Penrose's chief lieutenant here, and often fought the Vare forces.

leave for a few moments while he walked to the outer office. There he would talk to each person.

He made few comments; simply listened and nodded his head. If the story was good, if the person telling it made a sincere impression, he or she always got something, whether a promise to help land a job for some one or actual cash or an order for coal.

It was no infrequent thing to see the Senator, on one of these tours of the outer office, pull his wallet out of his pocket and slip out a ten-dollar note. One thing is certain: It was the Senator's custom to send Harry Snow, his secretary, over to the bank early each morning, and Harry would come back with a "big roll" in fives and tens.

When the Senator was not particularly impressed by a story he was hearing he would suggest that the applicant see the division leader. If, later on, the division leader reported that the case was deserving, well and good.

Senator Vare placed great dependence, perhaps it was the source of his power, on the ward and division leaders. He insisted that they know everything going on in their division and know everybody, just as a good policeman is supposed to know all that occurs on his beat.

On election days he would take an automobile and visit the various wards, calling on each division leader. He would stop the machine, call out: "Harry, how's it going?" get a next division and hurry on to the next division.

#### Left His Lieutenants "on Job" at All Times

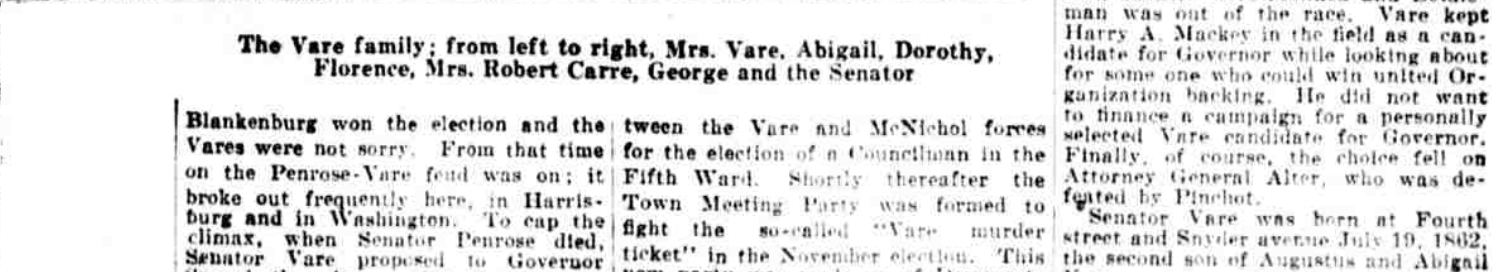
The division leaders were always on the job because they never knew when the Senator would drop around, and they knew also that the Senator claimed the returns of each division as closely as the returns of the moves of a Mayor or a Governor, or even of a United States Senator.

On one such occasion a division leader was so absorbed in making a good report to the Senator, as he stood at the curb, that he paid no attention to an old man and two women who were entering a polling place. Or perhaps he did not see them. Senator Vare saw them.

"Shut up!" the Senator shot at the division leader. "Look after that old man and those two women."

Thereupon the division leader hurriedly approached the voters with a smile and offered to help them out by supplying a sample ballot and telling them how to vote for the "best" candidates.

Senator Vare was always ready to listen to a woman or a delegation of women. When a woman was announced at his office he would say, "Senator Vare, if you might keep a State Representative or a magistrate waiting, it is interesting to recall that the Senator assisted the women suffragists at Harrisburg at a time when all the other organization leaders were trying to shove them away. Senator Vare was ex-



Above, Senator Vare's palatial home at Ambler and in contrast his humble birthplace, "The Little Fellow," as his followers knew him, at his desk; in circle, his daughter Florence; at left, his favorite Abigail

tion leaders had their eyes on any move the Senator might make in connection with the Organization choice for Governor. At that time, early this year, Lieutenant Governor Beidleman was running strong as a candidate for Governor.

Then Colonel George Nox McCain, of the EVENING PUBLIC LEDGER, exposed the \$5000 check which the Lieutenant Governor had received from Auditor General Snyder for legal services for the Commonwealth. Senator Vare went to Florida. On his way back he issued a statement declaring that Beidleman could never be nominated because of the trick expose and because he could not command the support of the women voters. The Beidleman backers were stunned and Beidleman was out of the race. Vare kept Harry A. Mackay in the field as a candidate for Governor while looking about for some one who could win united Organization backing. He did not want to finance a campaign for a personally selected Vare candidate for Governor. Finally, of course, the choice fell on Attorney General Alter, who was defeated by Pinchot.

Senator Vare was born at Fourth street and Snyder avenue July 19, 1862, the second son of Augustus and Abigail Vare.

#### Who'll Be New Leader? Politicians Are Asking

The old Vare homestead was in the original First Ward, which was largely made up of the trick expose and because he could not command the support of the women voters. The Beidleman backers were stunned and Beidleman was out of the race. Vare kept Harry A. Mackay in the field as a candidate for Governor while looking about for some one who could win united Organization backing. He did not want to finance a campaign for a personally selected Vare candidate for Governor. Finally, of course, the choice fell on Attorney General Alter, who was defeated by Pinchot.

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Two years ago the Committee of Seventy challenged Senator Vare's right to vote in the Thirty-ninth Ward of the ground his real home was in Ambler. When he went to register in the Thirty-ninth Ward in August of that year he was challenged by Samuel Hill, 2224 South Clayton street, a Moore worker. "This Senator took an affidavit that he lived in the division and he was registered in the division," said Hill. "The committee had experienced."

Senator Vare was belittled under questioning and insisted that 2009 South Broad street was his home. But he admitted he had been in the building three for a year previously, and that he didn't know how the dining room was furnished.

The Senator branded the attack on his voting residence as a "cheap political trick." The commission upheld his right to vote from the ward.

Subsequently he sold the house at 2009 South Broad street and established his voting residence at 2224 South Broad street, which he leased. In August, 1920, his voting residence was challenged, but the commission dismissed the petition.

Blankenburg won the election and the Vares were not sorry. From that time on the Penrose-Vare feud was on; it broke out frequently here, in Harrisburg and in Washington. To cap the climax, when Senator Penrose died, Senator Vare proposed to Governor Sprout that he appoint Congressman Vare as the successor to the late senior Senator. Governor Sprout, however, named George Wharton Pepper.

#### Widened His Power by Astute Methods

Beginning with the defeat of Bill Vare for the mayoralty nomination, the Vares, their wisest supporters, the fight with Penrose, and their following enlarged by their display of strategy and fighting qualities, began to make themselves felt more and more.

The State organization, headed by Senator Penrose, indignantly supported Dr. Martin G. Brumbaugh for the Republican gubernatorial nomination in 1911. But when Dr. Brumbaugh took office he named Francis Shunk Brown, personal attorney for Senator Vare, as Attorney General and otherwise showed more favor to the Vares than to Penrose. Penrose had not been fought in a factional battle, but the Vares, developing a new vein of State politics, had won. This helped the Vares when the mayoralty nomination in 1915 was the object of concern among the leaders. Again Penrose and McNichol and the Vares united on a single candidate, but when Smith became Mayor he named a decidedly Vare cabinet.

It was during the administration of Smith that the Vares suffered a setback in that their friends were charged with responsibility for the Fifth Ward murder. The full effect of this was not felt until the next mayoralty election when the Vare candidate, Judge John Patterson, was defeated by J. Hampton Moore, who had the backing of Penrose and the independents.

With the Fifth Ward murder, Senator Penrose started his drive against the Vares which terminated success fully in the election of Moore. And before that Penrose had pushed the new city charter through the Legislature against the opposition of Vares. The charter and the election of Moore finally brought an end to the Vare contracts for street cleaning.

#### Fifth Ward Murder Had Far Reaching Results

The Fifth Ward murder in 1917 arose out of the primary contest be-

Senator and Mrs. Vare; below, "Ed" and "Brother Bill" on Chestnut street

Senator Vare on his yacht

The Vare family; from left to right, Mrs. Vare, Abigail, Dorothy, Florence, Mrs. Robert Carre, George and the Senator

Above, Senator Vare's palatial home at Ambler and in contrast his humble birthplace, "The Little Fellow," as his followers knew him, at his desk; in circle, his daughter Florence; at left, his favorite Abigail

#### Wouldn't Back Pinchot Until After Landslide

About the only time of any importance when the Senator declined to go along with the women, although he opposed Lieutenant Governor Beidleman for the nomination for Governor because he did not think the women would stand for him, was when Mrs. Barclay H. Warburton, vice chairman of the Republican State Committee, called on him prior to the primary election in the spring of 1922. Mrs. Warburton gave him good reasons why he should support Pinchot. The Senator and Mrs. Warburton had a most friendly talk. But what the Senator regarded as the clinching argument why he should not favor the Forrester was that if he did his followers would think he was crazy. He told Mrs. Warburton he could never make his followers believe he was sane if he backed a man of so much independence of thought and action as Pinchot.

#### Had Firey Verbal War With Senator Penrose

Senator Penrose would call Senator Vare a scavenger and a garbage collector and Senator Vare would retort that the senior Senator was a "big bluff, a liar and a faker" and that Penrose would be of more use to the country if he were not "indisposed" so often.

#### Knew Value of Jobs to Strengthen Power

Senator Vare was smart enough and keen enough to know that the applause he got at political gatherings was inspired by the desire for jobs and other political patronage. Nevertheless, this feeling of the part of the little fellows was highly influential by the Senator's human qualities; his hand with the common touch. To these little fellows Senator Vare was the "Little Fellow," so described because of his stocky stature and physical antithesis to the "Big Fellow," Senator Penrose.

#### Only Leader Willing to Fight With Penrose

Penrose's reply on one occasion was: "I thought you fellows could control your words." That speech was intended for Germantown.

#### Refused to Take Place as "Boss of the State"

In fact, when Penrose died on New Year's eve last, Mayor Magee, of Pittsburgh, tried to place the garland of State leadership on the brow of Senator Vare. Thrice and more this crown was refused. But all Organiza-

#### Blakenburg won the election and the Vares were not sorry.

From that time on the Penrose-Vare feud was on; it broke out frequently here, in Harrisburg and in Washington. To cap the climax, when Senator Penrose died, Senator Vare proposed to Governor Sprout that he appoint Congressman Vare as the successor to the late senior Senator. Governor Sprout, however, named George Wharton Pepper.

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