PART THREE
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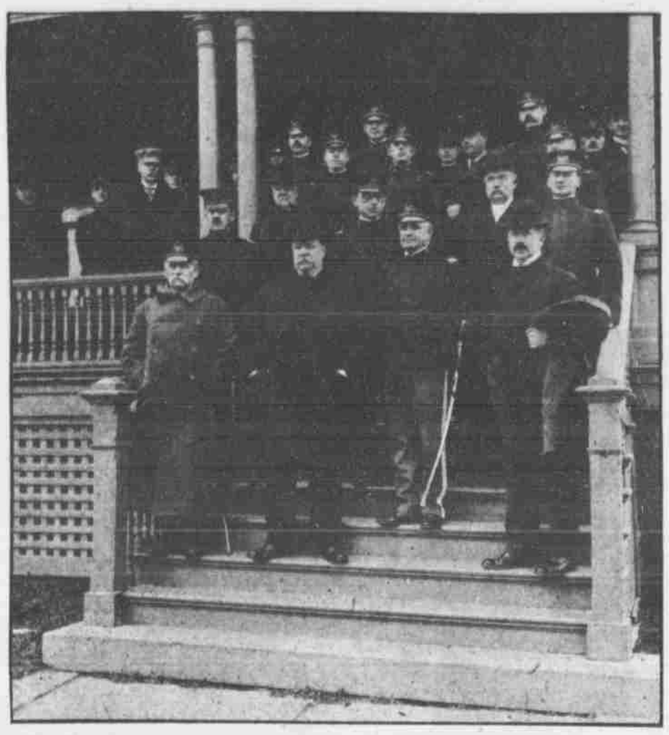
PRESIDENT TAFT'S FORMER FRIENDLY VISITS TO OMAHA

Four Occasions in Which the Present Chief Executive of the Nation Has Been Entertained Here and the Circumstances Under Which He Met With His Fellow Citizens



MR. TAFT AT FORT CROOK—COLONEL CORNELIUS GARDENER AND STAFF AND OFFICERS OF THE SIXTEENTH INFANTRY.

MR. TAFT AND THE NEBRASKA DELEGATES TO THE CHICAGO CONVENTION AT THE OMAHA CLUB.

MR. TAFT AT FORT OMAHA—LIEUTENANT COLONEL W. A. GLASSFORD AND STAFF.

WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT has been in Omaha four times for public visits, twice as secretary of war and twice as a candidate for the office which he now holds. As a cabinet officer and as a political possibility Omaha was pleased to entertain him lavishly and enthusiastically. It remains to be seen what welcome will be given him when he comes as the first officer of the American government.

There can be no doubt that Taft's generous and impressive personality will bring him cheering crowds and throngs of curious sightseers, and this would be true even if he were not president. As a special guest of the Ak-Sar-Ben Board of Governors he will be treated more as William H. Taft of Washington, D. C. but the people who gaze in the streets will think of him as the head of the nation. So he will get public honor and private hospitality and he ought to be impressed with the city's entertainment.

The secretary of war, known as a judge and as a skillful administrator of special public tasks, came first to Omaha, November 1, 1906. He had been through before on numerous occasions, but that was the first time he ever stopped here to talk politics and have a cup of tea. A congressional campaign was on and the national administration was very much interested in seeing that Nebraska was kept safely within the republican fold.

Came First on Political Errand

The republican candidate from this district was John L. Kennedy, and to boost his success the national committee decided to send the secretary of war. He had just been visiting with "Uncle Joe" Cannon, back in Danville, Ill., and came straight through from there to speak in Omaha. He made eight speeches the day before arriving here, all of them while passing through Illinois. Iowa was slighted, for things were hot in Omaha.

After it as decided to have Taft here, it was found that no suitable hall could be procured. The Boyd and Burwood theaters were both considered, but the houses had been sold out for both of them on that evening. Finally, at great expense, the Burwood was bought up for the evening, and it was decided to hold an overflow in the Boyd for those who could not get into the smaller playhouse.

The famous guest arrived in his private car "Independence." At the station he was met by Senator Millard, John L. Kennedy, Brigadier General Theodore H. Wint, commander of the department of Missouri and the officers of staff of the department. His first remark as a visitor in this city was: "It's good to get to Omaha." Just how he knew that with no experience has never been decided, but it was a fair prophecy and did not fail.

A reception committee made up of the most prominent of Omaha republicans and some democrats were at the station to greet him. From there he was driven to the home of Senator Millard, on Twenty-fourth and Harney streets, where he was entertained at dinner. The guest list included Mr. Taft, General Grenville M. Dodge, General and Mrs. Wint, General and Mrs. John C. Cowin, Mr. and Mrs. Henry W. Yates, John L. Kennedy, Dr. W. O. Bridges, Senator Joseph H. Millard and Miss Millard. Senator Millard and the secretary were close personal friends, their acquaintance having come from their association on the work of building the Panama canal. The construction was under the control of the War department and Senator Millard was chairman of the senate canal committee.

At the Burwood theater that night there were as many people as could be crowded within the walls. The speaker was introduced by Mr. Kennedy. He spoke from a stage on which sat General Dodge, Attorney General Norris Brown, Robert Cowell, Joseph H. Adams, chairman of the congressional committee; Tony Donahue, chairman of the county committee; Judge Doane, Henry W. Yates, who conquered democratic prejudices, and a number of other distinguished men.

In his speech, Secretary Taft devoted himself largely to a discussion of the policy of the United States in the island possessions, and he touched the question of Roosevelt policies. At that time there was widely circulated a sentiment supposed to have emanated from Colonel Bryan to the effect that it would take a democratic successor and a democratic congress to make possible the carrying out of the Roosevelt policies. Upon this idea Mr. Taft put a heavy foot, verbally, just as he later refuted it by personal conduct. After his speech at the Burwood he was driven to the Boyd, where the show was over and a thirty-minute meeting was held for another large crowd. That night he left Omaha for Wyoming. His first visit to Omaha was a decided success, and the congressional campaign was on for John L. Kennedy and the republican party.

Under very different auspices Mr. Taft made his second visit here June 18, 1907. The Young Men's Christian association had just finished a new $200,000 building and Mr. Taft was invited to make the dedicatory speech. He had been ill in St. Louis for several days before he was expected here, but recovered his health in time to meet the engagement. His route of travel took him up into the Black Hills before coming here, and bad weather had made the trains late, so that the committee expecting him was a worried group of officials until his train came in, about 7 o'clock the evening of the ceremonies.

Dinner at the Omaha Club

At the station he was met by Brigadier General Edward S. Godfrey of the Department of Missouri and his staff and a number of prominent citizens. He was taken in charge personally by Victor Rosewater and taken to the Omaha club, where Mr. Rosewater gave a dinner in his honor. The guests were Mr. Taft, Governor George L. Sheldon, Norris Brown, Major General J. Franklin Bell, General Edward S. Godfrey, John L. Kennedy, H. H. Baldrige, John L. Webster, Charles J. Greene, John C. Wharton, C. M. Wilhelm, Luther Drake, C. C. Rosewater, Robert Cowell, Wendell W Mischler, Gurdon W. Wattles, W. J. Connell, Fred H. Davis, Arthur C. Smith and Victor Rosewater. At the dinner the candidacy of the guest of honor for the presidency was much discussed. The only remark that he would vouchsafe upon the matter was "If the duty comes to me, I will accept it."

From the Omaha club he was taken by John C. Wharton to the new Young Men's Christian association building, at Seventeenth and Harney streets, where a huge crowd was already collected. Tickets were necessary to gain admission to the building as the affair was a reception to the Commercial club and the populace of Omaha anxious to catch sight of Taft crowded the pavement and the yard of the court house across the street. The president-to-be's carriage drove up and he was taken into the building. The crowd was disappointed, but not for long, as he reappeared almost immediately on the balcony. He made a brief speech, gave the people a good chance to look at him and then withdrew again for the reception.

Isaac W. Carpenter was master of ceremonies and introduced the speakers. They were H. H. Baldrige, Judge Sheldon S. Spencer of St. Louis, Governor George L. Sheldon and Mr. Taft. After his address Gurdon W. Wattles spoke briefly.

All the speeches and the whole spirit of the occasion were in the spirit of the Young Men's Christian association movement. The association had finished with brilliant success a campaign for funds and the building was ready to be turned over for the use and benefit of the youth of the city. Mr. Taft told of his own interest in the work after the speech-making was a reception, in which hundreds shook the hand of the secretary. At that time the Nebraska Taft league, a new political organization, made its first appearance and a number of those at the reception wore the Taft badges.

The opening of the new association headquarters was a brilliant affair and well worthy of the distinguished guest of honor. The new building, with its handsome rooms and corridors, was beautifully decorated and was filled with the members of the Commercial club, the representative business men of the city. His second visit must have made still more pleasant Mr. Taft's impression of Omaha.

Before He Was a Candidate

In April, 1908, the political campaign was growing dangerously near convention time and Taft represented in the minds of everyone the choice of the administration to lead the republican party. April 6 a huge dinner was given by the McKinley club of Omaha in the Auditorium and William H. Teft was the guest of honor. He arrived in Omaha early on the morning of the 6th and was taken to the Rome hotel, where a special apartment was fitted up for him. At noon he took luncheon at the Omaha club as the guest of Arthur C. Smith, Victor Rosewater and Myron L. Learned. There were about twenty-five guests at the luncheon, most of them either Nebraska delegates to the national convention or members of the Taft party. In the afternoon a public reception was held in the Rome hotel and the presidential candidate shook hands with hundreds of people. His cheerful, good-humored kindliness was shown in his manner with the crowd and those who shook hands with him were "for Taft" from then on. The Women's club held a reception for him at its club rooms in the First Congregational church, where he spoke for half an hour.

In the evening came the great banquet at the Auditorium, where 1,200 people took part in the dinner and about 6,500 heard the speeches. The hall was ablaze with lights and bright decorations and the tables were arranged in a huge letter "T." The speakers' table was in the center of the room, with festoons of lights stretched from it to the balconies, and overhead was spelled out, "T-A-F-T." When the chief guest appeared he was subjected to a dazzling limelight until the crowd could get a good look at him and then he was seated at the table.

Isadore Ziegler, as president of the McKinley club, was toastmaster and introduced Frank Crawford, who spoke on the subject of the McKinley club. Governor George L. Sheldon, Howard H. Baldrige, John C. Cowin and William Allen White were the other speakers preceding Mr. Taft. When William Allen White rose to speak the audience had become tired of waiting for the big speech of the evening and was not disposed to allow the Kansas editor to have his say, but before he was far along in his remarks they decided that he was quite well worth listening to. Mr. Taft had for his subject, "William McKinley," and gave a splendid eulogy of his former political chief. His speech was long, but was listened to with rapt attention by the crowd.

The next day, as secretary of war, Mr. Taft took a trip to the two forts. Rain was falling in the morning and it looked as if he would have a bad day of it, but the ceremonies at the military posts in his honor were not interfered with. Four automobiles, with O. C. Redick in the lead, took the party first to Fort Omaha and then to Fort Crook. At each of these places the salute of fifteen guns was given and army receptions were held by Colonel and Mrs. Glassford at Fort Omaha and by Colonel and Mrs. Gardener at Fort Crook

During the Last Campaign

Mr. Tart has been accused by a gossippy press of being altogether too fond of fast motoring. Whether the accusation is true or not the secretary of war certainly did race through the streets and roads between the forts on that day. He caused the stampede of a troop of government mules and started runaways in every half mile. The trip was successfully completed, however, and he was turned over to the reception committee from Council Bluffs at noon, April 7.

When Mr. Taft came to Omaha later in the same year he was the definite choice of the party and was making his campaign tour through the enemy's country. He came October 1, when Ak-Sar-Ben days were most glorious, and his visit here was not marked with any of the elaborate entertainment features that distinguished the former ones. He arrived Thursday evening and went first to South Omaha. Before a crowd of 4,000 or 5,000, mostly of laboring men, he spoke for an hour and then came back to Omaha at 9:30 to greet the 9,000 people who were waiting for him in the Auditorium. Before Mr. Taft appeared the audience was held quiet by Senator Dolliver of Iowa, whose interesting discourse filled up the time to the complete satisfaction of the crowd.

When Candidate Taft appeared he was tired and his voice was suffering from the continued strain, but he spoke cheerfully and powerfully. He voiced his faith in the outcome of the campaign in these words: "I feel confident that I am going to be elected president of the United States."

The Omaha men who spoke from the platform on this occasion were Frank Crawford and A. W. Jefferis.

These are the four calls that William Howard Taft has made upon Omaha. There has never been any greeting for him here except open hospitality and enthusiastic interest. He made good in Omaha as a man with his first appearance and every return has deepened that impression. Omaha expects to find him a genial-hearted and serious-minded leader of the people. They know him to be pleasant and are quite willing to do their best to keep him aware that Omaha is a good place to stop off at when he crosses his own United States.

Sidelights on Busy Life and Personal Ways of Late E. H. Harriman

EVERY man conspicuous in public affairs has other shades of character than that constantly in the spotlight. They are rarely observed by the general public and are shown only to intimates. The late Edward H. Harriman's life is a striking example of the one-sided view which the general public obtained of the man of affairs. But he had other and more loveable sides which bloomed flower-like above the stratum of business affairs. These characteristics are reflected in anecdotes and incidents gathered from various sources.

Mr. Harriman, in contrast to his brusqueness with [illegible] and railroad rivals, was fond of children and devoted to his family. He organized a boys' club in Tompkins Square, New York, personally supervised the putting of a building and ran the membership up to 10,000; dues 1 cent a year, members promptly dropped for nonpayment.

"What is the object of your club?" asked a woman, whose fad was charitable work among the poor children of New York.

"Object?" replied Harriman. "Object? Let me see. Why, I guess we haven't any, unless it is to see that the boys have a good time."

A visitor at Mr. Harriman's Boys' club asked one of the members, a 14-year-old boy, what he thought of the club's patron.

"Mr. Harriman," replied the youngster, "is a great man. He's president of a railroad, and worth a couple of thousand, anyway. He comes in, sees Mr. Taber, the superintendent, and goes on right about his business. He's a quiet man, and never tells anyone anything about his business. He ain't what I would call a fine-looking man, but I bet he could put up a great fight. But he aint stuck up over it. He comes down here and says to Willie Schmidt: 'Hello, Bill,' and Willie says, 'Hello, Mr. Harriman, how's yourself,'"

Two or three winters ago he was ill. His doctor told him he must not leave the house.

"But I must," objected Mr. Harriman. "I simply must."

"Well, what is it?" demanded the physician impatiently, "that 'must' carry you out of your house in this weather in your state?"

"I have to go down to Arden (his summer home). I promised the people there faithfully that I would help them celebrate Christmas."

And he went.

A committee of prominent citizens of Atlanta called one day to pay their respects to a distinguished northerner who was visiting their city. They were asked to wait a little, as the person they sought was at the moment engaged and could not be disturbed.

On the floor of an inner room sprawled a little man with big glasses and a bushy mustache. He looked anything but distinguished. Crawling over him, pulling his scant hair, searching his pockets and playing with his watch was a baby, while the little man chuckled with unfeigned pleasure.

"Don't go," cried the child, noting an alarming movement in the direction after half an hour had passed. "Stay'n play some more."

"I wish I could, Katrina," was the response, "but I must go to work now. Give me a kiss."

The kiss was exchanged and E. H. Harriman went to greet his callers.

Another incident which shows the human and social side of Mr. Harriman is connected with his life in Rhinebeck, Dutchess county, N. Y., where he made the acquaintance of several men whom he never forgot. Among these was Webster R. Clearwater, who is still living in the village. Clearwater was employed by James Livingston, with whom Mr. Harriman was a partner in a brokerage business, which went under in the panic of 1869, and in that way came to know Mr. Harriman well. One day, a few years ago, when Mr. Harriman was at the busiest part of his life, his old friend in Rhinebeck went to Mr. Harriman's office in New York. He found dozens of persons waiting their turn to see Mr. Harriman, but when he sent in his name on a piece of paper a messenger at once ushered him into Mr. Harriman's office. Mr. Harriman had an immense amount of work before him, but he turned from his desk and shook hands with his visitor, at the same time announcing to the messenger that he was going to luncheon and would see no one else until he returned. The two men went to luncheon in the Equitable building, and for an hour talked over old times in the Dutchess county village, Mr. Harriman remembering everybody that he ever met while there and asking for each one.

Later, in answer to a letter from Mr. Clearwater about a year ago, Mr. Harriman wrote in autograph a brief note, in which he said:

"Dear Web: Your reference to Jim and Lew (meaning James and Lewis Livingston) was truly touching. We are all getting old, the most of us living largely in the past. Believe me, I was glad to hear from you and that you have my kindest."

They tell in Chicago a story of a time when the fortune of E. H. Harriman hung in the balance, and for once he was genuinely worried. It was during the currency famine of 1893. At an acute stage of the trouble the bankers in the Clearing House association met secretly at the city home of Frederick D. Tappan, then president of the association. The house had been boarded up for the summer and the shutters were kept closed, so that no news of the meeting should get out. After an all-day meeting it was decided to issue clearing house certificates to relieve the situation.

Just after the meeting broke up and Mr. Tappan was left alone he was startled by a prolonged ringing at the front door. On the threshold, showing every evidence of extreme exhaustion and of nervousness almost beyond control, stood E. H. Harriman. His eyes were red, his hands tremulous and when he spoke his voice was low and uncertain. Mr. Tappan asked him in and offered him a seat, but Harriman, in his excitement, still standing, began to tell his story.

"Mr. Tappan," said he, in effect, "I have not consciously slept in seventy-two hours. I am desperate, but I am perfectly solvent. I have ample securities of the gilt-edged sort to cover all my liabilities and leave a large surplus. But no bank will lend me a cent on my very best securities even, and if I can't get some cash tomorrow I shall be a ruined man; I have brought statements and schedules to show you what I say is true."

Seeing that his visitor was in no condition to go into further details at that time, Mr. Tappan made him be seated and got him a glass of wine.

"Now, Mr. Harriman," said the banker, "I think I shall be able to give you a little hope. We have had a meeting of the clearing house bankers today and at that meeting a plan of action was adopted. I cannot tell you just what was done, for I am pledged not to do so. But you may take my word for it that if you are solvent, if you have the securities you say you have—you will be all right tomorrow. No, don't show your statements to me now, but go home and go to bed. When you are rested tomorrow morning, get up and go to your office. Without doubt the complications of today will be straightened out satisfactorily then."

Mr. Harriman listened almost as one in a dream; then, with a clasp of the hand, he thanked Mr. Tappan for his words, turned and left the house. That night he got the ten hours' sleep advised and more, too. Next day, when he went to his office all that Mr. Tappan had said came true.

When Mr. Harriman took up the reorganization of the Union Pacific railroad he was little known in Wall street. His matter-of-fact terseness in speaking had nothing in common with the big, verbose geniality of the typical promoter. The road at that time was a straggling, ill-kept line, running from Omaha to Ogden. The directors had no idea of its possibilities. Harriman had. They wanted to run it in the way the road had always been run with a little economy here and there, perhaps, to pay dividends. Harriman had other notions.

"This," complained one of the opponents of Harriman's policy, "is an old, broken-down railroad. It will cost a billion to carry out your ideas."

"Perhaps," replied Harriman, "but I figure it closer than that. At any rate, it will be worth the money. We haven't bought a railroad here. We have bought an empire."

In 1898, with the Spanish war coming on, Harriman was all for going ahead with the contemplated improvements of the road. The directors held back. They feared the outcome of the struggle over Cuba.

"We have here," said Harriman, "the vital franchise to a railroad 1,800 miles long, running through the heart of the richest part of the country. Populism is dead and dollar wheat is paying mortgages and piling up bank accounts. Now is the time to build; now is the time to buy. This road offers us an opportunity that comes to men but once in centuries."

The directors still demurred and Harriman virtually bought the equipment over their heads.

Mr. Harriman made a trip over the Union Pacific, of which he had recently come into control. Things were in a pretty thoroughly run-down condition and one delay after another tried the temper of the impatient new master of the line.

"What makes this delay?" he demanded during one particular stop.

"Engine taking water, sir," replied the division superintendent.

"Why not make the feed pipe bigger?" snapped Harriman.

"Can't be done, sir," was the reply. "Engine wouldn't take any larger feed pipe."

"Then we'll get some bigger engines," Harriman

(Continued on Page Four.)