

THE PRESIDENT COMING

The Party Will Be Royally Received at Johnson City
and Mr. Harrison Will Make a Speech

Johnson City Comet, Tuesday Morning, April 14, 1891

Benjamin Harrison, President of the United States, en route on his southern trip, will arrive in the city today at 2;15 o'clock.

Besides the President there are in the party Mrs. Harrison, Mrs. McKee, Mrs. Dimmick, Mr. and Mrs. Russell Harrison, Postmaster General John Wanamaker, Marshal Rousdell, Mr. and Mrs. George W. Boyd, Mr. E. F. Tibbott, the President's stenographer and representatives of the press associations.

The President has accepted an invitation to address the people of Johnson City. Arrangements have been made to give the party a royal reception. The ovation will be unprecedented in the history of Johnson City.

The following committees were chosen for the occasion:

Committee on Arrangements: W. G. Mathes, T. E. Matson

Committee on Music: J. F. Crumley, M. N. Johnson, W. W. Kirkpatrick

Committee on Decorations: J. W. Cox, C. W. Marsh, L. W. Wood, J. A.

Mathes, H. W. Hargreaves, Madames Hargreaves, Collins, Mathes, and Misses Mary Wilder and Sally Faw.

Reception Committee: Hon. Alfred. A. Taylor, Hon. T. F. Singiser, and Ike T. Jobe.

Guard of Honor: Major A. Cantwell, J. M. Erwin, W. Hodges, and G. A. R. Post.

Finance Committee: J. C. Campbell, A. B. Bowman, and H. C. Chandler.

The committee of reception will meet the President and party at Bristol and accompany them to this city. On their arrival the President will occupy the stand which is now being erected near the depot. Hon. A. A. Taylor will introduce the President Harrison, who it is certain, will address a large and enthusiastic throng of citizens and people from various parts of East Tennessee.

Already there are several parties in the city from different points awaiting arrival of the train. A multitude of human faces will be seen on the public square. It will be a representative body and will indicate to the President

and his party something of the remarkable industry that has taken its rise in our midst. There will be representatives from every class of labor in the New South in the presence of his Excellency, the President of the United States. They will come from the factories, shops, foundries, furnaces, and from the iron mines and from various channels of industry in this great section. There can be no doubt it is in evidence of the prosperity and importance of Johnson City to have the President stop here and address the people. Within the past two or three years we have grown to that magnitude. Every year new railroads come to us, and it will not be long until we are able to entertain such parties with all the pomp of the most important cities of the south.

THE PRESIDENT

And Distinguished Party Tendered a Royal Reception in Johnson City

The Chief Executive Responds in a Hearty Speech and is Followed by
Postmaster General Wannamaker and Secretary Rusk.

Johnson City Comet, Wednesday Morning, April 15, 1891

The greatest ovation ever witnessed in Johnson City was given to President Harrison and party yesterday.

Elaborate preparations had been made. The stand was handsomely decorated. Gaudy festoons covered the timbers of support, and the stand was cozily wreathed with red, white and blue, while silk flags of the stars and stripes were let to the breeze from every side. On either side of the stand was a modest escutcheon bearing the word "Welcome" diagonally across it. A large flag was suspended in mid air by a cord stretching from the top of Jobe's block to an uppermost window of First National Bank. The store buildings on the public square were elegantly and profusely decorated with flags and festoons. The entire surroundings were a scene of gorgeous beauty and highly pleasing to the gaze of mortal eye.

Although clouds veiled the sun more or less all day, and there were slight threats of rain, the weather remained pleasant and a refreshing breeze was astir from morning to night.

Fair delegations came in from up and down the E. T. V. & G. Railroad, and from the different terminal lines. At 1 o'clock fully 5,000 people were assembled in the public square awaiting the arrival of the distinguished party. Every window accessible to the view of the stand was crowded with

anxious people. Freight cars standing in the region of the Presidential stand were covered with masses of humanity. Special stands, which had been constructed for the occasion, were overflowing with people who were favored with an invitation to occupy those places of luxury.

At 2:23 o'clock a train of six magnificent cars pulled into the city, bearing the distinguished visitors. The train was pulled by Engine No. 252, with John Patterson, the well known engineer, at the throttle. The car next to the engine was occupied by Colonel Hudson and other officials of the E. T. V. & G. Railroad, who had come from Knoxville in the morning to join the party at Bristol. The second coach from the engine was the combination baggage and smoking car, "Aztlan," and is inscribed, "Presidential Special" in letters of gold. The third car was the dining car, "Coronado." It is a model of beauty. The President's car, "New Zealand," was next to the dining car. The decorations of this car are of the most cozy nature combining beauty and simplicity. Following the President's car came the sleeping car "Ideal" which in turn was followed by the last car, "Vienna." This car contains a library and is especially adapted for observation purposes. Often where there has been no formal reception arranged for, the speakers address the people from the rear of this magnificent car, which is adapted to stage purposes as well as those of observation.

The committee of arrangements decided to have on the stand with the President three aged citizens who had voted for William Henry Harrison, grandfather of the President, when he was elected to the same high honor which his distinguished grandson now enjoys today. These gentlemen, who took a position on the stand, were Samuel Miller, William Pleasant and Thomas Milburn. Besides this party, there were on the stand Mrs. H. W. Hargreaves and Miss Mary Wilder; also stenographers Messrs. Jas. M. Maher, Thomas H. Montgomery and a stenographer belonging to the visiting party.

It is due to the services of Messrs. Maher and Montgomery that *The Comet* was favored with a verbatim report of the speeches of the occasion.

The G.A.R. post of this city, with Major Cantwell commander, constituted the guard of honor, in whose care the Presidential stand was confided. The guard did its duty well and kept the surging crowd from within the ropes.

When the train had pulled up fronting the rear of the stand, the President alighted, and in company with Hon. A.A. Taylor, ascended the Brussels-laid stairway to the stand, which was elevated about ten feet from the ground.

The President stood in a composed manner while Mr. Taylor introduced him to the people in the following speech:

“Fellow Countrymen – The thirty-four counties comprising the eastern division of Tennessee gave to the Presidential ticket of their choice in 1888, the magnificent majority of 24,000. The head of that ticket, having just completed two years of wise, successful, conservative, resolute plain administration has come among us . In the name of all our people I thank him for the honor he has conferred upon us, in affording us an opportunity to see and hear him. I have the honor, fellow citizens, to present to you His Excellency Benjamin Harrison, President of the United States.” (Cheers)

When Mr. Taylor had concluded the President came forward and said:

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT:

“My Beloved Citizens: - The office of President of the United States is one of very high honor, and of very high responsibility. No man having conscientiously at heart the good of the whole people, whose interests are under the law, in some degree committed to his care, can fail to feel a most impressive sense of inadequacy when he comes to the discharge of his high functions. Elected under a system of government, which gives to the majority of our people, expressing their wishes through constitutional measures a right to choose their public servant. When he has taken the oath and been invested to the office of President, he becomes the servant of all the people; and while he may pursue the advocacy of these measures with which the people had given their approval by his voice, he should always defer to and have respect for the opinion of others, that should not alienate from him the respect of all his fellow citizens without regard to political beliefs. I am here today not to speak of what has been done, not even to confess errors, which may come to us all, but only to declare that I cherish very deeply, very earnestly the honor and good of the people and nation, as the executive head of which for the time I am placed. I would that I might have the wisdom that every act might conduce to the good of the people. I am not one of those that believe that the good of any crisis can be attained without sacrificing the good of all the people. I rejoice in the union of the States. I rejoice to be able to stand here in East Tennessee among a people irrespective of party who were so conservative during the hour of the nation’s peril as to stand by their convictions of duty; and I am especially glad to be able to say with those, who following their consciences and views of duty as citizens, took sides against us in that struggle, are able to assemble with us, and with one acclaim without and difference in voice or hear to praise Almighty God that he maintained this one nation. There is no man, whatsoever his views on any question of

state or national policy, who does not praise God that slavery no longer exists and that union as a whole is desirable. What is it else that has stirred the pulses of this great region that has kindled the furnace fires that were cooled and have now started anew to build up our common country. All of this will bring the farmer into close communication with the buyer and will conserve all interests. It is with that view and not with any sectional feeling that the true interests of all the States are to be properly perceived; and I rejoice here today that we have come into one common heritage and are invested with the common participation in all the fruits of our nation's industry, and that the Confederate soldier can participate with us in all the benefits of a just and great government; and I have no doubt that these would be among the readiest of all our population to follow old starry flag if we were assailed from any quarter. And, my beloved countrymen, it does me good to look into your faces and receive evidences of your hearty good will; I hope I may have some light and courage to conscientiously serve the public good, and by every instrumentality to advance the good of all the people and the glory of our beloved country."

During the course of the President's speech, he was freely applauded at times. Concluding, he withdrew from the stand, after having been presented with an elegant bouquet of choice flowers by Miss Mary Wilder. Miss Ada Wood, a pleasant little girl, presented the President with a beautiful call lily.

Mr. Taylor, introducing Postmaster General Wanamaker, said:

"Fellow Citizens: - I have the honor of introducing to you Honorable John Wanamaker, Postmaster General."

Mr. Wanamaker came forward wearing a cheerful air and addressed the people as follows:

REMARKS OF JOHN WANAMAKER:

It gives me great pleasure to hear the cheers that you give the chief magistrate of the nation. If any man deserves complete rest it is the hard working man who has just spoken to you. From a distance it may seem to be a very easy task in the White House and to sign the name and receive the callers and deputations, but with the experience of a business man and the observations of years I beg to say to you that I never saw a more earnest, faithful workers than the men who stand in front of your choice and your votes in charge of the executive departments of the government. One man only a few weeks ago fell in his tracks, a martyr as much as Garfield or Lincoln, to the great work to which he had been called. For two years, speaking for myself, I am sure this the first holiday, the first time to get away from a

workman's bench to look into the faces of the men who are the masters and for whom we are working. I believe it will do us all good to be better acquainted with each other, to hear the ringing tones of the great pilot in command of our ship, and to know that it is not all formal work, but there are true hearts with earnest, honest purposes seeking to do not for one set of men but for the whole nation irrespective of color, of situation or peculiar belief. How truly, as the President has said, the war is over. The last man appointed to a large place in the post office department was a private in the Confederate army. What he was is not to be thought of, what he is the measure of the man. I thank you very much for this true southern welcome given to us all. We have one country, one flag, look at it! One President, one hope for the future. We cannot live apart nor work apart, but all working together along the high road of honest endeavor will bring us to the highest place of the nations of the world.

Mr. Wanamaker is a forcible speaker. He elicited the hearty applause of his hearers. He has an imposing appearance being a heavy built man, full in the face, and with beard shaved close.

Introducing Mr. Jeremiah Rusk, Secretary of Agriculture, Mr. Taylor spoke as follows:

"You all know with what honesty and integrity that department of the government is carried on which is presided over by the Secretary of Agriculture, and now I have the honor to introduce you to the Hon. Jerry Rusk, Secretary of Agriculture."

Mr. Rusk came forward and said:

REMARKS OF JEREMIAH RUSK

"Fellow citizens: It is a great pleasure to be here today and meet so many of you. I am reminded by the Superintendent that I cannot make a speech today. I am so full of agriculture at all times that if I should start upon that line I don't think the train would wait until I got through the first sentence. This great country of ours is turning its attention to agriculture, and to the benefits of those employed in it. They should be considered now because they have in the past considered every other interest and supported every other interest; and I say the farmer has saved this country in time of war, in time of peace, and will always be the saving power with any and all interests connected with him. Now my friends, I will not detain you. I would like to

come here and talk agriculture with you but cannot stop today. I bid you God speed for your future welfare and bid you goodbye.”

When Mr. Rusk had finished the party repaired to the car. During the speeches by Mr. Wanamaker and Mr. Rusk the President stood on the lower step to the rear of the observation car, shaking the hands of the people. Mrs. Harrison stood just back of the President viewing the crowd and surroundings. Throughout the exercises, the Johnson City band discoursed stirring music.

At 2:50 o'clock the train pulled out from the station amid the wild shouts of a great and enthusiastic throng, with an occasional strain of music rising above the yell of voices and the shrieking of whistles from the foundries and shops of the city.

A CHAT WITH THE PRESIDENT

The Johnson City Party Spent a Few Pleasant Hours with the President

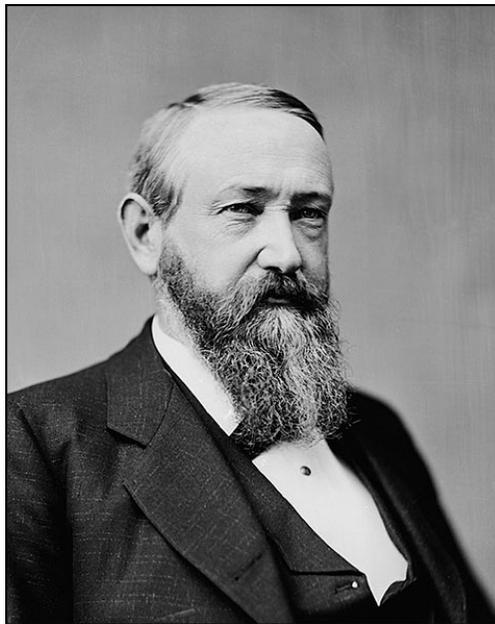
Johnson City Comet, Thursday Morning, April 15, 1891

The parties who had the pleasure of accompanying the President to Knoxville, returned to the city late Tuesday night, bringing with them the reward of a happy experience. They all had the honor of conversing freely with the distinguished party and consequently had many interesting incidents to rehearse to friends. Mrs. Harrison inquired of Mayor Jobe, relative to the people of Johnson City and asked him questions about his family – how many children there were in the family, etc. The Mayor was very kind to give her all the information she sought. Before closing the conversation, Mrs. Harrison presented the Mayor with a neat pin or badge for his little daughter.

Rising above the pleasant social remarks were a number of expressions significant above ordinary conversation and complimentary to Johnson City, and the people whose homes are here.

Talking with Honorable A. A. Taylor, the President remarked, over and over again, that the ovation tendered him at Johnson City was a most splendid

one and that he was not more pleased with the general surroundings at any point it had been his pleasure to stop. It was a magnificent ovation, and beyond what he had anticipated to witness at larger towns. Mrs. Harrison joined the President in his complimentary remarks relative to the welcome reception on the part of the good people of Johnson City, and surrounding country. Mr. Wanamaker, in his remarks on Johnson City said that he could tell in the moment he entered the atmosphere of snap and enterprise, that Johnson City showed every evidence of energy, pluck and thrift: that the people were alive to their own interests and to the advancement of the city. His remarks indicated that this was sure to make a city of no little magnitude.



President Benjamin Harrison

Note: President Harrison's railway stop speech at Johnson City in 1891 represented the city's coming of age and its recognition as a railway boom town. The event heralded great things to come and development as an important future city in the State of Tennessee. However, there were many bumps in the road and adventures prior to all the key pieces coming together in the 20th Century.

Archived copies of the Johnson City Comet are an entertaining read:

“A number of persons will receive sample copies of *The Daily Comet* from time the time, and are politely requested to retaliate by sending in the subscriptions at once to the same.” April 14, 1891.