

TAFT'S VISITS TO OMAHA MADE HIM HOSTS OF FRIENDS

Four Times in Two Years He Has Met the Local Folks Hand to Hand and Face to Face and Always Left Them Smiling When He Said Goodbye

FOUR times within two years President-elect William H. Taft, has visited Omaha. Even if a Nebraskan did carry the city of Omaha by a small majority, there is no doubt but what the four visits which Mr. Taft made to the city increased his popularity.

Once Mr. Taft came here to urge the election of republican congressmen and senators who would uphold the hands of President Roosevelt; again he came as secretary of war returning from an inspection of western military posts; this year he first visited Omaha as the guest of the McKinley club and city of Omaha, and his last visit was purely as a candidate for the office of president, to which he had just been elected.

Mr. Taft did not talk much with men on any of these visits about the city of Omaha, its resources and industries, its present and its future. His time was taken up with entertainment; with political friends and military men, with speaking to help others and handling his correspondence or dictating an address.

Observing things, knowing the needs of the abundance of a city or a state—feeling the things which make life possible and a people self-maintaining, is one of the qualities which goes with a judicial mind and one of the achievements which caused Mr. Taft to be taken from a judge's robe in Ohio to build a new nation in Asia. So when Mr. Taft had been whirled into Omaha to speak at two theaters two years ago; brought in at night to speak at the opening of a Young Men's Christian association building, a year later; then came out as the guest of the city for thirty-six hours six months later, he left Omaha knowing more about the city than some of the oldest inhabitants.

It was by a process of "absorbing the spirit of the people" and deducting from that atmosphere a concise statement of what the people do for a living, the extent of the public spirit and something of their hopes for the future. And Mr. Taft has never lost an opportunity to say a good word about Omaha when he returned to the east after being the guest of the McKinley club. He has praised it consistently—not the cheap praise of the political aspirant who "feels honored to stand before such an intelligent audience," but the sincere praise of a man who has not played politics in the past and is not likely to know how to play politics in the future.

Praise for the City

"Omaha is destined to become a metropolis in the west. It is a great market located in the heart of one of the richest sections of the west. The trade now given to the city reaches to the north Pacific ocean," was one of the tributes paid Omaha by the president-elect, who saw more in Omaha to talk about than most public men who visit the city. "During the recent financial trouble, Omaha and St. Paul were the cities in the west who best maintained their equilibrium and the effects of the so-called panic were not noticeable in Omaha."

Mr. Taft rode through South Omaha in an automobile while it was raining, hurrying to Omaha in the rain, but he rubbed the sweat from the window of the limousine and looked out. The smoke was pouring out of the chimneys of the packing houses, the yards were full of scared cattle, the voices of thousands of squealing hogs could be heard and the atmosphere was saturated with that rich odor of which all packing centers boast.

The great statesman had seen other packing plants in other cities. He comprehended in a moment the extent of the business in Omaha, made a mental comparison and drew the deduction that South Omaha was a busy packing center. The yards looked crowded to him and Mr. Taft evidently saw future growth. At his hotel he looked at the market page of an Omaha paper, glanced at the receipts and shipments of a week and returned to New York better able to answer questions about the extent of the packing industry at Omaha than many who have lived in the city for many years.

Mr. Taft's first visit to Omaha was two years ago in November, 1906. He spoke at the Burwood and at the Boyd theaters urging the election of John L. Kennedy and republican representatives everywhere who could best assist President Roosevelt and the republican governors in the east and west who were correcting abuses and reforming administrations. The very first sentence uttered by the big powerful man brought a storm of applause at the Burwood. With one of his expansive smiles, which showed the odd little creases and wrinkles at the corners of his unusually and singularly beautiful eyes, Mr. Taft said:

"I come before a Nebraska audience with a great deal of hesitation, because you have been used to not only forceful speaking, but to oratory and eloquence and I can bring you nothing of either. I came here to help, as far as I might, my friend, your representative, Mr. Kennedy."

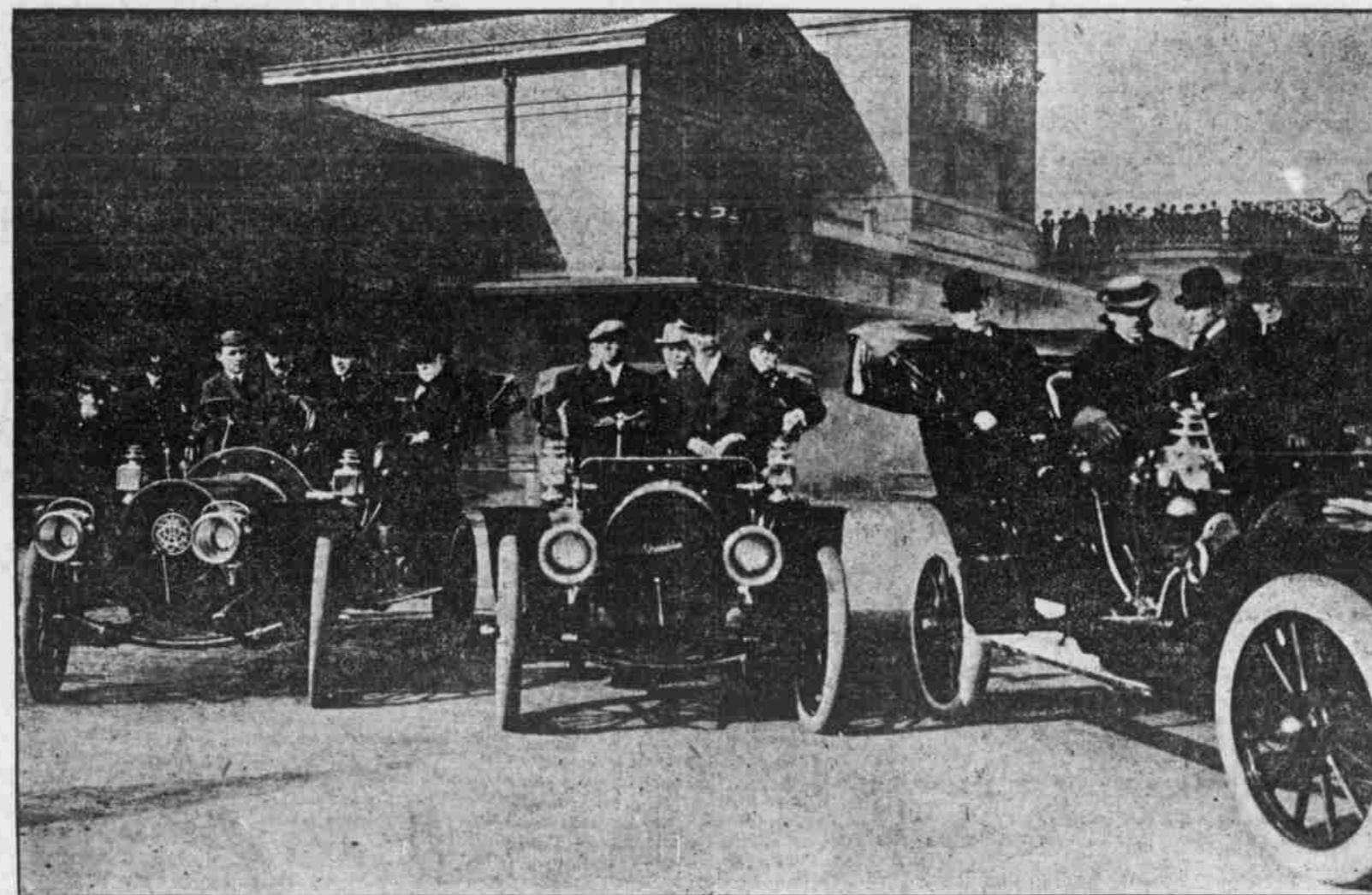
Jokes With Millard

Both Mr. Kennedy and J. H. Millard, then senator from Nebraska, had been working hard on the War department for developments at the forts, supply bureaus and other things which the department controls at Omaha.

"While I am always glad to receive Senator Millard, there has been times this last winter when it seemed to me that their presence



JUDGE TAFT, GOVERNOR SHELDON AND NOTABLE NEBRASKA REPUBLICANS ON THE STEPS AT THE OMAHA CLUB.



JUDGE TAFT AND RECEPTION COMMITTEE LEAVING THE UNION DEPOT.

preparations. He said the public would not stand for the delay. Now the American people want everything next morning for breakfast. That has been our experience. As soon as the canal bill was passed and the commission appointed every newspaper in the country began to ask 'has the dirt begun to fly?' But we let them ask the question and have taken two years for preparation because we want to do it right, and I am pleased to announce to you tonight that the dirt has begun to fly."

The next visit of Mr. Taft to Omaha was June 18, 1907, when he spoke at the formal opening of the Young Men's Christian Association building.

As secretary of war he had just returned from the military posts in the Black Hills after having made a swing through Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota and Nebraska. He visited the posts here and was entertained at dinner at the Omaha club.

When Mr. Taft delivered his address at the Young Men's Christian association opening, Omahans got a little closer to him—a little closer than they got the year before when he addressed political meetings, a little nearer the big heart of the man and were permitted to know something more of the kind of character he appreciates.

"This association has my highest admiration for the manner

in which it is conducted on severe business principles. The object of this association being so apparent, what a scope it offers to our wealthy men to put their money where it will do the most good. Frequently they keep it in their pockets because they do not know where to put it.

"It is often more difficult to give money wisely than to make it. Few realize the problems which confront those of millions who desire to give wisely. The furnishing of a Christian home for young men, who have no homes in which they can enjoy themselves—the furnishing of a Christian club is the phase of which I wish to speak and is the most useful phase."

Tribute to the Y. M. C. A.

Then the secretary of war paid a high tribute to the work of the association in connection with the army. He said, "I think of the Young Men's Christian association as a part of the government, for it knows how to attract the man of the army to get them to spend their leisure hours properly. We are always glad to call upon the educated agents of the association to help out, for they know better than our men how to reach the men.

"In the Philippines I have noticed the work of this association. We took the Philippines because we had to, we got the bear by the tail and are still holding on. We could not give the islands back to Spain and we could not let them govern themselves. We must now teach them by example. It is a poor example when a large part of the population we send to that country is seen reeling through the streets and it does not help much in the training we have undertaken. The effects of the tropics on those who come from the temperate zone is not always for the best. A brandy and soda seems to fill the aching void and so it goes on because there is no amusement like this building would furnish."

In general, he said of the association: "The work of the Young Men's Christian association makes for the righteousness of the community and makes for the betterment of the substratum of this government without which it would fall in a few years."

When the McKinley club began plans for its annual banquet this year, Secretary Taft was again invited to Omaha and promptly accepted. This was the visit which counted for most in friendships. Mr. Taft met everyone—everyone who wanted to meet him. He was a guest in Omaha, at the forts, in Council Bluffs and put in the busiest thirty-six hours a public man ever spent in Omaha unless it was Theodore Roosevelt. But the secretary of war, now president-elect, enjoyed every moment of the time, stood for any sort of entertainment, attended luncheons, banquets and receptions on both sides of the river with equal ease. At the reception held at the Hotel Rome, Mr. Taft got a chance to get an idea of what the people will do to him now that he is president. But he enjoyed it and did many amusing things.

Particular About Photographs

While Mr. Taft is always willing to accommodate the newspaper representatives with an interview, he is a little particular about having his photograph taken. It was while standing in the reception line at the Hotel Rome that he showed his discriminating taste as to the company in which he is photographed. Hundreds waited in line. The photographers had their instruments trained on the secretary of war, the alcohol lamps were trimmed and burning and the flash light powder waited to pop. But the photographers could not get Mr. Taft to turn around a moment for the picture. He stood shaking hands with a multitude of people. Away back in the crowd an old man with long white whiskers was leaning on a cane and showing some nervousness about getting to shake hands with the "next president of the United States." The secretary's eye fell on this old man.

Several more shouts were given by the photographers. An aide to the secretary asked him to turn around. But he shook hands with fifty, and the old man with the white and overflowing whiskers stepped up.

Mr. Taft grabbed the old man's hand, so dry and drawn it almost rattled like autumn leaves. Then, holding to the brown hand he turned around for the photographers with a smile which seemed to say: "I'll have my picture taken when I find some one who I want in the photograph with me."

With the officers at the military posts Secretary Taft showed he was an ideal superior officer and as to the firing of the salutes, he waited with impatience until the last shot was fired and said he thought such formal things were all right, but they always tore up the grass in front of the guns, and it would require many weeks to grow the grass scorched and torn up by the powder and wadding.

At the Auditorium, where Mr. Taft made an address which he dictated between times on the day of his arrival, the candidate outlined what would be the issue of the campaign in which he has just been victorious, and summed up the situation thus, "The campaign will hinge on whether the American people endorse the administration of President Roosevelt or not."

And they have endorsed it. Secretary Taft did not speak until late that night. The local spellbinders and the toastmasters took all the time they could before the street cars stopped and Mr. Taft had written an address of almost an hour's length. Just before the banquet opened Mr. Taft allowed the newspaper men to sort out a copy of the address for their use. He handed them both the original and the duplicate copies. They handed him back the original.

Fooled the Reporters

But while the secretary was reading he suddenly stopped and began to shuffle the pages of his manuscript.

Everyone at the speakers' table turned white. It was apparent the manuscript had been juggled—perhaps a few pages lost. The secretary continued to run through his manuscript and the press table was wet with the sweat of those who had the manuscript last.

"Well, I'll go on," said Mr. Taft, "I'll have to begin in another place, I cannot get this straightened out."

He only read a few moments after that and when the address was over a newspaper representative asked him, "Is it possible that I misplaced some sheets of your address?"

With a knowing twinkle, the secretary whispered, "No, it was only getting late and my voice was bad."

The last visit of Mr. Taft was one of those flying ones which all presidential candidates make if they go visiting at all during their campaigns. He arrived late, spoke in South Omaha to a good sized crowd and the record breaker at the Omaha auditorium.

It was a noticeable feature at the Omaha auditorium that the applause was well directed as it were. Those who have traveled with Mr. Taft notice this in all his meetings. Sentiment causes some crowds to cheer, others cheer when a speaker talks sense.

All Mr. Bryan has to do to get a hand in Omaha is to refer to the "great state of Nebraska," or shout as he lets out a joint or two and reaches toward the roof "let the people rule." Mr. Taft could say Nebraska was a great state and let the people rule if he cared to flatter and appeal to sentiment, but he would not get much of an outburst. But when Taft, the statesman, defines some policy, puts a great economic problem in a new light or tells without equivocation or reservation what he intends to do as president of the United States, he gets applause from an Omaha audience which equals that which Mr. Bryan gets on his flights of oratory.

Mr. Taft says, "our rivers should be improved, one at a time, and each as a great public enterprise. The people can afford to pay the tax necessary to improve those streams, but no community can long afford to pay the tax of the present waste of our resources and indifference to our advantages."

The people applaud this. Mr. Taft says his voice usually sounds like the honk of an automobile horn, and while it might not be pleasing it is at least familiar to the prosperous community of Omaha.

But the ballots of the people have shown they prefer a voice with a honk with a brain behind it, to a voice of richer quality and only the ability to construct flights or oratory behind it.

A Century of Airship Evolution

IT TOOK a century to develop the dirigible balloon after it had been conceived in its present modern form. For one thing, motors of the efficiency of those now available were lacking. But the delay was due in at least equal measure to the fact that no one thought of certain little details of construction—details which may easily escape the notice of the layman, but are vital to the airship.

To make a dirigible gas balloon seems in a way very simple now. Obviously it will move in any desired direction in the surrounding air if elongated and pointed like a submarine and provided with a propelling instrument and a rudder. Yet, with one notable exception, hardly one of the countless schemes proposed up to the latter half of the last century touched upon these vital points. Instead there were complicated and fantastic combinations of the initial round ball with useless contrivances of all sorts.

The balloon, like the steam engine, had its John Watt very shortly after its birth. This was a Frenchman, General Muesnier, who, with keen insight into essential principles, submitted a very creditable design of a dirigible balloon to the French academy as early as 1784. The design was judiciously adapted to the only available motive power, human arms, and there was an astonishing anticipation of the modern propeller, called by him a rotating car.

Muesnier's plans were never executed and were soon forgotten in the storm of the French revolution. For over a century they lay buried in the library of the French academy, and yet they anticipated all the essential points of modern aerostatics. A characteristic proof is found in the general's statement that he did not expect to drive his ship against any save the most gentle zephyr

by the sole efforts of its crew, but that he expected to be able gradually to steer it across the wind, to raise or lower it without any loss of ballast or gas and to reach the destination of a long sky voyage by thus taking advantage of the most favorable air currents.

The inventor also embodied in his construction fundamental features of the first self-propelled balloon that ever returned to its starting point—which feat occurred exactly 100 years later—namely, the oblong form of the car, which is needed to preserve the shape of the gas bag, the internal balloon, which keeps the gas bag taut and regulates its ascensional force and the system of staying the car fore and aft, which prevents it from swinging.

A hundred years elapsed, as has been said, before there was any real progress. Then, in 1884, the airship came at last into existence. Again it was a French officer, Captain Renard, who led in its development.

Under the stress of the siege of Paris in 1870 the wish for a means of communication by which a besieged fortress could not only be left, but also re-entered just as safely, had become so deeply rooted in the heart of the French nation that unlimited funds were placed at the disposal of a newly founded military aeronautical department for the purpose of evolving the perfect airship. By Captain Renard the way to achieve this was pointed out.

His work, like that of General Muesnier, was far in advance of the day. Not only did he invent the balloon La France of 1854-85, but also the Ville de Paris in 1907. In other words, he stopped short at nothing connected with the navigable balloon problem, and his successors needed in fact only to add improved motors.

He had to use a very imperfect source of power—an electric motor driven by batteries, not only because the steam and gas engines of his day were too crude and heavy, but especially because they offered no protection against the risk of setting the gas on fire. Gifford, who, in 1853, put rather recklessly the first mechanical motor on a primitive elongated balloon, using a low pressure steam engine fired with coke, was obliged to suspend the car so low that propulsion became problematical. Compared to the present airship, motors of five pounds weight per horse-power Renard's propelling mechanism, weighing over 100 pounds per horse-power, was almost as far from the goal as Muesnier's human power of more than 600 pounds per horse-power.

But Renard settled once for all the great questions of a shape of small resistance for the gas bag, the amount of stiffening required, the value of a high position for the center of gravity, correct suspension, elimination, surface friction both in balloon and car proper, placing and shaping of the rudder, economical propeller and last, but not least, the equilibrium in flight. All these discoveries were the result of painstaking, long and exact experiments with models, and the last named discovery, that of a means of maintaining equilibrium in the air, opened an entirely new epoch.

Its importance became appreciated only much later in the life of its author; in fact, only shortly before his untimely death. Like Muesnier's ideas, it was then submitted to the French academy, and its value being recognized, it started in flight a flock of aerostatic fledglings which were then struggling to master the art of true flight and which included the balloons identified with (Continued on Page Three.)



TAFT'S SMILE—GENERAL MANDERSON AT HIS LEFT.

in my office was not altogether necessary," was the comment made by the secretary of war in introducing a high tribute to Congressman Kennedy and Senator Millard for the hard work they had been doing for Nebraska and the Second congressional district.

A statement was made by Mr. Taft at this time which went around the country. It was in regard to the Panama canal, and called attention to the unreasonable restlessness of the press and the people because "dirt was not flying" within half an hour after the appropriation for digging the canal was passed and the commission appointed.

"James J. Hill told me, and I suppose he is one of the greatest railroad builders in the country, unless it is General Dodge, that we could not build the canal because we could not make the necessary