



Alf Landon

September 9, 1887 - October 12, 1987

Topeka, Kansas

Alfred Mossman Landon, the Kansas governor who ran against Franklin Roosevelt in 1936, carried only two states, and then lived another half century as a wry elder of the Republican Party, died at his home in Topeka on October 12, 1987. He was one hundred years old.

He was born on September 9, 1887, in West Middlesex, Pennsylvania, grew up partly in Marietta, Ohio, and moved with his family to Kansas. After graduating from the University of Kansas he went into the oil business around Independence and Lawrence and made enough money to enter politics as a Progressive Republican. He managed campaigns, served as state party chairman, and in 1932 won the governorship in the depths of the Depression, cutting spending while accepting parts of the New Deal he thought workable.

Republicans nominated him for president in 1936 as a moderate alternative to Roosevelt. The Literary Digest poll famously predicted his victory; instead Roosevelt won all but Maine and Vermont, and the Digest soon folded. Landon took the defeat without bitterness, returned to Kansas, and never again sought high office. He spoke out later against McCarthyism and for civil rights, and Presidents of both parties treated him as a living link to an older Republican tradition.

On his hundredth birthday, September 9, 1987, Ronald Reagan and other leaders telephoned congratulations. He died a little more than a month later. Kansas State University's Landon Lecture Series, which he helped inspire, still brings national figures to Manhattan, Kansas, a quieter legacy than a presidency, and a more durable one.

Services

Died in Topeka, KS, October 12, 1987, aged 100. Portrait: 1936 campaign photograph (public domain), hosted

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NN-OBIT-2026-H263

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