

The exhibit of the Sisters of Notre Dame was highly commended and at the close of the Fair, which lasted six months, a diploma and medal were awarded to fifteen of our houses in Massachusetts, Lowell's parish and day schools being among the favored ones. See also the Annals of the Sisters of Notre Dame, Vol. XIII., Columbus, Queen Isabella, and

Annals from the Archives

William Howard Taft's 1912 Visit to Cambridge

"Parramatta," the summer home of William Howard Taft from 1911-1912, located in Montserrat, Beverly, Massachusetts

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—Though born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1857, William Howard Taft was familiar with New England. He attended Yale from 1874 to 1878, graduating second in a class of 121. Returning to Cincinnati to marry, he began a career that led him into the Superior Court in Ohio. In 1890, he was nominated to serve as the youngest Solicitor-General of the United States, then as Governor General of the Philippines in 1900 and under Theodore Roosevelt, he served as Secretary of War. After his landslide victory in 1904, Roosevelt announced he would not seek the presidency again in 1908. As that year drew closer, many in the Republican Party, as well as Roosevelt himself turned to Taft to enter the race. Reluctant as he was, Taft agreed and won the election easily against Democrat, William Jennings Bryan. Massachusetts was one of the many firmly Republican states that supported Taft in the 1908 election.

Until becoming president, Taft and his family always had vacationed in Canada. Realizing that most Americans would look unfavorably on a President vacationing outside of the U.S., Taft began a search for a new vacation place and settled on Beverly, Massachusetts as the ideal location for a summer "white house". The Taft family enjoyed the Stetson Cottage from 1908 to 1910, located at the present day Lynch Park and between 1911 and 1912, the Parramatta estate, located in the Montserrat section of Beverly.

The election year of 1912 was an unpleasant one for Taft. Regretting that he hadn't run for reelection in 1908 and unhappy with Taft's policies, Roosevelt threw his hat into the ring, challenging Taft for the Republican Presidential nomination. Despite Roosevelt's popularity, Taft won the Republican nomination, which ultimately caused a split in the Republican Party. In the end, Roosevelt ran on the Progressive Party or "Bull Moose" platform, Taft ran as a Republican and Woodrow Wilson as a Democrat. The election was approaching when Taft decided to tour Massachusetts and support the Cambridge Industrial Carnival, which had opened on September 28, 1912. The city's armory was the site of the industrial exhibition that was filled with many of the latest technologies and inventions.

The Oct. 1st, 1912 Boston Globe reported that "[the President] will arrive about 4:30, entering Cambridge by the Boylston Street bridge. He will be received by a large delegation of citizens in automobiles and escorted to the Armory by way of the Charles River Parkway . . . At the Armory, he will view the exhibition, hold a reception and make an address from the platform at the east end of the Armory."

Though usually removed from the worldly goings on about them, the Sisters of Notre Dame were as thrilled as the rest of Cambridge to be part of such a visit. The Sisters wrote in their Cambridge Annals, that "October second, Cambridge was honored with a visit from President Taft. Mayor Barry, a devoted alumnus of the St. Mary's Parochial School, planned the route so that His Excellency should pass St. Mary's Gymnasium building on Harvard Street. . . The Reverend Pastor ordered 1680 large flags and every member of St. Mary's School was provided with the stars and stripes. America [the song] was rehearsed in the school yard with the assistance of Rev. Father Barry and Doctor McCarthy. The latter found no little difficulty in suiting the pitch [of the song] to the children's voices, much to the disgust of the Reverend Pastor who said, 'Let the teachers use their pitch pipes and they'll have it in no time.' Shortly after four o'clock every child was in line. . . The President was delayed so that

it was after five o'clock before the advance Guard of the mounted escort appeared, preceded by an immense automobile car, in which was seated the brass band and attendant musicians. As the Presidents' car came in sight, at a given signal, the children, 1600 strong burst forth into lusty cheers. The President called a halt, his kind face beaming with satisfaction as he surveyed the juvenile and enthusiastic army before him. Over and over again, he responded to the patriotic welcome by deep bows and lifted hat."

It must have been one of his few happy moments in the last month of his presidency. On November 5th, 1912, Taft suffered the worst defeat of any incumbent president before or since, losing to Woodrow Wilson. Even Roosevelt received far more votes than Taft. Taft's career wasn't over, however. He returned to Yale to teach, became president of the American Bar Association, founded the League to Enforce Peace in 1914 and in 1921 was nominated as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court by President Harding, a position Taft kept until his death in 1930.



The Taft
Presidential Car

Fun Facts about William Howard Taft

- ⇒ He was the first president appointed to the Supreme Court after his presidency.
- ⇒ He is one of two presidents buried in Arlington Cemetery. John F. Kennedy is the other president buried there.
- ⇒ He was the first president to have a presidential car.

Sources consulted for this article

- ◆ St. Mary's Convent Annals, 1876-1919.
- ◆ Boston Globe Archive, 1878-1980
- ◆ Bevhist.org