

# Earl Snell (1895-1947)

*By Unknown*

This photograph of Earl Snell was taken in 1947. Snell served as Oregon's secretary of state from 1934 to 1942 and as governor from 1942 to 1947.

Earl Wilcox Snell was born on his parent's farm near the Gilliam County town of Olex on July 11, 1895. After graduating from the Gilliam County public school system, Snell served in the U.S. Army during World War I. He went on to establish a Ford dealership in Arlington after the war.

A Republican, Snell got his start in politics while living in Arlington, where he served on the city council and as president of the chamber of commerce. He was first elected to the state legislature in 1927 and served six years in the house, including a year as speaker. He worked to reduce state spending during his time in the legislature, and helped cut several million dollars from the state budget while serving as speaker in 1933.

In 1934 he successfully campaigned for his first statewide office, secretary of state. He ran as a fiscal conservative, touting his cost-cutting record in the house. During the campaign, he promised to apply "sound, common sense business principles," and pointed to his successful automobile business as proof of his business acumen. He was a strong believer in efficiency in government; one of his slogans was "every tax dollar should purchase a dollar's worth of service."

Snell served two terms as secretary of state before running for governor in 1943, when he beat the incumbent Charles Sprague by more than 3,000 votes in the Republican primary. During his first term, Snell helped prepare the state for the postwar economy, believing that a postwar depression could be avoided. He foresaw a boom in tourism after the end of the war, and urged the legislature to encourage tourists to come to Oregon, which he considered "the greatest recreational and inspirational playground in America." He also worked to establish modern forestry practices, "to the end," he said in a 1945 speech, "that Oregon's wonderful forests may be a never-ending resource and a perpetual area of beauty."

Snell was nine months into his second term when he was killed in a plane crash in eastern Klamath County. Oregon's other top two public officials, the president of the Oregon Senate, Marshall E. Cornett, and Secretary of State Robert S. Farrell, Jr., were also killed in the October 1947 crash.

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