

PRESIDENT RUTHERFORD B. HAYES COMES TO BLOOMSBURG

Introductory Comment: *The nineteenth president of the United States, Rutherford B. Hayes, stopped his special train in Bloomsburg on July 3, 1878. He was traveling to Wilkes Barre to be part of the centennial observance of the Wyoming Massacre and the Fourth of July celebrations. The following article appeared in the Columbian and Democrat, a Bloomsburg newspaper, on July 5, 1878. This is an account of how the community responded when it learned that the president's train would be passing through the town. The only one other president who has traveled through Bloomsburg was Harry S. Truman in October 1952.*

The President's Visit

It being understood last Tuesday that President Hayes and family and members of the Cabinet would pass this point on a special train on Wednesday morning en route for the Centennial ceremonies at Wyoming and the celebration of the Fourth of July at Wilkesbarre, a meeting of citizens was called at the Court House to make arrangements for welcoming the distinguished party to this section of Pennsylvania. The meeting was called to order by J. C. Brown who nominated Judge Elwell as chairman. D. A. Becklye and David Lowenberg were appointed a committee to inform Judge Elwell of his election. The chairman occupied the top of the Court House steps, and a large number of citizens were present in the yard. J. B. Robison and J. C. Brown were elected secretaries. The chairman stated the object of the meeting, and said that it was very proper that we should pay our respects to the Chief Executive of the nation. On motion a committee of thirteen was appointed to welcome the President.

Hon. C. R. Buckalew [former United States Senator, 1863-1869] was elected Chairman of the committee which consisted of the following persons: D. Lowenberg, D. A. Beckley, J. B. Robison, Geo. E. Elwell J. K. Grotz, C. G. Barkley, A. C.. Smith, Wm. Neal, Samuel Knorr, L. J. Moyer, J. J. Brower, Geo. Correll and John Wolf.

On motion the chairman of the meeting was added to the committee. Dennis McDonald, H. C. Bittenbender and W. B. Poust were appointed a committee on Decoration. The Bloomsburg Silver Cornet Band was invited to be present at the depot, and the meeting adjourned.

On Wednesday morning before six o'clock crowds of people began flocking to the D. L & W. depot, and at about half past six the train

appeared in sight. The locomotive was gorgeously decorated with flags. The train stopped so that the rear end of the last car stood across Market street. Mr. Buckalew and Judge Elwell boarded the train and soon appeared at the door accompanied by the first President of the United States who has ever appeared in Bloomsburg. There was much confusion and pushing in the effort made by everybody to get near enough to hear what was said. After the noise had somewhat subsided Mr. Buckalew spoke as follows:

Buckalew's Speech

Mr. President, on behalf of the citizens of Bloomsburg and of Columbia county, I tender you a sincere and hearty welcome to Northern Pennsylvania. They are gratified to see you amongst them as the representative of the government of our common country. They are gratified also that your visit is upon the occasion of the great celebration in our neighboring valley of Wyoming, and they sincerely wish for your and your companions a pleasant visit, and safe return to Washington.

Fellow citizens I introduced to you the President of the United States.

President Hayes bowed and the people gave him three hearty cheers. He then spoke in substance as follows.

The President's Speech

Mr. Buckalew and Fellow citizens. We meet this morning, not politically, but as citizens of one common country. I am glad of this opportunity to stop for a few moments in your pleasant village while on the way up one of the most beautiful valleys of your State, to attend the Centennial of a great event. Pennsylvania occupied a prominent place in the early struggles of this country for an independent existence, and so now she occupies a high position in the centennial celebration of some of the greatest events in the early history of this country. We are now on our way to attend the ceremonies at the hundredth anniversary of the Wyoming massacre. I need say no more. It is pleasant to meet in this way. You have heard my voice and I have heard yours, and I will now introduce to you a gentleman connected with the government, Mr. John Sherman, Secretary of the Treasury.

Sherman appeared and received three cheers.

Sherman's Speech

Fellow citizens: I am pleased to meet you and am glad to shake hands with my old friend Mr. Buckalew. I want to tell you a secret, and that is

that while Republicans and Democrats often oppose each other, they can also be the best of friends. I have not often voted with Mr. Buckalew, and yet we have frequently acted in concert on important measures, and there is no man for whom I have a greater respect than for your distinguished townsman.

The President then introduced Attorney General Devens, who appeared in the car door just as the train started, and he had only time to say "I am very happy to meet you all." The crowd cheered, the band played, and the presidential party was gone. The demonstration was a hearty one, and was made by all, irrespective of creed, color, sex or politics.

The President invited Mr. Buckalew and Judge Elwell to join his party, but they had made different arrangements and were unable to accept.