

# THE PALIMPSEST

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## Theodore Roosevelt in Iowa

The turn of the twentieth century ushered in significant changes of wide-spread interest and importance. The panic of 1893 had passed, and prosperity, which had long been "just around the corner", had again come into full view. The age of material advancement and economic wealth was blossoming in splendid promise of abundant fruition. Social legislation was developing apace, while political activities might well have been caricatured as a snorting, bucking broncho with Theodore Roosevelt, reins well in hand and one foot in the stirrup, ready to leap into the saddle.

Prior to the convening of the Republican National Convention at Philadelphia in June, 1900, it was generally conceded that William McKinley would be renominated for a second term as President. Republican newspapers throughout the country, and especially those of Iowa, had



heralded Jonathan P. Dolliver of Fort Dodge as the most likely vice-presidential nominee. At the convention McKinley was endorsed without opposition. The vice-presidential predictions failed of fulfillment, however, when Dolliver withdrew from the race and supported the nomination of Theodore Roosevelt.

Roosevelt was rapidly approaching the heyday of his eventful career. As a young man he had been a member of the New York General Assembly and had lived for a time on a ranch in North Dakota. Later he enhanced his reputation as a United States Civil Service Commissioner. He had been President of the New York City Police Board and had served as Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Navy. At the outbreak of the Spanish-American War he had recruited a volunteer regiment of "Rough Riders", and in the Cuban campaign he won the distinction of being the "Hero of San Juan Hill". Upon his return from military service he was "drafted" by the Republicans to be Governor of New York. In that capacity he instituted numerous reforms and in 1900 he was contemplating an energetic campaign for reëlection.

In 1896 the Democratic party had come under the influence and leadership of the distinguished orator, William Jennings Bryan, renowned for his



famous "Cross of Gold" speech. Early in 1900 it was generally acknowledged that he would again be the Democratic standard bearer and that he would go up and down the land conducting a powerful campaign against the Republican administration. President McKinley would of necessity be confined to the White House by official duties. In this emergency the Republicans needed a vice-presidential candidate who could tour the country Bryan-fashion, arousing popular enthusiasm and counteracting the attack of the opposing candidate.

Theodore Roosevelt was regarded as a popular hero, a candidate who could successfully compete with Bryan in his appeal for the support of the electorate. Accordingly, at the Republican National Convention a wave of unprecedented popularity swept him into the candidacy for the office of Vice President of the United States.

The campaign opened with enthusiasm and advanced with increasing power. The "Great Commoner" of Nebraska toured the country from west to east and from east to west declaring in favor of the free coinage of silver on a basis of 16 to 1, advocating the abandonment of control in the Philippines, and urging voters everywhere to support the principles of the Democratic party. Roosevelt in like manner toured the country by



special train, appealing directly to thousands of eager listeners along the way. He urged the voters to continue to support the gold standard, to retain the Philippines, and to adhere to the "great fundamental principles of Republicanism".

On October 4th the Roosevelt campaigning party moved eastward across the State of Nebraska stopping at the principal cities and closing the day with a great demonstration and rally at Omaha in the evening. October 5th was "Roosevelt Day" in Iowa. According to arrangements the train entered the State at Council Bluffs soon after midnight and travelled eastward over the Illinois Central Railroad. Upon the insistent request of Senator Dolliver, the party stopped at Fort Dodge for breakfast and there the distinguished guests were entertained during the early hours of the day. Thence the train proceeded to Waterloo, Cedar Rapids, West Liberty, and arrived at Davenport late in the evening. The chief celebration was held at Waterloo about noon.

On the evening previous to the arrival of the campaigning party, Julian W. Richards announced that Waterloo was "alarmed". Every indication was for "the biggest attendance ever known to a political gathering in Iowa," and that the people there were "trembling for fear they will be unable to handle the crowds." Large dele-



gations were reported to be coming from all parts of the Commonwealth. Citizens of Des Moines were awakened on the morning of the celebration by the sound of thirteen guns which were fired from the courthouse yard "proclaiming that Governor Roosevelt is in Iowa, and that an excursion train-load of enthusiasts is preparing to leave this city to see him and hear him speak in Waterloo."

When this delegation and others similar to it began to arrive in the convention city, it was apparent that the committee had exercised good judgment in preparing for the immense crowd. Between the hours of eight and eleven o'clock in the forenoon of October 5th, the three railroads through Waterloo brought to the city thirty-one heavily loaded passenger trains.

The event of the morning was the arrival of a special train bearing Governor Roosevelt and his party. It was reported that "fully forty thousand" people awaited the arrival of this company and that at least ten thousand people crowded the station and the nearby streets. From all parts of the State enthusiastic supporters had come to greet the vigorous champion of Republicanism "with a mighty roar of cheers" as he was escorted from the train to make one of his great political campaign speeches.

Waterloo was appropriately decorated for the



occasion. Old Glory was everywhere apparent — waving from flagstaffs, doorways, and verandas. Windows were gayly bedecked with posters and streamers and pennants. McKinley-Roosevelt caps, buttons, and badges were displayed by enthusiastic partisans who waved banners and yelled, "We want Teddy".

Few men in all the land were more popular in those days than "Teddy" Roosevelt. In Iowa as elsewhere thousands of people hoped he would be victorious at the polls. Jonathan P. Dolliver — always a loyal supporter of the Republican cause — declared that the reception given to the vice-presidential candidate in Waterloo was the "greatest political demonstration ever held in Iowa."

The parade which started shortly after noon moved in compact form over the principal streets of the city. Visiting delegations made up of marching clubs and Rough Rider organizations numbered more than five thousand people. Des Moines Republicans, two thousand strong, with their State Military Band, together with the Tippecanoe Veterans' Club, the Full Dinner Pail Brigade, and the Fremonters of the State — the veteran Republicans who had voted for John C. Fremont for President in 1856 — had the honor of leading the parade. Dubuque was represented by two thousand or more loyal Republican



"shouters", and Marshalltown "swelled the list with another thousand". Besides these, marching clubs were in line from Waterloo, Cedar Falls, Cedar Rapids, Iowa Falls, Independence, Grinnell, Newton, and other cities and towns. Mounted "Rough Riders" rode into the county seat from nearly every township in Black Hawk County.

It was, indeed, a gala day for the Republicans of Iowa, and it was a gala day for Teddy. He smiled and showed his teeth. He raised his hat, waved his hand, bowed to the right and to the left, greeted and saluted mounted Rough Riders and thousands of pedestrians along the way, and in the midst of it all he declared "This is bully!"

Governor Roosevelt's voice was not as clear as it might have been. He had been called upon to speak almost continually for nearly a month, and his voice had lost some of its resonance. Accordingly, after the parade when he arrived at the platform to address the crowd in an east side park, he talked for only fifteen or twenty minutes, but during that time he made an enthusiastic appeal for Iowans to support the Republican party at the November election.

By way of introduction he said that he had come to Iowa not to teach but to learn. "You are fortunate enough", he said, "in having a state



from which we draw inspiration in other states. . . . I wish that Iowa's Republicanism were catching, and that it could bite one or two other states." He expressed the hope not only that President McKinley might be reëlected, but that Colonel David B. Henderson of Iowa might again be chosen as Speaker of the national House of Representatives.

After this complimentary introduction he launched forth upon a discussion of the issues of the campaign. In outlining the policy for the government in the Philippine Islands he pointed to the fact that ninety-seven years before Thomas Jefferson had been criticised for his policy of expansion in negotiating the Louisiana Purchase. Moreover, he said, "Lincoln — patient, kindly Lincoln — as he toiled and suffered for the people, was accused of trying to build an empire and make himself an emperor". In like manner, Governor Roosevelt said that President McKinley was being criticised. He referred to these critics, however, as "weaklings", and declared that "the men who desire us to leave the Philippines, to abandon our duty, desire us to do so because they lack faith."

Referring to the Democratic candidate for President, and his position on the money question, Governor Roosevelt said: "Now we hear again



from men some excuse to justify themselves and their own conscience for supporting Mr. Bryan. We hear from them that Mr. Bryan could not do much damage, if elected, because the Republican senate would not let him. Think of a man who makes that argument!"

In continuing this attack, Mr. Roosevelt desired "no better campaign argument than that of our opponent four years ago. He told you that unless you had free silver, you would have four years more of harder times. The circulation per capita would decrease, but in every case, instead of going down, the thing mentioned has gone up. There was but one instance where he said things would go up. He said the amount of mortgages would increase, and they are the only thing where there has been a falling off. They have decreased about 30 per cent."

In concluding his address, Governor Roosevelt asked the people "to stand with us for the sake of liberty, to stand with us for the sake of that policy which we have always pursued, that no man may, where the American flag has once been hoisted in honor, haul it down in dishonor."

Hundreds of delegates who could not hear the Governor were nevertheless "delighted" to see him and witness the enthusiasm with which he conducted his campaign. H. O. Weaver com-



menting upon the Waterloo meeting, and upon Governor Roosevelt's popularity, said: "Perhaps never in Iowa has there been such an out-pouring of the people before. They came from everywhere and this, in fact may truthfully be said to be a great republican state meeting. The people came to see all the embodiment of Americanism. They look upon Governor Roosevelt as the representative of that Americanism which believes in American honesty and American enterprise. The people came to see such a man and were not disappointed. Anyone listening to the cheers and seeing the crowds rush to touch the hand of the man who is the ideal American cannot but feel that this has been one of the greatest days in Iowa history".

General Curtis Guild of Boston, Massachusetts, Governor Leslie M. Shaw, and Senator Jonathan P. Dolliver, all of whom were members of the Governor's party, followed Roosevelt with brief addresses. Other distinguished guests of the day included William B. Allison, David B. Henderson, Robert G. Cousins, and a number of prominent State officers. It seems significant that several of the Iowans who accompanied Roosevelt that day, later occupied positions of national leadership in his administration.

About the middle of the afternoon the "Roose-



velt Special" prepared to leave for Cedar Rapids. It was travelling men's day at the carnival there and a large number of salesmen in red and white shirts and white trousers and caps met the political campaigners at the Rock Island station. They formed a double line between which the campaigning party marched on the way to the speakers' stand. With a dozen officers surrounding him, Governor Roosevelt was hurried through the crowd, hat in hand, bowing and saluting and smiling as he went.

One of the interesting features of the meeting at Cedar Rapids was the presence of almost two hundred students from the State University, and other large groups from Coe College and Cornell. A good-natured rivalry among the students in giving their college yells served as wholesome entertainment for the crowd while it awaited the arrival of the special train. When Governor Roosevelt appeared, he was given many lusty cheers by the students, and he seemed to be a boy again "as he showed his famous teeth, and doubled up his face in a smile suggestive of the Republican policy of expansion".

Colonel W. G. Dows acted as chairman of the Cedar Rapids meeting, where brief addresses were made by Governor Roosevelt, General Guild, and Senator Dolliver. The visit in Cedar



Rapids was, however, of short duration, and the campaigning party was soon on its way again. While Governor Roosevelt and his party were being escorted to the train, and as the train pulled out from the station, cheer after cheer went up in honor of "the next Vice President of the United States". After a brief stop at West Liberty, the campaign special went directly to Davenport for the final meeting within the State of Iowa.

The delegations at Davenport were not as numerous nor as large as those at Waterloo, but there was nevertheless a large crowd. Trains coming into the city, particularly those from the west, were loaded with enthusiastic delegates. The excursion train from Des Moines was well filled before it arrived at Iowa City and when Davenport was announced the passengers were so numerous that "they fairly hung out of the window". Davenport, like Waterloo and Cedar Rapids, "was in her campaign clothes" with Old Glory hanging from housetop and window. Hon. Joseph R. Lane, Congressman from the Davenport district, introduced Governor Roosevelt.

In his address the Governor emphasized a characteristic idea. "Fundamentally", he declared, "what we need in a nation are just the same qualities that we need in an individual. First of all needed is honesty. . . . One



form of honesty is paying 100 cents on a dollar, with a dollar worth 100 cents." Again, he said, a nation as well as an individual must have courage to perform the duties of government. Indeed, "a nation ceases to be great when it ceases to do its duty as that duty arises". As a third quality of success, Mr. Roosevelt said that both an individual and a nation must have "the saving grace of common sense". He was emphatic in declaring that "no amount of oratory and no amount of enthusiasm will take the place of hard headed, kindly, shrewd common sense in dealing with the problems by which we are surrounded". These three qualities of greatness, he stoutly maintained, were principles of the Republican party.

When, at length, the program at Davenport was ended and the "Roosevelt Special" moved eastward across the Mississippi, the Republicans of Iowa felt that they had spent a busy, enjoyable, and profitable day in the interest of their party. From early morning until late in the evening the din of political excitement had not ceased. Iowa was honored that day in receiving and saluting and being saluted by Theodore Roosevelt, citizen, soldier, statesman, hero of San Juan Hill, and worthy aspirant to the high office of Vice President of the United States.

J. A. SWISHER