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## Pomerene family lineage played a part in shaping politics and medicine

BY AMBER KANUCKEL JANUARY 16, 2017 688

7

As the decades have gone by, Holmes County has given rise to plenty of influential people. However, none have made as large a mark in history as the Pomerenes. Pomerene Hospital in Millersburg is named for Dr. Joel Pomerene, who was perhaps one of the first of this family to become famous. His story starts in the mid-1800s at the small village of Middletown in Salt Creek Township, where he worked on his family's farm until the age of 17. From there he went on to attend the Western Star Academy in Summit County, which marked the beginnings of his medical career. Joel Pomerene had a brother, Peter Pomerene, who also dreamed of becoming a doctor. Together the Pomerene brothers worked their way through school, but they came from a poor family, so they didn't have the money to enroll in university continuously. Joel Pomerene took up teaching to help fund his education, taking classes when he could afford it, all the while tutoring his brother in the field of medicine. In 1855 Peter Pomerene began practicing medicine in Berlin while still taking what time he could to further his education. In 1860 he traveled to Philadelphia to attend a lecture course at Jefferson Medical College. Joel Pomerene went in a different direction, however. He became a military surgeon during the Civil War, where he met and served with future President James A. Garfield. They became good friends, Candice Barnhart of the Holmes County Historical Society said. Years later when Garfield lay dying of an assassin's bullet, Dr. Pomerene went to be by his side. The Pomerene legacy didn't end with brothers Joel and Peter. Joel Pomerene had a son, DaCosta Pomerene, who was born blind but nevertheless became a famous Presbyterian minister. Peter Pomerene built the Pomerene House in Berlin and raised 12 children, several of whom achieved prominence, becoming doctors, lawyers and ministers. Interestingly one of Peter's sons, Dr. Lister Pomerene, was associated with Dr. George Washington Crile, a famous doctor from Baltic who went on to become one of the founding fathers of the Cleveland Clinic. Dr. Lister married Dr. Crile's nurse, who he met when she accompanied Crile on a call, Barnhart said. The most prominent of Peter's children was Atlee Pomerene, born in Berlin on Dec. 6, 1863. Atlee was quite a distinguished politician, Barnhart said. He attended the Vermillion Institute in Hayesville. That building has recently been historically restored and at one time was among the ranks of Kenyon and Oberlin. In addition to the Vermillion Institute, Atlee Pomerene also studied at the University of Cincinnati Law School and at Princeton University. By 1886 he was a full-fledged lawyer practicing in Canton. From there Atlee Pomerene went on to serve in a variety of government positions at the city, county and state levels. In 1910 he was elected as the 31st lieutenant governor of Ohio, but his time in this office was short. In March of 1911 Atlee Pomerene was elected to the United States Senate, where he served until 1923. During his senatorial career he was appointed as a special prosecutor for the Teapot Dome scandal by then President Calvin Coolidge. By 1928 Atlee Pomerene set his sights on the presidency itself, running in that year's Democratic Primary. He lost the Democratic nomination to Governor Al Smith from New York. In November of that year Smith lost the presidential race to Herbert Hoover. Atlee Pomerene's political career was not over with the primary loss, however. In 1932 President Hoover appointed him to lead the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, a political entity devoted to helping the United States recover from the Great Depression. Though the Pomerenes had humble beginnings as settlers in Holmes County, their family lineage played a large part in shaping politics and medicine across the United States in the late part of the 19th century and first half of the 20th century.

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