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Long Grove History

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A Stump Speech on the *Stemple Steps*

With statewide elections gearing up, an interesting historical question — have any famous candidates ever campaigned in Long Grove? With no railroad and a low population density, you have to go all the way back to 1892.

By Aaron Underwood · Long Grove Historical Society



Then & now. The Stemple store stoop in **1909** — the same crossroads corner where Altgeld delivered his 1892 speech — beside the same building in **2014**, now serving as the Information Center for downtown merchants.

In 1892, a hot topic in the Illinois Governor's race was labor reform. The Democrat **John Peter Altgeld** was challenging the sitting Republican Governor Joseph Fifer. Candidate Altgeld delivered a speech in Long Grove from the steps of the Stemple store at the downtown crossroads — somewhat ironic, considering proprietor Charles Stemple was a well-known Republican in the area.



Not a household name — but his friends are.

While Altgeld might not currently be a household name, his associates are. The famed attorney Clarence Darrow was Altgeld's protégé, and would later become famous for the Scopes Monkey Trial. Jane Addams, of Chicago's Hull House, was a friend. Both were instrumental in organizing Chicago-area support for the challenger.

Altgeld won the election, 49% to 46%. As promised, he passed a number of labor reforms — though his thinking may have been a bit too reformist for the voters, and he was defeated in his 1896 re-election bid.

Why Long Grove?

The exact date, and the reason he chose to speak in Long Grove, are not known. Having been born in Germany, one of his claims to fame was being the first foreign-born Illinois Governor. Interesting speculation is that he may have had a family connection in the heavily German Long Grove of the time.

A POLITICIAN TO THE BITTER END

*Altgeld met his maker while giving a political speech in Joliet
in 1902. Darrow and Addams gave the eulogy at his funeral.*

JOHN PETER ALTGELD · 1847 — 1902

A statue of Altgeld can be found in Chicago's Lincoln Park, near Diversey and Lake Shore Drive.

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