

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

JOHN MICHENER HAINES  
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Of German and early Pennsylvania English Quaker ancestry, he was a native of Jasper County (between Des Moines and Grinnell), Iowa, where his family had a farm. After a brief student career at Penn College (Oskaloosa, Iowa) and his marriage to Mary Symons in 1883, he became a bank clerk for two years in Friend (near Lincoln), Nebraska. Then in 1885 he shifted into real estate around Richland, Kansas. There he joined in Walter E. Pierce's real estate ventures; L. H. Cox also entered that firm which, after severe drought ruined their western Kansas prospects, moved to Boise in 1890. By that time he had political experience as a Kansas State Republican Committee member who won an election as Norton County commissioner of deeds.

In Boise, he continued his political as well as real estate career: as a city council member beginning in 1899, he gained experience that led to a term as mayor (1907-1909) and culminated in a 1912 election victory that made him governor. During that campaign, in which Progressive Republicans were divided into separate factions after Theodore Roosevelt tried to return to his presidential office as a Progressive party candidate, Haines remained a Taft Republican. Taft, with strong Mormon support, came close to winning in Idaho, and Haines did better yet. No candidate received a majority, but Haines was progressive enough to gain office. Many important Progressive reforms came in 1912 and during his administration that followed.

As was typical in Progressive reform, Haines advocated a sound business approach to governmental administration. Any new

agencies, office expansion, or additional services could be accepted only if they showed favorable cost ratios, demonstrating that benefits, computed financially, would exceed expenditures. In addition, he supported reforms such as non-partisan elections for judges, appointive rather than elective positions for professional state officers (such as attorney general, treasurer, auditor, superintendent of public instruction, and state mine inspector), and four-year terms for governors who would continue to be elected. A state public utilities commission, along with regulation of corporation securities sales (stocks and bonds), joined a workmen's compensation program and superior administration of public lands (state and federal) in his array of reforms. Some of those improvements were accomplished during his administration, while others were deferred. A unified State Board of Education took over state university and school operations during his term.

A candidate for reelection in 1914, he faced two other aspirants who were still more progressive than he was. Just a couple of weeks before election, though, he was greatly embarrassed by having to imprison his state treasurer (whom he did not appoint nor control) for stealing \$93,112.03 in state funds. Even though he was not responsible for that aspect of public administration (but wanted to be), that defalcation fitted in poorly with his progressive program of cost ratios and efficiency safeguards. Another former Boise mayor, with still better progressive business credentials, replaced him during a close contest in 1914. Not long after that, failing health left him no opportunity to attempt to return to office.

**(This information has not been edited.)**

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