

On the Road with President Woodrow Wilson

By

Richard F. Weingroff

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On the Road with President Woodrow Wilson

President Woodrow Wilson initiated the Federal-aid highway program by signing the Federal Aid Road Act on July 11, 1916. He does not appear to have played a direct role in securing congressional approval, but his team at the Department of Agriculture, particularly Director Logan Waller Page of the Office of Public Roads and Rural Engineering, was influential. Nevertheless, President Wilson favored such a program because he understood, from personal experience, that it was needed.

For information on development of the 1916 Act, see “Creating of a Landmark” on this Web site at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/highwayhistory/landmark.pdf>

Woodrow Wilson – Bicyclist

On March 1, 1869, Thomas Woodrow Wilson, a 12-year old, saw the Hanlon brothers riding velocipedes on Broad Street in Augusta, Georgia. David V. Herlihy, the author of *Bicycles: The History* (Yale University Press, 2006), wrote in *Adventure Cyclist* magazine that Tommy, as he was known, “was practically an eyewitness” to the inception of the bicycle. “He may even have ridden the old boneshaker himself because two rinks flourished briefly near his home”

Whether he tried the boneshaker is unknown, but Tommy was not gripped by the growing enthusiasm for bicycling that began with the introduction of the ordinary – the bicycle with a large front wheel and a small back wheel. Today, it is difficult to comprehend how extensive the Bicycle Craze of the 1880s and 1890s was following introduction of the ordinary or “English Bicycle.” The worldwide craze included the formation of city, State, and national bicycle clubs, such as the League of American Wheelmen (L.A.W.), the most influential of them; city bicycling free of trolley schedules and fares; construction of velodromes for learning, practice, and exercise, similar to the roller and ice skating rinks of a later era; bicycle racing, a sport that was as popular in its time as Nascar is today; bicycle sale and repair shops in every city, one of which was the source of income for Orville and Wilbur Wright as they developed the first self-propelled airplane to take flight; fashions, including the then-scandalous “bloomers” for women; opportunities for African Americans such as Marshall “Major” Taylor, one of the most famous bicycle racers in the world; and national advocacy by the L.A.W., bicycle makers, and “cranks” (fans) for good roads. The bicycle, in short, was a revolution.

In 1883, while Woodrow was practicing law in Atlanta, his 16-year old brother Joseph (Josie) caught the bicycling fever in Wilmington, North Carolina. He bought a Columbia ordinary, one of the premier brands, and soon founded one of

the South's early bicycle clubs. "Josie did his part for the cause, suing the State of North Carolina to give wheelmen access to a local turnpike."

He promoted the bicycle to his older brother in letter after letter (in one, he wrote "Hurrah!!!! For the bicycle"), but Woodrow was not persuaded:

Woodrow did not truly fit the wheelman mold. For starters, he was not much of an athlete. At five feet 11 inches, he towered over his younger brother, and he had played some baseball in his college days, but both his eyesight and his general constitution were poor. Besides, he was approaching the 30-year milestone, an age when many wheelmen hung up their wheels to get on with life. Indeed, Woodrow was already dating the woman he would soon marry, Ellen Louise Axson.

In 1884, when Joseph went to military school, he left his Columbia with Woodrow, hoping he would try bicycling. "Whether Woodrow ever dared to mount the Columbia and take it on a furtive spin or two is not known, [but] if he did, he never succumbed to 'high wheel fever':"

And by 1887, it seemed that Woodrow would never cycle. He had married Ellen, become a father to the first of their three daughters, and was fully engaged in his new career as a university professor, teaching ancient history and international law.

Joseph, returning from school, became the secretary-treasurer of the bicycle club and an agent for two bicycle companies, Columbia and Ridge.

Woodrow, increasingly experiencing fatigue and headaches, believed that exercise might help him overcome his illnesses, but resisted the bicycle until a variation, called the "safety," with same size wheels, arrived in the United States from England:

Although it was at first widely dismissed as an eccentricity, the diminutive chain-driven bicycle from Great Britain quickly gained traction. With the adoption of pneumatic tires, the revamped bicycle was at last ready to deliver on its original promise to provide efficient, enjoyable—and reasonably safe transportation. It soon toppled the old high wheel and threw open the gates of the cycling kingdom to the general population.

The safety reached the United States in 1882.

As the safety displaced the ordinary, Joseph lost interest. "If he could no longer mount his 'ordinary' with his head held high, it was time to give up the sport altogether." His older brother, however, finally caught the fever:

Along with millions of others, Woodrow would get swept up by the great bicycle boom of the 1890s Woodrow probably purchased his first bicycle around 1894, after he had returned to Princeton as a professor. For the next 16 years or so, even after the bicycle had lost its cachet [to the automobile], and even after he had assumed the university's highest administrative post, Woodrow continued to rely on his bicycle to get around campus. [Herlihy, David V., "Woodrow Wilson, Cyclist," *Adventure Cycling*, June 2017.]

At an unknown point, he joined the L.A.W., which published *Good Roads* magazine monthly beginning in 1892 ("The Illustrated Monthly Magazine Devoted to the Public Roads and Streets"). All members received a free subscription to the magazine. Whether Wilson received and read the magazine is unknown, but what an author wrote in 1882 would hold true, namely that "the moment any person becomes a wheelman he is instantly and ardently convinced of the necessity for improved highways. Both his vote and his voice can be depended on . . . to support legislation to secure better roads and streets." The sentiment behind this statement would inspire the Good Roads Movement of the 1880s-1890s that accompanied the Bicycle Craze. [Bates, Lewis J, "Effect of the Bicycle on Our Highway Laws," *Wheeling*, October 1882, page 40; cited in Mason, Phillip P., *The League of American Wheelmen and the Good Roads Movement 1890-1905*, M.A. Thesis, The American University, 1957, page 49]. (The L.A.W. sold the magazine to a private publisher, E. L. Powers, in 1895.)

His often poor health took a bad turn in 1896, as A. Scott Berg wrote in his 2013 biography:

While writing a letter in 1891, Wilson had complained of difficulty in holding his pen. He thought little of it until late 1896, when pain shot down his right arm, his hand froze, and some of his fingers became numb. He was alarmed enough to consult a doctor in Philadelphia. The physician, probably not fully apprised of the professional and financial pressures under which Wilson had been toiling, dismissed the condition as "writer's cramp." Looking back on Wilson's medical history with a century of hindsight and knowledge, later experts would presume an occlusion of his left middle cerebral artery. In other words, Woodrow Wilson had evidently suffered a small stroke.

The prescription for the 39-year old Wilson was a break from the pressures he faced, especially from writing, and he took advantage of the opportunity to spend 9 weeks in Scotland and England. Ellen, with her daughters to look after, declined to go, but she urged him to bicycle his way back to health.

The 12-day trip across the Atlantic Ocean on the S.S. *Ethiopia* “proved tonic. His writing hand rested completely, as his ambidexterity allowed him to take up a pencil with his left.” [Berg, A. Scott, *Wilson*, G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 2013, pages 124-125]

By the time the ship docked in Glasgow, Wilson had made friends with Charles A. Woods and his wife from Marion, South Carolina. The new friends toured Glasgow and Edinburgh before bicycling 100 miles southeast to Carlisle, his mother’s birthplace, stopping in Ayr and Dumfries.

In Carlisle, he searched for his maternal grandfather’s home or church and his mother’s birthplace, and while the hunt was not successful, he found the Caledonian air “exhilarating and entertaining.” With his friends delayed by bicycle repairs, Wilson took the train to Keswick, then bicycled to Grasmere in the Lake District, describing the ride as “16 enchanting miles.”

The Woods caught up Wilson in the Lake District.

The trio continued southeast to York. From there, Woodrow cycled some 200 miles to London before taking a train back to Glasgow to board his homeward-bound steamship. He had enjoyed his first cycle tour immensely, especially his visit to the Lake District. [Herlihy]

The Lake District of England would entrance Wilson. A recent guide to the area stated:

The compact and easily accessible corner of the North West is packed with the best of everything that England has to offer including cycling. It has all of the land over 914m (3000 feet) with England’s highest summits, the largest and deepest lakes and rare wildlife such as red squirrels, nesting osprey and a solitary golden eagle that desperately needs a mate. The scenery was wild and dramatic before man arrived, first settling in the fertile valleys to grow crops and rear cattle, and then venturing into the fells to mine copper, lead and other ores. By medieval times the region was criss-crossed by packhorse tracks that linked the main commercial centres of Ambleside and Keswick with the outside world. Over time these tracks became the roads we know today. Some have very steep gradients and cross the highest pass in England providing cyclists with challenging rides amid stunning scenery

Despite being called Lake District, there is only one lake – Bassenthwaite Lake – everything else being ‘waters’, ‘meres’ or, in the case of the smaller expanses of water, ‘tarns’. [Barnett, Richard, Introduction, *Cycling in the Lake District: Week-Long Tours and Day Rides*, Cicerone, 2016]

Wilson returned to England in 1899, this time with Ellen's brother Stockton:

Woodrow even joined the Cyclists' Touring Club so that the two could enjoy discounts at certain hotels and restaurants. His surviving club-issued Pocket Record reveals that his mount was an 1899 Columbia Model 59, purchased for \$75.

After they discovered that Stockton could not keep up with his brother-in-law, "Woodrow graciously insisted that they do most of their travels by train, with the bicycles stored in the baggage car." In the Lake District, they continued their bicycle touring:

Wilson wrote to Ellen that he and Stockton had just ridden along "the most beautiful road in the world" as they followed the River Eamont. He also described the "perfect" conditions they had enjoyed, including "keen fresh air out of the West [and] intense sunlight and quick moving shadows, showing every peak and line of the mountains, every sloping shore, every home, or group of trees or herd of cattle

He added that the trip was therapeutic. Once again in need of rest, he found "unspeakable peace" in a restful change from his hectic world.

Stockton felt bad about holding up his brother-in-law who "loved his bicycle, loved the rides along the fine British roads, and had looked forward to the ride from Edinburgh to southern England, all by wheel." In Surrey, England, Stockton stayed behind to let Woodrow enjoy bicycling around England.

Berg summarized the trip:

At Ellen's insistence, he took another vacation, cycling through Cumbria with her brother Stockton. Woodrow retraced much of the itinerary of his first trip abroad Although he enjoyed a brief detour to Ireland—roaming the quads of Trinity College in Dublin in search of Burke's spirit—and shed tears in St. Giles's Church in Edinburgh, where he heard the very hymns his mother had sung to him—there remained "no spot in the world in which I am so completely at rest and peace," he said, "as in the lake country." [Berg, page 133]

He returned home refreshed.

At Princeton

In June 1902, Woodrow Wilson became the 13th president of Princeton, where his bicycle became his primary mode of transportation:

While others were turning to various forms of motorized transportation, Woodrow remained true to the bicycle. One evening, a student was riding his motorbike through the distant outskirts of Princeton and spotted the university president dutifully pedaling his bicycle home. The surprised young man offered Wilson a tow, which the professor sheepishly accepted on the condition that he be released just before they reached the campus so that he would not risk being recognized or humiliated. [Herlihy]

Wilson would return to the Lake District in 1903. This time, however, Ellen accompanied him, making the cycling of earlier visits impossible. They toured England and Scotland, crossed the Channel to France, Italy, and Switzerland

On May 28, 1906, Wilson awakened without sight in his left eye, pain in his left shoulder, and some paralysis in his right hand. With Ellen, he visited his Philadelphia ophthalmologist, Dr. George de Schweinitz, who diagnosed a blood clot and rupture in the eye. Recalling previous symptoms, Dr. de Schweinitz “saw a graver medical picture.” He was concerned about the flow of blood in the carotid artery. Hardening of the arteries was involved, but really it was another stroke. The prescription was rest. [Berg, page 150]

He turned over his responsibilities at Princeton to an acting president, and returned to the Lake Country with his family, once again for a bicycle-less vacation. Staying in the two-story Loughrigg Cottage in Rydal, they enjoyed a relaxing vacation:

He and Ellen visited all the [William] Woodworth haunts, at which she frequently opened her paint box; with his daughters, he walked the neighboring “fells,” clearing his head when he was not losing himself in conversations with local shepherds. He hiked as much as fourteen miles some days.

He wrote to a friend, “No doubt God could have made a lovelier country than this Lake District, but I cannot believe he ever did.”

He visited an oculist in Edinburgh who found Wilson’s eye restored enough to resume reading, “though he noted a scotoma, a blind spot to which Wilson was already adapting.” He could return to work. The family returned to Princeton in early October. [Berg, pages 142-153]

Biographer Arthur Walworth summarized the medical results:

His left eye never recovered fully, in spite of his assurance to his wife that he would train it to behave. His hand still bothered him, but a pen with a large handle was made to relieve the pain of writing. After meals a bottle of whiskey was set beside him and he measured out a medicinal dose, then

apologized roguishly to his family for not sharing his liquor with them. By pruning his engagement calendar, systematizing his work, and insisting on ample sleep, he was able to take up his task again. [Walworth, Arthur, Part 1, *Woodrow Wilson*, Penguin Books, Inc., 1969 (Revised Edition), pages 98-99]

After a few months of working too hard, he was again in need of rest. Ellen insisted he follow doctor's orders and take a solo vacation to Bermuda. He asked Ellen to accompany him, but she said she must stay home "like the fixtures." [Walworth, part 1, page 99]

He arrived in Bermuda in January 1907. Berg described his activities as "studying and loafing":

In the mornings, he composed outlines for the short lecture series on government he had agreed to give at Columbia; in the afternoons, he strolled the waterfront, explored the island on bicycle; or viewed the surrounding sea and reefs in glass-bottom boats.

At a dinner party he met Mary Allen Hulbert Peck. Her first husband had died, and she was about to divorce her second husband. They formed an instant friendship that he always claimed was platonic. Wilson left the island 2 days after the meeting. [Walworth, pages 98-100]

After losing a frustrating battle regarding social conditions at the university, Wilson once again experienced numbness and pain in his right arm and shoulder attributed to neuritis. He again sailed for Bermuda on January 18, 1908. According to Berg, he "felt unmoored," not only because of the dispute he had lost, but because he and Ellen, for the first time in 20 years, "faced an empty nest." As Berg explained, their three daughters had moved away to live their lives apart from their parents:

With the loss . . . melancholia frequently overcame Ellen. She sometimes needed to put distance between herself and Woodrow. When he went away, she took to visiting relatives in Georgia.

No sooner had the Bermudian docked and Wilson checked into the Hotel Hamilton than he went in search of Mrs. Peck. [Berg, pages 167-168]

He would enjoy visiting with her and also met her friend, Samuel L. Clemens, better known as Mark Twain. For Twain, Bermuda was a magical place. Starting in 1867, he visited the island eight times; his time there added up to about 6 months. It was, as author Daniel Hoffman wrote in his book about Twain's fascination with the island, "a great deal of time for a man so constitutionally

restless.” [Hoffman, Donald, *Mark Twain in Paradise: His Voyages to Bermuda*, University of Missouri Press, 2006, page 1]

Twain wrote about Bermuda in articles and his rambling autobiography. Based on his visit in 1877, he wrote about the island’s roads:

Take any road you please, you may depend upon it you will not stay in it half a mile. Your road is everything that a road ought to be: it is bordered with trees, and with strange plants and flowers; it is shady and pleasant . . . it carries you by the prettiest and peacefulest and most home-like of homes, and through stretches of forest that lie in a deep hush sometimes, and sometimes are alive with the music of birds; it curves always, which is a continual promise, whereas straight roads reveal everything at a glance and kill interest.

Your road is all this, and yet you will not stay in it half a mile, for the reason that little seductive, mysterious roads are always branching out from it on either hand, and as these curve sharply also and hide what is beyond, you cannot resist the temptation to desert your own chosen road and explore them. You are usually paid for your trouble; consequently, your walk inland always turns out to be one of the most crooked, involved, purposeless, and interesting experiences a body can imagine. [Quoted in Hoffman, page 43]

After returning to New York City after a stay in Bermuda in 1907, Twain returned for a quick trip in March. During this quick trip, Twain had met Mrs. Peck, who had spent the winter on the island as her marriage dissolved. She had met Woodrow Wilson, just a few days earlier. [Hoffman, page 79]

After Ellen Wilson insisted that her husband stick to a good-health plan of taking a winter vacation, he returned to Bermuda in 1908, arriving on January 20. He soon resumed his friendship with Mrs. Peck. Through her, he met Twain at her island home, Shoreby:

Clemens and Wilson shared a spicy meal at Shoreby, but at coffee Wilson’s high-minded talk about government left Clemens bored. [Hoffman, page 96]

According to Walworth, Wilson enjoyed the near-daily company of Mrs. Peck:

In Bermuda, Wilson loved the company of Mark Twain, too, and would spend mornings with him over croquet, or a game of miniature golf of their own invention. Though the humorist and his friend [wealthy industrialist] H. H. Rogers cut capers and clowned together, they put on party manners when the president of Princeton approached. This made it

hard for him to lose his dignity in the carefree, boyish play of which he seemed never to have had enough. He could not cut loose from his position. [Walworth, part 1, pages 100-101]

(Miniature golf took place on a putting green with nine holes at a time when Bermuda did not have a full golf course.)

One thing that Twain and Wilson agreed on was the bad influence of the automobile on the island. A few small automobiles had been imported to Bermuda by then, along with a motorized omnibus, nicknamed the “Scarlet Runner.” Stable owners complained that the omnibus went too fast, frightened the horses, and created unsafe conditions on the island’s roads.

Then, in March 1906, wealthy newspaper publisher James Gordon Bennett had shipped a large and expensive French automobile, a De Dion-Bouton, to Hamilton harbor on his luxurious steam yacht, the *Lysistrata*. Writer Keith Archibald Forbes wrote:

It bumped noisily over the unpaved roads of the town while amazed Bermudians gawked wide eyed from every window and droves of panting schoolboys raced behind it. It traveled at an average rate of 15 miles an hour, much faster than any horse and carriage in Bermuda could reach and sustain. Schoolboys loved it but there were many others who were not amused, whose horses were frightened, or who had nightmares that “horseless carriages” would drive away very important visitors like Mark Twain. [Forbes, Keith Archibald, “Mark Twain and Bermuda,” *Bermuda Online* at <http://www.bermuda-online.org/twain.htm>]

“Bennett’s noisy, smelly motor car” prompted a campaign, led by Wilson, to ban motorized vehicles from the island. He wrote a petition to the Bermuda legislature:

We, the undersigned, visitors to Bermuda, venture respectfully to express the opinion that the admission of automobiles to the island would alter the whole character of the place . . .

The island now attracts visitors in considerable numbers because of the quiet and dignified simplicity of its life. It derives its principal charm from its utter detachment from the world of strenuous business and feverish pleasure in which most of us are obliged to spend the great part of our time [W]e are confident that the free introduction of such vehicles, especially by visitors, would in the mind of everyone capable of appreciating the natural and wholesome pleasures of the place make it a place to shun rather than to resort to

The danger to be apprehended is chiefly from reckless tourists who would care nothing for local opinion or for the convenience and safety of others. This is one of the last refuges now left in the world to which one can come to escape such persons. It would, in our opinion, be a fatal error to attract to Bermuda the extravagant and sporting set who have made so many other places of pleasure entirely intolerable to persons of taste and cultivation. [Hoffman, pages 98-99]

The comment about the “extravagant and sporting set” was a direct reference to Bennett, his yacht, and the automobile it had carried.

The petition appeared in the island newspaper, the *Royal Gazette*, on February 1. On February 4, the newspaper carried a letter signed “Americus” that called the automobile “the worst affliction that has cursed the world since the beginning of civilization.” Citing one example, Americus explained that at least the Spanish Inquisition had as justification “the salvation of souls, but there is no possible excuse for the use of the mercilessly murderous automobiles because they are employed solely for the personal gratification of individuals whose frenzied desire for pleasure cannot be satisfied without the excitement of some pursuit which will bring them continuously face to face with danger to life and limb.” As if that were not bad enough, “In many instance homes and farms are mortgaged to obtain the means for the gratification of the monstrous.” [Hoffman, page 97. Hoffman did not speculate on the identify of Americus.]

Forbes described a different process for the petition. Twain and Wilson abandoned their golf games:

They drafted a petition to the Bermuda Legislature demanding that motorized vehicles be totally banned in Bermuda Wilson and Twain lobbied local legislators extensively to ensure the success of their petition. It was effective. It was helped hugely by the fact that in 1908 the first bus on the island . . . frightened . . . a horse, causing a doctor to be tossed to the ground. That incident is believed to have been one of the catalysts – Mark Twain in Bermuda was another – that led to the passing of a law that would ban all motor vehicles from Bermuda’s roads.

The assembly and Governor approved the Motor Car Act of 1908, which banned all motor vehicles from Bermuda. The ban remained in effect until 1946.

[Forbes]

That summer, at Ellen’s insistence, Wilson returned to the Lake District, this time alone. “This would allow him to cycle his way back to health,” but also prevent him from returning to Bermuda to renew his friendship with Mary Hulbert:

Woodrow admitted to her that his affair was “indiscrete,” but he insisted that it was “not improper.” He agreed, nevertheless, to abide by Ellen’s proposal. After all, now that he was in his early 50s and in the midst of a full-blown mid-life crisis, there was much he could ponder on a third cycle trip: his poor health, his troubled marriage, his three growing daughters, and his increasingly rocky tenure at Princeton—not to mention his as yet unfulfilled political ambitions.

Arriving in Glasgow, he retrieved his bicycle for brief trips to Sterling and Edinburgh. After arriving by train in Lockerbie, “he began to cycle in earnest.” His bicycle took him to Carlisle, through Penrith to Keswick, Grasmere, and Coniston. He took the train to Drigg, then took a 2-day ride around the Western Lakes. After a stay in Glasmere, he returned to Glasgow where he boarded a steamship bound for home, “a fully recharged man.”

[Unless otherwise cited, all quotes are from Herlihy. Discussion of the Lake District visits was supplemented with information in Barnett, Richard, “Woodrow Wilson on Wheels,” *Cycling in the Lake District*, page 30]

Author Carlton Reid discussed how Wilson’s bicycle travels helped him understand the need for good roads:

It’s almost certain that Wilson’s interest in Good Roads started when he was a cyclist

Wilson spent many vacations cycle touring in northern England, including the Lake District. (His mother was born in Carlisle, north of the Lakes.) England’s rural roads of the late 1890s, especially the main ones, were mostly covered in tightly-compacted small stones – the macadam system – and, by and large, were far superior to the roads Wilson would have been used to in America. His cycle tours in Europe would have impressed on him the need for better roads, the clamour for which was led by the Cyclists’ Touring Club in Britain and the League of American Wheelmen in the US. LAW’s ‘Good Roads’ movement – a movement later commandeered by motorists who claimed it as their own – was modelled on the Roads Improvement Association, founded by the Cyclists’ Touring Club and the National Cyclists’ Union in 1886.

Lobbying by cyclists in the 1890s saw many improvements made to roads, although on neither side of the Atlantic was there national administration for roads. Roads were deemed to be of local concern only, something cyclists worked hard to change, long before motorists came on the scene. [Reid, Carlton, “A Cycle Touring US President Kickstarted the Paving of America,” The Blog, September 11, 2013 -

<http://www.roadswerenotbuiltforcars.com/wilson/> and Reid, Carlton, *Roads Were Not Built For Cars: How Bicyclists were the First to Push for Road Roads & Became the Pioneers of Motoring*, Island Press, 2015, page 47]

Early Views on the Automobile

President Wilson of Princeton University gave a speech on “The Young Man’s Burden” before the North Carolina Society of New York at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on February 27, 1906. His speech covered several topics, including the automobile, where his preference for the bicycle appears to have affected his observations:

I think that of all the menaces to-day, the worst is the reckless driving in automobiles. In this the rights of the people are set at naught. When a child is run over the automobilist doesn’t stop, but runs away. Does the father of that child consider him heartless? I don’t blame him if he gets a gun. I am a Southerner [born on December 28, 1856, in Staunton, Virginia] and know how to shoot. Would you blame me if I did so under such circumstances?

In these comments, he was not rejecting automobiles, but reflecting the contemporary concerns about the unintended consequences of the benefits of automobiles, in this case fatalities.

He added, in a statement often quoted in histories of the automobile, “Nothing has spread socialistic feeling in this country more than the use of automobiles. To the countryman they are a picture of arrogance of wealth, with all its independence and carelessness.”

He concluded his speech:

I don’t believe you realize the growth of socialism in this country. To stop it you must do more and better thinking. You must sit tight and stand pat, for perhaps you don’t know the beast you are riding. [“Wilson Blames Speeders,” *The New York Times*, February 28, 1906]

In a time when automobiles shared roads with bicycles, horses, wagons, and pedestrians, Wilson’s comments reflected a widespread class division. In the 1890s and early 1900s, farmers resented the “peacocks” on their bicycles, then in their automobiles, who could afford to buy their “machines,” as they were often called in those days, and had the leisure time to cruise along the primitive country roads scaring horses. Author Carlton Reid explained:

Working class people felt embittered that they were being shunted to the margins of the road by “rich mens’ toys.” Pioneer motorists were pelted with stones. There are many recorded examples of this from Germany and Switzerland, but missile-throwing was endemic in the Netherlands, claimed a German woman motorist, who recorded in her diary in 1905 that “a journey by automobile through Holland is dangerous, since most of the rural population hates motorists fanatically. We even encountered older men, their faces contorted with anger, who, without any provocation, threw fist-sized stones at us.”

Motorists were physically attacked in America, too. Between 1903 and 1907, farmers shot at motor cars in Minnesota; motorists were pulled from their vehicles in Wisconsin; and in rural New York motorists were whipped. Roads were sometimes booby-trapped with rakes, glass or tacks and ropes or barbed wire were strung across rural roads known to attract “scorchers.” [Reid, page 47]

(“Scorchers” had become a common term for speeding bicyclists, and survived in that meaning into the early days of the motor age.)

Although the spread of socialism was a public concern, automobilists rejected Wilson’s linkage of the automobile to the movement. John Parson, a Chicago banker who was president of the American Automobile Association (AAA), urged Wilson to travel through the Midwest:

The very opposite of President Wilson’s statement is practically true in the farming districts of the West. The small machines that have been built in such large numbers recently and that may be purchased for from \$750 to \$1,250 are being used to a large extent in the West, and the discovery by the rural residents that these cars can be relied upon for hard usage has occasioned a more friendly feeling toward automobiles in general.

Scores of well-to-do farmers are now automobile owners, and where three years ago the horseless vehicle was regarded with suspicion, entirely different sentiments are entertained now. Just as soon as any class of people realize that the automobile is useful for the ordinary work and duties of life apart from its pleasurable attributes as a touring car, it will be regarded with favor, and this feeling is growing all the time in the agricultural parts of the West.

An unnamed New Jersey automobilist who had taken a long trip through Maine had expected people in some parts of the State to have never heard of an automobile, but found them in use statewide:

I remember one long, dreary stretch of road over which I traveled with some difficulty, not far from the Canadian border, where there were only eighteen houses in about fifty miles. I was pleased to see that these backwoods residents exhibited considerable interest in my machine, but I soon ascertained the reason. The owners of eleven of those eighteen homes kept automobiles. One of the most intelligent residents owned an old-fashioned second-hand car that he had bought somewhere down in Maine, but he kept it in good repair and had found it much cheaper than horses.

“Well, you see, it’s like this,” he said to me, “nearly every house on the road is a sort of sportsman’s headquarters, and there’s nothing that catches the Summer resorters so much as to tell them we will meet them at the station a dozen miles or more away with an automobile. It tickles their fancy and makes good business. Then, when my automobile is not at work, it stands in a shed and costs nothing to keep.

Not much socialism in that up in Maine. I could cite scores of cases in New Jersey where farmers who two years ago could not say enough against automobiles are now motor car owners themselves.

E. S. Partridge of the Decauville Automobile Company discussed Wilson’s views on socialism from a manufacturer’s point of view:

I trust that President Wilson will not request us to abandon a pastime that has practically revolutionized traffic and done so much for the commercial world. We have become accustomed to the outburst from time to time of occasionally discontented minds not familiar with the subject of automobiling, and have allowed these attacks to go unanswered, but as a matter of cold fact if any one will investigate he will find that there are not as many crazy drivers of automobiles as there are crazy drivers of horses, bicycles, or other vehicles. [“Motorists Don’t Make Socialists, They Say,” *The New York Times*, March 4, 1906]

Despite these denials, Professor James J. Frink in a 1970 book about the adoption of the automobile found that at the time of Wilson’s comments, farmers had mixed reactions to the motor vehicle:

Early assessments of farmers’ opinion of the motor vehicle by the automobile trade journals found little prejudice against the innovation. At the turn of the century, *Horseless Age* found it “gratifying to learn that the farmers in many sections of the country are taking a very sensible attitude toward the automobile. Recognizing it as the inevitable, soon to be as common on our roads as the horse vehicles, they are improving every

opportunity to accustom their horses to it . . . this is a very hopeful sign and proves that more than half the battle for the automobile in rural districts is already won”

The ire of farmers was unexpectedly aroused against the automobile, however, with the advent of widespread informal automobile touring during the summer of 1904. Speeding automobile tourists constituted a danger both to stock and to horsedrawn traffic and raised clouds of dust that damaged crops and settled on farmhouses, barns, and washes hung out to dry. These problems were much more severe in rural than in urban areas because of the absence of the traffic congestion that reduced speed in cities and because of the general lack of any paving whatever on country roads. Moreover, in 1904 the farmer could not easily anticipate owning an automobile himself soon, for most reputable manufacturers made no serious attempt to design cars suited to the farmers’ needs and purses until forced to by the apparent saturation of the urban luxury market about 1906.

As these comments suggest, farmers gradually embraced the automobile:

Each year farmers [became] more familiar with the motor vehicle, aware of its advantages over the horse, and anxious to purchase cars themselves. The increasing prosperity of farmers, combined with the appearance of rugged, moderately priced cars such as the Ford Model N [1906] and Model T [1908], led to the rapid development of a substantial rural market for motor vehicles after 1906. The hostility toward the automobile that had arisen in rural areas diminished appreciably. [Flink, James J., *America Adopts the Automobile, 1895-1910*, The MIT Press, 1970, pages 66-70]

Professor John B. Rae added:

Mr. Wilson was reflecting the frequent propensity of the intellectual to express his concern for the common man by undertaking to determine what the common man should go without. As it turned out, he was wrong about the automobile, but he was wrong only because there were enough other individuals in the United States with the foresight to see what the motor vehicle might become and the willingness to take enormous risks to reach their goals. [Rae, John B., *The Road and the Car in American Life*, The MIT Press, 1971, page 43]

Governor Wilson

Woodrow Wilson was governor of New Jersey for a little over 2 years – January 7, 1911, to March 1, 1913. He focused on fiscal and business issues, and as a candidate for President by late 1911, traveled around the country giving speeches.

Nevertheless, Governor Wilson took several steps to advance the cause of good roads. A history of the State’s road network summarized:

The administration of Democratic Governor Woodrow Wilson “ushered in an era of reform that reflected the Progressives’ objective of using apolitical specialists, or experts, and the scientific approach to solving social and technical problems. In theory, the learned replaced the political cronies as the setters of policy, with inefficiency and corruption replaced by honest, efficient administration.”

(The quotation is from A. G. Lichtenstein and Associates, Inc., *The New Jersey Historic Bridge Survey*, Prepared for the New Jersey Department of Transportation, Bureau of Environmental Analysis and the Federal Highway Administration, NJ Division, 1994, page 41.).

Governor Wilson chose Colonel Edwin A. Stevens to be Commissioner of Public Roads. Colonel Stevens was a graduate of Princeton (1879) where he was a classmate and friend of “Tommy” Wilson. After graduation, Stevens received a degree of civil engineering from the Stevens Institute of Technology, founded by his family. He earned the title of Colonel with the Second Regiment of the New Jersey National Guard, which he commanded for 6 years. He would become well-known nationally among roadbuilders, serving as president of the American Road Builders’ Association in 1916.

The history added:

During Stevens’ tenure from 1911 to 1918, he transformed the department into a place of studied innovation in highway construction. Increases in staff and funding allowed Stevens to approach the state’s roadwork needs in a professional, business-like manner, appropriate to the increasing importance of the road network to New Jersey’s commerce. As Stevens pointed out in his 1914 report, “the whole tendency of road legislation in this and other states is towards a more centralized control. Roads have become matters of general and no longer of merely local interest.” As such, Stevens instituted uniform standards for construction and maintenance, undertook bridge construction projects across the state, and ushered in the era of the New Jersey state highway system.

Although Woodrow Wilson never learned to drive an automobile, he became a motorist after winning election as Governor. From his bicycling days, he knew the value of good roads, but his experiences as a motorist reinforced that knowledge. For example, on March 18, 1912, he was motoring from a dinner of

the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick at the Hotel Montclair to the Princeton Inn in Princeton. He was in Montclair Mayor Ernest C. Hinck's automobile, accompanied by John L. Cox. They left for Princeton around 1 a.m.:

As the night was intensely dark a message was sent to Chief of Police Kiely, asking that a policeman be assigned to act as guide over the roads from Plainfield to Princeton.

The journey to Plainfield was accomplished in safety, but after striking out from that town the chauffeur steered into a badly mired road. The big limousine floundered in the bog and it became necessary for Gov. Wilson and his companions to alight and wade about in the mud and water until the chauffeur extricated the car. In the darkness the members of the party could not see each other as they plodded along the bad stretch of road, and when they could board the car again they were unable to get their bearings for a time. Finally the automobile reached New Brunswick, far out of the shortest route to Princeton. The Governor arrived home about 5 o'clock in the morning. ["Gov. Wilson Lost in Jersey," *The New York Times*, March 19, 1912]

During a little over 2 years in office, Governor Wilson took several steps to improve motoring in New Jersey. One of the most important was signing legislation in 1912 that called for the State to establish a 1,500-mile State highway system. As Colonel Stevens explained in his annual report for 1912:

The law of 1912 in effect divides our roads, exclusively of city streets, into three classes: The State highway, the county road and the municipal road. The roads in these classes should vary in respective importance according to their classification.

The State highways, when taken over, can be efficiently maintained with the present organization and an enlarged force, as soon as adequate appropriations are available. ["Road Work of 1912 In New Jersey," *The New York Times*, January 5, 1913]

Legislation in 1913, as Stevens said in a statement, "directed the immediate taking over of 500 miles of State highways and made appropriation for carrying out this work":

Taking over the State highways will involve a great deal of organization work. I have recommended in the past to the Highway Commission that these roads as taken over should be surveyed and the State placed in possession of accurate data in reference thereto. This data we have as to a few of the more recently improved roads only, and it will be necessary to

secure it as to all the others. The amount of road to be surveyed will be in the neighborhood of 500 miles. ["New Laws Affect Jersey Highways," *The New York Times*, April 27, 1913]

The State under Governor Wilson also took a major step on reciprocity. As the Nation adapted to the automobile, States began collecting revenue from licensing vehicles. Each State had to decide whether to honor the tags from other States, the objection being that motorists with tags from one State did not provide revenue for upkeep of the roads used in other States. In the absence of reciprocity, a motorist had to secure a license plate for each jurisdiction his or her vehicle passed through. Professor Flink described the result:

A welter of license plates flapping from the rear end of a fleeing automobile made identification of the car, the main reasons for registration to begin with, almost impossible Automobilists ideally wanted regulation of the motor vehicle by the federal government, including a single federal license that would be valid in all states and uniform speed limits throughout the country

As early as 1902, the National Association of Automobile Manufacturers petitioned Congress for such legislation, but without success. Beginning in 1905, the necessary bills were introduced in every Congress, but never emerged from committee:

A national legislative convention held in Washington, D.C., in February 1910 marked the high point of efforts to secure federal motor vehicle legislation, but by then the need for a single, national license had been fairly well obviated by the general adoption of interstate reciprocity provisions and a trend toward increased uniformity in the motor vehicle laws of the various states. [Flink, pages 172-173]

On August 22, 1911, Governor Wilson met with a AAA delegation headed by

A. G. Batchelor, chairman of the association's executive committee. According to the *Times*, "the Executive told the motorists he was heartily in favor of real auto reciprocity between the States and would do all in his power to push down the anti-reciprocity wall about New Jersey." The 1912 State legislature approved what was called the Stickel bill. Governor Wilson signed the bill into law on April 2 and welcomed a Connecticut motorist, tag No. 3444. "A handshake with the Governor, and the man from Connecticut scurried outside to his car, removed his New Jersey license, and proceeded forthwith without hesitancy until he met the first policeman to whom he successfully explained the astounding fact that nonresident motorists were now welcome in the Commonwealth."

Under the law, a motorist from another State that had a reciprocity law could drive in New Jersey for 15 days a year. Those staying for a longer period would have to pay the regular license fee based on horsepower. [“Favors Auto Reciprocity,” *The New York Times*, August 23, 1911; “Autoists Pleased With Jersey Law,” *The New York Times*, April 7, 1912; “New Jersey Auto Bill Signed,” *The Washington Post*, April 3, 1912]

(The Supreme Court ruled on this matter in a case sponsored by AAA in 1908 when a New York motorist, Frank J. Kane, was arrested in New Jersey for not displaying local tags. On December 4, 1916, the Supreme Court ruled that the States had the power to regulate and tax automobiles within their borders; the arrest was constitutional. “The power of the state, in the absence of national legislation upon the subject, to regulate the use of its highways by motor vehicles moving in interstate commerce applies as well to such as are moving through the state as to such as are moving into it only. As applied to vehicles of nonresidents moving in interstate commerce as well as to vehicles of residents, the amount of the registration fee may properly be based not only on the cost of inspection and regulation, but also on the cost of maintaining improved roads.” [Bromley, Michael L., *William Howard Taft and the First Motoring Presidency*, McFarland & Company, 2003, page 235; *Kane v. New Jersey* 242 U.S. 160 (1916)]

(The White House had to address reciprocity when President William Howard Taft introduced the first automobiles as an alternative to the horses used by all previous Presidents. As Michael L. Bromley explained in his book about President Taft’s introduction of the automobiles to the White House:

It subjected Taft to one of the most vexing problems of early motoring, federalism. Not even the President of the United States could run his motors without permission of the locals. Or, could he? Or did his auto, like the English King’s, “have more rights and privileges than a fire engine”?

(Initially, the White House registered its four automobiles and two Secret Services automobiles in the President’s home State of Massachusetts as well as in Maryland and Virginia. (The District of Columbia did not have a licensing law.) However, in 1911, the White House submitted requests for its permits for the year, but did not include the fee (\$2 per driver, \$6 for automobiles of less than 20 horsepower, \$12 for 20-40 horsepower, and \$18 for over 40 horsepower). Both States refused to issue the permits without payment of the fee.

(Maryland State Motor Vehicle Commissioner John K. George said, “Mr. Taft is president, I know, but all automobiles look alike to me.” State law exempted Maryland’s official vehicles, but was silent on White House automobiles. “I might trust the President of the United States for the amount, but I’ll wait till I get

the cash.” He rebuked Sheriff William E. Vlett of Montgomery County, adjacent to the District, when he did not arrest Vice President James S. Sherman for motoring into Maryland without State tags. George said, “I don’t want that to happen again. Princes, potentates, Presidents and Vice President look alike to me in this automobile business.” [“Begin War On Autos,” *The Washington Post*, January 11, 1911]

(The White House argued that the Supreme Court had ruled that State and local jurisdictions could not tax government vehicles while they were performing proper government functions. Therefore, no fees were due. In Massachusetts, a similar dispute had been resolved when Governor Eben S. Draper paid the fee for the President’s automobiles. A diplomatic solution also occurred for Maryland and Virginia:

The issue was resolved by executive fiat, just as in Massachusetts earlier. The states, said the White House, “reconsidered the matter.” The Secretary of Virginia announced that “satisfactory arrangements” were discovered. What it was was peace with honor. The governors of Maryland and Virginia settled up without admitting defeat. “Regardless of the law,” [Governor August L.] Crothers of Maryland said, “I have to-day directed that the tags be sent to President Taft for his four automobiles and that no charge be made for them. I think it is a courtesy due the Executive from a sovereign state that forms a part of the Commonwealth of the Nation.”

(Governor Crothers’ directive to Commissioner George was dated January 31, 1911. [Bromley, pages 183-185; “No Auto Tax For Taft,” *The Washington Post*, February 1, 1911]

The Atlantic City Speech

In 1912, the Democratic Party chose Governor Wilson as their Presidential candidate during their Baltimore convention on June 25-July 2, 1912. His running mate was Governor Thomas R. Marshall of Indiana.

The party platform covered many topics, including good roads:

Post Roads

We favor national aid to State and local authorities in the construction and maintenance of post roads.

The Republican Party had not addressed the topic in its platform. President William Howard Taft, who had introduced the automobile to the White House,

avored good roads but did not believe the Federal Government should use Federal funds to build them. [Bromley, pages 233-234]

The Progressive (Bull Moose) Party, with former President Theodore Roosevelt as its nominee, adopted a platform that included the following:

Good Roads

We recognize the vital importance of good roads and we pledge our party to foster their extension in every proper way, and we favor the early construction of National highways. We also favor the extension of the rural free delivery service.

As was the tradition, Governor Wilson had not attended the Democratic Party's convention. Instead, on August 7, the party formally notified him of his nomination, at which time he delivered his acceptance speech. The notification ceremony took place in Sea Girt, New Jersey, home of the New Jersey Governor's summer mansion. Before thousands, he read his earnest and detailed speech, with a few interjections to provide a little humor, for about an hour.

He said the Nation faced "two great tasks":

One is to set up the rule of justice and of right in such matters as the tariff, the regulation of the trusts and the prevention of monopoly, the adaptation of our banking and currency laws to the various uses to which our people must put them, the treatment of those who do the daily labor in our factories and mines and throughout all our great industrial and commercial undertakings, and the political life of the people of the Philippines, for whom we hold government power in trust, for their service, not our own.

The other, additional duty, is the great task of protecting our people and our resources and of keeping open to the whole people the doors of opportunity through which they must, generation by generation, pass if they are to make conquest of their fortunes in health, in freedom, in peace, and in contentment.

This second great task included a transportation element:

In the performance of this second great duty we are face to face with questions of conservation and of development, questions of forests and water powers and mines and water ways, of the building of an adequate merchant marine, and the opening of every highway and facility and the setting up of every safeguard needed by a great, industrious, expanding Nation.

In elaborating on the need for a strengthened transportation system, Governor Wilson did not address road improvement directly or the provision in the Democratic Party's platform favoring national aid for roads. He did, however, say near the end of his address:

We have set ourselves a great programme, and it will be a great party that carried it out It is solidly based on the facts of our National life, its items are items of present business; it is what every man should wish to see done who wishes to see our present distempers made an end of and our old, free, co-operative life restored. ["Wilson Appeals to 'Awakened Nation,'" *The New York Times*, August 8, 1912]

Governor Wilson attended the American Road Congress 2 months later, sponsored by the American Highway Association, in Atlantic City, New Jersey. On September 30, the opening day of the congress, he delivered a nonpolitical welcoming speech to the delegates:

It is with great pleasure that I find myself here facing this interesting company and I am very glad that this is not a political convention. I am very glad indeed to be released occasionally, not from speaking about politics, but from thinking about politics. I am afraid that before you get through with the good roads question, a good deal of politics will creep into it. I am afraid from some narratives I have heard of the portions of certain bills, that politics may have crept into it already, but I think we will all agree that it is very desirable indeed that politics should be studiously excluded from it. It is a question in which there is no difference which can discriminate between party, and in my judgment it is a question in which men of good judgment can hardly differ very radically.

I was interested in thinking, as I came upon the platform, that this was a body of men who were joined together to create opinions and to reflect further that the very things they were interested in were those things best suited to create opinion. A nation is bound together by its means of communication—its means of communication create its thought. Its means of intercommunication are the means of its sympathy, they are the means by which the various parts of it keep in touch with one another, so that in performing the very pleasant function of bidding you welcome to the State of New Jersey, I feel that I am in a certain sense linking New Jersey with the sentiment of the rest of the country.

The question of highways is a question which has interested my thoughts particularly in recent years, because it is one of the few great instrumentalities of our public life and of our communal life with which the government is of necessity connected.

The government is not, in the United States, expected to build railroads. The government is not as yet expected to own railroads. Railroads differ from other highways, though we often speak of them as the highways of our commerce, in this important particular, that only those who own them can use them, in the matter of putting vehicles upon them—that a particular set of individuals by reason of their control of the roads, have the exclusive right of way over it. I have been told—I never looked into the matter and do not know whether the information is apocryphal or not—but I am told when the first part of the great Pennsylvania Railroad was built that it was the avowed policy of the State which granted the charter to the company, to allow anybody who had a vehicle with proper wheels to make use of this railroad as a highway, of course it being necessary and understood to be necessary that there should be some coöperative understanding so that the vehicles should not collide on a road on which they could not pass one another without collision. If that be true, then our railroad building started out with the highway idea, namely of the absence of the right of exclusive use, whereas the very essence of a highway is that it is open to everybody.

I dare say that some of you are lawyers and have been interested as I have been, in one of the details of the right of public meeting. We say that the people of the United States, like the people of every other free country, have the right to assemble and discuss their affairs, but the question as to where they have the right to assemble is a very interesting one. You and I can stop on the corner of a street, or on a roadside and discuss any question we please. A third friend may join us, and a fourth, a fifth or any number up to the point where we begin to interrupt the traffic. So soon as the crowd becomes big enough to disturb the normal and free use of that highway, then we must go somewhere else, then somebody has the right to tell us to break up the meeting or to move on; so that, while we have the individual right to use that road, we have not the collective right even to monopolize it. It is intended to be an open artery free for any released energy to flow in, and so the highway is of necessity a public instrumentality.

It cannot from any point of view be regarded as a private instrumentality, and as I look forward to the future of the history of the United States, I see that we must do what we have been very backward in doing as compared with other nations, we must more and more engage the government in providing the general facilities of the common life. (Applause.) There is no breach in that of any of our older understandings of the function of government. We have never doubted that the government had the right to maintain highways. We have never doubted that the government has the right to supply these facilities which private endeavor has never been

expected to supply. Therefore we are not upon a new ground of theory; we are merely upon a new ground of practice, and when I think of what the highways mean, I feel to be thinking of the whole history of the human race.

Whenever I used to read stories I remember my imagination was most fascinated when the characters went on a journey and met the rest of the old world. On the old highways, particularly the old English highways, you met everybody, from the king to the beggar, from the king to the highwayman. You were there in a way to have the adventure, the whole experience and adventure of English life because it was there that English life interlaced and crossed and was fluid, flowing from one region to another, and by the same token, it was upon the highways that men get [sic] to contacts which result in the building up of public opinion.

I was trying to illustrate the fact one day that in some of our great cities there is no public opinion, in a way which led me into trouble. I said that what generally happened to a man in a city was that when he got in a public vehicle or on a highway, he does not talk to anybody, but if he can hold himself steady enough, that wherever he happens to be he plunges his head into the morning newspaper and experiences a reaction which he calls his opinion, but it is not an opinion at all, it is simply the impression that a piece of news or an editorial has made upon him, and he cannot be said to be participating in public opinion or in opinion at all until he has laid his mind along side the minds of his neighbors and discussed with them the incidents of today and the tendencies of the time.

Where I got into trouble was that I ventured to use this illustration. I said that public opinion was not typified on the streets of a busy city, but was typified around the stove in a country store where men sat and probably chewed tobacco and spat in a sawdust box and made up, before they got through, what was the neighborhood opinion, both about persons and events; and then inadvertently I added this philosophical reflection, that whatever might be said against the chewing of tobacco this at least could be said for it, that it gave a man time to think between sentences. (Laughter and Applause.) And ever since then I have been represented, particularly in the advertisements of tobacco firms, as in favor of the use of chewing tobacco. (Laughter.) As a means of reflection I dare say that it is wholesome; otherwise I will not declare my opinion about it at all. (Laughter.) But the illustration nevertheless was an illustration of what I think is pertinent to us or rather pertinent to my thoughts in connection with what you are doing.

You know how the Roman Empire used to throw its great highways out from Rome until they touched the limits of the Empire—until they threaded even the distant island of Britain; and it was like throwing thongs out to bind the Empire together. Now the initial purpose of those highways was to afford an open road for the armies of Rome so that she could throw her power rapidly in any direction; but Rome also, in my imagination at any rate, prepared her own destruction by those highways, because she could not open them to her own armies without opening them also to the people that lived upon their edges, and they could not touch one another without forming an opinion about the Roman power, without intermingling the influences of different nations for these roads did not stop at national confines, and the Roman roads threaded the opinion of the world into a nexus and pattern, and I tell you very frankly that my interest in good roads is not merely an interest in the pleasure of riding in automobiles, it is not merely an interest in the very much more important matter of affording the farmers of this country and the residents in villages the means of ready access to such neighboring markets as they need for economic benefit, but it is also the interest in weaving as complicated and elaborate a net of neighborhood and State and national opinions together as it is possible to weave. (Applause.)

It is of the most fundamental importance that the United States should think in big pieces, should think together, should think ultimately as a whole and I feel, in my enthusiasm for good roads something of the old opposition that there always has been in me to any kind of sectional feeling (Applause.) to any kind of class feeling. The reason that city men are not more catholic in their ideas is that they do not share the opinions of the country and the reason that some countrymen are rustic is that they do not know the opinions of the city and they are both hampered by their limitations.

I heard of a lady the other day who had lived all her life in the city and in a hotel. She made her first visit to the country and spent a week in a farm house. She was asked afterwards what interested her most about her experience and she said that it was hearing the farmer page his cows. (Laughter.) A very urban point of view with regard to a common rustic occurrence, and yet that language showed the sharp, inelastic limits of her thought.

She thought much more narrowly than in the terms of a city; she thought in the terms of a hotel; and in proportion as we are confined with the walls of one hostelry or city or one State, we are provincial, and national thought cannot successful build itself upon these foundations in a way that will be permanent, so that I believe that the development of great systems of roads

is, psychologically speaking as well as physically speaking, a task of statesmanship.

I believe that it is the proper study of statesmanship to bind communities together and open their intercourse so that it will flow with absolute freedom and facility. No one argument ought to be omitted; every class has its argument for good roads and putting them all together they form an irresistible mass of arguments, but the result of the whole reasoning to my mind, is simply this; the United States has up to this time, simply let the energies of its people drift. It has thrown the reins on our necks and said, "Now here is a continent of unexampled richness; do what you please with it, we will try to see that you do not break each other's heads. We will try to see that you are restrained until you get so powerful that we cannot restrain you. We will try to see that you do justice until you so combine with one another that justice is impossible, but we are not going to lend the aid of the government to the actual task of development."

That has been the general attitude of our government up to this time. It cannot be that attitude any longer. There are things of this sort for example, you take not merely the matter of good roads and the carrying of goods to market, but of what goods there are to be carried to market, the production, the agricultural production per acre in the United States does not favorably compare with the production with the older countries of the world and the margins are approaching one another. We used to lead the world and our grain exports were our chief exports, but the exports of grain are going down and down and down because the other margin is coming up, the margin of domestic demand and the population is increasing faster than the product, so that a great deal of our commercial history is about to be altered by the circumstances of agricultural production, and I believe that it is a proper function of the government to see to it that by the extension of all the varied modern knowledge about agricultural processes and about the characteristics of different soils ought to be so extended, so carried everywhere to the farmer as to build up on the aid of the government this thing that feeds us and ought to continue to feed the world; and whenever you speak of that, whenever you increase what the United States is doing, you must immediately increase the facilities of the United States for handling what it has made after it has made it. You cannot rationally increase the prosperity of this country without increasing the road facilities of this country. (Applause.)

I remember having a very interesting and, for me, enlightening conversation with a mountaineer once in the North Carolina mountains. He was very hot against the excise taxes, which made it practically impossible for him, without becoming a criminal, to make whiskey out of

his corn, and I discussed it somewhat minutely with him in order to get his point of view. His point of view was simply this; he had a little farm that was a fertile pocket in a remote part of the mountains. It did not pay him to take his corn to the market as corn, because by the time he got to the market, the very horses that were hauling it would have eaten it up, but he could profitably get it to the market as whiskey, and his point was simply this that it was unreasonable for the government to forbid his getting a market for his corn in the only way in which it was possible for him to get a market.

Now, while we might say that it was not desirable that there should be any market at all for the product that he wished to sell, nevertheless the illustration will point my moral, namely that it is not worth producing until you can release what you produce and that the only way of releasing it is by the most facile means of intercommunication and transportation. We are merely threading the energies of a nation together, linking them in a single pattern or rather we are merely setting them free when we facilitate and promote the interest of a congress like this.

I need not tell you therefore that I am in deep sympathy with the purposes of this congress, because in my judgment that would simply be like claiming that I was a rational being and I hope that does not require argument. I would rather admit it than try to prove it (Laughter.) and if you will allow me to admit that I am a rational being, you will allow me to say that, as a matter of course, I am profoundlyly [sic] interested in the purposes of this congress and I consider it an honor that the State of New Jersey should have the pleasure of housing you for a little while and entertaining you for a little while in consultation about what is at bottom, a great national interest. (Applause.)

[Wilson, Governor Woodrow, *Proceedings of the American Road Congress, Part II, Sessions Under Auspices Of The American Highway Association*, Atlantic City, New Jersey, September 30-October 5, 1912, pages 7-12]

Governor Wilson wrote his own speeches, and would continue to do so as President, one of the last Presidents, if not the last, to do so. During the campaign, however, Governor Wilson preferred not to read speeches, according to *The New York Times*. He preferred to speak “right off his own bat,” as he put it, and his good roads speech may have been an example.

His secretary, James Tumulty, collected some of Governor Wilson’s better off-the-bat comments, which he shared with the *Times*. One of them recalled his 1906 discussion of irresponsible drivers during his bicycle days:

SIZE AND SAFETY.—I think those great touring cars which are labeled “Seeing New York” are too big for the streets. You have to walk almost around the block to get out of the way of one of them, and size has a great deal to do with your trouble if you are trying to get out of the way. But I have no objection on that account to the ordinary automobile, properly handled by a man of conscience who is also a gentleman. Many of the people I see handling automobiles handle them as if they had neither conscience or learning. You know what men do when they have a joyride; they sometimes have the time of their lives, and sometimes, fortunately [sic], the last time of their lives. [“The Real Wilson Revealed On Stump,” *The New York Times*, October 6, 1912]

Just before the November 7 election, Governor Wilson was injured in a car crash, prompting what the *Times* called “sensational rumors that he had been seriously hurt”:

The Governor’s worst injury was a scalp wound about three inches long on the left side of his head, just back of the forehead.

He was in a limousine owned by Abram I. Elkus, a New York attorney, Democratic Party activist, and Wilson supporter who lived in Red Bank, New Jersey. They were returning from a political meeting at Red Bank, where Elkus lived, to Governor Wilson’s home in Princeton. As they traveled the main street on the outskirts of Hightstown, Elkus’s chauffeur failed to see a bump in the road that resulted from workmen repairing the drains. The bump was obscured by the shadow of a telephone pole:

. . . when the machine passed over it, the Governor and Capt. “Bill” McDonald, his bodyguard, were thrown violently from their seats. Gov. Wilson’s head striking on one of the iron braces on the ceiling as he was hurled up, and for a moment he was stunned. Capt. McDonald was tossed to one side and his neck was wrenched.

The chauffeur did not realize how badly his passengers had been shaken up, and started to drive ahead. Then the Governor, feeling the blood trickling down his forehead, ordered him to turn and go to [what turned out to be] the office of Dr. Charles G. Titus in Hightstown.

(Governor Wilson, the Democratic nominee for President, was traveling with a bodyguard because just a few days earlier, on October 14, former President Roosevelt had been shot in Milwaukee by a man named John Schrank who said that “any man looking for a third term ought to be shot.” Items in the former President’s winter coat, including the text of the speech he was about to deliver

and his glasses case, deflected the bullet and saved his life. He gave the speech, but the injury kept him off the campaign trail for several weeks.)

After treatment by Dr. Titus, Governor Wilson went home and slept until noon, giving rise to rumors that he was more seriously injured than was the case. He gave this account of the incident:

I went to the home of Abram I. Elkus after the meeting in Red Bank and we had something to eat. Then Mr. Elkus placed his limousine at my disposal and with Capt. McDonald I started for Princeton around 11 o'clock. Capt. McDonald was on my left in the car. It wasn't very cold, so I didn't wear a fur coat loaned by Mr. Elkus, and we used it for a lap robe.

Were we going fast? No, I think we must have averaged fifteen miles an hour when we reached Hightstown, which is about twenty-seven miles from Red Bank. He saw a red light ahead of us on the left of the road, and there was a post to the right which cast a shadow over the road. I want to say that I don't think the chauffeur was in the least to blame.

When we struck the mound at right angles I struck the roof of the automobile, and it was a good hard blow, too. There isn't the slightest doubt about that. I had a soft hat on, and that acted as a cushion, but not as a defense. I was tossed about the car as it lurched, and Capt. McDonald, who was by my side, went through the same contortions. My eyeglasses were knocked from my nose and were broken.

I was astonished to find that my head was bleeding because I did not feel badly hurt. But I knew it would be unwise to go on in that condition and ordered the chauffeur to stop the car. Some boys directed us to the home of a physician. We had to wake the doctor up and when the boys told him that Gov. Wilson had been injured he apparently thought they were jesting.

At first, Dr. [Charles G.] Titus thought it would be necessary to close the cut with stitches, but after he had thoroughly cleansed the wound found that by drawing the edges closer together and painting the cut with collodion the same effect was had.

All the time I was at Dr. Titus's office, I worried about what Mrs. Wilson would think of my delay and I was impatient to get away.

Dr. Titus suggested that I wear a skull cap to conceal the wound, but skull caps suggest old age, and that would never do for me [he said with a laugh].

Dr. [J. M.] Carnochan [the Wilson family physician] says there is no reason in the world why I should not do everything I have planned to do. I shall, therefore, speak at both Paterson and Passaic to-morrow, even if I am conscious of the galleries looking down on my head.

He summed up, "I guess I'm too hard-headed to be hurt . . . and it didn't even give me a headache." ["Gov. Wilson's Head Cut In Auto Shake-Up," *The New York Times*, November 4, 1912]

On November 7, 1912, Governor Wilson won 40 States and secured 435 electoral college votes (with 266 votes needed to win) to defeat former President Roosevelt (6 States, 88 electoral college votes), and President Taft (2 States, 8 electoral college votes).

President-Elect Wilson Returns to Bermuda

On November 15, President-elect Wilson, his wife Ellen, and two of their daughters, Eleanor and Janet (known as Jessie) boarded the steamship Bermudian bound for a restful vacation in Bermuda after the hectic campaign. (Their third daughter, Margaret, remained in New York City where she was studying music.)

His plan was to avoid work and publicity while relaxing with his family, golfing, and bicycle riding. Before leaving, he told reporters, "I'm going to try to be 'Incog,' so that I may have no functions of any kind while there." He did not want to be interrupted by the tasks involving in preparing to take office on March 4, 1913, least of all Cabinet appointments and other jobs his supporters wanted. He said, "anybody comes to see me at Bermuda will get the very reverse of what he wants." ["Gov. Wilson Enjoys His First Day At Sea," *The New York Times*, November 17, 1912]

As they boarded the ship, he told newspaper correspondents that, "I'll feel like dancing a jig when I get aboard that boat." Ten of the correspondents boarded as well to cover the President-elect's vacation, despite his intention not to produce any news. His bodyguard, Sam Gordon, was carrying the Governor's golf clubs. ["Wilson Sales on Bermudian," *The New York Times*, November 16, 1912]

They arrived on November 18 to what the *Times* described as "an official welcome as well as an enthusiastic greeting from American visitors and British residents who gathered at the Wharf and along the streets to see the distinguished visitor":

As a matter of comity the customs officials passed the baggage of the Governor and all members of the party without the usual inspection. They were then driven at once to Green Cove Cottage, through streets lined with people, while private and public buildings were decorated with flags and

bunting. [“Bermudians Cheer as Wilson lands,” *The New York Times*, November 19, 1912]

His bicycle was waived through customs as well.

President-elect Wilson had obtained use of Green Cove Cottage from a friend. The “little cottage [was] on a three-mile wagon road trip from Hamilton. It can be reached by ferry, too, but the ferry runs at infrequent intervals.” The cottage was located on Salt Kettle Creek, which is not really a creek but a small bay. “The tiny peninsula is just visible among the trees from the coral road high above it, and is reached by a winding white road down the hill.” [Untitled, *The New York Times*, November 26]

The visit prompted the *Times* to include a November 24 article in the Sunday edition titled, “President-Elect Wilson in a Bicyclist’s Paradise.” By then, the bicycle was an artifact of the recent past:

Many an American has doubtless read with surprise within the last week that President-elect Woodrow Wilson’s chief recreation on his one month’s vacation in Bermuda was to be riding a bicycle. Except for a few enthusiasts, the bicycle hereabout has come to be a by-gone. Bicycle manufacturers have gone bankrupt—or turned to making motors. It is a rare American community these days that retains any of its old wheeling fancies. The men who remember, and regret, the time when pedaling was a National pastime are for the most part old bald-heads or rapidly getting to be.

But there are no motors in Bermuda, and Mr. Wilson is one of those who recognize the sunny archipelago as offering, among its many attractions, a freedom from that prejudice which has grown in the United States against the once popular diversion.

When visitors arrive, the Bermuda hotel clerk typically asked, “Have you engaged your bicycle?” If the visitors, especially Americans, replied “we don’t wheel,” the clerk tells them, “Better learn then. Everybody rides down here.”

The article explained:

That everybody does ride the stranger discovers quickly. Automobiles are not even allowed as transients on the coral islands. The white roads are ideal. The horse-drawn equipages are slow. In short, the bicycle is the best medium of travel for all who are not too old or too decrepit to pedal—from the flannel-clad tourist idling away a holiday in the sunshine to the native farmer who comes wheeling into Hamilton or St. George for his weekly mail.

After extolling the wheeling on the island, the reporter concluded:

To them that know, it is no cause for wonder that the President-elect has chosen the Bermuda Isles for his holiday, or that he considers bicycling there the main pleasure of his well-deserved rest. ["President-Elect Wilson in a Bicyclist's Paradise," *The New York Times*, November 24, 1912]

An article in the *Times* a few days later asserted:

It seems strange to be in a place where there are no automobiles. Gov. Wilson himself was one of those who brought about this state of affairs. The roads here are narrow, there are no sidewalks, and when automobiles were permitted accidents were unavoidable and constant. Finally, the inhabitants and the Winter residents united in a petition to the Assembly to prohibit the dangerous machines, and the Assembly condemned all that were here and prohibited the landing of any more. Gov. Wilson, who was one of the Winter residents, joined in the petition. [Untitled, *The New York Times*, November 26, 1912]

Reporters accompanying the President-elect found that his efforts to remain isolated, free to walk, wheel, and golf were "in serious danger." He found that "public and official distractions," such as plans for a state dinner in his honor, made it "a hard fight to keep from being drawn into the social whirl":

Apparently dreading [being drawn into the social maelstrom], he did not even take his family with him when he went for a drive today, but was accompanied only by Richard Taylor, a Secret Service man

Despite the whirl around him, the President-elect "declared today that he is beginning to forget politics."

Nevertheless, he would be plagued throughout his visit by decisions on his Cabinet, which he had said he would not undertake until he returned home. Particularly recurring was whether he would nominate William Jennings Bryan to be Secretary of State, including whether Bryan would visit him in Bermuda. The famed orator, known as "the Great Commoner," had served two terms in the U.S. House of Representatives from Nebraska, and had been the Democratic Party's unsuccessful candidate for President in 1896, 1900, and 1908. His support for

Governor Wilson eventually would earn him the post of Secretary of State even though he ultimately decided not to visit the President-elect in Bermuda.

The reporters noticed that President-elect Wilson was finally recovered from his automobile accident:

The injuries sustained by Mr. Wilson in an automobile accident before the election do not trouble him any more. The plaster covering the wound on his head came off today, showing that the abrasion had healed. [“Hard to Keep ‘Incog,’” *The Baltimore Sun*, November 20, 1912

On November 21, correspondents reported that the President-elect was being forced to change his vacation plans:

Gov. Wilson was driven to-day into confinement indoors by Bermudians and tourists anxious to greet the next President of the United States. His programme of bicycling and walks was abandoned, and he was obliged to confine his diversion to carriage drives and reading with his wife and daughters.

Moreover, reporters indicated:

Gov. Wilson’s stenographer [Charles I. Swem], by working day and night, has nearly caught up with the Governor’s correspondence. The Governor is now preparing his message to the Jersey Legislature. [“Mobbed by Tourists, Wilson Quits Walks,” *The New York Times*, November 22, 1912

One day later, the President-elect discovered one of the reasons why automobiles outside of Bermuda were gradually replacing horses:

Gov. Wilson spent the day in a trip to St. George’s, the former capital of the island. A balky horse held up the President-elect’s departure for some time. While Gov. Wilson waited impatiently on the veranda of Glen Cove, wondering at the delay, the coachman [managing Wilson’s carriage] was storming at the obstinate horse up the road. The placid horse seemed pleased at the chance of delaying the President-elect. The more the coachman urged the less the animal moved, while Gov. Wilson continued to pace the veranda, looking at his watch. Suddenly a big palm beside him topped, breaking an urn, and increasing the confusion. Finally Gov. Wilson and his wife set off in another carriage, their daughters cycling to market meantime.

The real news of the day was not the balky horse but a persistent photographer, as reported in the *Times*:

Gov. Wilson for the first time became angry when a New York photographer focused his camera to snapshot his daughters as they were leaving. He always objects to their being publicly photographed, and, leaving the carriage, walked along with his daughters up the road. He had previously requested the photographers assembled to abstain from using

their cameras. All respected his wishes except the New Yorker, who snapped the group. Gov. Wilson flushed crimson.

“You’re no gentleman!” he explained. “If you try it again I will thrash you. I can do it.”

The offending photographer [identified elsewhere as Vargis] afterward cabled to his paper for permission to leave the island, and received an answer in a message of one word: “Return.”

The *Post* reported Wilson’s angry statement as: “You are no gentleman! If you want a good thrashing, keep that up! I can take care of myself in these things! I came here especially to avoid photographers!” The *Post* added that, “Mr. Wilson passed the greater part of today in making bicycling excursions in the vicinity of his residence.” [“Wilson Threatens To Beat Camera Man,” *The New York Times*, November 23, 1912; “Camera Man Annoys Wilson,” *The Washington Post*, November 23, 1912]

A page 1 editorial cartoon in Washington’s *The Evening Star* showed President-elect Wilson erecting a screen around himself while photographers waited behind a wall to take his picture. The caption:

President-to-be Wilson, who favors the “open door” policy for the White House, has been compelled to lock his gates at his Bermuda retreat.

Calm had returned on Saturday, November 23. In the morning, the President-elect and Jessie had taken off on their bicycles “on unfrequented roads to avoid curious sightseers. Wearing a golf cap and an old, gray suit, and carrying a market basket, he went by almost unrecognized.” When they returned to Glen Cove Cottage, Wilson found that his mail had arrived. He had given stenographer Swen the day off, but telephoned him to return to help with the replies. He abandoned plans for an outing by boat. “The next steamer does not leave until Tuesday, but Gov. Wilson wished to dispose of the correspondence at once.” [“Wilson’s Mail Halts Recreation Plans,” *The New York Times*, November 24, 1912]

The family continued relaxing with tennis, golf, or bicycle rides. His wife and daughters usually accompanied him, but on November 29, according to the *Times*, “The President-elect cycled alone over the hills part of the day.” [“Bermudian Hits Tornado,” *The New York Times*, November 30, 1912]

Despite his plans for an ‘incog’ vacation, he showed reporters a pile of over 200 letters he had received on possible legislation:

Pointing to a mass of correspondence, Mr. Wilson said:

“That is the idea some American people have of giving a man a vacation.”

He also had paid \$7 in excess postage fees on mail that included newspaper clippings speculating on his Cabinet picks. He said:

“If you see that Wilson has invited this or that man to come to Bermuda relative to appointments in the cabinet, you may be sure that the news came way of Constantinople or the Windward passage.” [“Favors Later Date,” *The Evening Star*, November 30, 1912]

On the morning of December 2, he walked “in his old clothes to Hamilton, where he did some shopping for his wife.” The *Times* added, “One can get lots of things in Bermuda cheaper than at home.” [“Bermuda Assembly Cheers Gov. Wilson,” *The New York Times*, December 3, 1912]

On December 3, the President-elect vented to the reporters about a pet peeve. He was receiving large numbers of letters from a wide variety of people, many of them ill-informed on the issues, offering opinions on legislation, foreign affairs, and Cabinet picks (especially Bryan, pro and con) – all with too little postage on them. He not only had to read the letters and respond to them, but “pay three cents extra postage on each letter, and there are hundreds of them.” The *Times* added, “Perhaps it serves him right for coming to an English ‘playground,’ instead of an American one, where cranks can write to him at the cost of a two-cent stamp.” [“Many Misguided Correspondents,” *The New York Times*, December 6, 1912]

On December 14, President-Elect Wilson and his family boarded the Bermudian for the return to their New Jersey home. *The Baltimore Sun* reported:

The island was in holiday array in honor of Governor Wilson’s departure. Most of the places of business closed and the residents celebrated the occasion. In carriages, on horseback and on bicycles crowds flocked to

Hamilton early from all parts of the island to bid the distinguished American farewell. A military escort was sent to the pier.

The Governor spend his last day on the island quietly. He took a ride with Mrs. Wilson and his daughters [by carriage] and paid calls on the Governor-General and several families whose guests he had been at different times. [“Wilson On Way Home,” *The Baltimore Sun*, December 15, 1912]

The *Times* added:

Gov. Wilson gave another exhibition of his ideas of Democratic simplicity when it came to getting his baggage and that of his family aboard the steamship. There were plenty of persons, official and otherwise, who would have been glad to attend to details in this matter, but he let it be known quietly that he was prepared to look after his belongings as he would have done if he were an ordinary citizen. And he did it. He saw to the transportation to the wharf and to the proper bestowal of the various trunks and handbags on the vessel. He mingled freely with the people at the pier and also with the passengers on the *Bermudian* after he had gone aboard. [“Wilson in New York To-Morrow Morning,” *The New York Times*, December 15, 1912]

When the ship arrived in New York City on December 16, the *Times* summarized his trip:

The Governor’s stay in Bermuda was one of unadulterated rest. He went nowhere except where old friendships made a social breakfast or tea unavoidable, and most of the time he wore an old suit of hand-me-downs, hung a market basket on the handle bar of his bicycle, and went his lonely and unrecognized way. Jessie and Eleanor Wilson did the same thing, and the next lady of the White House never even took the trouble to put on an evening dress.

The two girls used to tramp over the hills together in common-sense walking shoes and heavy skirts and now and then as they walked toward the south shore they would meet a farmer-like person pedaling his way over the coral hills with a market basket slung at the side of the machine. It was Dad. That was all there was to it.

Back in New York City:

On the pier he spent half an hour with his family, going through his baggage with customs officials, and waiting for the twelfth piece to come ashore, which was a valise that had gone astray from the rest.

Having cleared customs, the family went to the Waldorf-Astoria where they would spend the evening before returning to Trenton.

President-elect Wilson spent some time looking through his awaiting mail:

Then he started a brisk walk up Fifth Avenue with the announced purpose of buying a hat. Although the Avenue was crowded, few recognized him. At Thirty-seventh Street he narrowly escaped being run down by a delivery wagon. He jumped out of the way just in time, and the driver looked back and grinned. Several blocks further north Gov. Wilson had to jump out of

the way of an automobile. An anxious traffic policeman sprang to his rescue here, but the Governor had nimbly leaped to the sidewalk and reassured the policemen with a wave of the hand.

Mr. Wilson was accompanied by two Secret Service men, who had difficulty sometimes, in keeping up the brisk pace which he set. The Governor finally found the kind of hat he was looking for, a soft brown felt, and started back for the hotel.

On the way he was recognized by a small boy, who put out his hand and gravely asked, "How are you getting along?"

"I am getting along fine," said the President-elect with equal gravity

Before he reached the hotel again Gov. Wilson sauntered into an art gallery and inspected some of the paintings. Asked if he intended to buy some of the pictures he replied that he was merely killing time. During his absence from the hotel Mrs. Wilson and her daughters did some Christmas shopping.

A different account of the walk provided the detail that the driver of the delivery wagon that nearly ran over the President-elect "looked back, recognized him, grinned and shouted: 'Better get your life insured, Woody.'" ["The President-Elect Back From Bermuda," *The New York Times*, December 17, 1912; "Gov. Wilson Home Again," *The Baltimore Sun*, December 17, 1912]

As Herlihy pointed out in his *Adventure Cycling* article:

Of course, as he prepared to enter office, President Wilson's passion for cycling was known to the press and frequently lampooned, given that many considered the humble bicycle passé

In truth, President Wilson did indeed still cherish his bicycle. But he also knew that, given his newfound fame and busy agenda, not to mention his poor health, it might be a long time, if ever, before he could cycle around town again or enjoy another relaxing bicycle tour. After assuming office, he became increasingly interested in the emerging automobile, a vehicle in which he could still ride while enjoying peace and solitude, albeit without the health benefits of cycling.

Last Days as Governor

Returning to Trenton, President-elect Wilson would serve as Governor of New Jersey until March 1, 1913. He planned to use that time to secure approval of legislation he considered critical to the State's future, with Democrats gaining

control of the State legislature, which convened on January 14. He particularly wanted to secure passage of seven bills revising the corporate laws of New Jersey, nicknamed the Seven Sisters bills:

“These acts are designed to put an end to trusts and monopolies under the laws of New Jersey,” declared Gov. Wilson in a prepared statement describing the measures, “and I confidently predict that they will accomplish that much desired result.”

The bills addressed such topics as preventing monopolies, underselling in local markets, mergers, the existence of holding companies, and the issuance of watered stocks, all topics he had talked about during his national campaign. [“Put End to Trusts,” *The Washington Post*, January 21, 1913]

During this period, newspaper coverage did not report that he rode his bicycle, but provided some indications of his travels before taking the oath of office in Washington. His intention was to work during the weekdays, but relax during weekends.

On Sunday, December 22, 1912, he slept until noon at the family’s Princeton home at 25 Cleveland Lane, finally coming downstairs at around 3 p.m.:

The Governor put on a pair of gloves and took up a new walking stick that had just been presented to him by a Western admirer.

“Do you know,” he remarked, “I feel too much confined by this indoor work, and I miss my usual afternoon walk. Today I want to enjoy a real long one. Which way looks most inviting?” No one volunteered a suggestion, and the Governor said he would like to go on a “seeing Princeton” trip.

President-elect Wilson, who as a college undergraduate became famous for his long and lonesome walks, in which he seldom allowed others to participate, went out again over his old familiar Princeton pathways today, but this time, instead of seeking solitude, he sought company. He took four friends with him and invited others who held back feeling out of training. The President-elect tramped five miles over collegiate pathways . . . [“Wilson On A Walk Over Old Ground,” *The New York Times*, December 23, 1912. The paragraph sequence has been altered for clarity.]

Christmas Day found the President-elect in bed:

Gov. Woodrow Wilson was too ill to-day to partake of that forty-three-pound, chestnut-fed turkey sent to him from Kentucky by [U.S. Representative] South Trimble. He got a cold in making the trip to and

from Trenton in an open automobile, and he remained in bed to-day under the care of his family physician, Dr. J. M. Carnochan.

According to Ellen Wilson, “He came home from Trenton last night with considerable fever, and I feared that he was about to have a case of the grip.” These were among the common ailments that had afflicted Wilson most of his life. [“Gov. Wilson In Bed With A Heavy Cold,” *The New York Times*, December 26, 1912]

The President-elect also had to plan for his inauguration. It would be on March 4, but he and planners were thinking of postponing the inaugural balls until April when weather would likely be more favorable. He resolved the question by informing the inaugural committee that it should consider omitting the ball altogether. He recognized that many people were looking forward to the ball, but he would cancel the event “because of the large indirect expense upon the

Government incidental to it, and because these balls have ceased to be necessary to the enjoyment of the visitors.”

According to the *Times*, the President-elect “was amazed to find that it would cost the Government \$95,000; that the 2,000 clerks in the Pension Building would have no work to do for two weeks while the Pension Building was being prepared for the ball and while it was being restored to business purposes afterward.” The *Times* also explained his reference to “the enjoyment of the visitors”:

He also learned that the ball had very little if any thing to do with the inauguration; that it was simply a money-making affair for Washington, and that it was in no sense a representative Washington society event. Anybody with \$5 and a dress suit can get in, and it is a heterogenous sort of affair, which the Governor learned detracted from instead of adding to the dignity and impressiveness of the inauguration. [“Calls Off Inaugural Ball,” *The New York Times*, January 17, 1913]

A later article suggested the real reason for the President-elect’s decision: “he feared there would be indulgence in the ‘turkey trot,’ the ‘bunny hug,’ and other ragtime dances, and thus provoke what might amount to a National scandal.” [“Wilson Banned Ball Fearing Turkey Trot,” *The New York Times*, January 21, 1913]

(The Pension Building, located at 401 F Street NW, is now home of the National Building Museum.)

Determined to relax on weekends, the President-elect and Mrs. Wilson were in New York City on January 24. He found that relaxing as the president of Princeton or the Governor of New Jersey was different from his new

circumstance. He had visited his dentist in Philadelphia before joining Ellen in New York City in the afternoon:

The governor had agreed to meet Mrs. Wilson on an upper floor of one of the big stores, and as he stepped out of the elevator and walked to the spot where she was waiting, some one recognized the President-elect. There was an immediate flutter among the store employes [sic], who flocked from all sides and surrounded the couple. An impromptu reception followed, during which scores of eager young women were greeted by the governor and his wife.

Otherwise, their shopping took place without “being generally recognized.” [“Wilson Seeking Rest,” *The Washington Post*, January 25, 1913]

Governor Wilson signed the Seven Sisters bills on February 19.

Aware that the President-elect’s doctors had advised him “to turn his mind from the weighty consequence of national affairs,” editors of the *Post* took mock exception to the notion that “Washington is . . . a monster of hideous mien., ready to drain the vitality and wear down the mentality of the chosen head.” Why was he so afraid of Washington, the *Post* asked:

Other Presidents have managed to have a fairly good time There are good golf links in Washington, and excellent bicycle paths As for the people of Washington, they have always been considerate toward Presidents. Mr. Wilson need have no fear that he will be buttonholed on the street or waylaid while on his bicycle. [“Gov. Wilson’s Rest,” *The Washington Post*, January 26, 1913]

On February 19, Dr. Charles W. Eliot, president emeritus of Harvard, appeared before the Judiciary Committee of the Maine legislature in opposition to a bill that would repeal the 1909 law that prohibited use of automobiles on Mt. Desert Island, including Bar Harbor:

Dr. Eliot said that the roads in Bar Harbor would not be safe for walking or driving if the use of automobiles were permitted. The roads were narrow, he said, and conditions were different from those at other resorts. The Summer residents paid the greater part of the taxes, and they desired a place which was quiet and restful. Those who favored the bill said that young persons did not visit Mt. Desert Island because they could not bring their automobiles with them.

Following his testimony, Dr. Eliot read a telegram from President-elect Wilson supporting a Bermuda-like resistance to the popular vehicle: “I wish you all

success in keeping the automobiles from Mount Desert Island.” [“Dr. Eliot Opposes Bill,” *The New York Times*, February 20, 1913]

Although reminiscent of the anti-automobile crusade President-elect Wilson had waged with Mark Twain on Bermuda, the fight in Maine would have a different outcome. The automobile had proven commercially useful, as Ann Rockefeller Roberts explained in her book about the carriage roads in Acadia National Park:

On the island, the car was perceived from the start as a mixed blessing. The summer folk were determined that the island should remain a refuge, but most of the year-round residents who had to make a living in the area saw it as a very desirable advance and good way to facilitate transport and daily activities. The issue was so heated that it ended up in the state legislature. At first, in 1908, the summer interests carried enough weight to sustain the ban on cars, but the debate continued, and in 1913 the commercial interests and year-round residents had gained enough support that the legislation was amended to allow cars only on the Bar Harbor side of the island. Seal Harbor and Northeast Harbor were safe, as was [John D. Rockefeller, Jr.’s] house. But it was just a matter of time until the last resistance was swept away, and that happened in 1915. The ubiquitous, noisy, smoke-belching autos began to roll over the causeway to the island in increasing numbers. [Roberts, Ann Rockefeller, *Mr. Rockefeller’s Roads: The Untold Story of Acadia’s Carriage Roads and Their Creator*, Down East Books, 1990, pages 49-50]

The *Post*, in a contemporary look at social leaders at seaside resorts, reported:

After ten years of exclusion, with more or less unsatisfactory results, Bar Harbor has at least opened its doors with the welcome sign out to automobiles For a decade motorists have looked longingly at the attractive roads and shaded drives of the island. At last the barriers have been let down, but only after a long and bitter fight in the legislature, contested at every point. The venerable Dr. Charles W. Eliot led the fight against the admission of motors, and a powerful lobby at Augusta did its utmost, but the feeling was too strong. The question, largely local, got a touch of national interest on the reading of a telegram from President Wilson to Dr. Eliot hoping that he would be successful in keeping motor cars out. [“Social Leaders of Nation Flock To Seaside Resorts,” *The Washington Post*, June 9, 1913]

As the season progressed, the *Times* reported on the result:

Motor cars have practically retired the horse. Automobiles of all kinds and descriptions throng the roads of Bar Harbor, and have opened up the

surrounding country There are cars of every kind and class here at present, including some of the finest French makes [“Bar Harbor May Lose Its Horse Show,” *The New York Times*, July 6, 1913]

(Although President-elect Wilson’s telegram did not have the desired effect, he would have a positive impact on the island. In 1914, Eliot went to Washington to convince officials to preserve the protected area as a national park:

After nearly two years of negotiation and what must have seemed interminable delay . . . President Woodrow Wilson signed a proclamation declaring the establishment of the Sieur de Monts National Monument on July 8, 1916.

Proclamation No. 1339 set aside 5,000 acres of land on Mount Desert Island donated for the purpose to the Secretary of the Interior. The name reflected the historic significance of the island, which was discovered and explored by Samuel de Champlain, acting under the authority of Sieur de Monts, the royal commissioner of New France. The proclamation stated: “The topographic configuration, the geology, the fauna and the flora of the island, largely embraced within the limits of the Monument, also are of great scientific interest.”

(A little over a month later, on August 25, President Wilson signed legislation creating the National Park Service in the Department of the Interior.)

(On September 27, 1918, Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane announced that the monument would henceforth be called Lafayette National Park, the first national park east of the Mississippi River:

With these associations and its own magnificent frontage on the great ocean highway which our troops are traversing to France’s aid and for whose freedom we are now contending, no more striking expression of national regard and amity could be conceived than the creation under a name which has become a symbol of international friendship between America and France of our first Eastern national park. It will stand as a sign, set up forever and visible to all the navies of the world, of that league of nations for which the President is wisely striving and from which alone true peace can come. [“New Name For Mount Desert,” *The Washington Post*, September 28, 1918]

(Despite the name change, the area remained, technically, a monument. For it to become a true national park, another step was needed:

This required an act of Congress, and, because of congressional preoccupation with the war effort, it took years of ingenuity to achieve. Not until February 26, 1919, did the Sieur de Monts National Monument

become Lafayette National Park So the national monument that had been named for an early French explorer became a national park named for the Frenchman most celebrated as a sympathizer and supporter of the American Revolution.

(President Wilson signed the law designating Lafayette National Park by statute on February 26, 1919 (Public Law 65-278). Congress changed the name to Acadia National Park in 1929, with President Calvin Coolidge signing the legislation on January 19, 1929 (Public Law 70-667). Secretary of the

Interior Roy O. West explained:

It is established that the name “Acadia” is of native origin, coming from an Indian word apparently describing the region and its use among the early fishermen and traders from across the sea in the accounts brought back to Europe by them before recorded exploration of it first began by French or English. [Extension of Boundary limits of Lafayette National Park, ME., And Changing Name of Park to Acadia National Park, Committee on Public Lands and Surveys, United States Senate, 70th Congress, 2d Session, Report No. 1425, January 7, 1929, pages 1-2]

(From 1913 to 1940, Ann Rockefeller Roberts’ grandfather, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., financed and oversaw construction of the park’s most famous feature, 57 miles of carriage roads for hikers, bikers, horseback riders, and carriage – and no automobiles. Roberts’ book describes them:

Mount Desert’s beautiful carriage roads fit so perfectly into the landscape that it seems they must always have been there; built of native materials and landscaped for a natural effect, they curve gracefully across the island’s dramatic topography. [Roberts, back cover]

(Roberts acknowledged the irony of a Rockefeller creating an auto-free area:

The automobile represents another of the wonderful ironies of both my family and the carriage roads. Its introduction onto the island was one of the principal reasons that Grandfather began to build the carriage roads. At the same time, the automobile’s immediate and extraordinary success was the cause of the stupendous growth of the Standard Oil Company and its subsidiaries after the turn of the century, from which came all the Rockefeller wealth. Without the car, the family fortune that allowed Grandfather to help create Acadia National Park and build the carriage roads would not have existed, and yet Grandfather’s roads were built in order to keep the car at bay. [Roberts, page 4])

On February 21, 1913, Governor Wilson traveled to Philadelphia to see his dentist, then traveled to New York City to visit Colonel Edward M. House, his friend and political advisor. At House's home, he met with William F. McCombs, his former campaign manager and current chairman of the Democratic National Committee. McCombs had hoped for an appointment in the Wilson Administration but the President-elect was doubtful that McCombs would be able to "work in harness" with other members of the new government. As Berg wrote,

"More to the point, Wilson simply did not like him and resented even having to spend time with him."

Nevertheless, the *Times* wrote of the meeting, "William F. McCombs doesn't seem to be as much on the outs with Gov. Wilson as some newspaper reports would indicate." The three men had dinner, then went to the Knickerbocker Theatre where they shared a box for a presentation of the British musical comedy, "The Sunshine Girl," which had opened on February 3:

He said before he went in to see this one that he wanted to get diversion, and he got it, but he was not overwhelmingly enthusiastic. [Berg, pages 267-268; "Wilson and McCombs Go To See A Show," *The New York Times*, February 22, 1913]

(Governor and President Wilson often went to the theater, where he preferred comedy to drama; he was fond of vaudeville and often attended performances in New York City and Washington. His second wife, in her memoir, explained his interest:

When he left his desk or office, he apparently closed that door in his mind, and was ready to play; then he would play with the abandon of a boy. Frequently, at night, we would go to the Oval Room upstairs after dinner and he would put a record on the Victrola and say: "Now, I'll show you how to do a jig step." He was light on his feet, and often said he envied Primrose, the minstrel dancer, and wished he could exchange jobs.

Mr. Wilson enjoyed vaudeville and was a regular patron of Keith's Theatre [at 619 15th Street NW., in Washington]. No matter how foolish the skit, he said it rested him because it took his mind off responsibilities and refreshed his spirit to see light-hearted people who "took on no more at their hearts than they kick off at their heels." Particularly he enjoyed the tap dancing, and Primrose always pleased him. The manager of the theatre, Mr. Roland S. Robbins, and his assistant Mr. Chevalier, always met us at the entrance and escorted us to our box. [Wilson, Edith Bolling, *My Memoir*, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1939, page 145)

This trip to New York City was notable for the journey back to Princeton on February 22. On the train ride from New York City to Newark, he found a seat, but when he changed trains, he had to stand most of the rest of the way:

So did a lot of other people, and at every station somebody would come along and jam the President-elect in the back with a suitcase, step on his feet, or push him against a seat. The next President was recognized, but nobody offered him a seat, and for that matter nobody offered a seat to any of the women who had to stand.

At Metuchen, the President-elect captured a vacant seat, as the *Times* recounted:

A moment later he saw that a woman was standing and he jumped up and offered her his seat. He was only man in the car whose gallantry led him that far.

The *Post* added the detail that he had been standing for nearly an hour up to that point:

The President-elect gave up his seat on a train today to a woman who was standing in the aisle. She was not near him, at that, but at the other end of the car when he spied her, arose, bowed, and beckoned for her to take the seat he had vacated. She smiled, thanked him, and took it.

He finally found a seat at New Brunswick “and dropped into it wearily.” A young woman, “a very pretty one, by the way,” asked the future President if she could shake his hand. “Why, surely,” he replied, “and it’s a pleasure to meet you.” He also gave “a jovial greeting” to a 6-year old girl who introduced herself.

During the ride, the President-elect expressed his concerns about the situation:

When the conductor came to punch his ticket for the third or fourth time the Governor, who was being crowded by the incoming passengers worse than ever, said to him:

“I wish you would give my compliments to the man who is responsible for the management of this railroad, and tell him that it is a very badly managed road.”

The conductor turned red, but made no answer.

Back home in Princeton, President-elect Wilson remained in doors, forced to miss “his usual afternoon walk” because of heavy rain. [“Wilson Has To Stand In a Jersey Train,” *The New York Times*, February 23, 1913; “No Trips For Wilson,” *The Washington Post*, February 23, 1913]

Governor Wilson, on February 25, informed David S. Crater, New Jersey's Secretary of State, that he would resign effective noon on March 1. He said:

For three days I will be a private citizen. I feel as though I would like to turn a handspring to celebrate the fact that I will have no dignity of office to maintain.

An alternative version of the quote was:

I shall have the pleasure of being a private citizen for just three days. I think I shall celebrate the fact by turning a handspring just to show that I have no dignity of office to maintain.

[“Gov. Wilson Has Resigned,” *The New York Times*, February 26, 1913; “Back To Jersey Fight,” *The Washington Post*, February 26, 1913]

He had been Governor of New Jersey a little over 2 years, from January 17, 1911 to March 1, 1913. To help pay for the move to Washington, he took out a \$5,000 bank loan. His daughter Eleanor said, “He hated to do it, but we could not have made the move to Washington without it.” [Berg, page 272]

The Oath of Office

Berg described the March 3 trip to Washington:

On Monday the third, Secret Service men, a large crowd, and a line of motorcars waited outside 25 Cleveland Lane. At 10:30, Woodrow and Ellen exited the house, choosing to walk to the train station instead of riding in one of the automobiles. They made a slight detour, strolling down Library Place, past the house they had built years earlier. Friends and neighbors paid their respects along the way, though most of the townspeople waited for them at the train—a special car followed by a half dozen coaches filled with six hundred rollicksome undergraduates. The family stood on the back platform as the train pulled out of the campus depot at eleven, the First Couple smiling and waving and looking wistful as the spires and towers disappeared from view.

They arrived in Union Station at 3:45, departing for the Shoreham Hotel at 15th and H Streets in a touring car provided by President Taft along with a chauffeur, footman, and two motorcycle policemen. Their three daughters entered a second car, also provided by President Taft. They managed to bypass “the chaotic gathering of women suffragists who were staging a ‘pageant’ down Pennsylvania Avenue and commanding most of the attention that afternoon—5,000 women demanding their rights as they paraded in front of a crowd of 500,000.”

As described in the *Times*, the trip was circuitous:

Woodrow Wilson, after to-day President of the United States, slipped into the Capitol City, and, all unobserved, drove through undecorated and deserted residential streets, by a roundabout back-alley route, as it were, into the gay city where for the next four years he is to live and hold the reins of the National Government. Scarcely a score of persons noticed his automobile as it whizzed through the silent streets, and only a few applauded him as he reached the hotel.

The caravan of vehicles followed Massachusetts Avenue to H Street, then onto 15th Street and the hotel. [Berg, pages 272-273; “Wilson Evades Vast Crowd, *The New York Times*, March 4, 1913]

That evening, President-elect and Mrs. Wilson attended a private dinner for the Wilson family as guests of the President-elect’s cousin, John A. Wilson of Franklin, Pennsylvania. Mr. Wilson would visit President Wilson many times over the two terms. He also was a vice president of AAA; in December 1913, he would be elected president of the organization, a post he held until May 1916. [“NIP A.A.A. Insurgency,” *The New York Times*, December 2, 1913]

The *Star* described the cousin as:

John A. Wilson, the President’s cousin, who is dean of the Wilson family . . . finds himself very much at home about the Executive Mansion. He used to play there more than fifty years ago, when he and Tad Lincoln, the youngest son of the Great Emancipator, were “pale.”

Wilson recalled many stories of the relationship between President Lincoln and his rambunctious, hard-to-control youngest son, whose given name was Thomas. [“Tells Of Friendship For Tad Lincoln,” *The Evening Star*, March 7, 1917]

In an account of the dinner party, the *Post* reported:

President-elect Wilson was in high spirits. The wear and tear of the past few days had left no trace in his appearance. He was genial, kindly, and exceedingly solicitous regarding the members of his family.

The guest list of over 20 family members included Miss Helen Woodrow Bones, a favorite cousin. She would join the Wilsons in the White House as the First Lady’s personal secretary. [“Wilson Dinner Party,” *The Washington Post*, March 4, 1913; Berg, page 271]

Governor Wilson took the oath of office on March 4, 1913. Although some observers had wondered how the first bicycling President would move between

the White House and the Capitol, he chose neither a bicycle nor an automobile. Berg described the choice:

Taft and Wilson entered a large landau drawn by four horses. Great cheers greeted them all along Pennsylvania Avenue. In the meantime, White House chauffeurs drove the Wilson family in automobiles down side streets to the Capitol, where they took seats in the Senate Gallery It was still overcast but a mild fifty-five degrees as the Presidential carriage pulled before the crowd, the incumbent appearing happier than the incoming President. With little pomp, Wilson took his place on the grandstand, which sat slightly above the heads of the 100,000 countrymen who stood there in anticipation. [Berg, pages 275-276]

The *Post* described the procession along Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol:

At 10:07 o'clock the ride to the Capitol began. In the first carriage were President Taft and Mr. Wilson, Mr. Taft occupying the right-hand seat

The party moved briskly out of the White House grounds and down Pennsylvania avenue, the mounted escorts clattering along beside and behind. The streets were packed, and to roars of cheers, President Taft and Mr. Wilson gave their acknowledgements

At the President-elect's request the number of secret service men assigned to guard the carriage in the procession to the Capitol was reduced to two. Vice President (elect) Marshall's carriage followed closely, and immediately behind marched the White House correspondents and the newspaper men who have been with Mr. Wilson in the campaign.

President Taft and President-elect Wilson were escorted to the President's room, where the current President began signing the bills Congress, which was still in session, passed that morning. ["Starts Day Early," *The Washington Post*, March 5, 1913]

With the 62nd Congress finally at an end, President Taft and President-elect Wilson went onto the grandstand. Chief Justice Edward Douglass White administered the oath of office, with Ellen holding the Bible.

President Wilson's Inaugural Address was, as a *Post* editorial put it, "a model of brevity and calm expression." He began by noting the transition:

There has been a change of government. It began two years ago, when the House of Representatives became Democratic by a decisive majority. It

has now been completed. The Senate about to assemble will also be Democratic. The offices of President and Vice-President have been put into the hands of Democrats. What does the change mean? That is the question that is uppermost in our minds to-day. That is the question I am going to try to answer, in order, if I may, to interpret the occasion.

The point was not that his party had been successful. "The success of a party means little except when the Nation is using that party for a large and definite purpose." By its vote, the Nation called on the Democratic party to change the country's plans and point of view.

Some old things with which we had grown familiar, and which had begun to creep into the very habit of our thought and of our lives, have altered their aspect as we have latterly looked critically upon them, with fresh, awakened eyes; have dropped their disguises and shown themselves alien and sinister. Some new things, as we look frankly upon them, willing to comprehend their real character, have come to assume the aspect of things long believed in and familiar, stuff of our own convictions. We have been refreshed by a new insight into our own life.

He cited some of his goals, including a strengthened industry, improved labor conditions, and changes in the tariff, concluding:

The Nation has been deeply stirred, stirred by a solemn passion, stirred by the knowledge of wrong, of ideals lost, of government too often debauched and made an instrument of evil. The feelings with which we face this new age of right and opportunity sweep across our heartstrings like some air out of God's own presence, where justice and mercy are reconciled and the judge and the brother are one. We know our task to be no mere task of politics but a task which shall search us through and through, whether we be able to understand our time and the need of our people, whether we be indeed their spokesmen and interpreters, whether we have the pure heart to comprehend and the rectified will to choose our high course of action.

This is not a day of triumph; it is a day of dedication. Here muster, not the forces of party, but the forces of humanity. Men's hearts wait upon us; men's lives hang in the balance; men's hopes call upon us to say what we will do. Who shall live up to the great trust? Who dares fail to try? I summon all honest men, all patriotic, all forward-looking men, to my side. God helping me, I will not fail them, if they will but counsel and sustain me!

With the ceremonies ended, President Wilson and former President Taft returned to their carriage, while their families returned to the White House in automobiles:

When congratulations on his address were over . . . he was ushered to the carriage in front of the stand. Mr. Taft following him into the carriage. His smile had not worn off, and it radiated over the crowd as the new President doffed his hat to the populace when the procession started.

There was hardly a minute during the new President's ride from the Capitol to the White House that he did not hear a constantly rising chorus of cheers. As his carriage passed up Pennsylvania Avenue, and each section of the densely crowded thoroughfare spied the visage of the new President, the outbursts seemed to increase in volume and enthusiasm

President Wilson doffed his hat continuously in recognition of prolonged ovations.

The carriage reached the White House at around 3 o'clock. There, the current and former Presidents, their families, members of the new Administration, and friends enjoyed a buffet luncheon. The former President left, while the Wilsons and others went to the reviewing stand for a parade that lasted nearly 5 hours. ["Nation Acclaims Woodrow Wilson Its President," *The Washington Post*,

March 5, 1913; "The Inaugural Address," *The Washington Post*, March 5, 1913]

One incident had occurred while President-elect Wilson's carriage was on the way from the Shoreham Hotel to the White House:

One startling incident took place yesterday while President Wilson was being escorted to the White House. A cavalryman's horse plunged toward the President's carriage, and at one time it looked as if he would plant his forefeet in it.

A dozen troopers frantically rushed to grasp the bridle, while President Wilson calmly leaned out of his carriage and patted the frightened horse on the neck. ["Horse Endangers President," *The Washington Post*,

March 5, 1913]

President Wilson's Automobile Rides

Shortly after taking office, President Wilson fell into a routine that biographer Gene Smith described:

[Wilson], looking better than he had ever looked before (or would ever look again), did not find his duties onerous. He spent no more than four or five hours a day on his work, and saying he still kept to a schoolboy schedule, he did not work on Saturdays or Sundays.

He enjoyed relaxing on drives around the Washington area in the chauffeur-driven White House Pierce-Arrow automobile:

In the afternoons when the weather was good he and one or more of his womenfolk went riding in one of the White House Pierce-Arrows, big open cars with right-hand drive and the President's Seal on the door. He mapped out a series of routes, and the chauffeur was not allowed to deviate from them: The Number One Ride, The Southern Maryland Ride, the Potomac. Going on these rides, the First Lady saw things that shocked her. She was born in a small town [Rome, Georgia] and grew up there and after her marriage lived in a series of small college towns, and the crowded big-city back streets and alleys of Washington were a revelation to her. She walked through the slums and talked a great deal to the Negro servants about their homes, and it became her passion to do something for the people who lived in the houses that appalled her. [Smith, Gene, *When the Cheering Stopped: The Last Years of Woodrow Wilson*, William Morrow and Company, 1964, pages 5-6]

Initially, the Presidential automobile was followed by Secret Service men on motorcycles. This procedure changed after an incident during one of his rides. The President's vehicle was moving along a level road in Maryland. The vehicle slowed to allow a car to pass:

As the car went by its occupant, not dreaming who the distinguished motorist was, called out in a friendly tone to the President:

“Say, be careful; the bicycle cops are behind you!”

Mr. Wilson turned and there coming along behind him was the secret service bodyguard.

That was its last appearance at the rear of a machine.

From then on, the Secret Service always trailed the President in an automobile of their own. (By “motorist,” the reporter meant the passenger driven by a chauffeur; the reference to “bicycle cops” is unclear.) [Essary, Helen K., “Social and Personal Side of President Wilson and Family,” *The Baltimore Sun*, March 8, 1914]

A third car, filled with journalists, often followed the Presidential Pierce-Arrow and the vehicle carrying Secret Service agents.

On March 8, the *Star* reported on the President's routine:

President Wilson began work at 8.30 o'clock this morning, and began seeing visitors before 9 o'clock. His program was a pretty lively one. At 4 o'clock this afternoon he will stop, adhering to his purpose to shut off steam at that hour for a little recreation. He has been going on automobile rides each afternoon lately, seeing Washington from the same automobile Mr. Taft used. A new automobile is being made ready for the President. Accompanied by Dick Taylor, a secret service man who was with him at Trenton and Princeton, the President yesterday had a long ride through the city. The two motor cycle men who followed President Taft now ride behind President Wilson, but they no longer wear uniforms. They are in citizen's clothes.

This change in dress was because of several decisions by President Wilson who did not like the quasi-regal aspects of the presidency. He also decided that he would no longer be accompanied by uniformed aides when in public except on state occasions at the White House or army or navy functions.

On March 8, the First Lady joined President Wilson for his automobile ride. The *Sun* reported that he returned to the White House "at dinner time, his face aglow with the flush of wintry air."

That evening, President and Mrs. Wilson went to the National Theatre to see Billie Burke in "Mind the Paint Girl," a comedy by Arthur W. Pinero. The Wilsons attended "in the most democratic sort of way," in keeping with the newspapers' theme of a President who preferred "Jeffersonian simplicity." They and their party drove to the theater in two White House automobiles:

They escaped the waiting crowd by using the side entrance, which brought them into the house directly by the boxes. Again by request there was no welcome from the orchestra [the formality of playing "The Star Spangled Banner"] The only decoration on the Presidential box was a shield bearing the President's Insignia.

A Secret Service agent kept guard while the "negro footmen in the White House livery, with red, white and blue cockades, were the only other attendants. ["Limited To Tariff," *The Evening Star*, March 8, 1913; "Strong On Simplicity," *The Baltimore Sun*, March 9, 1913]

President Wilson did not always go for drives in the White House Pierce-Arrow. On March 11 and 12, for example, he took his first long walks in the city. The *Post* described his March 11 walk:

Dressed in a pearl gray suit of neat design, a natty hat cocked airily to one side, a bright necktie, and carrying a cane, the President left the White

House With only James Sloan, the secret service agent accompanying him, the President walked briskly from the back door of the White House down to the west gate Outside the White House grounds he fell quickly into a long stride that surprised Sloan, who had grown used to the more leisurely stroll of Mr. Taft.

He stopped to view the State, War, and Navy buildings, the Corcoran Art Institute, the Daughters of the American Revolution building, and the home of the Pan-American Union. In addition, “he violated the ‘keep off the grass’ injunctions, and cut through Potomac park to the river”:

Many persons who were taking advantage of the warm afternoon were almost convinced that May had arrived ahead of its schedule when they saw the natty figure: sans gloves and overcoat, and wearing the Easter garb. Then as they drew nearer they were amazed to find that it was the President of the United States. [“Nattily Garbed The President Walks, A Harbinger Of Spring,” *The Washington Post*, March 12, 1913]

On March 12, he went for another walk:

For a short time during the afternoon the President worked on his correspondence, but soon was outdoors enjoying the spring weather. The President spied some magnolias in blossom, observed the growing verdure of the White House grounds and swung into a brisk walk along Potomac drive.

He reportedly “attracted practically no attention as he strolled through the parkways.” [“Ready To Name Four,” *The Washington Post*, March 13, 1913]

On March 25, President Wilson and his daughter Jessie were out on a drive when they decided to stop for a surprise visit to Speaker of the House James B. “Champ” Clark. “A doorkeeper told him the building was closed, but a whispered word from a secret service man opened the doors.” The Speaker greeted them and gave them a tour. The visitors were “most interested in the reports of the new arrangement of seats in the House chamber, and the Speaker acted as their guide.” They sampled the benches that proved to be very comfortable. President Wilson had to leave for another appointment, but said, “maybe I’ll come up again some time.” The Speaker replied, “Yes, come again,” not aware how soon the President would return. [“President Makes A Call On The House Speaker,” *The Evening Star*, March 26, 1913]

In fact, Members of Congress would be surprised by his return to deliver his annual message to Congress a few weeks later in the House chamber to a joint

session of the House and Senate. Not since President John Adams had a President delivered the message in person; the messages were typically sent to Congress and read by a clerk. The move was so unusual that he explained his reasoning to reporters and gave them permission to quote him:

The reasons are very simple. I think that is the only dignified way for the President to address Congress at the opening of the session, instead of sending the address to be read perfunctorily in the clerk's familiar tone of voice. I thought that the dignified and natural thing was to read it. It is a precedent which it is true has been discontinued a long time, but which is a very respectable precedent.

Despite the unusual nature of the April 8 visit, President Wilson wanted to minimize ceremony:

To rob the affair of as much formality as possible and make it wholly free from ostentatious display, the President went to the Capitol unaccompanied by any one save James Sloan, his faithful Secret Service guard When the White House automobile bearing the President and his secret service guard reached the entrance to the House several hundred persons there applauded and got a smile and a wave of the hand in response.

The First Lady and her three daughters had arrived by automobile earlier and were seated in what was known as "the President's pew."

The address concerned primarily the tariff laws. The tariff on imported goods was a chief source of government revenue, but had been a subject of congressional debate for decades. "It is clear to the whole country that the tariff duties must be altered. They must be changed to meet the radical alteration in the conditions of our economic life which the country has witnessed within the last generation."

Despite these changes, the tariff schedule had remained unchanged; the "task is to square them with the actual facts." He preferred change sooner rather than later to free the business community from "the law of legislation and artificial arrangement." He indicated that he would soon present additional recommendations on banking and currency laws so that "our fiscal system . . . may best serve to open once more the free channels of prosperity to a great people whom we would serve to the utmost and throughout both rank and file."

He concluded after only 9 minutes, to the surprise of many of those in attendance. ["President's Visit Nettles Senators," *The New York Times*, April 8, 1913; "Congress Cheers Greet Wilson," *The New York Times*, April 9, 1913]

President Wilson's automobile rides were usually routine and did not make news, but a few drew the attention of newspaper correspondents. For example, on May 1, 1913, Neighborhood House at 470 N Street, SW., began a flower festival to celebrate the return of spring. President and Mrs. Wilson arrived on May 3 in a White

House automobile to observe children in a procession and play:

Seated in a White House automobile at 5th and N streets southwest, President and Mrs. Wilson stayed for more than an hour while more than a hundred small children, garbed in fantastic and enticing attire, danced about Maypoles in intricate and graceful steps, and played fairy games in the street in front of Neighborhood House.

The White House automobile was some distance from the society people watching the festival, and crowded all about it were men, women and children from the southwest section of the city. The President delighted the crowd when he nimbly jumped over the back of the front seat of the automobile in order to see the dances better. He stood up all the time, but Mrs. Wilson remained seated. Both applauded the children frequently. When the automobile took them away, they were in turn heartily applauded. ["Wee Folk Charm Head Of Nation," *The Sunday Star*, May 4, 1913]

Another newsworthy incident occurred on October 4. Robert Crawford, a 15-year old bicycle messenger for the Postal Telegraph Company, collided with President Wilson's automobile at 14th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, SE. Crawford had swerved into the automobile's path while trying to avoid stones thrown at him by another boy. The *Post* reported:

The President, who was riding in the front seat with the chauffeur, was at the boy's side in an instant, lifting him from beneath the wreckage, while the secret service men disentangled the demolished bicycle from under the automobile. Crawford's principal solicitation was his wheel.

"My wheel, my wheel," he whimpered; "I'll have to carry the messages now."

The President promptly assured him that he would buy him "a nice new wheel," and directed Dr. [Cary T.] Grayson [U.S.N., the President's physician] to attend him constantly. The boy's mother is employed at the hospital [Providence Hospital] where he was taken.

Fortunately, as explained in a White House statement, "The car was going very slowly, and was stopped before the wheels could pass over the boy." Robert's

injuries were not serious, mostly consisting of body bruises and scrapes on his arms and legs. The hospital's doctors determined that he would be well enough to return to work the next day, but the President insisted that the boy stay in the hospital overnight.

President Wilson visited Robert in the hospital around noon the following day. Several nurses walked the President into the ward:

“Hello, young chap, how are you?” said the President, smiling down on the little messenger.

“I’m all right,” replied Raymond [sic]. “Gee, you fellows give [sic] me an awful bump yesterday.”

Robert told the President how the accident had occurred while he was dodging stones. “I didn’t know you were in the machine.” After displaying his injured ankle and bruised knee, he added, “I’ll be all right in a few days. I had better be, or I’ll lose my job.” He had just started working for Postal Telegram Company the previous Friday, had worked only 2 days, and did not know how he would pay off the remaining cost of the demolished bicycle. He had paid \$3 for the first installment, with \$17 due.

President Wilson assured him he need not worry about that:

The little fellow beamed with joy at the President’s visit, introduced

Mr. Wilson to some of the patients about him, and thanked him for his visit with tears in his eyes.

Mrs. Sabina Crawford, the boy’s mother, who is employed at the hospital, expressed her appreciation to the President for his attention to her son.

“There aren’t many folks,” she told Dr. Grayson . . . “who pay so much attention to those they run down with the automobiles.”

At President Wilson’s direction, Dr. Grayson bought a replacement bicycle for Robert and had it delivered to the Crawford home on October 13, the day after Robert was released from the hospital. Back at work, Robert “was the center of all eyes among the messenger boys” as he “exhibits proudly to his friends” the bicycle given to him by the President of the United States. [“Wilson Auto Hits Boy,” *The Washington Post*, October 5, 1913; “Wilson Calls On Boy,” *The Washington Post*, October 6, 1913; “Messenger Boy Proud Of Gift From Wilson,” *The Washington Post*, October 19, 1913]

President Wilson also became caught up in the enthusiasm about the Lincoln Highway. In September 1912, Carl G. Fisher, who had made a fortune with his Prest-O-Lite compressed carbide-gas automobile headlights, gathered his auto industry peers for a dinner in his hometown of Indianapolis. He suggested they finance a \$10 million Coast-to-Coast Rock Highway from New York City to

San Francisco. "Let's build it," he told the group, "before we're too old to enjoy it!" By mid-1913, Fisher and his supporters had changed the name of the road to the Lincoln Highway, established a headquarters in Detroit, and launched a route-finding tour.

The Lincoln Highway Association announced the route in September 1913 and began collecting \$5 membership subscriptions, in return for which members would receive a certificate and an insignia to place on their motor cars. With the encouragement of Representative Frank E. Doremus (D-Mi.), President Wilson sent a \$5 check and in return received membership certificate No. 1. The association, known for its publicity efforts, used his membership to solicit other memberships, according to its official history:

For instance, as a feature of the campaign to sell membership certificates, they reproduced in halftone President Wilson's No. 1 certificate and offered the reproduction as an illustration to every newspaper which would print it. [*The Lincoln Highway: The Story of a Crusade That Made Transportation History*, Dodd, Mead and Company, 1935, pages 94-95]

In choosing the route for the Lincoln Highway, the association had gone with the most direct route practical. In doing so, it upset nearby States, particularly Colorado, that on the basis of the route-finding tour, had thought they would be included in the route that auto industry executives planned to build with their own funds. In late 1913, Maryland and District of Columbia business leaders began to promote the idea that the Lincoln Highway, which ran through Philadelphia, should pass through Baltimore and Washington. Construction by Maryland of State roads would avoid increasing the funds the association would have to raise. ["Wants Lincoln Highway," *The Baltimore Sun*, December 6, 1913]

A. R. Pardington, vice president of the Lincoln Highway Association, was in Baltimore on December 20 to address the City Club. In introducing Pardington, City Solicitor S. S. Field made the case for inclusion, as described by the *Sun*:

[He] said that any national highway ought to go to the capital and cross Mason and Dixon's line, and that this was especially true if it is to be called the Lincoln Highway. He declared that Lincoln was the true friend of the South and that his immortal work and his death had taken place in Washington, with which his name would forever be associated.

A Lincoln highway situated altogether in the North and which did not reach Washington, Mr. Field declared, would be almost a misnomer. Such a boulevard might appropriately be called a motorway, he said, or the joyway But it would be entirely inappropriate to call it the Lincoln Highway.

Pardington explained how the route had been selected during the cross-country tour, noting that about 62 percent of the population was not far from it:

He explained how many of the great cities had been disappointed because the highway would pass them by, such as Indianapolis, Detroit, Chicago and St. Louis, but these, he said, with other cities further off the route, like St. Paul, were making plans and had contributed large sums of money to build roads to connect with the highway. [“Urges Lincoln Highway,” *The Baltimore Sun*, December 21, 1913]

On June 1, 1914, the Merchants and Manufacturers’ Lincoln Highway Committee put their case before President Wilson. They argued that the Lincoln Highway should make a detour from Philadelphia to Washington via Baltimore and from Washington to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where it would again link with the main route. The *Star* summarized their argument that this change would not increase the cost to the association:

It has been pointed out that the authority to mark the roads from here to Philadelphia and from here to Gettysburg will cost the commission little, if anything.

The Philadelphia to Washington road is practically completed and state authorities will bear the expense of completion. From here to Gettysburg the states will furnish whatever money is necessary.

From the District line the road would follow certain streets to the great monument being erected in Potomac Park to the memory of Lincoln.

The streets and roads from the Lincoln Memorial to the Lincoln Highway at Gettysburg would be designated by the city and States as the Lincoln Highway.

The *Star* added:

The President sympathized with the presentation of the views of the committee to the extent of approving the argument that a great national highway named for Lincoln would be inappropriately named if it failed to take in Washington

The President requested his visitors to submit to him the letter they would like to write to the Lincoln memorial highway commission, with headquarters in Detroit. If this letter suits him he will send it to the commission. ["Lincoln Highway Plea Heard By President," *The Evening Star*, June 1, 1914]

He sent the letter on June 19:

I am sure that the whole country is interested to see to it that there should no longer exist a North or a South in this absolutely united country which we all love and that the imaginary Mason and Dixon line should be made once and for all a thing of the past, and as a small contribution to that end

I earnestly suggest that the Lincoln Highway Association should grant permission to place the official Lincoln Highway markers on the macadam roadway running from Philadelphia to Washington, through the properly selected streets of the latter city to the Lincoln Memorial now under construction, and from thence along the roadway through Frederick, Maryland, and from Frederick to Gettysburg.

I am reliably informed that this route is now or will in the very near future be a modern macadam roadway from Philadelphia to Gettysburg by way of Washington. The entire expense of the road, I am informed, including officially marking the highway, will be defrayed by local interests.

Cordially and sincerely yours,

Woodrow Wilson

Although the letter did not mention Baltimore, the road between Philadelphia and Washington ran through the city. ["President Responds To Highway Appeal," *The Evening Star*, June 22, 1914; *The Lincoln Highway*, page 159]

In late July, Henry B. Joy, president of the Lincoln Highway Association and of the Packard Motor Car Company, replied to the President. The association's work, Joy wrote, "no doubt greatly assisted through your recognition of its work in its early stages," had progressed to the point where virtually every segment of the Lincoln Highway had been marked and renamed, especially the segment between Philadelphia and Gettysburg:

Especially is such the case between Philadelphia and Gettysburg, where in the counties traversed and also in the cities . . . the official adoption by the local authorities of the name Lincoln Way and the marking thereof and the betterments and beautifications in process make the changing of the

route in accordance with your suggestions, if for no other reasons, outside of and beyond the control of this Association

It is not possible to undo this wonderful work of the communities whose loyal patriotic efforts are making, have indeed made, the Lincoln Highway a part of the map of our country.

The Lincoln Way is the shortest, most direct and practicable route consistent with the topography of the country from New York on the Atlantic to the San Francisco on the Pacific, and to change from that basis principle and extend its length by devious windings from city to city, or from point of interest to point of interest, would insure its failure as a permanent useful Memorial Way.

It is not within the power of our Association to alter the already painstakingly selected and actually adopted route. [*The Lincoln Highway*, pages 160-161]

Robert N. Harper, the president of District National Bank and a member of the local committee, was disappointed by the reply and puzzled by it. President Wilson's letter did not ask the Lincoln Highway Association to change the route. "Washington is asking the association not to deviate one foot from its cross-continent highway, or to spend one extra cent on the loop through Washington. We are asking nothing more than the association has already done in Colorado and Nevada, where side loops have been laid out marked with the Lincoln highway marker." He could not "conceive any bona fide reason" for rejecting the request. ["Opposes Change in Route Of Highway," *The Evening Star*, August 2, 1914]

However, the Lincoln Highway Association had learned its lesson from those other examples. Groups such as the Baltimore-Washington committee saw those loops as precedents for their own loops. The association's history explained:

Most of the arguments in favor of these changes cited the fact that the Association had once varied from its declared principle of directness The directors, however, quickly recognized the error that had been made and in the spring of 1915 formally withdrew sanction of the Denver loop as a part of the Lincoln Highway. This action evoked a storm of protest The Association stood its ground. [*The Lincoln Highway*, page 158]

A 1916 discussion in a good roads magazine of President Wilson's motoring interests explained:

No more ardent motorist ever occupied the White House than President Wilson. . . . Mr. Wilson probably has spent an average of two hours a day in an automobile since he became president.

He prefers to ride with the top down. ...His choice of a seat depends upon the purpose of the ride. If he intends to do some thinking, he is almost certain to sit beside the chauffeur. If he is out solely to relax, he joins his companions in the [back seat] and mingles in their conversation. An automobile load of Secret Service men always accompanies the president's car, whether the journey be some 150 miles through the Green Mountains or merely from the White House to one of the Washington theatres.

Motoring is the president's chief form of recreation during his vacations. [Brown, L. Ames, "President Wilson the Motorist," *Northwestern Motorist*, September 1916]

President Wilson was clear about his preferences:

The President loved moderate speeds He considered twenty-five miles an hour fast enough for anyone who wanted to see something of the country. Frequently he and Mrs. Wilson took a drive in the [Baker] electric, with the Secret Service Cadillac trailing behind. A writer of the time was so impressed with the scene that he said they reminded one "of a rabbit leading a St. Bernard over the country roads."

President Wilson detested the constant presence of the Secret Service, but reluctantly observed the law. He managed, however, to eliminate the motorcycle police escort used during the Taft Administration.

In addition to strict orders to War Department garage personnel regarding excessive speeding, the President issued a strict plan of operation for the garage itself. One reporter described it as more like a fire-engine house than a garage. By presidential direction the vehicles were available on three-minute telephone notice, day or night. In this way, urgent government business could be conducted even while the city slumbered. [Collins, Herbert Ridgeway, *The Presidents on Wheels*, Acropolis Books LTD, 1971, pages 138-139]

Summer Vacation – 1913

The Wilsons decided on a Summer White House near Cornish, New Hampshire. They rented Harlakenden House from American novelist Winston Churchill – a two-story brick structure on a hill 3 miles from Windsor, Vermont, with a view of the Connecticut River Valley and the Green Mountains. On June 28, the family, minus President Wilson, took the railroad to Windsor, then motored to

Harlakendon House. The President remained in Washington after demanding that Congress stay in session until it completed work on tariff and currency legislation.

He finally arrived on July 5. The *Times* described his arrival:

The President's arrival attracted little attention. Except for a single cheer there was no demonstration. The townfolk stared as the President kissed Mrs. Wilson and [their daughter] Miss Eleanor and stepped into a waiting automobile. Along the way some of the natives waved a flag and occasionally an apron fluttered, but the ascent of three and a half miles to Harlakendon House was as uneventful as if a party of tourists was passing through the mountain country.

The secret service men followed in another car, while the President's machine plowed through the loose sand and left in its wake an atmosphere thick with clouds of dust. Automobiles whirling by in the opposite direction contributed more dust, while some passed at dangerously close angles, for the roads are narrow and curve along steep embankments in places. ["Wilson at Cornish, Sees No Visitors," *The New York Times*, July 6, 1913]

Because of concerns about congressional activity, President Wilson initially planned to return to the city on July 7, but decided to postpone departure for a day or two. The *Times* reported that he was delighted with a drop in the temperature and accompanying Autumn-like breezes. "The President had an exhilarating day." He drove to Woodstock, Vermont, for a round of golf. After lunch, he and Mrs. Wilson motored to Hanover, New Hampshire, to see Dartmouth College, and "after viewing the college grounds they made a wide circuit homeward, a distance of thirty miles." ["Wilson Prolongs His Stay," *The New York Times*, July 8, 1913]

He was still at Harlakendon House on July 8. The *Star* described his day:

President Wilson tried another golf links today, this time the nine-hole course at Dartmouth College. He left Cornish early, and, motoring thirty miles over green hills and valleys, arrived there before noon. The college town is filled with summer school students and some of the young women tripped enthusiastically across the links to greet the President

The President played a fair game, but found the links much more difficult than the Woodstock course, where he was yesterday. ["To Remain Another Day At the Summer Capital," *The Evening Star*, July 8, 1913]

(On July 9, the *Star* observed on its editorial page that, "President Wilson motors and plays golf with enthusiasm. That story about his only being bicycle riding was evidently campaign fiction.")

At some point during his stay, President Wilson had the following experience:

He was driving at his usual moderate rate of speed along one of the New Hampshire roads when a heavy farm wagon came suddenly into view around a sharp turn. The horses, frightened at the apparition of three automobiles bearing down upon them—the president’s car is always followed by the Secret Service machine and usually by another car carrying newspaper men—reared and wheeled. The hoofs of one of the horses came within a few inches of striking the rear of the president’s machine, where Mr. Wilson was seated, for fortunately the accident was averted by the chauffeur’s action in putting on more speed until his passengers were safely past the danger. Barring an occasional skid on a slippery road or greasy asphalt, this is probably the nearest any president has come to real danger while in an automobile. [Collins, page 138]

He left for Washington on July 13. His family stayed in New Hampshire to enjoy activities such as a motor trip through the White Mountains.

President Wilson would return to Harlakenden House twice more in 1913 for brief visits with his family, during which he enjoyed golf and motoring along what the *Star* called “the woods-bordered roads of New Hampshire.” [“White House Dull on Labor’s Holiday,” *The Evening Star*, September 1, 1913]

Winter Vacation - 1913

President Wilson had been ill for several days in December and wanted to relax, free from the pressures of work. However, he could not leave until he signed the landmark Federal Reserve Act (Public Law 63-43). It created the central banking system that was intended to stabilize the economy and free it from the economic panics that the country had experienced on a regular cycle.

The signing ceremony took place on December 23 a little after 6 p.m., as described by Berg:

And on December 23, the President held another signing ceremony in his office, surrounded by his family as well as the officials who had contributed to the bill. For this occasion, he had purchased three gold pens, which he handed to Congressman [Carter] Glass [D-Va.], Senator [Robert L.] Owen [D-Ok.], and Secretary [of the Treasury William G.] McAdoo. He spoke for a few minutes, expressing his belief that, on the heels of the tariff bill, this act “furnishes the machinery for free and elastic and uncontrolled credits, put at the disposal of the merchants and manufacturers of this country for the first time in fifty years.” Wilson could not find the words to express his “deep emotions of gratitude” at

being part of something so beneficial to the business of America. [Berg, page 316]

(According to the *Times*:

In addition to the three plain gold pens purchased by the President with which to attach his signature, Senator [William E.] Chilton of West Virginia had presented another gold pen, which he asked the President also to use.

With Senator Chilton's pen President Wilson wrote the words: "Approved, 23, December, 1913" Then he took up one of the plain gold pens and wrote his first name, "Woodrow," with it. With the second of the plain gold pens he wrote the first syllable of his last name, and finished his signature with the other pen. ["Wilson Signs The Currency Bill; Promised Friendly Aid To Business," *The New York Times*, December 24, 1913]

At 10:45 p.m., that night, President and Mrs. Wilson, two of their daughters, and other family and staff entered the Presidential rail car, attached to a Southern Railway train, for a trip to Pass Christian, Mississippi, where they would spend the holiday season. (Daughter Jessie had married Francis Bowes Sayre in the East Room of the White House on November 25, 1913; they were honeymooning in London and Paris.) The *Times* reported:

The President does not intend to do any work while he is away except in writing or answering such personal letters as may be necessary. Arrangements have been made at Pass Christian for giving the President every protection from annoyance or interruption, and Dr. Grayson has gone along to see that he has a complete rest.

The only exception to rest was consideration of nominees to the Federal Reserve Board. The *Post* added:

Dr. Grayson in the meantime intends to bring the President back to Washington in tip-top physical condition. Dr. Grayson has arranged a program of golf, motoring, and walks, which he believes will prove most beneficial to Mr. Wilson. Since the President was taken ill about a month ago he has been unable to get out as much as he desired. This, coupled with the confining work—the tariff and currency bills and the patronage question—kept him at work almost constantly since he took office, and he feels the strain. ["Wilson Off For Rest," *The Washington Post*, December 23, 1913]

Before leaving, President Wilson ensured that every policeman, messenger, workman, and domestic servant at the White House received a Christmas turkey, 130 in all. (“With turkeys selling in the local markets at 30 cents a pound this feature of the President’s Christmas expenditures is supposed to have cost him about \$400.”) [“President Off For A Rest,” *The New York Times*, December 24, 1913]

In Pass Christian

A couple years later, writer William K. Gibbs compared the area to France’s Riviera on the northern coast of the Mediterranean:

America has her Riviera on the Gulf Coast of southern Mississippi
The spell of America’s Riviera will hold you; make you want to linger long past the time you planned to direct your course toward home. I say this without reservation; one seldom, if ever, finds parting from this inspiring section of the Gulf Coast an easy matter

Here Nature has given her master stroke to surroundings that form a picture with an appeal that makes one loathe to leave for places less favored by the Great Artist.

Three communities, according to Gibbs, constituted America’s Riviera. Pass Christian was on the west, with Biloxi on the east. Gulfport was in the middle. [Gibbs, William K., “America’s Riviera,” *Motor Age*, January 18, 1917, pages 5-9]

The Wilsons were on the train on Christmas Eve as it rolled through Georgia. At Gainesville, the train stopped at the station to change engines. President and

Mrs. Wilson came out to the car platform with their two daughters to point out the house where Margaret and honeymooning Jessie had been born. The home had been occupied by Ellen’s Aunt Louisa Hoyt Brown on South Bradford Street when the two girls were born.

The President asked the small crowd where Tom Haney, the long-time station master, was:

“Here he is,” said a voice, as the individual referred to, a somewhat aged but vigorous-looking station master, appeared. The President and the station master shook hands warmly

“Who lives in the old house,” the President asked, and the stationmaster knew by the direction of the questioner’s nod that he meant the birthplace of his daughters.

“Nobody; it’s closed up,” said Haney. “But how are you, Mr. President? We hear you have been ill.”

“I am quite well,” replied the President smilingly.

“Maybe you better not stand out in the cold,” cautioned someone in the crowd, and the President thanked him for his solicitude. The engines were changed quickly, and the train started, while the handful of spectators waved good-bye.

Elsewhere, the President had been greeted by large crowds, especially in Atlanta. [“The South Throngs To Greet Wilson,” *The New York Times*, December 25, 1913]

On December 25, the train arrived in Pass Christian, where a small crowd greeted them with holiday best wishes. The White House automobiles, shipped to Pass Christian in advance, took the party to the Herndon mansion, “located in the fashionable East End, and [it] has a commanding view of the Gulf of Mexico.” The *Times* described it:

The residence is one of the oldest on the coast, and is a fine example of colonial architecture, somewhat modified by the old French and Spanish styles which prevailed in this section many years ago. The house stands far back in high and spacious grounds, with a superb Gulf view between trees directly in front. Around the edge of the grounds is a row of stately cedar trees, planted before the civil war, while nearer are sweet olives, palms, and other semi-tropic trees.

A hedge surrounds the grounds on three sides, and in the flower garden there now are blooming roses, chrysanthemums, nasturtiums, pansies, and poinsettia. The house has two stories, with an attic. In front is a long colonnade of white columns, supporting the roof from the front veranda. A long pier stretches from the shallow beach in front into the Gulf, affording water deep enough for bathing. The bathhouse is at the end of the pier, and there also is a landing stage for small boats. [No title, *The New York Times*, December 21, 1913]

President and Mrs. Wilson took a short walk on the beach road along the Gulf. Later in the morning, President Wilson and Dr. Grayson took a motor ride to Gulfport. In the afternoon, President and Mrs. Wilson walked to the Pass Christian post office, which was closed for the holiday. Someone alerted the postmistress, Mrs. Annette Simpson, about her famous visitor. She arrived with her two little daughters “one of them attired for the occasion in a mortar board hat of the collegiate type.” The President told her, “I didn’t think there would be any

one over here. But I thought I'd try. It's very kind of you to come over." He bought two 25-cent books of stamps "and in her confusion the Postmistress forgot to give him fifty cents change." She intended to correct her mistake the next day.

After the President and Mrs. Wilson had walked off, Mrs. Simpson told reporters, "I wish he had said something about letting me have three more years. They're fighting me hard for the place."

Outside, children approached him. He asked their names and wished them a Merry Christmas. He and Mrs. Wilson continued their walk before returning to Herndon House. ["President Wilson Spends Happy Day," *The New York Times*, December 26, 1913; "Wilson in Gulf Home," *The Washington Post*, December 26, 1913]

(The Post Office Department had employed women as postmasters for many years, but "women still faced plenty of discrimination in the post," according to a history of the department. In addition to being paid less than men in similar positions, women employed as clerks and postmasters were subject to male attitudes about the role of women:

Married women confronted particular obstacles. In 1902, the *New York Times* reported many civil service employers, including the post, requested only male names from the registers of qualified applicants. By way of explanation, one official said, "Every time a woman is appointed to a clerkship in one of the departments she lessens the chances of marriage for herself and deprives some worthy man of the chance to take unto himself and raise a family." Postmaster General Henry Payne, who served in President Theodore Roosevelt's administration between 1902 and 1904, ordered that women employees who change their names by marriage would not be reappointed, adding that wives should "stay at home and attend to their household duties." This official bias against married women extended to 1921, when it was lifted by Postmaster General Will Hays [Gallagher, Winifred, *How The Post Office Created America: A History*, Penguin Books, 2016, pages 196-197])

The day after Christmas, President Wilson and Dr. Grayson took the White House automobile, trailed by the Secret Service in a second automobile, through Gulfport to the golf course. As they returned through Gulfport, the President spotted a fire on the roof of a home that was owned by Judge and Mrs. J. H. Neville. Judge Neville was away, but Mrs. Neville had been standing at the window to watch the President pass by:

Instead she saw the two machines stop in front of the house, the President himself alight and dart up the front steps, followed by Dr. Cary T.

Grayson, U.S.N., the Secret Service men and the chauffeurs, who had unstrapped the fire extinguishers from their machines.

“Don’t be alarmed,” said the President to the astonished woman. “Your house is on fire, but these men will put the blaze out quickly if you will show them the way to the attic.”

After she led the men to the attic, she returned to the President who tried to reassure her. She asked, “Will you come into the parlor?” He declined. “No thanks, but you might let me get a bucket of water.” By then, however, the fire had been put out with little damage to the roof:

As the party left the house for the automobiles, the Chief of the local Fire Department arrived with his hook and ladder and other apparatus, followed by Judge Neville, his son and a big crowd. The Judge was profuse in his thanks and spoke appreciatively of the President’s thoughtful concern for Mrs. Neville. [“President Saves Cottage From Fire,” *The New York Times*, December 27, 1913]

Gulfport citizens, still thinking about President Wilson’s role in saving the Neville house, were considering a formal vote to thank him. On December 27, while the President and Dr. Grayson motored to golf in the morning and Margaret and Eleanor took a long horseback ride over the Shell Road with friends from New Orleans, a volunteer fire fighter told reporters about an incident outside the Neville home:

“I was standing outside the Neville residence waiting for the apparatus to arrive,” he said, “when a man came up. He noticed my uniform and asked me why I was standing there looking at the fire.

“‘Why don’t you go up there and help?’ he asked.

“I told him I couldn’t go up until the hook and ladder wagon came.

“‘Well,’ he said, ‘my men could climb up on the inside. I don’t see why you can’t.’”

“It suddenly dawned on me that I was talking to the President, and I went inside to help.” [“President Wilson 57 Years Old To-Day,” *The New York Times*, December 28, 1913]

Several children had watched President Wilson and Dr. Grayson play golf. One, who had served as the President’s caddie, told reporters, “He’s a good player. He’s careful, too.” Another, perhaps disappointed he had not been selected to serve as caddie, said, “I didn’t think he played so good, considering he’s the

President.” Another boy defended the President. “Presidents don’t have to be good players.” The *Post*’s reporter added, “President Wilson really plays a good game in view of the fact he took up golf a little more than a year ago.”
 [“President 57 Today,” *The Washington Post*, December 28, 1913]

(The *Post* reported that:

Pass Christian has a single street, extending along the sheltered waters of Mississippi Sound for seven miles Along the street—“The Shell Road” they call it—are the homes of the aristocrats of “The Pass” and the wealthy New Orleans folk who live there when summer sun drives them from the city. The aristocrats of “The Pass” number about twenty-five old families, and in their quaint Colonial homes are to be found such relics of the old South as grace great museums.

Back of those old homes is “the road.” By it are scattered the homes of the creole and negro population of “The Pass,” numbering more than 1,700 people. They are the fishermen and the laborers and the dreamers in the sun. [“Pass Christian People Respecting President’s Desire For Privacy,” *The Washington Post*, January 4, 1913])

On Sunday, December 28, President Wilson’s birthday, he, Ellen, and

Dr. Grayson attended a Presbyterian church in Gulfport where they heard a sermon on personal responsibility. After the service, they went for a drive:

The Presidential party motored to Biloxi, twelve miles further east along the coast before turning back to Pass Christian. On the way the President saw four aged Confederate veterans in gray uniforms hobbling along the road, leaning heavily on their canes.

“How do you do?” said Mr. Wilson as he ordered his car to slow up.

“Howdy,” they answered, but passed on without recognizing the President. Further along the road the party saw Beauvoir, the old home of Jefferson Davis, with its tiny office near by.

The automobiles were covered with mud when they got back, for a heavy rain fell during the night and a drizzle continued most of the morning.

Many telegrams filled with birthday greetings awaited the 57-year old President Wilson at Pass Christian:

He took a short nap after luncheon and started for a walk late in the afternoon. He had not gone far when a little girl met him with a bouquet of flowers.

“Many happy returns of the day,” she said. The President thanked her warmly. It was a simple tribute—the single visible evidence, it seems, that the outside world recalled the birthday of the nation’s Chief Executive.

He later told friends it contrasted with his visit to his birthplace in Staunton, Virginia, before the Inauguration when large crowds cheered him, “but he appreciated it just as much.” [“Wilson Worships In Little Church,” *The New York Times*, December 29, 1913]

The following day, as the White House automobile approached the golf course, boys “clambered on the running board of the President’s automobile . . . and engaged in a free-for-all fight” to be his caddy:

The President laughed heartily as he leaned out and separated the contestants, while one of the Secret Service agents told the boys that if they didn’t behave and take their turns in an orderly manner each day they would not be permitted to caddy for Mr. Wilson at all. After that a truce was declared.

The President played 18 holes “for the first time in many weeks. He made some of the holes under bogey, and succeeded in defeating his opponent, Dr. Cary T. Grayson, U.S.N., something he rarely does. [“Wilson’s Health Mending,” *The New York Times*, December 30, 1913]

Reporters agreed the vacation was restoring President Wilson’s health:

The President yesterday motored to the Mississippi Country Club and played eighteen holes of golf as though he had not a care in the world. His health apparently is improving daily. As he climbed over the bunkers at the golf links yesterday there was a resiliency in his step and a vigor in his walk that revealed to those who have been constantly observing him how much he has been benefited by a week of rest and recreation in the mild gulf climate. He is growing accustomed to the stubby grass of the links, with its retarding effect on the roll of drives, and made a much better score yesterday than usual.

On the way back to Herndon House, the White House automobiles passed a fire on the waterfront that was challenging the Gulfport fire department. “Mr. Wilson, however, decided that his service this time were not necessary and continued on to his cottage.” [“Lind On His Way To Pass Christian,” *The Evening Star*, December 31, 1913]

On New Year's Eve, President Wilson walked into Pass Christian on a shopping trip. He bought a toothbrush and a lamp shade. That night, he kept to his sleeping schedule and went to bed early. ["President Retires Early," *The Baltimore Sun*, January 1, 1914]

On January 1, President Wilson went for his usual golf game in the morning, awaiting the arrival of John Lind, his representative in Mexico. Lind arrived on January 2, docking in Gulfport. He and President Wilson met in the cabin of the scout cruiser Chester until 8 p.m., after which the White House automobiles returned the President to Herndon House, declining requests for comment from the reporters. ["Wilson Meets Lind on Ship," *The New York Times*, January 3, 1914]

The reporters, who had been anticipating Lind's arrival for several days, questioned the President the following day. He disappointed them by saying it was just a "get-together talk" with no new plan, move, or change as a result. The *Star* reported:

Mr. Wilson apparently attached little importance to the Lind episode, pointing out that the proximity of his personal envoy, coincident with his own vacation on the Mississippi coast, had been, as much as anything else, a motive for the conference. ["Mexican Program Unchanged by Lind," *The Evening Star*, January 3, 1914]

Berg summarized the meeting with information not available to the reporters trailing President Wilson:

A storm was brewing the January night Wilson went out to a cruiser at sea to confer with John Lind, his special agent in Mexico. Lind reported on Mexico's recent elections, which had prompted General [Victoriano] Huerta to nullify the results, dissolve the legislature, and remain as dictator. Regional opposition continued to mount, but the leaders remained too wary of one another to join forces Lind urged an aggressive attack against Huerta. Unfortunately, the Ambassador was neither knowledgeable nor sensitive enough to recognize that the Mexican people preferred Huerta to foreign imposition. Knowing he was not receiving enough reliable information, Wilson returned from his shipboard meeting badly shaken. He felt it was as essential as it was inevitable that the Huerta regime should fall, but he was committed to Mexico's determining its own government—no matter how badly he wanted to intervene. [Berg, pages 319-320]

On January 4, the Wilsons attended services at the First Presbyterian Church in Biloxi, 23 miles from Herndon House. President Wilson's presence quickly

spread, prompting every seat and standing room to be filled. Leaving the church, he was greeted by cheers from a crowd:

President Wilson's party found the 50-mile ride to and from Biloxi the most pleasant they had taken since coming to Pass Christian. It lay along the Mississippi Sound, which sparkled with sunshine today. The roads were good, but the cars moved slowly along the beach, and many families ran to their front verandas and waved to the distinguished motorist.

The *Sun* reported on his health:

He is being benefited so much by his vacation that each day he is tackling more and more the documents which he brought with him for leisurely study. The Chief Executive's health is normal again: In fact, those who have been with him for many months say he never looked better. His bronzed skin shows the glow of health, and his jaunty step and vigorous stroke on the golf links confirm his return to physical strength, which was the purpose of his vacation. ["Motors 25 Miles To Church," *The Baltimore Sun*, January 5, 1914]

With his vacation nearing an end, President Wilson decided to reward all the children he had seen on his trips to and from the Gulfport golf course. The *Sun* described his method:

Since coming here the President has made warm friends with the children, who daily run to their front gates to wave greetings to him.

Today there were many expressions of delighted surprise at homes along the way when the big White House automobile stopped and a secret service man appeared at the doors with a box of candy under his arms, a present from the President to his little friends. The President was delighted with his role of Santa Claus.

When news of Mr. Wilson's generosity spread among the children, it became known that many of the youngsters who do not live along the route to the golf course were disappointed. They were promised, however, that they would not be overlooked and that the supply of candy at the Presidential cottage was sufficient to meet all demands.

The *Post* had a different account:

As the President motored back to his cottage after golf he distributed a lot of candy to the children who greeted him along the way. The little ones flocked around his automobile when it stopped and plied him with scores of childish questions.

“Where did you get that automobile?” asked one, and the President laughed heartily.

Tomorrow the presidential automobile will carry more candy, as there wasn't enough to go around today. Ever since the holiday season began the President's family has been receiving boxes of candy from friends, far more than could possibly be eaten by them. So the President thought it a good idea to give some of the sweets to the children who wave their little American flags each day when he passes and always seem so glad to see him.

Reporters also wrote about another incident that morning:

When the chief executive finished his golf game, an old negro approached the presidential group. He had difficulty in determining which of the men who stood before him was the President, so feeble had his eyesight become.

“I'm Ben Williams, Jeff Davis' old body servant,” he said, “and I wanted to meet Mr. Wilson.”

The President stepped forward and shook his hand. He asked the negro's age.

“I expect I'm 75 anyway,” was the reply.

The old residence of Jefferson Davis, which is now used as a Confederate soldiers' home, is only a few miles from the links, and the negro has lived in this vicinity continuously since the days of the Confederacy. [“Wilson As Santa Claus,” *The Baltimore Sun*, January 8, 1914; “New Message Begun,” *The Washington Post*, January 8, 1914]

The next day, President Wilson continued handing out candy:

School children lined both sides of the main street singing “America,” and people came flocking from stores and shops as the President's car slowed down. A child of twelve handed the President a box and a letter which she asked him not to open until he reached home.

The letter, which President Wilson opened when he reached Herndon House, read:

Dear Mr. President: You will find in this box a real, live dove. It flew in the door and broke its wing several months ago. We have cared for it, and now that it is well, my mamma says we must give it freedom. If you will

do me the honor to open its prison and let it fly away to find companions of its kind, I shall be very grateful.

Lovingly,

W.G.

P.S.—Just a little Tennessee girl enjoying the beautiful Southland.

Standing on the veranda of the cottage at sunset, President Wilson opened the box. “The bird fluttered for a moment, then paused on a heavy-limbed oak, as if preparing for a long flight, and soon was lost in the evening shadows.”

Representative Byron P. “Pat” Harrison, who represented the congressional district that included Pass Christian, was with the President in the automobile that day. At the President’s request, Representative Harrison learned that the brown-haired girl was Willa Green, who said she had signed her initials because she did “not want anybody to know anything about it.” [“Wilson Frees Girl’s Dove,” *The New York Times*, January 9, 1914]

As the *Star* reported, President Wilson had enjoyed his meetings with the children who often lined the road between Herndon House and the golf course:

Hundreds of boys and girls have lined the road on which he motors to and from the golf links each day, cheering or waving flags. The President’s chauffeur knows the whims of the chief executive and slows down as he approaches the little groups. The President often has stopped to talk with the children.

One recent day, one of the boys, Cecil Brown, had halted the White House automobile. “I want to give you some candy,” he told the President, “and I want you to eat it, because I made it myself”:

The President took the box of homemade candy with him, while Master Brown, attired in a Boy Scouts uniform, saluted proudly as the automobile proceeded. When Mr. Wilson got through with his important business, he wrote the boy thanking him for the gift.

When the President rode to golf yesterday [January 8], Master Brown was again signaling in the road with his flag, but this time he was in civilian clothes. He had a box of flowers for the President and a little note. When the President got home he read the note. “I liked your letter so much that I brought you the flower. I hope you will write me another letter, too, and when you get back to Washington I want you to write regularly to me.”

The President wrote Master Brown that he appreciated the flowers very much and was deeply grateful. [“President Answers Children’s Letters,” *The Evening Star*, January 9, 1914]

January 10 was his last full day in Pass Christian. He motored to the golf course for one last round of golf with Dr. Grayson:

A crowd collected at the links to see the President when he finished his game, and along the route going to and from the course, men, women and children stood in the road waving flags and cheering.

They presented him with flowers and other gifts:

As Mr. Wilson passed the home of former Congressman [Eaton J.] Bowers he was given a gigantic bunch of grapefruit, while children along the way presented him with oranges and bananas.

Although he had declined the many invitations he had received while in Pass Christian, President Wilson agreed to a farewell reception at Herndon House arranged by Representative Harrison:

Automobiles, carriages, rickety traps, crude farm wagons, dust-covered saddle horses and crowded trolley cars brought eager people to the reception. Pretty girls, aged Confederate veterans in gray uniforms, mothers carrying their babies and little children by the score crowded into line and passed up the steps to meet the President.

President stood with Ellen, his two daughters, Dr. Grayson, and other members of his party to greet about 2,000 residents:

Guests were welcomed by the President and Mrs. Wilson, who stood on the cottage veranda in the warm, bright sunshine. Mr. Wilson apparently enjoyed the occasion immensely, greeting with a cordial smile those who shook hands.

The President is highly appreciative of the manner in which the residents have scrupulously observed his desire for seclusion and rest, and it was in recognition of their courtesy that he tendered the reception on the day before his departure for Washington.

Reporters noted that it was first reception held during the Wilson Administration. [“President Starts Back To Capital Tomorrow,” *The Evening Star*, January 10, 1914; “Wilson Receives Them,” *The Baltimore Sun*, January 11, 1914]

The Presidential party returned to the station in the early evening of January 11 and boarded their special train for the trip to Washington. At the station, President Wilson told the crowd that he had enjoyed his stay in Pass Christian and had obtained exactly the rest he had desired. Pool reports in several newspaper agreed:

All told the chief executive has done a great amount of work between his games of golf, his long motor rides, and his extended periods of rest. He has practically mapped out the course of his administration for the remaining months of the present session of Congress. His work has been practically uninterrupted either by callers on official business or by the curious among the gulf coast people. With the exception of John Lind, his personal representative in Mexico, the President has seen absolutely no one on business. ["Wilson On Way Here," *The Washington Post*, January 12, 1914]

The train finally departed after 11:30.

The train ride today was a restful one for the President and his family. Few stops were made, but at many of the towns and cities the special was run through slowly while the President stood on the back platform and waved his hat in response to the cheers. At Calhoun, S.C., the old homestead of John C. Calhoun, 800 cadets at Clemson Military College swarmed around the end of the train and gave Mr. Wilson a noisy demonstration. ["President Home Today," *The Baltimore Sun*, January 13, 1914]

Reporters agreed that the vacation had restored President Wilson's health.

Back to Harlakenden House – 1914

In early 1914, Ellen Wilson became ill, weakening from Bright's disease, a kidney ailment, before dying on August 6, 1914. As President Wilson sank into a deep depression, Dr. Grayson encouraged him to keep up his golfing and auto rides, but nothing seemed to relieve the President's sadness.

He and his family went back to Harlakenden House, with President Wilson arriving on August 28. Aware of his grief, area residents remained in the background. He was reluctant to golf so soon after his wife's death, but

Dr. Grayson insisted. He also planned long automobile rides.

On August 29, he "got a thorough rest" that included a long automobile ride, during which he "sped in the White House automobile through the Connecticut [River valley] villages past several dangerous turns and bridges, but the only

mishap was bursting of one of the tires.” [“President Out in Rain,” *The New York Times*, August 30, 1914]

On the 30th, “The President today found quiet and seclusion automobiling over the hills of New Hampshire with Prof. Stockton Axson, his brother-in-law, and

Miss Margaret Wilson. His route took him high above the Connecticut valley through some of the most picturesque scenery of New England.” [“President Goes Autoing,” *The Washington Post*, August 31, 1914]

On his final full day at Harlakenden House, he motored to Hanover for a round of golf with Dr. Grayson. “His game was so strenuous that he broke his driver.” [“President’s Vacation Ends,” *The New York Times*, September 1, 1914]

The mourning President’s brief vacation did little to relieve his depression.

In early 1915, Wilson met Edith Bolling Galt, a 42-year old widow who had inherited a business, the well-known Galt and Bros. Jewelers, from her husband. She had married Norman Galt in 1896, but he died in 1908. Smith wrote:

The shop was a profitable one and ran itself with little aid from its owner, who was able to travel widely, take a great interest in clothes, particularly Paris frocks, and drive around in an electric automobile which, she said, was the first ever owned and operated by a Washington woman. She lived alone save for two maids in a house on 20th Street, N.W., at New Hampshire Avenue [near Dupont Circle]. She was tall and imposing and had a beautiful smile and appealing dimples.

A friend of Mrs. Galt’s told Smith that she drove the electric car like an absolute madwoman. [Smith, pages 13-14]

One day in March, President Wilson and Dr. Grayson were in a limousine in Washington when Dr. Grayson saw a friend of his on the street. He pointed out Mrs. Galt, as author Erik Larson explained:

At five feet nine inches tall, with a full and shapely figure and a taste for fine clothes, including those designed in the Paris fashion house of Charles Frederick Worth, she was a striking figure, with a complexion and manner said to gleam, and eyes of a violet blue.

The President asked, “Who is that beautiful lady?” [Larson, Erik, *Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania*, Crown Publishers, 2015, page 37]

Mrs. Galt was a friend of Helen Bones, the President's cousin and de facto White House hostess since Ellen's death. Often, they would drive in Mrs. Galt's car to Rock Creek Park for walks.

They usually ended their visit at Mrs. Galt's home. But one day after a walk, Bones suggested they have tea at the White House. Mrs. Galt, whose shoes were muddy, hesitated, feared she would be "taken for a tramp." Bones assured her that President Wilson was off playing golf with Dr. Grayson. As they reached the second floor, however, they saw the President returning from a golf outing still in his golf clothes. He joined them for tea. With her cheerful manner, Mrs. Galt prompted the depressed President Wilson to laugh. Bones wondered "if she was hearing right. He had laughed. 'I can't say that I foresaw in the first minute what was going to happen,' Helen Bones said later. 'It may have taken ten minutes'":

A few days later Mrs. Galt came to dinner at the White House, and a few days after that went riding with the two cousins, she and Helen sitting in the back of the car while the President sat by the driver. He seemed very tired and hardly said a word while his cousin and her friend chattered away.

He cheered up during dinner at the White House:

In the days that followed, the President and Mrs. Galt went for frequent rides with his cousin as chaperone (along with the ever-present Secret Service men), and she came often to dine in the White House.

After Bones invited her friend to the White House on March 23, President Wilson sent the White House Pierce-Arrow to pick her up. "Edith wore a purple orchid and sat at Wilson's right," Larson wrote. The evening continued with conversation:

The evening had a profound effect on Wilson. He was entranced. Edith, sixteen years his junior, was an attractive and compelling woman. White House usher Irwin "Ike" Hoover called her "an impressive widow. That evening, Wilson's spirits soared." [Larson, pages 18-19]

Despite President Wilson's many concerns, including the war that had broken out in Europe in August 1914, Mrs. Galt was a frequent White House dinner guest in April, always with others present as etiquette dictated. He began to include her in his afternoon rides, with Dr. Grayson, Helen Bones, or another chaperone:

Here in Edith, in the midst of world chaos, he found a purpose to which he could devote himself that took him, if only temporarily, out of his apprehension about the widening war and the fate of the larger world. She was, to him, "a heaven—haven—sanctuary." More than this, her presence

helped him clarify his thoughts about the nation's trials. On their evening rides in the White House Pierce-Arrow, he spoke to her of the war and his concerns as he probably would have spoken to his late wife, Ellen, thereby helping him order his own thoughts. "From the first," Edith wrote, "he knew he could rely on my prudence, and what he said went no further."

The drives with him were "life giving" as she began to feel a bond with him. "She had never met a man like Wilson—intensely bright, but also warm and solicitous of her feelings. It was all very unexpected." They found they had some common elements in their background. They both were natives of Virginia, he from Staunton, she from Wythe. ...

As for him, his valet, Arthur Brooks, recalled, "He's a goner." [Larson, pages 108-110]

As she spent more time with President Wilson, she began to look at her life differently, but was surprised by what happened on May 4. After dinner at the White House, he asked to be alone with her. They walked onto the South Portico where they could talk, for once, without a chaperone. He told her of his growing love. She protested that, "Oh, you can't love me for you don't really know me; and it is less than a year since your wife died." He replied:

I know you feel that, but, little girl, in this place time is not measured by weeks, months, or years, but by deep human experiences; and since her death I have lived a lifetime of loneliness and heartache. I was afraid, knowing you, I would shock you; but I would be less than a gentleman if I continued to make opportunities to see you without telling you what I have told my daughters and Helen: that I want you to be my wife. In the circumstances of the spotlight that is always on this house, and particularly on me as the head of the government, whoever comes here is immediately observed and discussed; and do what I can to protect you from gossip, it will inevitably begin. If you care for me as I do for you, we will have to brave this; but as I cannot come to your house without increasing the gossip, you, in your graciousness, will have to come here"

In a conversation that lasted over an hour, she explained that if he wanted an answer now, her answer would be "no." They had, after all, known each other only 2 months; she needed more time.

He was disappointed in her answer but encouraged by a letter she sent him the following day:

I am a woman—and the thought that you have need of me—is sweet! But, dear kindred spirit, with such frankness between us, there is nothing to fear—we will help and hearten each other.

She and Helen Bones went for one of their walks in Rock Creek Park where they discussed the growing relationship. As they talked, Bones burst into tears. “Just as I thought some happiness was coming into his life! And now you are breaking his heart.”

Mrs. Galt was beginning to feel like an “ogre,” but told her friend she could not “consent to something I did not feel.” She was, she said, “playing with fire where he was concerned, for his whole nature was intense and did not willingly wait; but that I must have time to know my own heart.”

Depressed by her answer, President Wilson found himself “feeling almost disoriented as world events clamored for his attention.”

Unsure about her feelings, whether she loved the man or the President, she agreed to continue seeing him under proper chaperonage, often provided by cousin Helen Bones.

Throwing himself into the courtship, he sent flowers, invited her to the White House, and took her for automobile rides. “She worried about what to do, but she continued to see him for drives and dinners . . .” Walworth wrote that, “Each time she saw him, he stirred an impulse in her to love him and help him to bear his burdens; and Helen Bones pleaded his cause on days when duties held him at his desk.” [Walworth, Part 1, pages 428-429; Larson, pages 175-177]

He was in Philadelphia on May 10 for a speech to a group that had just taken the oath to become American citizens. Back in the White House, he told Mrs. Galt he could not recall what he had said “while in an emotional haze caused by his love for her.” He added, “I found myself a little confused as to whether I was in Philadelphia or New York! Because my heart was in such a wonderful whirl from that wonderful interview of yesterday and the poignant appeal and sweetness of the little note you left with me; but many other things have grown clear in my mind.”

President Wilson next saw Mrs. Galt on May 16. Before his April 30 proposal of marriage, she had agreed to accompany his party on the Presidential yacht *Mayflower* for a trip to New York City where he would review the Atlantic fleet the following day. The *Mayflower* left from Hampton Roads, Virginia, but as it moved up the Atlantic coast encountered a violent storm that left everyone in agony, as Smith recounts. Helen Bones stayed in her cabin, wanting to be left alone to suffer her agony in private. Even Dr. Grayson, a naval officer, “reeled

and gagged.” The President’s valet, on a mission to deliver brandy and ice to one of the stricken party, collapsed in the dining saloon:

Mrs. Galt went below and took the liquor from him. She carried it part way to the deck but ran out of good health in the hatch and lay on her back with her eyes closed, clutching the brandy bottle to her chest. The President found her so and could not help laughing at the sight; that made her laugh too, and she felt better.

The incident provided some stability for their relationship. By the time the *Mayflower* arrived in New York City, “the President was talking about his work and problems to Mrs. Galt, and she was torn by the desire to help him and the fear that really she was unqualified to do so. She worried about what to do, but she continued to see him for drives and dinners, with Margaret, Nellie or Helen invariably being their companions. [Smith, pages 17-18]

Harlakenden House – 1915

President Wilson’s recreational routines were so familiar to reporters that when he changed them, they took notice, as shown in this December 1914 *Post* article:

The President is gradually revising his system of receiving callers, now that the days are getting so short that darkness interferes with his usual golf matches with Dr. Cary T. Grayson, the White House physician. He is now, whenever possible, receiving visitors in the afternoon, instead of the morning.

He goes to his office as soon as he has had breakfast to look over the newspapers and attend to pending matters of importance. Then, if the press of business is not too great he goes for a golf match or an automobile drive. After luncheon he is ready to receive callers. [“President Changes Hours,” *The Washington Post*, December 14, 1914]

For the summer, President Wilson planned to return to Harlakenden House in New Hampshire for a family vacation. Family members, including his daughter Jessica and her husband, Professor Francis Sayre of Harvard, were in New Hampshire for parts of the vacation. Margaret and Helen Bones asked Mrs. Galt to join them:

She did so, driving with Helen via Princeton, where Helen acted as guide on a tour of his former haunts. They went on for shopping in New York and then to the summer place. [Smith, pages 17-18]

President Wilson arrived on June 25. He had brought work with him related to the European war and issues involving Mexico. The *Times* reported:

Mr. Wilson spent almost the entire afternoon and evening looking over the estate and attending to some correspondence, but took a short automobile ride before dinner. He plans to devote practically all his time while here to golfing, automobiling, reading and resting. He will play golf each morning twenty miles away at Hanover, N.H., and in the afternoons he will motor through the picturesque Connecticut Valley. ["President Cheered On Trip To Cornish," *The New York Times*, June 26, 1915]

As planned, he was on the road the following day:

With members of his family, the President spent a very quiet and uneventful day and night. He remained at the "Summer White House," working on some correspondence this morning, and late this afternoon went automobiling to Hanover, N.H., and White River Junction, Vt In the course of their drive the President and his party became lost several times and Mr. Wilson personally called to three natives along the roadside and asked the way. In neither instance did the men show any sign of recognizing him. ["Wilson Loses Way On Automobile Trip," *The New York Times*, June 27, 1915]

On June 27, President Wilson, family members, the Secret Service, and the reporters in a third car, drove to Vermont, spending 5 hours "riding through forests, up and down steep inclines, part of the time in a driving rain":

The drive took the Presidential party over roads seldom traveled by automobiles The chauffeurs of the two cars carrying the party were from Washington, and the President knew the country at least as well as any one with him

Several times his automobile was driven into "blind" roadways and had to be backed out in order to proceed on its way. In one place the machine plowed down a steep hill in mud up to the hubs, and in others it ran beside ravines with mountain streams far below. The chauffeur is a careful driver, however, and at no time was the party in any danger.

During the ride the President frequently remarked on the impressive scenery. Going down a narrow gorge, the automobile was forced to stop to allow a horse and wagon to pass, and at another place it had to slow up while a farmer pushed to one side an obstinate cow that insisted on standing in the middle of the road.

His goal was Woodstock, Vermont, "but in the mountains he lost his way and drove in many directions," resulting in an oft-repeated anecdote:

At one place the automobiles were stopped, and Mr. Sayre leaned out and spoke to a farmer standing beside the road.

“Where does this road go?” asked Mr. Sayre.

“I’ve been living here all my life and it never went anywhere,” replied the man, while the President tried to preserve his gravity. [“President Explores Byways Of Vermont,” *The New York Times*, June 28, 1915]

A different version had the man replying, “Whar does this road go? It don’t go anywhere so far as I know, it’s been here as long as I have.”

A second account, from *The Baltimore Sun*, began:

Becoming lost in the course of a motor run to Woodstock, Vt., today, President Wilson hit upon a plan of exploration and [ad]venture with the result that he covered 76 miles of rough, rugged and winding mountain roads in this State [Vermont] and New Hampshire. His own and all known records for these parts was shattered by the President’s experience.

This account continued:

So the Presidential party set out to explore the road that didn’t lead anywhere, devoting five hours to the fun until a driving rain compelled them to head homeward.

The secret service men that trailed the President had a hard time of it over the oxen trails and precipitous paths unfamiliar to the tread of an automobile and at one point the entire party landed in a swamp, from which it was found difficult to extricate the machines.

In contrast the party scaled some of the highest peaks of the lower ridge of the Green Mountains. A stop was made at the rough monument which commemorates the spot where the Johnson family of pioneers was captured by Indians in 1754, and at one or two farmhouses. Altogether it was the most remarkable outing the President had during his three summers at Cornish. [“Wilson Astray In Auto,” *The Baltimore Sun*, June 28, 1915]

President Wilson continued his travels on the 28th when his trip carried him “110 miles over the green mountains to Rutland, Vt.” The trip took six hours, and included a stop at a tea house along the way. The Secret Service vehicle experienced engine trouble “and the President was several miles on his way home before the other car overtook him.” [“President Watches Foreign Situation,” *The New York Times*, June 29, 1915]

Presidential business intervened to interrupt the vacation President Wilson needed. Since learning on May 7 that a German submarine had sunk the passenger liner Lusitania, with the loss of 1,198, President Wilson had spent considerable time on the issue of submarine warfare. Diplomats from the two countries were trying to agree on the wording of a note from Germany indicating it would no longer target passenger vessels. The diplomatic negotiations became more strained when a German submarine sank the Dominion Liner Armenian, with reports of several Americans lost. The situation in Mexico also was again occupying his time.

On June 29, the newspapers reported that President Wilson had decided not to visit the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco; the war in Europe was at a critical point:

One reason why the President wishes to remain in the East is that he wants to be ready to take immediate steps toward ending the European war if any of the belligerent nations or any neutral nation calls on the United States to lend its help in that direction.

He also had decisions to make regarding Mexico, but:

Late this afternoon the President, with Miss Margaret Wilson, Miss Helen Woodrow Bones, and Dr. Cary T. Grayson took a 50-mile automobile ride to Lake Sunapee, N.H.; Newport, N.H., and Claremont, N.H. [“Wilson Prepared For A Peace Move,” *The New York Times*, June 30, 1915; “Angeles Is Ignored,” *The Washington Post*, June 30, 1915]

Drizzly weather kept the President from an automobile ride on June 30 while he continued to wrestle with the issues before him. “After devoting several hours to officials business” on July 1, “the President put on a rubber hat and coat and went with Dr. Cary T. Grayson for a long walk in the rain through the woods surrounding Harklakenden House.” [“Fail To See President,” *The Washington Post*, July 1, 1915; “Wilson Relieved Over The Armenian,” *The New York Times*, July 2, 1915]

On July 1, President Wilson, with family and Dr. Grayson around him, touched a telegraph key at Harlakenden House to open “Wilson Day” at the Panama-Pacific exposition.

Some pressure was relieved because he learned that the Armenian had been “engaged in admiralty business,” which meant it was not an “unarmed merchantman” as President Wilson had referred to ships such as the Lusitania. If President Wilson felt relief, he was not able to enjoy peace in his automobile:

Automobiling was impossible today because of the bad condition of the roads, and therefore, the President was indoors most of the time, reading and working on official correspondence from Washington. [“Wilson Guides Inquiry,” *The Washington Post*, July 2, 1915]

On July 3, the *Times* noted that Mrs. Galt had arrived. Although the reporters were aware of her frequent visits to the White House and suspected the reason, they informed readers that she was “a guest of Miss Helen Woodrow Bones.” [“Wilson Studies Peace Plans,” *The New York Times*, July 3, 1915]

Following a bombing on Capitol Hill and an assassination attempt on the son of financier J. P. Morgan on July 3, the Secret Service increased its forces surrounding President Wilson. As explained in the *Post*:

The corps of nine secret service men attending President Wilson here today took additional precautions to guard him, following detailed reports from Washington of the bomb explosion that wrecked part of the Senate early this morning.

Chief Joseph Murphy will ride in the President’s automobile from now [on] at all times until the vacation is over and three of his men will be in constant attendance.

Despite the news, President Wilson, Dr. Grayson, Helen Bones, and Mrs. Galt “took the most difficult automobile ride of his present trip to New England. Misdirected by a farmer, he rode across a mountain and over very bad roads for a distance of 100 miles. [“President’s Guard Will Be Increased,” *The Washington Post*, July 4, 1915; “Wilson Told Of Attack,” *The Baltimore Sun*, July 4, 1915]

President Wilson spent a quiet 4th of July at Harlakenden House. When he and his party, including Mrs. Galt, went for their automobile ride, their car and that of the Secret Service were “running around the edge of Echo Lake near Ludlow, Vermont, when they suddenly came upon a group of persons surrounding a small machine hanging over the side of the road.” Dr. Grayson and President Wilson left their automobile to see if anyone had been hurt. The injured had been taken to a nearby farmhouse:

The President then offered to have his automobile pull the wrecked machine back over the embankment, but an auto truck had already been sent for and therefore his assistance was not required. Several persons recognized him and thanked him for his offers

They rode for eighty miles through some of the most beautiful sections of the Green mountains. [“Wilson Offers Help To Wrecked Autoists,” *The New York Times*, July 5, 1915]

One highlight involved President Wilson's first grandchild, born on January 15, 1915, in the White House. The mother was Jessie Sayre, the President and Ellen's middle daughter:

"The Fourth" was celebrated tonight at Harlakenden House, for the benefit of Francis Woodrow [sic] Sayre, the President's infant grandson. "Baby" Sayre received a box of fireworks and they were touched off while

Mr. Wilson and others of the household watched the proceedings from the porch. ["Wilson's Quiet Fourth," *The Washington Post*, July 6, 1915]

(The baby's name was Francis Bowes Sayre, Jr.)

He returned to the road on July 10 with his usual companions, including Mrs. Galt. Their 75-mile ride passed by Lake Sunapee:

When his machine stopped to avoid frightening a horse, a small automobile bumped into the White House car from behind, breaking the front lights on the small automobile.

The President and Mrs. Francis B. Sayre, Miss Helen Woodrow Bones and Mrs. Norman Galt, of Washington, were shaken up by the collision. An automobile carrying secret service men a short distance behind came quickly to the scene.

The secret service men jumped out to see what was wrong, and soon learned that the President's party had suffered no hurt, and that the five men in the other car were uninjured.

All concluded that the President's chauffeur was not to blame. "His automobile was going at comparatively slow speed," as preferred by President Wilson. The *Post's* account of the incident added the detail that, "During the trip the automobile chased two small deer for 300 or 400 yards, while their mother watched the proceedings from a nearby field." ["Wilson In Auto Crash," *The Washington Post*, July 11, 1915]

For the next few days, President Wilson's days were dominated by the exchange of notes with Germany, working with staff at Harlakenden House and in Washington to fashion a note with precisely the same message. The goal was to stop unprovoked attacks on passenger ships and keep the United States out of the European war.

He was not able to enjoy golf and automobile rides as freely as in the past. News reports focused on the deliberations, but did occasionally mention his pleasure rides. For example, during a lull in Germany-related discussions, he treated

July 13 as a holiday, taking a 60-mile “automobile spin through the Green Mountains in the afternoon,” according to the *Times*:

He wore a smile when he passed people he had seen before, and once, when he overtook an automobile which had been having trouble and got stalled, he stopped and genially asked if he could be of any assistance. The occupants were two exceedingly pretty girls, Margaret McCleary and Charlotte Amsden, and they overlooked a large opportunity. Instead of having the President get out and help them fix their machine, they thanked him and told him they had just got it fixed. They knew it was Mr. Wilson, too, for as soon as the President had whizzed by, Miss McCleary hopped out of the machine, waved her hands frantically to some girl friends further up the road and shrieked, “I’ve just been talking to the President!” [“Wilson Deliberate In Framing Reply,” *The New York Times*, July 14, 1915]

Finally, on July 17, he began preparing to return to Washington for discussions with his Cabinet regarding Germany. It had been his longest stay away from Washington since becoming President. The *Post* reported:

During his three weeks’ visit here in the Cornish hills, Mr. Wilson’s health has improved, and he has gained several pounds in weight. Members of his family will remain here after his departure, and he will return later, if possible.

The President played golf this morning and went automobile riding this afternoon. [“Wilson Starts Today,” *The Washington Post*, July 18, 1915]

The *Post* summarized the trip back to Washington:

Despite the fact that no details of the President’s return trip were given out in advance, he was greeted by large crowds at every stop on his way back to Washington this afternoon. At several places he stepped out on the rear platform of his private car and shook hands with as many people as time permitted.

Virtually all the people of Cornish and Windsor, Vt., saw their distinguished summer neighbor off from the “summer capital.” He waved his hand and took off his hat to the assembled crowds as they applauded him.

The President paid particular attention to the babies at the different stops. At Bellows Falls, Vt., he asked that a small red-headed boy be lifted to shake hands with him, and at Greenfield, Mass., chucked a baby under the chin.

“It is rather hot weather for babies,” he remarked to the mother. [“Wilson Ends Vacation,” *The Washington Post*, July 19, 1915]

On July 23, President Wilson’s note was presented to the German foreign office as well as to the press. The *Post* summarized it:

Germany is notified that the United States insists as solemnly as ever on the immunity of American citizens from jeopardy while proceeding on peaceable missions on the high seas. In the name of the long friendship between the two nations, the German Government is solemnly warned that a repetition of illegal acts of German submarines “must be regarded by the Government of the United States, when they affect American citizens, as deliberately unfriendly.”

This is strong language in diplomatic intercourse. “Deliberately unfriendly” are the concluding words of the American note, and they are interpreted as the more significant for that reason. [“Reject German Proposals,” *The Washington Post*, July 24, 1915]

Rather than wait in Washington for Germany’s reply, President Wilson left for Harlakenden House in the afternoon. He had asked the Department of War to provide a report on national defense, but while waiting for it he would consider defense issues. He told a well-wisher at the Cornish railroad station, “I am not expecting a vacation, but am coming to Cornish for an uninterrupted opportunity for work.” [“Wilson at Cornish; Takes Up Defense,” *The New York Times*, July 25, 1915]

Nevertheless, he had some time for pleasure. On July 29, President Wilson, “contrary to his usual custom since he has been here, dodged the cares of his office to a large extent today, and wooed the charms of golf and a long auto ride.” The President, his daughter Margaret, Helen Bones, and Mrs. Galt traveled about 75 miles “skirting the Connecticut River on the Vermont and New Hampshire sides.” [“Wilson On Long Auto Trip,” *The Washington Post*, July 30, 1915]

He took another ride on July 30, with the *Times* noting that he was unable “to play golf because of the absence from Cornish of Dr. Cary T. Grayson, his physician and golf partner,” who was visiting in Boston. The ride took President Wilson, Mrs. Galt, and others “through sections of Vermont and New Hampshire.” The rides helped him overcome feeling “slightly depressed” after “the arduous work he performed in writing the last note to Germany.” [“President Feeling Better,” *The New York Times*, July 31, 1915]

The daily rides continued on July 31 despite news reports that a German submarine had sunk the Leyland liner *Iberian*. Reports indicated that the liner,

like the Armenian, was carrying a cargo of 600 horses, plus 69 horsemen, and other material for the allies. He refused to discuss the incident in the absence of official word:

Mr. Wilson spent the entire afternoon automobiling with members of his family. He rode for more than seventy miles through Woodstock, Vt., South Woodstock, Vt., and other small towns over roads winding between hills and mountains. It was one of the most beautiful rides the President has had since coming here. [“President Hears of Attack,” *The New York Times*, August 1, 1915]

President Wilson interrupted his daily rides on August 3 to spend the day with his sister, Mrs. Anne Howe, and her family:

This afternoon he failed to take his usual automobile ride because of the arrival here of Mrs. Anne Howe, his sister; Prof. George Howe, of North Carolina University, his nephew; Mrs. Anne Cothran, his niece; and Josephine Cothran, a small grandniece. [“Wilson Has Quiet Day,” *The Washington Post*, August 4, 1915]

On August 4, rain prevented his daily automobile ride, but he resumed his rides the following day. As on previous occasions, his ride included a crossing of the Cheshire toll bridge over the Connecticut River near Claremont, New Hampshire. The Cheshire Bridge Company had built a covered wooden toll bridge at this location in 1806. The Springfield Electric Railway company purchased the bridge in 1897 and replaced it with a three-span steel Pratt truss bridge, 600 feet long and 20-feet wide. (The bridge was replaced in 1930.) The toll for crossing the bridge was 15 cents, a fee that applied to the President of the United States as to all others:

Mr. Wilson on his vacation here has motored across this toll bridge perhaps a score of times and always without being recognized by the

74-year-old toll keeper. Each time he has leaned down from his seat beside the chauffeur and paid the 15 cents from his own pocket.

On August 5, President Wilson had the 15 cents ready as the car pulled up to the bridge, “but he found that at last the aged keeper had recognized him as the country’s Chief Executive”:

Instead of the accustomed “Fifteen cents, please,” Mr. Wilson was greeted with:

“Are you the President of the United States?”

Mr. Wilson smilingly acknowledged his identity.

“I never saw a President before,” said the keeper,” and I would like to shake hands.”

They shook hands, the keeper collected his fee and the Presidential automobile speeded back to Harlakenden, the summer White House. [“Shakes Hands With Wilson,” *The Baltimore Sun*, August 6, 1915]

President Wilson was still at Harlakenden House on August 9, with the Civil War in Mexico very much on his mind. After several hours of work, he, his daughter Jessie, and Dr. Grayson went for an afternoon automobile ride. About 3 miles along, the President’s automobile rounded a bend and discovered another automobile overturned at the bottom of an embankment:

Mr. Wilson and Dr. Grayson hurried to investigate. They found Miss E. A. Swasey, Mrs. Emma Hathaway and C. C. Judd, all of Norwich, Vt., underneath the automobile, and the President helped to pull them out. They were badly bruised and frightened, but an examination by

Dr. Grayson showed that none of them was seriously injured.

The President and Dr. Grayson assisted the two women to the road and then Mr. Wilson directed the secret service men accompanying him to remain behind and render all assistance possible. Those in the overturned automobile did not recognize the President and did not know who had helped them until later, but they thanked him profusely for his aid. The secret service men took the two women to Windsor, Vt., in another machine. [“Wilson Aids Autoists,” *The Washington Post*, August 10, 1915]

On August 11, President Wilson left for Washington to consult with officials on the situation in Mexico:

President Wilson, while on a brief outing with members of his family, was halted by a man near Cornish Flats, N.H., who presented to him thirteen four-leaf clovers “for luck.” The President smilingly accepted the clover and thanked the man warmly. The man, who said he had picked the clovers especially for the President, told Mr. Wilson that he had presented to a President many years ago a bunch of thirteen four-leaf clovers. [No title, *The New York Times*, August 12, 1915]

His family, along with the White House automobiles, remained at Harlakenden House.

On August 20, he interrupted discussions of Mexico and other issues for an excursion by automobile to Philadelphia. The trip was a surprise to White House staff who did not initially know where President Wilson was. He and Dr. Grayson left around 6 a.m. in a light car usually used only in the city, with six Secret Service men in a separate automobile behind them.

Reaching Baltimore, the Presidential cars turned the wrong way. After seeking directions, they went in the right direction and arrived in Philadelphia shortly after 1 p.m. The main purpose of the trip was to visit his oculist, Dr. de Schweinitz, for a checkup:

News of the President's coming had preceded him, however, and a crowd of photographers and moving-picture men greeted him as he stepped from the automobile at the door of the oculist. He remained with the oculist less than half an hour and was told that his eyes were in excellent condition.

It was time for lunch:

An invitation to have lunch at a Philadelphia club was declined and the President decided to go to a hotel. He rode along to the hotel and passing by astonished employes [sic] and guests who recognized him, took an elevator to an upstairs dining room.

Selecting a table, the President ordered luncheon apparently oblivious to the startled glances of others who had no idea he was in Philadelphia.

Dr. Grayson joined him afterward.

While the President had gone to the hotel, Dr. Grayson had traveled to the railroad station "on a fruitless mission to engage a private car to return to Washington." President Wilson thought a return trip by automobile would be "too tiresome and long." Dr. Grayson learned that a private car was not available, but reserved seats on a Pullman drawing room before joining the President at the hotel for lunch:

After lunch the President decided he wanted exercise and started through the downtown section of Philadelphia. He swung along Walnut street unnoticed by other pedestrians.

At one corner an automobile of the Philadelphia water department almost bumped into him. Then a mounted policeman recognized the President and appointed himself a special guard throughout the walk.

Mr. Wilson passed from one street to another, and finally turned into Chestnut street, where the sidewalks were crowded. There he was recognized and followed, and a crowd soon had gathered which the secret

service men had trouble keeping back. The throng still was along when the President entered the Pennsylvania station.

President Wilson took the train back to Washington, but kept the door of his drawing room open:

The other passengers were much interested, and Master Robert Swan, 5 years old, of Norfolk, Va., was presented to the distinguished traveler at his father's request.

Because of the sudden decision to drive to Philadelphia, the White House did not have a car waiting for President Wilson and Dr. Grayson when they reached Union Station. Instead, they hired "a public auto" to take them to the White House.

Although President Wilson portrayed the visit as routine, Dr. Grayson acknowledged the real reason in a letter to his wife that was released along with 10,000 other documents when Dr. Grayson's family donated them to the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library:

My number one patient in this house had an accident last night with one of his eyes – the good one, which is bad now. [The usually bad eye was virtually useless, according to Berg, the result of a hemorrhage in his retina.] I am hurrying off to Philadelphia with him at six o'clock tomorrow morning to consult with an eye specialist. We are going by motor. I think we can make the trip less noticeable in this way.

He added that the newspaper reporters, when they hear of the trip, "will read something like this: The President made his annual visit to the oculist etc etc."

It had been an historic trip:

He returned this evening by train, after having broken some presidential precedents. He had been lost on the road, had lunched unannounced in the public dining room of a Philadelphia hotel, strolled through the streets of the business section of Philadelphia, rode back to Washington in a public railroad car, and drove to the White House in a hired automobile. ["Wilson On Hasty Trip," *The Washington Post*, August 21, 1915; "Wilson Pays Visit To Philadelphia," *The New York Times*, August 21, 1915; Chandler, Michael Alison, "A President's Illness Kept Under Wraps," *The Washington Post*, February 3, 2007; Berg, pages 284-285]

Although President Wilson had wanted to return to Harlakenden House, he remained in the White House dealing with issues related to Germany and Mexico.

In a memoir, Mrs. Galt recalled her vacation at Harlakenden House:

Whenever my thoughts turn back to that wonderful summer, there seems about it all a halo of gorgeous colour from the flowers, and music made by the river where nearly every day we walked when the President was there. He was like a boy home from school, when he could steal a week-end away from Washington and come there to the peace and quiet of the hills. When we walked we would try to forget that lurking behind every tree was a Secret Service man. We would go, always a car full of us, on long motor rides through that lovely country, exploring new roads and sometimes very bad ones, getting back in the late twilight for tea on the terrace, or stopping at a picturesque little teahouse en route [*My Memoir*, page 71]

The Big Announcement

Mrs. Galt returned to Washington on September 3 after visiting friends in New York. During her time with President Wilson in New Hampshire, she became certain that she loved him – the man, not the President. [Walworth, part 1, page 430]

At her home, she found flowers, a note of welcome, and a reminder that she had agreed to dine with President Wilson at the White House on the day she returned:

After dinner . . . Galt and the two cousins, Helen and the President, went for a ride through Rock Creek Park. He talked about the problem of keeping the United States out of the war and ended by saying that he had come to understand her reluctance to assume the responsibilities his wife must necessarily have during such difficult times. The car had as passengers a Secret Service man and the chauffeur, and Helen was sitting right beside her, but despite them she put her arms around his neck and said, “Well, if you won’t ask me, I will volunteer.” So it was decided. The next morning they told Margaret and Nellie they were engaged. [Smith, pages 14-19]

His advisors were concerned about the engagement, as Walworth described:

Inevitably the politicians grew anxious. The image in which the people liked to cast him was that of their President in the last era of acute crisis—Abraham Lincoln—a remote, lonely patriarch, worn by personal sorrow and bowed by the grief of mankind. What would the people think if they learned that he was courting like a college boy? [Walworth, part 1, page 430]

In view of the concern, she thought they should wait to announce their engagement until after the 1916 election. He “protested that he needed her now. ‘If the people do not trust me,’ he said, ‘now is the time to find out.’”

Around this time, President Wilson sent a large check to Mary Hulbert, formerly Peck, the friend he had met in Bermuda. Their friendship had continued when he became Governor of New Jersey and President of the United States, mainly consisting of letters they exchanged; even in the White House, he sent weekly letters on Sunday after she moved to California. Their friendship had occasionally prompted gossip, including during the 1912 election, and now, following his engagement to Mrs. Galt, his staff raised the prospect of blackmail, insinuating incorrectly that Hurlbert, as she became after her second divorce became final, was displaying improper notes from him, prompting gossip on the West Coast.

President Wilson did not know that his advisers had conceived the rumor and were deceiving him to preserve his image. He could not understand how his friend could betray him, but he was determined not to expose Mrs. Galt to gossip that he attributed to political scuttlebutt. He tried to write a note releasing her from her pledge to marry him, but instead asked Dr. Grayson to tell her everything.

After a sleepless night, President Wilson received a note from her. Fearful of the content, he put the envelope in his pocket, unopened. He did not know she had written:

I am not afraid of any gossip or threat, with your love as my shield. This is my pledge, dearest one, I will stand by you—not for duty, nor for pity, not for honour—but for love—trusting, protecting, comprehending love.

Sunk in depression, he stayed in his chamber on September 18.

Mrs. Galt, puzzled that he had not replied to her note, responded immediately when Dr. Grayson, fearful for the President’s health, asked her to visit the White House:

Taken to a darkened chamber on the second floor of the White House, she saw on the pillow a pallid face with deep-set, glowing eyes. He said no word, but held out a thin hand. She took it and found it icy cold. When she released it, Grayson had gone, the valet had gone, and they were alone in perfect understanding.

A few days later, on September 22, he talked with Colonel House. President Wilson explained that his relationship with Hurlbert had been entirely platonic and that he would not be concerned if any of his letters to her were made public even though some were more emotional than prudent. As for the large check, her

son had lost money in his fruit business; the President had sent her a check for \$7,500 to buy two mortgages. Still believing the rumor his aides had concocted, he said that if she was showing his letters to gossips that might lead to blackmail, they could publish every letter as far as he was concerned.

Colonel House did not want to tell him how his advisors had fabricated the story about his friend, Walworth wrote:

The Colonel . . . could merely give reassurance in general. Asked to decide when the betrothal should be announced, he was moved by the pathos of his friend's loneliness. It seemed to him that scandalous gossip should be checked by announcing the engagement. Moreover, when he met Edith Galt he found her truly charming and inspiriting. His ego was touched by her lively interest in him and her revelation that the President spoke of him as a man of "lucid mind . . . almost like a business clearing-house."

On October 1, after considering the President's request, Colonel House wrote to him. "I do not believe anything is to be gained by delaying the announcement of your engagement." [Walworth, part 1, pages 431-433]

The announcement went out on October 6, 1915:

The White House

Washington, Oct. 6, 1915

The announcement was made today of the engagement of

Mrs. Norman Galt, of this city, to President Woodrow Wilson.

Tumulty read the message at 8 p.m. to correspondents summoned to the White House for the occasion. He told them that the newspapers were not to report the news until October 7 "to prevent the calling of extra newspapers through the streets of Washington and other cities." ["Engagement Has been Rumored For Three Months," *The Washington Post*, October 7, 1915]

Tumulty told the reporters:

Mrs. Norman Galt is the widow of a well-known business man of this city, who died eight years ago. She has lived in Washington ever since her marriage in 1896. She was, before her marriage, Miss Edith Bolling of Wytheville, Va., where her girlhood was spent, and where her father, William H. Bolling, acquired considerable distinction as one of the State's ablest attorneys.

It was Miss Margaret Wilson and Miss Bones who drew Mrs. Galt into the White House circle. They met her first early in the autumn of last year. During this recent summer Mrs. Galt spent a month at Cornish as the guest of Miss Wilson. It was through that intimacy with his daughter that the President had the opportunity of meeting Mrs. Galt. It is needless for me to add that Mrs. Galt is a woman of charming personality. [“Future Bride Was Introduced Into White House Circle By Eldest Daughter of President,” *The Washington Post*, October 7, 1915]

President Wilson had written this summary and showed it to Mrs. Galt for her approval.

At the White House on October 6, family, friends, and government associates held an informal dinner to celebrate the announcement.

The reaction, contrary to advisors’ fears, was what today would be called a media frenzy. Reporters scrambled for every detail they could find about Mrs. Galt. The *Post* reported on October 7:

Today the entire country sees him in a new and interesting light, and political issues and differences are lost to sight, while from every quarter good wishes are sped to the White House.

The Baltimore Sun reported:

The President appeared very happy today when he went to the executive offices. Late in the afternoon he went personally to the telephone and, calling up all his friends among prominent Democrats now in town, informed them of his engagement. The news thus spread quickly over Washington and he was overwhelmed with congratulations tonight. During the afternoon the President and Mrs. Galt went for an automobile ride.

(On this same day, President Wilson had announced his support for woman’s voting rights in his home State of New Jersey, which reporters thought an odd coincidence. The White House had done so “hoping thus to minimize the adverse reaction of feminine voters.”)

Reporters had begun to notice Mrs. Galt at Harlakenden House and how the President paid special attention to her even though she, technically, was visiting his daughter Margaret and her friend Helen Bones. She had been present when the President and Margaret held the first social affair since Ellen Wilson’s death, a tea for neighbors from the Cornish artist colony on July 28. Reporters also had observed her frequently visiting the White House, in the automobile for long

rides, and nearby during official events, such as in the reviewing stand at the Grand Army of the Republic parade on September 29 in Washington.

Now, reporters were freed from their restraints. Her every move was news; wherever she went, she was trailed by reporters, photographers, and motion-picture cameramen. In the next few months, newspapers reported on her travels to assemble her trousseau, to select a wedding gown, or visit friends or family, as well as her activities with President Wilson.

The initial newspaper reports used the biographical information Tumulty had provided and described her, sometimes inaccurately, for readers. The *Times* described her:

In the circle of people who have known Mrs. Galt for many years she has been regarded as a woman of unusual beauty, gifted with a natural charm. Friends speak of her as being constantly sought out as a delightful companion, remarking especially on her thoughtfulness and capacity for accomplishing anything she chose to undertake (*The New York Times*, October 7, 1915]

The *Sun* explained:

Mrs. Galt's resemblance to the late Mrs. Wilson has frequently excited comment. She is a strikingly pretty woman in her late thirties, slightly below medium height and has a graceful, rather plump figure. Her hair is brown and her eyes are gray blue. Her prettiest feature is her mouth, which is curved and expressive She has a graceful, vivacious manner, and is well informed on all the subjects of the day and takes a keen interest in politics. [*The Baltimore Sun*, October 7, 1915]

On the day after the announcement, the White House continued receiving congratulations from around the country and the world. The *Post* reported:

When the President received callers yesterday, and when he left and entered the White House he was wearing a broad smile, and seemed very happy

[Mrs. Galt's] simple, pretty home, in Twentieth street, at the intersection of New Hampshire avenue, where the vine climbing its east wall is just turning a rich crimson and bronze in the autumn sunshine, having taken on a new interest over night, caught momentarily the eye of many passing in its locality. Mrs. Galt, with heightened color, laughed and joked, as she spent the morning answering telephone calls of friends who wished to congratulate her. She was extremely shy when asked regarding details of her plans.

“I am very happy,” she said, “but I am of no importance, and the less the newspapers print about me at this time the more I will appreciate it, and so, I am sure, will the President.” [“On Trip With Fiancee,” *The Washington Post*, October 8, 1915]

In short, the *Sun* reported, “the bride-elect of President Wilson awoke this morning to find herself world famous. The eyes of America, especially, were centered on the happy woman who is to be the mistress of the White House”:

A thrill of romantic interest ran through Washington society when it was learned that the future first lady of the land is a direct descendant of Indian royalty and traces her ancestry back through nine generations to Pocahontas, the good Indian princess whose saving of Capt. John Smith’s life is one of the classic tales of American history. So far as is now known, she will be the first mistress of the White House in whose veins runs the blood of the royal race which originally ruled the land. [“President May Hasten Wedding,” *The Baltimore Sun*, October 8, 1915]

(Mrs. Galt’s relationship to Pocahontas was valid, as described in “Many Americans Trace Their Ancestry to Pocahontas,” published in *The Sunday Star* on November 7, 1915. Also see Smith, pages 15 and 140, and Berg, page 356)

The public did not have to wait long to see her for themselves. On October 8, President Wilson, Mrs. Galt, her mother, and others traveled to New York City by train in the Presidential Pullman car, known as the Superb. The *Post* reported:

From the time of their arrival this afternoon until late tonight they were New York’s chief object of interest, and each time they appeared in public they were followed by thousands.

For the first time since he became President Mr. Wilson gave way as a center of attraction to another. The people showed anxiety to see him, but their eyes were centered on the woman who within the next two months is to become the “first lady of the land.”

. . . Both the President and Mrs. Galt were evidently pleased by the reception accorded them. They were slightly shy on their first appearance in public as an engaged couple, but acknowledged applause with smiles. They made no attempt to hide themselves, and every time they appeared in public they were side by side.

The President . . . was happy and jovial throughout the day and his usually stern face was constantly wreathed in smiles.

Shortly after arriving at the Hotel St. Regis, the President, Mrs. Galt, and her mother went for an automobile ride:

The ride was up Fifth Avenue to Central Park, past the Mall and the Sheepfold [known today as the Tavern on the Green], north in the West Drive to Ninety-sixth Street, through this street to Riverside Drive, and up the Drive to 136th Street. The return ride was down Broadway from 136th Street to 110th Street, east to Central Park, down the East Drive of the Park to Fifty-ninth Street, out there into Fifth Avenue, south in the avenue to Thirty-Second Street, and then west to the Pennsylvania Station.

At one point on Riverside near 108th Street, “the President’s soft felt hat blew off. It rolled across the Drive, but was quickly recovered by one of the Secret Service men, who jumped from an automobile behind the President’s.”

Leaving the hotel for the ride, the couple was delayed for a few minutes “by a large corps of photographers.” The President turned to Mrs. Galt, who said, “Certainly, let them take the picture.” The President and Mrs. Galt smiled as the photographers snapped their photographs. The President asked, “Did you get a good picture?” The photographers “in chorus as the automobile moved away,” called “Yes, thank you”:

Early on the ride the President was recognized and pedestrians and many persons turned, bowed, smiled and waved handkerchiefs and hats. Frequently the President raised his hat in reply and Mrs. Galt bowed and smiled.

Automobile [occupants] sought to get near the President’s car to see the couple, and as a result before he had proceeded far[,] upward of 100 automobiles were in pursuit, and the secret service men and city detectives had a hard time keeping them back.

After a dinner party with Colonel and Mrs. House, the President and Mrs. Galt went to the theater to see *Grumpy.*, “but the President and Mrs. Galt were easily the stars of the evening. As they entered the theater the entire audience arose and applauded. The applause continued until the President, Mrs. Galt, and Miss Bones appeared in their box and were seated.”

As would frequently be the case, Mrs. Galt’s attire interested the public. For the dinner and theater, “Mrs. Galt wore a low cut gown of black, relieved by a large corsage bouquet of red roses. Over her gown she had an elaborate opera cloak of red and black. She wore no ornaments in her hair. [“Cheer Bride-Elect,” *The Washington Post*, October 9, 1915; “President Returns With Future Bride,” *The New York Times*, October 10, 1915]

(*Grumpy*, which had opened at the Emerson on September 13, starred Cyril Maude, a British actor famous for his role in the play as a grumpy retired lawyer who solves a crime to satisfy his loved ones.)

President Wilson spent the evening at the home of Colonel and Mrs. House, while Mrs. Galt and her mother stayed at the hotel.

While the couple was automobile riding, Dreicer & Co., sent several rings to Colonel House's home:

One of the firm's salesmen took the assortment of gems to the residence of Col. House, where the President made a choice of the many handsome stones.

While en route from the St. Regis to dinner at the home of Col. House, the President slipped the ring on Mrs. Galt's finger.

It is described as a magnificent solitaire, set in platinum, and is said to be a very expensive stone. ["Mrs. Galt Wears Ring," *The Washington Post*, October 10, 1915]

On October 9, they took the train to Philadelphia where the Phillies were playing the Boston Red Sox in the second game of the World Series. Entering New York City's Pennsylvania Station at around 11 a.m. and walking through the waiting room, "they laughed and chatted, and with bows and smiles acknowledged the boisterous greetings of the several hundred persons in the station among whom they passed on their way to the train." The *Times* observed:

It seemed that whatever self-consciousness they may have had on Friday, when they first appeared together before the curious public in New York, had disappeared. Both were unaffectedly gay.

About 100,000 people lined the route to the Baker Bowl at 2622 North Broad Street, home of the Phillies. They arrived a few minutes past 2 o'clock as the game was about to begin. As they appeared in the runway, the 20,000 fans greeted them with thunderous applause:

Forty thousand eyes were turned upon them. Mrs. Galt was a wondrous picture in a midnight blue tailleur gown with black satin and underbodice and sleeves, and broad-brimmed hat of black velvet trimmed with fur and surmounted by a feature ornament.

As they made their way to the box the band struck up "Tipperary," and a storm of plaudits boomed even from the distant centre-field bleachers

[sic]. The President swept off his light felt hat and the smile of Mrs. Galt caused the hundreds near them to hold their breath in wonderment

An ideal vision of the perfect “outdoor woman” she appeared as she stood there, a bit timidly.

In the box the President held his fiance’s arm. She blushed and bowed to the right and left. Still smiling, she greeted Mayor [Rudolph] Blankenburg, President [William F.] Baker of the Phillies and the members of the National Baseball Commission.

For a moment she held in her gloved hand the milky white ball that the President was to throw to the diamond for the official opening of the second game of the baseball classic. Straight and true, the President tossed the ball toward the serious-visaged boxman and Mrs. Galt patted his arm in commendation. [“Thousands Acclaim Her,” *The Baltimore Sun*, October 10, 1915]

Around the box, Mrs. Galt was the center of attention, especially among the women. “Women who peeped in her direction first glanced at her face and then looked for her left hand. They were disappointed when they did not see the ring. ‘I am so sorry she has on gloves,’ was the remark of many splendidly dressed Philadelphia women say on all sides.”

The Phillies beat the Boston Red Sox in the game, 2 to 1, and went on to win the World Series, four games to one. “It was a capital game,” President Wilson told reporters, “and I enjoyed every minute of it.”

As they drove along Broad Street after the game, President Wilson “was compelling to stand up in his automobile . . . and, bareheaded, return the salutations. Both going to and returning from the park Broad street was packed and the cheering was spontaneous and hearty. At some points bells and a variety of noisy instruments, including automobile horns, gave a noisy welcome. [“Tender Ovation To President And Fiancee At Game,” *The Sunday Star*, October 10, 1915]

The Wilson party returned to Washington “in record time, the special train making the run in 2 hours and 35 minutes, or at the rate of about 62 miles an hour.” The group had a dinner party at the White House to relax after the game. [“Went Home In A Hurry,” *The Baltimore Sun*, October 10, 1915]

During the evening, President Wilson and Mrs. Galt decided to visit his brother Joseph and his family in Baltimore on Sunday. The drive in the White House automobiles took 90 minutes. “The day was cold, and the members of the party bundled themselves up in rugs.” After initial greetings, they walked to the

Franklin Street Presbyterian Church. Crowds had gathered outside the brother's apartment building and the church to see the President and his fiancée:

Mrs. Galt wore a beautiful blue taffeta gown, a black velvet hat, trimmed with fur, champagne-colored gloves, and a short face veil, and smiled happily at the crowd. The President, too, smiled continually.

Because it was Sunday, the crowds did not cheer "but the people voiced their approval of the President's choice in audible comments":

On the third finger of her left hand Mrs. Galt wore the diamond engagement ring given her by the President in New York. It had been reported that the platinum ring was set with only a solitaire diamond, but today it was noticed that it also had several smaller diamonds in the narrow gold band.

After a family luncheon in Joseph's apartment, President Wilson and Mrs. Galt returned to Washington:

It was after 3 o'clock when the visitors started back for Washington, driving from the apartment house through a street lined with people. During the return trip the President's automobile traveled rapidly, but was recognized by many people. A constable on a motor cycle charged the driver of one of the machines following the President of exceeding the speed limits, but made no arrest. ["Bride-Elect Is Guest," *The Washington Post*, October 11, 1915]

Washington observers had a very modern name by contemporary standards for the relationship between President Wilson and Mrs. Galt:

Washington has begun to call the wooing of Mrs. Norman Galt by President Wilson a "motor courtship," as their daily rides into the country had been going on for weeks unremarked by the public before the engagement was announced.

It now transpires that ever since the President returned from Cornish he has been taking long motor rides. Persons here thought that he was driving with his cousin, Miss Helen Woodrow Bones, who did, as a matter of fact, leave the White House with him in the motor. Usually, however, she went no farther than Mrs. Galt's home, where the President's fiancée changed places with her and the pair of lovers went out over the hill roads of Virginia or through beautiful stretches of Maryland country.

Few persons who passed the motor knew that the lady by the President's side was not one of the White House family, for Mrs. Galt resembles in

appearance Miss Bones and she usually wear blacks, which the ladies at the White House wore in mourning for the first Mrs. Wilson until the engagement was announced. [“‘Motor Courtship’ of President Is carried On Without The Public Knowing His Companion’s Identity,” *The Washington Post*, October 19, 1915 (from *The New York Evening Mail*)]

On October 12, newspapers reported:

Recently the President has taken to walking more than ever before President Wilson did a little shopping today. He walked from the White House to a leather goods store and bought a traveling bag. This gave rise to the impression that he was preparing for a wedding trip within the immediate future. In the afternoon he walked from the White House to Continental Memorial Hall, not far away, where he delivered an address at the silver jubilee of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Mrs. Galt occupied the Presidential box in the hall at 1776 D Street, NW. “This was her first appearance at any public function here with the President since their engagement was announced”:

As Mrs. Galt entered the box the large crowd which had assembled for the celebration, mostly women, applauded.

When Mr. Wilson entered the hall he smiled recognition to his fiancée, who returned the glance. [“Wilson Nuptials To Await Congress,” *The New York Times*, October 12, 1915; “Members of D.A.R. Observe Jubilee,” *The Evening Star*, October 12, 1915]

Newspapers reported on October 12 that “President Wilson’s romance grows apace.” The telephone company was installing a private telephone line connecting the White House with Mrs. Galt’s home at 1308 20th Street, NW., “and now the President may phone his fiancée directly without sending the call through central.” According to the “whispers” of friends, the telephone had been in frequent use “in spite of the fact that the President has spent every spare moment in the company of his fiancée since their engagement was announced.”

As for Mrs. Galt, “So persistent have become the calls upon Mrs. Galt that her house telephone has been disconnected.” Her mother, staying with Mrs. Galt, also had her telephone disconnected for the same reason. [“Private Wire From White House To Mrs. Galt’s Residence; Date Of Wedding A Profound Secret,” *The Washington Post*, December 12, 1915 (from *The New York World*); “President To Name Wedding Day Soon,” *The New York Times*, October 15, 1915]

On Saturday, October 16, two White House automobiles left at around 9:00 a.m. for an 80-mile trip to Harper’s Ferry, West Virginia. The President’s vehicle

included Mrs. Galt, Miss Bones, Secretary Tumulty, and friends. "It was raining, and the roads were muddy, but the holiday makers were not to be discouraged." Their destination was Hill Top House overlooking the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, an inn and resort "kept by a negro family." The President registered, writing, "Woodrow Wilson and party":

Hill Top House is run by Thomas Lovett, who took the greatest pleasure in escorting the party over the hotel, taking them on to the great balcony, where can be seen the beautiful country for miles around, including numerous points of historical interest

After viewing the scenery the party went into the main dining room for a dinner which had been arranged for them with much hustle and bustle and care when it became known that they intended to stop. The honor of serving the distinguished party went to Martha Smith, a negro girl.

"You ought to eat a lot of this," she told the President. "It's home cooked."

"I expect to," returned Mr. Wilson, smiling. The three ladies at the table laughed merrily.

The dinner included roast lamb, fried chicken, boiled ham, creamed rice and "corn dodgers," the well-known Southern corn cakes. There were

20 other guests in the public dining room where the dinner was served.

Martha couldn't help afterward announcing with pride that she had insisted on the President eating two pieces of chicken and two corn dodgers. She said the others in the party ate heartily, too, but her particular attention had been devoted to the President.

The White House had called ahead to let the owner know the President would be visiting, and that he was particularly looking forward to the inn's famous apple pie. Unfortunately, the inn did not have any apple pie on hand that day, or enough time to bake one for the President. He had to settle for a dish of "poor man's pudding." He paid for the dinner and tipped Martha.

Some accounts reported:

After the luncheon the future first lady of the White House stepped upon a pair of scales and weighed herself. She registered 160 pounds.

The party left for Washington around 2:30 p.m., "making the trip in three hours over good, but, sometimes, muddy roads" in a continuing drizzle:

The news that the President was in the vicinity had preceded him on the return trip, and at Frederick, Rockville, and other towns, many people waited to see the White House automobile go by and tried to get a glimpse of Mr. Wilson and Mrs. Galt.

They arrived at the White House in time for the evening meal before a night out at the Belasco Theater at 17 Madison Place for George Bernard Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion*. Because the party was to arrive late, the President had asked the theater to reserve a box in the middle tier instead of the more conspicuous Presidential box he would normally occupy. "Few persons in the theatre knew of the presence of the President and his bride-elect until the intermission, when the house was flooded with light." ["Wilson At An Old Inn," *The Washington Post*, October 17, 1915; "Wilson On Holiday Trip With Fiancee," *The New York Times*, October 17, 1915; "Wilson Has Long Drive," *The Baltimore Sun*, October 17, 1915]

President Wilson and Mrs. Galt took another long ride on Saturday, October 23. "They disappeared at 9 o'clock and it was far past noon before the news finally leaked out that they had motored to Emmitsburg, Md., near the Pennsylvania border, to lunch with Mrs. Galt's brother-in-law," Sterling Galt, owner and editor of the *Emmitsburg Chronicle*:

Without taking any of the White House attaches into his confidence, the President ordered his automobile for 9 o'clock, entered it with his daughter, Miss Margaret Wilson, and followed by the Secret Service car called at the home of Mrs. Galt. In five minutes they were away and when last seen in this city they were speeding across Connecticut avenue bridge . . .

Meantime officials at the Executive Offices were at a loss to locate their chief and his party. Phone calls were made to Baltimore, Ridgeville, Harpers Ferry and Frederick, but until the Frederick report reached town no clue was received as to the destination of the motorists.

One report indicated:

The day, which seemed threatening in the morning, turned out to be ideal for an automobile trip. The air was crisp and there was a strong, cold wind. The sun was bright all afternoon, however, and set off ideally the red, yellow and half-green leaves of the autumn.

The article also described the stop at Mrs. Galt's house:

The White House automobiles, which stood outside the Galt residence for a short time, attracted much attention. The President and his daughter

went into the house, returning soon afterward with Mrs. Galt at the arm of Mr. Wilson. He helped her down the steps and into the automobile, as a group of schoolgirls, gathered in front of the old Italian embassy, pronounced the future bride to be “perfectly lovely.”

The party left Washington immediately, going through Rockville, Md., Frederick and other smaller towns along the line to Emmitsburg. They were recognized in some of the villages, for the telephones along the line were kept busy announcing that the famous party was about to pass along. In several places small crowds gathered and cheered. Mr. Wilson smilingly removed his hat and bowed in every case.

Discussing Mrs. Galt’s shopping trips and wardrobe, the article added:

Incidentally, it is said, as Mrs. Galt wears every day the corsage bouquet of orchids which the President sends her, the selection of black or dark blue or gray costume is almost imperative for street wear, if the flowers are to have their proper setting.

After lunch with Galt and his family, the President and Mrs. Galt returned to the White House in time for dinner. [“Wilson ‘Lost’ 6 Hours,” *The Baltimore Sun*, October 24, 1915; “Mr. Wilson On Trip With His Fiancee,” *The Evening Star*, October 23, 1915; “Lunch With Mr. Galt,” *The Washington Post*, October 24, 1915]

The workweek ended, President Wilson and Mrs. Galt made another long automobile ride on Saturday, October 30. With Dr. Grayson and Mrs. Galt’s brother along for the ride, they drove to Annapolis, the capital of Maryland. Although the football team of the Naval Academy, based in the city, was playing

North Carolina Agricultural College, the President declined to attend the game to “avoid the crowd”:

The arrival at Annapolis was unheralded, and occurred just at the time when the usual crowd of out-of-town persons were getting here for the football game . . . so that to most of the population it was not known that the chief executive of the nation was within the city.

After driving slowly through the streets of the town, the party entered the Naval Academy, where they drove through the many shaded roadways. No salute was fired, nor was any official notice taken of the President’s presence.

They visited with Captain Edward W. Eberle, superintendent of the academy and visited the State House to meet briefly with Governor Phillips L. Goldsborough.

Captain Eberle and Governor Goldsborough offered to go with them to the football game, but President Wilson declined. After lunch at Carvel Hall, they left the city. (Carvel Hall was the best known hotel in the city, with a view overlooking the Severn River, the Naval Academy, and the Chesapeake Bay.) [“Motors To Annapolis,” *The Washington Post*, October 31, 1915]

By now, the couple had settled into routines that the *Post* could describe:

The President and Mrs. Galt live their daily life serenely indifferent to the curiosity in official life as to their plans. They drive together in the morning, frequently lunch together, either at the White House or Mrs. Galt’s house, and always take an automobile ride in the afternoon. When the President does not dine with Mrs. Galt and her mother, Mrs. Galt and her mother dine at the White House. Once a week the President takes a day off. He and Mrs. Galt and a proper chaperone, either Miss Helen Woodrow Bones, Miss Margaret Wilson or Mrs. William Bolling, go for a long ride through Virginia or Maryland, as they did yesterday.

When Mrs. Galt dines at the White House, she and the President and the rest of the family adjourn to the octagon room, which is the upstairs sitting room of the Wilson family, for an evening of poetry, music and song. The President reads from his favorite poets, often closing the book and reciting from memory. Mrs. Galt, who is a finished pianist, improvises melodies and sings. When Miss Margaret Wilson is absent, records of her voice are listened to by the President and Mrs. Galt. The President is very fond of old Scotch songs, and Miss Margaret Wilson has made records of several of his favorite ones.

The curiosity regarding Mrs. Galt is almost unbelievable. Crowds stand outside of her modest little home on Twentieth street awaiting the chance to get just one glimpse of the woman who is soon to be the first lady of the land. When the White House car is in front of the door, the policeman on the beat has his hands full. Although when the President is paying an extended call on his fiancée, he sends the White House car away, the presence of four secret service men on the curbstone reveals the fact that the chief executive is inside. [“Going To Shadowlawn,” *The Washington Post*, October 31, 1915]

One typical aspect of their outings was avoiding movie cameramen:

When the principals in the coming wedding rose and went for their morning walk, a camera was waiting and when they entered their autos, a battery faced them, ready to show their every movement to a curious world.

Often, Dr. Cary T. Grayson has been forced to put himself between a camera and Mrs. Galt in order to protect the next first lady of the land and often the White House auto has been forced to make detours to foil the knights of the film.

Now, however, on November 3, the *Post* could report:

The offensive attention which the moving picture men have given President Wilson and his fiancée, Mrs. Norman Galt, has come to an end. There will be no further necessity for resorting to ruses to escape the ever open eye of the camera. The men who turn the cranks have agreed to let the chief executive and his bride-to-be strictly alone. They do not only hold up the white flag of truce, but surrender unconditionally

The movie men realize at last that they may have been a nuisance. The fact is, they have been able to get fewer feet of film of the President and Mrs. Galt, despite their constant activity, than of any other of the many notables in Washington. [“Rid Of The Movie Men,” *The Washington Post*, November 3, 1915]

On November 4, President Wilson took the train to New York City, where he was to speak on national defense at the Manhattan Club at the Biltmore Hotel.

Mrs. Galt was already in the city, staying in the St. Regis Hotel, for a shopping trip with Helen Bones and her niece, Agnes E. Gordon:

Colonel E. M. House met the [President’s] party at the station and they drove in Colonel House’s automobile to the St. Regis Hotel, where the President was greeted by Mrs. Norman Galt, his fiancée. The route to the hotel was over Thirty-third Street to Fifth Avenue. A dozen automobiles, occupied by Secret Service men, detectives, and reporters, followed, forming a parade which attracted much attention.

President Wilson and Mrs. Galt had intended to go for a ride through Central Park before the speech, but in view of the threatening weather, they canceled the ride. He remained at the hotel until leaving for Colonel House’s residence to prepare for the speech. [“President Meets Fiancee,” *The New York Times*, November 5, 1915]

President Wilson stayed overnight with Colonel House’s family, but canceled plans to leave for Washington in the morning. Instead, he, Mrs. Galt, and their party attended a luncheon at the home of Cleveland H. Dodge, a businessman, philanthropist, and friend and adviser to President Wilson.

From there, President Wilson and Mrs. Galt entered separate automobiles for the ride to Pennsylvania Station:

In Seventh Avenue, just outside the station, the automobile in which the President was riding narrowly escaped running over Mario Pashi, a boy of 10, who was crossing the driveway. The boy dodged just in time, but his left arm was bruised by the mud guard. Mr. Wilson ordered his car stopped, and it was not until he had heard the boy shout that he was all right that the President proceeded. The boy had been told who was in the car, and he stood on the curb, grinning and rubbing his arm, as the automobile went on its way.

Mrs. Galt was already in the President's private rail car when he arrived. "As he walked through the station the President was heartily cheered. He removed his hat and bowed to the crowd." ["President Pleased By Reception Here," *The New York Times*, October 6, 1915; "Wilson Auto Hits Boy," *The Washington Post*, November 6, 1915]

On the morning of Saturday, November 6, President Wilson walked from the White House to Mrs. Galt's home, accompanied only by his Secret Service agents:

On the way to pay his call, the President was assailed by some small boys, who did not know his identity and began shooting peas at him through peashooters. The chief executive did not seem to mind the assault very much, but he did turn so that the boys, if they wanted to, might recognize him, and when they did they sent up a cheer. The President took the affair good humoredly and smilingly waved his cane to the boys as he passed on.

That afternoon, the couple went for an automobile ride.

Unfortunately, the reported truce with the moving picture men proved to be incorrect:

The moving picture men were again busy yesterday. They have organized themselves into groups, some of them agreeing to snap the president and his fiancée when they are walking and others limiting their efforts to the automobile in which they ride. A system of signals has been adopted, so that when one photographer learns that the automobile is to take a certain course he notifies his brother "movie" man. A shrill whistle will summon a horde of camera men, and a certain popular song, sung by the prize tenor of the aggregation, means that a good point of vantage would be the northeast corner. The President and Mrs. Galt have been watching these maneuvers with good-natured interest and expect before long to know the

signals so well that the “movie” men will be forced to change them.
[“Motors With Fiancee,” *The Washington Post*, November 7, 1915]

The next day, Sunday, the President and Mrs. Galt took a long drive “along the picturesque roadways of Virginia.” [“Motors With Mrs. Galt,” *The Washington Post*, November 8, 1915]

The following Saturday, November 13, the two continued their tradition of getting lost on their ride in the White House automobile. “The habit of disappearing from Washington Saturdays has become a permanent one with the President, who gives no hint of where he wants to go, except to his chauffeur.” [“Lost Again To Washington,” *The Evening Star*, November 13, 1915]

The *Post* reported the next day that the President, Mrs. Galt, and her mother had taken a 150-mile automobile ride through Baltimore, Westminster, and other small towns and villages in Maryland:

While going through Baltimore the President and his party were recognized by only a few, but during a stop at Westminster many people crowded around the car. The President shook hands with several men and women in the crowd.

Soon after leaving Westminster the President’s automobile was run up a side road, and there the party ate lunch they had taken with them from the White House.

Farmers driving along the main road nearby noticed them and stood up in their wagons to get a better view of the picnic party. [“Picnics With Fiancee,” *The Washington Post*, November 14, 1915]

On Monday, November 20, the President and Mrs. Galt, with the President’s daughter Margaret, took a 175-mile automobile trip, the longest they had taken since announcing their engagement. (One article states that the trip was 120 miles long.) Their destination was Point Lookout, Maryland, at the point where the Potomac River enters the Chesapeake Bay:

The route lay through a historic portion of Maryland, a region with which the outer world did not come much in contact until the automobile and improved roads made it possible

Among the towns through which the party passed was Leonardtown, one of the early settlements on the Potomac. Here a stop was made at the Leonardtown Hotel, where the President was recognized and some of the townspeople shook hands with him.

One elderly man told President Wilson, “You are the first President I’ve seen since Mr. Pierce. He patted me on the head way back before the Civil War.” (President Franklin Pierce won election in 1852 and served a single term, 1853 to 1857.) Many in the crowd wanted to shake Mrs. Galt’s hand, too. She “smilingly greeted them.”

The party enjoyed a picnic luncheon, prepared at the White House, along the roadside at about noon on the way to Point Lookout. At Point Lookout, they left the automobile to view a monument. During the Civil War, a Union prison camp at the site held thousands of Confederate soldiers. The memorial, still in place, is on a mass grave holding over 3,300 soldiers who died while in custody. (The number of buried soldiers is in dispute.)

The road from Leonardtown to Point Lookout passed through Ridge, “a small village, which claims the distinction of casting a solid Democratic vote in political elections.” It had 11 registered voters. Knowing that the President’s automobile would have to return through the small town, the townspeople decided to give the

President and Mrs. Galt a reception on their homeward trip:

The decision was carried out in first-class style. A band had been engaged and backed by twenty or more of Ridge’s population. It played patriotic airs as the White House motor car entered the village street on the return to Washington. There was some cheering and much waving of flags, and the President and his fiancée acknowledged the compliment as the car passed slowly along.

The band, consisting of three farmers with two horns and a bass drum, played “America” as the White House automobile passed along the main street. “His automobile slowed down and he waved his hat.” [“President On Motor Trip,” *The New York Times*, November 21, 1915; “Wilson Again In State,” *The Baltimore Sun*, November 21, 1915]

On Thanksgiving, November 25, President Wilson abandoned his plan to spend the day with Mrs. Galt. Instead, he locked himself in his private study with his typewriter to prepare his annual message to Congress. The message had to be sent to the public printer on November 26. He did, however, have time for a short automobile ride before having Thanksgiving dinner with Mrs. Galt and his family. [“Busy Day For Wilson,” *The Washington Post*, November 26, 1915]

That weekend, they were in New York City where President Wilson stayed with Colonel House while Mrs. Galt stayed with a close friend, Gertrude Gordon (described in some accounts as a cousin) at 12 West Tenth Street. President Wilson left in the White House automobile around 10 to pick up Mrs. Galt –

trailed as usual in the city by automobiles filled with Secret Service men, police detectives, and reporters. The President and Mrs. Galt attended the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church at 55th Street. They drove to Miss Gordon's home for dinner:

The ride was up Fifth Avenue, through Central Park, across Seventy-second Street to Riverside Drive, and up the Drive to 157th Street, where the automobiles turned south, going down the Drive and Fifth Avenue to Miss Gordon's home.

After dinner, they drove to the St. Regis Hotel where they stopped for a 15-minute visit with the President's sister, Mrs. Howe. They then took an hour-long ride along Riverside Drive before returning to Miss Gordon's home:

Riverside Drive was teeming with hundreds of automobiles, and through these the President's car had to thread its way. Because of Mr. Wilson's wish, the police department automobile dropped behind, but whenever a traffic jam occurred, the police car shot ahead and made an opening. He and Mrs. Galt rode in the closed limousine, and were recognized by only a few persons. At Fifth Avenue and Fourteenth Street, on the return from the ride, the motorman of a cross-town surface car attempted to cross in front of the President's limousine. A shout from the police made him stop to let Mr. Wilson and those following him go by.

Mr. Wilson accompanied Mrs. Galt inside Miss Gordon's house and remained a few minutes. He reappeared alone and drove to Colonel House's home.

President Wilson left for Washington shortly after midnight, while Mrs. Galt remained behind to continue shopping to complete her trousseau. ["Wilson Spends Day Here With Fiancee," *The New York Times*, November 29, 1915; "Wilson Back Today," *The Baltimore Sun*, November 29, 1915]

The Wedding

Mrs. Galt remained in New York City for several days for shopping, fittings, and final say on her wedding gown. She returned to Washington on December 2.

Finally, on December 4, the White House revealed the couple's wedding plans:

It was announced at the White House today that the marriage of Mrs. Galt and the President will take place on Saturday, the 18th of December. As previously stated, the ceremony will be performed at Mrs. Galt's home, 1308 Twentieth Street, N.W. The only guests will be Mrs. Galt's mother, her brothers and sisters, the President's brother and sister, his daughters and the members of his immediate household. No invitations will be issued.

President Wilson wrote the announcement on the morning of December 4, then visited Mrs. Galt for her review.

All other details were left out of the statement, leaving others to speculate on the time of the ceremony, the name of the officiating clergyman, and, course, the design of the wedding gown. Reporters suggested that details, particularly about time, were left out to avoid a crowd of spectators from appearing outside Mrs. Galt's home.

Plans for the honeymoon also were not revealed, leading to speculation that they might leave Washington on the Presidential yacht *Mayflower* for a coastal destination, possibly Pass Christian. However, as speculators admitted, nothing was stopping them from going to Union Station to take a train to their honeymoon destination. ["Wilson Weds Dec. 18," *The Washington Post*, December 5, 1915; "Wilson To Wed December 18," *The Baltimore Sun*, December 5, 1915; "Wilson Wedding Is Set For Dec. 18," *The New York Times*, December 5, 1915]

News accounts during this period did not indicate whether the President and his fiancée had time for their daily automobile rides. However, according to the *Post*, they did take a drive on Sunday, December 12: "President Wilson and his fiancée, Mrs. Norman Galt, discussed plans for their approaching marriage while motoring yesterday afternoon." ["Motors With Mrs. Galt," *The Washington Post*, December 13, 1915]

The *Times* described the President's movements during the day of the wedding:

The rain was falling just about as hard as rain can fall when President Wilson stepped out of the White House at 9:30 o'clock this morning and stood under the great portico waiting for his motor car. He was whistling, and did not seem to be a bit depressed by the weather conditions. He greeted a policeman cheerily. The President wore a suit and his head was covered by a gray soft hat.

"What was he whistling?" repeated the policeman later, in answer to a question. "I don't know. He whistles in fragments, and doesn't carry a tune very well. I've often heard him whistling when he comes back to the White House."

President Wilson stepped back inside to avoid the rain, but his car finally arrived:

When the car came he stepped into it briskly. The chauffeur did not have to be told where to go. In a very few minutes the President was at

Mrs. Galt's house. He did not remain there long. When he left he returned to the White House.

The *Sun* described the wedding, which took place at 8:30 p.m.:

All arrangements for the wedding ceremony were carried out perfectly, the President arriving at his bride's home shortly after 8 o'clock and the remainder of the wedding party, which numbered less than 30, following soon after

Everything was in readiness for the ceremony when the President arrived and it proceeded without music. Neither the President nor Mrs. Galt had any attendants and there were no ushers or flower girls. Neither the army, the navy nor the diplomatic corps was represented, and the occasion was essentially what both of the couple had wished it to be—a home wedding

Just at the hour set for the ceremony the President and his bride appeared at the head of the staircase, which was decorated with ferns, asparagus vines and American Beauty roses. They descended to the lower floor, where the guests were grouped about informally.

The Reverend Herbert Scott Smith, rector of Mrs. Galt's Episcopal church, and the Reverend James D. Taylor, of President Wilson's church performed the ceremony. Mrs. Galt's mother gave the bride away:

The President stood to the right of the clergymen and the bride stood on their left. At once, Dr. Smith began the words of the Episcopal marriage service, the President making his responses first, and then the bride making hers. After the bride promised to "love cherish and obey" the President placed the wedding ring, a plain band of gold, upon her finger, and then, after a prayer, and while the couple clasped their right hands together, Dr. Smith declared them man and wife. The brief and simple ceremony was over.

President Wilson was attired in conventional evening dress, while the bride wore "an afternoon gown of black velvet combined with embroidery of various shades of blue" along with "a large picture hat of black beaver." President Wilson had given her "a magnificent diamond brooch," which she wore at her throat:

The entire party turned to the dining room, where a buffet supper was served. The decorations there were in pink and on the buffets were banked growing ferns and pink roses. The tables were decorated with Lady Stanhope rose blossoms. On a table in the centre was the wedding cake—a fruit cake several layers high, ornamented with sprays of pink orchids in the centre. Mrs. Wilson cut the cake without formality, and no

arrangement was made for bestowing bits of it upon others than those in the wedding party.

The President's idea of not releasing the time of the wedding was effective in preventing a large crowd from forming; police officers were present but had few spectators to control. The unannounced second element of his plan for avoiding crowds was a surprise to reporters and the public gathered at Union Station:

Then at 9:45 o'clock the White House limousine drew up to the entrance with the curtains of the windows toward the crowd drawn. However, there was just one little opening where one could get a glimpse of the President and Mrs. Wilson, but the police deployed themselves in skirmisher fashion and shut off all view. There were two lines of defense, but not even the first was attacked.

The secret service men and the Washington detectives led by Maj. Pullman went to their cars. The President helped his bride into the machine, and the car started off like a catapult at about a thirty-mile gait, with two cars and a motor cycle policeman tailing behind. Several cars with newspaper men started in pursuit, but they were waved back.

Reporters had received a tip that the Presidential limousine was not headed to Union Station, but to the station in Alexandria. The reporters' cars caught up with the limousine just after it crossed the Long Bridge [at the site of today's 14th Street bridges], but were turned back. "Motor cycle policemen had been stationed on one of the roads to hold up any but the official machines." ["President's Wedding To Mrs. Galt Marked By Great Simplicity," *The Baltimore Sun*, December 19, 1915; "President and Mrs. Galt Wed In Presence Of Their Families; Honeymoon At Hot Springs, VA." and "Go To Alexandria To Get Their Train," *The Sunday Star*, December 19, 1915; "President Wilson Weds Mrs. Galt In Her Home With Simple Ceremony; To Spend Honeymoon At Hot Springs," *The New York Times*, December 19, 1915]

As the *Post* pointed out, "The President's ruse to escape the eyes of the curious worked well. Indeed, it worked only too well, according to the view of hundreds of citizens who went to Union Station last night to catch a glimpse of their chief magistrate and his bride."

Hopes were raised at about 9:15 when a White House car pulled up to Union Station:

But the only person that got out was Martha Steptoe, Mrs. Galt's colored maid. Martha immediately discovered that she had lost her purse and

would not proceed until the chauffeur had found it in the tonneau where she had dropped it.

Martha had been coached in the rules of evasion. Asked where the President and his bride were, when they would arrive at the station, and where they were going she simply replied: "I don't know."

She went through the gate and boarded one of three cars standing on track 20. It afterward turned out that these cars composed the President's special section.

The cars would soon leave the station, to meet the President, Mrs. Wilson, and their party in Alexandria.

The crowd at Union Station "did not hesitate to voice their disappointment and protest." When a policeman broke the news to the crowd that the Presidential party had gone to Alexandria, he said, "fooled you this time." One bystander replied, "Yes, but we will fool him when the election comes around." ["President's Ruse To Evade Crowd Brings Forth A Vigorous Protest," *The Washington Post*, December 19, 1915]

The train arrived in Alexandria late bearing the President's Pullman car, the Superb, and its two companions. They were bound for Hot Springs, Virginia:

Snow from the previous day's fall was still on the ground and they thought it lovely in the clear moonlight. At Alexandria a private car was waiting filled with flowers, and some sandwiches and fruit stood on a table. Around midnight the train pulled out.

The next morning at seven one of the Secret Service men, Edmund Starling, stepped into the car as the train came into Hot Springs. As Starling went into the narrow train corridor a figure came out of the car's sitting room. It was the President, in top hat, tail coat, and grey morning trousers. He was facing away from the Secret Service man. As Starling watched in silence, the President's hands went into the pockets of his trousers and his feet came flashing up in the air to click heels. He began to whistle a popular song. The heels came leaping up to click again and the whistling changed into outright singing:

"Oh, you beautiful doll, you great big beautiful doll; oh, oh, oh, oh, OH, YOU BEAUTIFUL DOLL!" [Smith, pages 25-26]

The Honeymoon

The Wilsons had reserved a wing of the Homestead Hotel for their honeymoon. Two White House automobiles had been sent to the hotel for their use during their planned 2-week stay.

Their train arrived at about 8:30 a.m. The Wilsons were the first out of the special cars, stepping into one of the White House automobiles for the ride to the hotel. In addition to Charles Swem, the stenographer, and Secret Service agents, the Wilsons were followed by “a score of newspaper men.” The President, the *Times* pointed out, “has given strict orders that no photographs are to be taken of himself and Mrs. Wilson.” President Wilson intended to deal with “only the most important public business while here,” but a special telegraph line was established between the hotel and the White House for transmission of documents and messages, in addition to the telephone connection. [“Big Crowd Greet’s President’s Bride,” *The New York Times*, December 20, 1915]

The *Star* informed readers:

Every arrangement had been made to allow the distinguished couple to spend their honeymoon quietly in the seclusion of the mountains of the state in which they were both born

Mountains and hills, wild and romantic, entirely surround the green plains of the Warm Springs valley. Winding roads and steep trails lead up the slopes of these highlands, and Mrs. Wilson will have unlimited opportunity to indulge in her fondness for walking—with the President. Numerous motor trips also have been planned by the couple, two White House automobiles having been shipped here for their use. [“Abandon The Idea Of Playing Golf,” *The Evening Star*, December 20, 1915]

The Wilsons had brought their golf clubs with them and, from their rooms, could see the golf course. On their first full day in Hot Springs, however, they abandoned plans for a round of golf to respond to many of the messages of congratulations they had received from friends, relatives, and officials. That afternoon, they finally left their seclusion for a long automobile ride that the *Times* described as being “over the Warm Spring [sic] Road in the direction of McGuffin’s Mountain, then over the Healing Springs Road toward Oak Grove for about thirty miles, returning to the hotel again about 6 o’clock.”

According to the *Sun*,

They were absent a little more than two hours. It was the first time they had left the hotel since arriving here early yesterday morning. Mrs. Wilson appeared in one of the most beautiful costumes of her trousseau, a gown of black velvet, with a heavy fur-trimmed coat and a small toque.

Her face was radiant with smiles and frequently along the route, as the White House limousine and its occupants were recognized, she joined the President in acknowledging the respectful greetings of the country folk

After driving about five miles over a rough trail the chauffeur turned back and with better luck took his passengers over 50 miles of smooth roads through magnificent mountain scenery and past some famous springs.

The frustrated “movie men” tried to negotiate a deal with the President. They sent him a round-robin letter suggesting that if he would let them photograph the new couple for 5 minutes, they would leave Hot Springs. They were skeptical he would comply. [“President Takes Bride On *Auto Trip*,” *The New York Times*, December 21, 1915; “Wilson In Seclusion,” *The Baltimore Sun*, December 21, 1915]

The following day, December 21, the Wilsons went for a long walk, “about three miles [that] carried them past the golf links, with secret service men following. Mrs. Wilson wore a light walking suit, heavy tan walking shoes and small black hat.” They also went for a “50-mile automobile drive to neighboring springs.” During the drive, they stopped “at a famous old hotel to see registers signed by Thomas Jefferson and other notable figures in American history.”

The frustrated movie men had stationed their cameras at strategic vantage points, but the Secret Service agents prevented them from filming the Wilsons. [“Wilson On Long Walk,” *The Washington Post*, December 22, 1915; “President Takes Walk With Bride,” *The Evening Star*, December 21, 1915; “Wilson On Long Walk,” *The Baltimore Sun*, December 22, 1915]

(The “famous hotel” was apparently The Homestead (now the Omni Homestead Resort), which former President Jefferson visited in 1818. An online history of the hotel states: “During his visit, on August 13, 1818, Jefferson enjoyed breakfast at The Homestead, soaked in the springs, and took his dinner. He recorded that the entire day’s activities cost him \$2.12 and wrote to one of his daughters praising the springs as among the best in America.” The hotel still has the registry from his visit. [<http://www.historichotels.org/hotels-resorts/the-omni-homestead-resort/history.php>])

On December 22, the Wilsons left their hotel and motored 40 miles to White Sulphur Springs in West Virginia:

The journey was without incident other than the fording of thirteen shallow streams unprovided with bridges, such as abound in the Virginia mountains. No accident occurred, notwithstanding a number of hairpin curves, and the steep woodside precipices of the mountain country.

At the Greenbrier resort, they dined for the first time in public:

After luncheon the President and Mrs. Wilson took a stroll around the parklike grounds. Mrs. Wilson recalled with pleasure the different cottage rows in which she had lived. Later, they visited the golf links, where the President on a former visit turned in some excellent scores.

They left for Hot Springs at around 3 p.m. “Two movie picture men have given up in despair and returned to New York last night.” [“Visit White Sulphur,” *The Washington Post*, December 23, 1915; “President On Auto Trip,” *The New York Times*, December 23, 1915]

Mrs. Galt’s memoir described fording one shallow stream:

We started one morning to drive to White Sulphur Springs to spend the day, but ran into heavy roads which made our progress slow, though it was possible, until we reached a stream so swollen that the chauffeur said he was afraid the water would overflow the car. We decided to get out and let him try it, and if he could make it we would cross on a tree which had fallen across the stream. If he could not, we would return in the Secret Service car and send him help. We stood in the road and watched the big Pierce Arrow lunge and plunge in the current but finally emerge triumphantly on the other side. Then came our turn, for the old tree which was to form a bridge for us was slippery and wet, and very rotten in places; but by forming a human chain—the five Secret Service men, the two chauffeurs and ourselves—we steadied one another and with a real thrill of adventure reached safety. [*My Memoir*, page 87]

The Wilsons made their first appearance on the Hot Springs golf course on December 23 for 14 holes, chatting with other players. They did not keep scores “but Mrs. Wilson, although a novice, played nearly as well as her husband, and the President did his best.” As often was the case, the Secret Service agents did double duty as caddies.

In the afternoon, “Mr. and Mrs. Wilson took an hour’s automobile ride to points of historic interest in the vicinity, returning after dark, and just in time for dinner.” [“Mr. and Mrs. Wilson Make First Public Appearance On Golf Links,” *The Washington Post*, December 24, 1915; “President And Bride Appear On The Links,” *The Evening Star*, December 23, 1915]

On Christmas Eve, the Wilsons played golf in the afternoon and went for an automobile ride. While they were on the course, another golfer, Barton French, accidentally drove two balls within a few feet of them. “At the President’s request, Mr. French then passed the President and his wife and finished the course

ahead of them.” French told reporters a hill had blocked his view of the Presidential party.

That evening, the Wilsons attended the Homestead Hotel’s Christmas party, described as “an old-fashioned Virginia Christmas celebration held in the spacious lounge of their hotel.” It was their first visit to the public portion of the hotel.

The *Times* reported:

At 9 o’clock the President and Mrs. Wilson walked from their apartments in the east wing and took seats not far from the great tree which stood at the head of the foyer. The several hundred visitors who are spending Christmas here remained standing until they were seated.

Fifteen African-American employees of the hotel provided the musical entertainment. The entertainers were described in several accounts using terms common to the times, but the *Times* reported:

The negro singers who provide entertainment nightly then appeared in fancy costumes in a procession led by a float on which one of their number posed as Santa Claus under a lighted fir tree. An hour’s entertainment of negro melodies followed.

The *Post* characterized the Wilsons:

The President, happy as a schoolboy beside his bride, kept time to the raggy tunes with his foot. As for the rest of the audience, numbering about 100 guests, seated before the huge, brilliant evergreen tree, that reached to the high ceiling, the performance had but passing interest. Everybody fixed his eyes on the President and the new first lady of the land.

When the performers put on a vaudeville show, the Wilsons “did much laughing.” The *Star* stated, “the President and everybody else almost convulsed with laughter,” at their “antics.” [“At A Christmas Fete,” *The Washington Post*, December 25, 1915; “President And Bride Join In Festivities,” *The Evening Star*, December 25, 1915; “Wilson At Hotel Party,” *The New York Times*, December 25, 1915]

The Wilsons went to the golf course at about noon on Christmas Day, enjoying themselves through the 13th hole when the overcast sky “suddenly poured a deluge of rain”:

They immediately turned back for the hotel, and as the storm became heavier the President removed his coat and threw it about Mrs. Wilson’s shoulders. Even this did not save her from a thorough drenching.

At the hotel other guests offered such first-aid preventives as were at hand, but the President laughingly refused to accept.

Another account reported:

They started out at a walk to retrace their way to the hotel. And then they threw all dignity to the wind and ran, not at a dog-trot pace, but at a pace that set the hearts and lungs of the secret service men in the rear pumping like trip hammers.

The sweater failed to save Mrs. Wilson from a soaking. By the time the party reached the shelter of the hotel water was dripping from their hats and clothes as from the eaves of a house. Every foot in the party was as waterlogged as a long-abandoned derelict. At each step there was that squashy, oozy sound made when one steps into a bog.

The rain caused them to cancel their planned motor ride for the afternoon. ["Rain Routs Wilsons," *The Baltimore Sun*, December 26, 1915; "President's Christmas," *The New York Times*, December 26, 1915; "Wilson's Get Ducking," *The Washington Post*, December 26, 1915]

The rain turned to snow overnight, but as the *Post* reported, it "did not keep the President and his bride from having their daily automobile ride." It was, however, "slow and difficult traveling, but for an hour and a half the White House car toiled winding roads, while its passengers enjoyed the wonderful winter scene and the sharp, invigorating air. ["Wilson Pushes Bills," *The Washington Post*, December 27, 1915]

On December 27, the Wilsons did not want to stay in their hotel suite:

Roads hereabouts were in no shape for automobiling today, so President Wilson and his wife took a nine-mile tramp through the snow and slush.

They walked about the white-covered mountain country for several hours, being recognized and heartily cheered in the villages through which they passed. ["Wilson's In Long Walk," *The Washington Post*, December 28, 1915]

December 28 was the President's 59th birthday. After reading and responding to the hundreds of telegrams of congratulation, they "took a long automobile drive over snow-covered mountains roads." In the evening they enjoyed a cake the hotel had baked to Mrs. Wilson's specifications. "It was an almond sponge cake, decorated with candy roses and tulips and bearing in white icing the inscription: "Many happy returns. W.W." ["Cake For Mr. Wilson," *The Washington Post*, December 29, 1915]

More telegrams arrived on December 29 that took up the Wilsons' time in the morning:

After a morning rain the sun shone in the afternoon and the President and his wife went out for a walk. Rain followed the sunshine, and they were caught in the sudden storm. A White House automobile took them, dripping, back to the hotel. ["Wilson's Caught In Storm," *The Baltimore Sun*, December 30, 1915]

The next day the Wilsons, accompanied as always by the Secret Service, "motored to a point 5 miles from here and to within half a mile" of Flag Rock. They proceeded on a "half-mile climb over a rough and precipitous mountain trail" to the top of the "lofty Appalachian peak, from which they saw the Blue Ridge in the hazy distance and counted 47 mountain tops within a range of 60 miles." The *Post* told its readers:

Flat Rock, used almost continuously during the civil war as an army signal station, now is a mecca for tourists.

The frustrated "movie men" provided the other highlight of the day:

An enterprising "movie" man this afternoon almost "snapped" the President and Mrs. Wilson as they were playing golf, despite the efforts of the Secret Service guard

The operator had hidden himself under the floor of a cabin near the golf links. He had his camera in position as the President and his bride approached the fifteenth hole. A Secret Service man spied the camera just as the operator started cranking and he sped across the field to the cabin. He confiscated the roll of film in the machine and warned the operator that any more attempts to snap the President would cause him to lose his machine.

The President and Mrs. Wilson were startled when the Secret Service man suddenly bolted to the cabin and it was several minutes before they resumed playing. ["Movie Trap For Wilson," *The Baltimore Sun*, December 31, 1915]

On New Year's Eve, the Wilsons golfed and "took an automobile ride over a new mountain road." ["Wilson Receives Today," *The Baltimore Sun*, January 1, 1916]

One New Year's Day, a rainstorm again drove the Wilsons from the golf course:

Mr. and Mrs. Wilson took a long motor ride and a three-mile walk today after a rainstorm had driven them from the golf links. They motored to Warm Springs, Va., and returned by a circuitous route, alighting at

Healing Springs, three miles away, and walking the remainder of the distance. They walked leisurely, stopping several times to talk with children who trooped out to meet them

In the afternoon, the Wilsons held a New Year's reception for hotel guests and townspeople:

[At] 4 o'clock the hotel was filled with a waiting throng when Mr. Wilson and his bride walked through the new lobby from their suite in the east wing of the hotel and stood near the lighted Christmas tree at the head of the corridor.

Hundreds, including many children, went through the receiving line. One child particularly impressed the Wilsons:

Mrs. Wilson kissed one little tow-headed mountain girl, who courtied so prettily that the President lifted her up and, turning to his bride, said: "Isn't she a dear?"

Another photography incident was on the minds of officials:

Warning was given today that publication of snapshots secured of the President and Mrs. Wilson would be punished by abrogation of White House privileges to the offending concerns.

The one picture taken was obtained by a "sacrifice hit." One movie operator hid himself in such a way that he was bound to be caught. While he was being caught, his colleague snapped the President and Mrs. Wilson.

["President Greets New Year's Throng," *The New York Times*, January 2, 1916; "Wilson's Are Hosts," *The Baltimore Sun*, January 2, 1916; "Reception By Wilsons," *The Washington Post*, January 2, 1916]

On January 2, the Wilsons took what turned out to be the final walk and automobile ride of their honeymoon. With the "stout sticks used by mountain climbers here," they tramped the Delafield Trail:

The trail leads to the top of Warm Springs Mountain, where the view is out upon the Blue Ridge chain and into the Warm Springs Valley, where some of the skirmishes of the civil war were fought. After luncheon the President and Mrs. Wilson took a long motor ride.

In recent days, the foreign crisis had grown with continuation of the German policy of sinking passenger liners without warning. The torpedoing of the British steamship *Persia* took place on December 15, 1915, with the loss of nearly 350 lives, including the American Consul at Aden, not long after an attack on the Italian steamer *Ancona* with the loss of nine Americans. On January 3, reports

came in that two more steamships had been sunk in the Mediterranean, the British ship *Glengyle* and the Japanese steamer *Yasaka Maru*.

President Wilson decided to end his honeymoon after 16 days and return to Washington to consult on the subject:

Before his departure the President came to the office of the Homestead and registered for himself and Mrs. Wilson. The register and the new silver pen which he used have been put away in one of the safes of the hotel.

Because he had intended to stay a couple more days, his special rail car was not in Hot Springs, but they were able to borrow a private rail car that had arrived with two New York vacationers. It was attached to the first through train and the Wilsons and their party left in the evening for Washington. [“President Starts Back,” *The New York Times*, January 4, 1916; “Wilson Hurries Back To Handle New Crisis,” *The Baltimore Sun*, January 4, 1916]

Not long after their return, newspapers again were covering their automobile rides. On Sunday, January 16, the Wilsons motored through Alexandria, Virginia, as the *Post* reported:

Yesterday afternoon the President and Mrs. Wilson, followed by the usual secret service guard, passed down Washington street in a White House automobile, turned west on King street to Alfred and then proceeded over Hunting Creek bridge into Fairfax county, where they spent an hour riding over the hills and through the dales of that historic section, passing again through this city by the same route on their way home.

Passing motorists and pedestrian spotted the Wilsons and waved or doffed their cap, and he returned the greetings. “It was the first visit of the President and Mrs. Wilson since they motored here the night of their marriage to board their train for Hot Springs.” [“Wilson In Alexandria,” *The Washington Post*, January 17, 1916]

The Road Bill

Through the 1890s and early 1900s, Members of Congress had introduced good roads bills, with the number of bills increasing during the 1910s. The bills were referred to committee and never heard from again.

That changed in 1912. On March 29, Representative Dorsey W. Shackelford (D-Mo.) introduced a bill that authorized \$25 million a year to “rent” roads for rural free delivery of U.S. mail as an incentive to upgrade the roads. Class A roads (macadam) would receive a payment of \$30 a mile, while the rental fee for Class B roads (gravel) would be \$20 a mile and for Class C roads (dirt) would be \$10 a mile. The House of Representatives approved the Shackelford bill on

May 2 by a vote of 240 to 86, as an amendment to the Post Office Appropriation Act of 1913.

The focus on roads used for mail delivery stemmed from the constitutional provision giving Congress the authority “To establish post offices and post roads” (Article 8). In the 19th century, Congress and Presidents had debated whether “establish” meant pay for construction or simply identify routes suitable for carrying the mail. Now, however, the link to post roads was seen as needed to counter Members of Congress who argued that the Federal Government did not have the constitutional authority to pay for road construction.

The Senate removed the rental provision from the House appropriations bill, substituting authorization for a joint committee to report on Federal assistance for roads. The House-Senate conference committee to resolve differences between the House and Senate bills dropped the Shackelford provision, included the joint committee, and added \$500,000 for an experimental program to improve post roads on which the delivery of mail “is or may hereafter be established.” President Taft signed the bill on August 24, 1912.

Although the Shackelford bill had been defeated in the end, it had opened the door on Federal assistance for road improvement.

On March 6-7, 1913, AAA sponsored a good roads convention in the Raleigh Hotel in Washington, just 2 days after the inauguration of President Wilson. In fact, on the first day of the convention, 300 or so delegates, including the President’s cousin John A. Wilson, met with President Wilson in the East Room at the White House at 2:30 p.m. *American Motorist*, AAA’s magazine, described the meeting:

One of the features of the convention was the call at the White House, President Wilson receiving the delegates in the East Room and expressing to them his great interest in highways [sic] improvement. John A. Wilson, first vice-president of the A. A. A., introduced the good roads advocates to the Nation’s Chief Executive, who paid a special compliment to Chairman George C. Diehl in reference to his extensive knowledge of the good roads question. [“Federal Aid Good Roads Convention,” *American Motorist*, April 1913, page 309]

AAA’s leaders urged him to endorse interstate trunk highways.

President Wilson experienced a busy day, but left the White House at 4 p.m. for an automobile ride with the First Lady.

As was traditionally the case during the era, the 63rd Congress would not convene until December 1913, so good roads advocates in Congress could not pursue legislation for the year.

The Third American Road Congress, sponsored by AAA and the American Highway Association (AHA), took place in Detroit on September 29 through October 4, 1913. President Wilson sent a brief letter expressing disappointment that he could not attend but telling the delegates about “the very deep interest which I feel in the whole matter of adequate road building in the United States.” He added, “Every man who wishes to see this great country made the most of must sympathize with the efforts now being made to weave its parts together by good roads.” [*Proceedings of the Third American Road Congress, Under Auspices of American Highway Association/American Automobile Association, Detroit, Michigan, September 29-October 4-1913, page 9*]

Secretary of Agriculture David F. Houston, whose department included the U.S. Office of Public Roads (OPR), was one of the most eagerly awaited speakers because he would, it was hoped, reveal the new President’s plans for good roads. He spoke on the opening day of the convention, telling the delegates he would not try to convince them of the need for good roads or the economic and social advantages they provided. “This would be ridiculous excess, and I shall assume that you are already thorough converts to this idea and that your mission in life is to bring the people generally to your thinking.”

He summarized the Federal role dating to October 1893 when the Department of Agriculture opened the U.S. Office of Road Inquiry with a congressional appropriation of \$10,000. The money was not for road building, but to pay for “inquiries in regard to the systems of road management throughout the United States, to make investigations in regard to the best method of road-making, to prepare publications on this subject suitable for distribution, and to enable him to assist the agricultural colleges and experiment stations in disseminating information on this subject, ten thousand dollars.”

The agency had evolved since then, but Secretary Houston said, “Its function has been primarily educational, and as such it has been recognized to be of great value.” Now, however, Congress had taken “a step of great importance and significance” by appropriating \$500,000 for use by the Secretary of Agriculture and Postmaster General in the experimental program to improve post roads. Counting the regular OPR appropriation of \$300,000 for its educational programs, “it will be seen that the department of agriculture has been charged with the supervision of an expenditure for roads of about one and three-quarter million dollars.”

Even more impressive was the work of the States. Ten years ago, few States had an expert central road agency; now, twenty-four States had “reasonably efficient highway commissions, and thirty-three have central agencies of more or less importance”:

Ten years ago the appropriation by states [sic] for good roads slightly exceeded two million dollars. In 1912, the appropriation was over forty-three millions, which was over 40 per cent of the total estimated expenditure by the States up to December 31, 1911. It is estimated that aside from these federal and State appropriations there was expended locally in 1912 over one hundred and seventy-five million dollars and quite significantly it is also estimated that from 20 to 40 per cent of this local expenditure was, relatively speaking, wasted.

The days were over when political theory stated “that government which governs least, governs best.” He continued, “One gratifying thing today is that people are demanding that their various governmental agencies devote themselves to the vital, essential, economic, and social problems,” a view that would divert funds from war “to the constructive and helpful expenditure for the development of society.” The growth in highway expenditures demonstrated this shift.

Everyone agreed on the role of State and local governments in road improvement, but at this point, arguing for Federal encouragement and aid “would be merely academic.” The question was not whether the Federal Government should be involved but “the extent and character of such aid, and of methods and machinery—federal, State, or local.”

He said the suggestion of great national transcontinental roads and interstate roads connecting the country’s capitals “appeals to my imagination . . . and to the sense of pleasure that I experience in riding around the country in my friends’ automobiles.” However, he entertained “no sort of doubt” about the need to get products to market to make rural life more profitable, comfortable, and pleasurable, “and it is obvious that the representatives of the people in Congress are like minded.” The new experimental post-road program was evidence of the sentiment.

Many questions would have to be answered regarding Federal help. “That the suggestion of federal aid to road building raises grave questions and involves possible dangers, no thoughtful citizen doubts”:

There are proposals before the public mind which would bankrupt the federal treasury and suggest possible abuses before which those of the worst pork-barrel bill of the past would pale into insignificance.

Any plan must “carry with it the assurance of safeguarding the treasury” or it does not “stand the ghost of a chance of favorable consideration.” He was concerned, too, about precedent. “This is not the only proposal before the American Congress involving the suggestion of huge appropriations.” He also warned that it would be “especially pernicious if such aid should result in stifling the spirit of self-help.” He wanted to avoid “the building up of a great and powerful bureau in Washington, with an ever-increasing control over the highways of the country.”

With those cautions in mind, Secretary Houston outlined his ideas:

The first practical essentials in the planning of road legislation would seem to be to recognize the States as the smallest unit with which the federal government might deal. This would give relief in a measure from the insistent demand that would come from every township and every district in the Union for its share of State or federal assistance, without reference to the merits of the case or the practicability of the undertaking It would seem that the basic feature would be such coöperation between the States and the federal government as would leave with the States the initiative in the selection of roads to receive aid, and as much of the immediate construction and maintenance as would be practicable. In the case of roads on which federal money is to be expended, it would seem essential and wise that the federal agency should have the requisite power of the approval of the selection, supervision of the construction and maintenance, and the right of inspection, for the plain and simple, ordinary purpose of seeing that the federal money is applied to the purpose for which it was voted and is efficiently expended.

It is reasonably clear that for every reason there must be some automatic check upon the demands to be made upon Congress, and that this should be afforded through the requirement that the States and the localities should contribute an amount both for construction and maintenance at least equal to and possibly double that contributed by the federal government; and that, in the apportionment of any possible federal funds, a number of basic factors, such as population area, wealth, or minimum cost of construction, should control, I have not the least doubt.

He realized that cries of “centralization” would be heard, but he thought nothing was more natural than cooperation for mutual assistance by “two jurisdictions serving the same people.”

Those who complained of centralization did so when it would be of least value:

They are not in the least timid in their approaches to the federal treasury, and their courage fails them only when it is suggested that the federal

government has a right to see that the money of the people of the nation is wisely and efficiently expended. If they are to take counsel of their alarms, let them do so before they determine to assault the treasury.

He concluded by saying that as a practical consideration, "I believe that this matter is one in which haste can best be slowly made." The people will support a road program "when they are convinced that it is applied to a wise purpose and will yield the results anticipated." The post-road program and the joint committee indicated "a wholesome desire to know the facts":

Too short a time has elapsed to judge of the value of this undertaking, but that it is in the right direction, few will question. That it might be extended with ample funds if aid is to be furnished, more thoughtful men would concede; and the plan has the peculiar value of being susceptible of indefinite extension in case the result should be found to justify it.

[*Proceedings of the Third American Road Congress*, pages 22-27]

Representative Shackelford introduced a new version of his rental bill in 1914. Under the bill, each Governor could choose the ABC rental plan or a Federal-State partnership in road improvement similar to what Secretary Houston had outlined. Once again, the House passed the bill. In the Senate the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads substituted a plan based on the sale of bonds, selection of projects by a State highway agency, and establishment of a U.S. highway commission to oversee the work. The committee approved the bill, but it never reached the Senate floor for a vote before the Senate adjourned for the year on October 24, 1914.

The AHA and AAA sponsored the Fourth American Road Congress in Atlanta, Georgia, on November 9-14, 1914. About 3,300 delegates registered for the congress at the Auditorium-Armory. OPR Director Logan W. Page, founder and president of the AHA, told delegates that the presence of people from around the country was "proof that this great question is of nation wide [sic] importance, and well it may be so considered, for it touches human welfare of every angle and is a material factor in the development of education, in our home life and in religion, the three great fundamentals of our civilization." [*Proceedings of the Fourth American Road Congress Under Auspices of American Highway Association/American Automobile Association*, Atlanta, Georgia, November 9-14, 1914, pages 11-15]

On the third day, the presentation of technical papers was interrupted to read a letter that had just been received from President Wilson. He regretted he could not attend to convey his "deep interest" in the work of the Fourth American Road Congress:

I need scarcely emphasize the social and economic importance of good roads. They are prerequisite to the betterment of rural life in a number of directions. Improved roads, especially improved community roads from the farm to the nearest railway station, are an urgent necessity. They are essential for the economic marketing of farm products, and for the development of the educational and social institutions of the country.

Providing additional funds for better roads was important, but “even more important are the matters of better road administration and the better maintenance of roads already constructed.” Despite the fact that State and local governments spent \$205 million for roads, “it is clear that we are not getting the results we should have”:

The proper planning for road systems in States, the development of better methods of administration, State and local, and the proper maintenance of roads, will, I am sure, receive peculiar attention from your body. When the people are convinced that they will receive full value for every dollar expended on roads they will be brought more easily to an appreciation of the need for future expenditure and will make the requisite provision.

He concluded, “I believe that your body can furnish intelligent guidance in the solution of our problems in this field.” [*Proceedings of the Fourth American Road Congress*, page 155]

On December 12, 1914, at the Raleigh Hotel in Washington, State highway officials founded the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO), with Logan Page and two of his top officials in attendance. Henry G. Shirley, Chief Engineer of the Maryland State Roads Commission, was elected president of AASHO, serving in that post in 1915 and 1916. Page joined AASHO’s founders in a visit to the White House where they met President Wilson.

The Joint Committee on Federal Aid in the Construction of Post Roads released its conclusions on January 21, 1915. The report strongly endorsed the need for a Federal-aid program, and dismissed any constitutional objections to such a program:

Among those of legal training a technical discussion of the constitutionality of national highway appropriations would no doubt be interesting, but we believe the time has long since passed when controversy over this question could be deemed appropriate Federal aid to good roads will accomplish several of the objects indicated by the framers of the Constitution—establish post roads, regulate commerce, provide for the common defense, and promote the general welfare. Above all, it will promote the general welfare.

The committee, with its membership spanning the spectrum of views on Federal-aid, was able to agree on some points regarding the future Federal-aid program. The members rejected centralization of control in Washington. They also feared that spreading a small amount of funds over a large amount of mileage would create a "pork barrel" that would work against permanent upgrading of the roads. However, the committee was unable to agree on how the Federal-aid program should operate. [*Federal Aid to Good Roads*, Report of the Joint Committee on Federal Aid in the Construction of Post Roads, U.S. House of Representatives, 63d Congress, 3d Session, Document No. 1510, January 21, 1915, page 14, 19, 22-23]

The AASHO Bill

AASHO's members returned to the Raleigh Hotel where the new Executive Committee (not including Page) was instructed to prepare and present a bill to Congress representing AASHO's plan for Federal cooperation. The committee, dominated by members from heavily populated States with well-developed highway networks, collaborated with AAA's president, A. G. Batchelder, on the draft of a bill that called for a national system of highways.

The draft was sent to Congress, but midwestern members of AASHO, many from States with less developed networks, objected to the plan and the fact that they had not been consulted before it was submitted to Congress. [Seely, Bruce E., *Building the American Highway System: Engineers as Policy Makers*, Temple University Press, 1987, page 42]

To settle the dispute, a meeting of a committee of AASHO's Executive Committee was arranged for September 11, 1915, in Oakland, just before the Pan-American Road Congress. The committee consisted of:

George P. Coleman, Chairman, Virginia
 Henry G. Shirley, Maryland (AASHO president)
 W. D. Sohler, Massachusetts
 Thomas H. MacDonald, Iowa
 Edwin A. Stevens, New Jersey
 Lamar Cobb, Arizona
 Joseph Hyde Pratt, North Carolina

According to AASHO's Golden anniversary history, MacDonald was instrumental in shifting the focus from using Federal funds to build a relatively small mileage of long-distance Federal highways to a Federal-aid concept of assistance to the States:

It was his contention that such a program would encourage development of highway technology and the creation of a great network of highways throughout the Nation, instead of a few Federal routes and some spiderweb highway systems within the individual States He felt that without the encouragement and stabilizing influence of Federal-aid, some of the States would have a difficult time developing adequate and competent Highway Departments and effective highway programs. [*The First Fifty Years, 1914-1964*, American Association of State Highway Officials, 1964, pages 52-53]

The resulting bill provided for authorization of \$25 million a year to "promote the improvement of Rural Post Roads, Military Roads, and Roads used for interstate commerce," again referring to powers that the Constitution granted to Congress. The funds were primarily for rural roads, but could be used on the streets of cities, towns, or boroughs having a population in excess of 2,000 if the houses averaged more than 200 feet apart. A "Rural Post Road" was defined as any public road "over which the United States' mails are or may be transported."

Three factors would be used to apportion the funds among the States: total area of each State compared with the total area of all States (one-third); the population of each State compared with the population of all States (one-third); and the mileage of rural post roads in each State compared with the total mileage nationally. The Secretary of Agriculture could use up to 5 percent of the funds to administer the program. In addition:

. . . the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to employ such assistants, clerks and other persons, in the city of Washington and elsewhere, to rent such buildings in the city of Washington and elsewhere, to purchase such supplies, material, equipment, office fixtures and apparatus, and to incur such travel and other expenses as he may deem necessary

The Secretary would be authorized to make rules and regulations for carrying out the Act's provisions.

The State highway departments would initiate projects within the limits of apportioned funding by petitioning the Secretary of Agriculture for aid in the "improvement or maintenance" of eligible roads. If the Secretary approved, the State would conduct surveys and develop plans, specifications, and estimates for the project. The work would be done under the direct supervision of the State highway department, which would advertise for bids for all work according to the laws of the State or do the work as otherwise provided for by the laws of the State.

The Federal share of project costs should not exceed 50 percent. The cost of engineering, inspection, and unforeseen contingencies could be included in the estimated cost of the project, provided the cost did not exceed 10 percent of the total. However, no payments would be made until the work was done to the satisfaction of the Secretary.

The Secretary would be authorized to withhold funds and reappropriation them to other States if, in his judgment, a State highway department has not "properly maintained" the Federal-aid projects. First, the Secretary would notify the State in writing. Then, he would take action if the State authorities failed to maintain or repair the projects within 6 months. [*Proposed Federal Aid Road Bill*, American Association of State Highway Officials]

On December 6, 1915, at AASHO's annual meeting in Chicago, the executive committee discussed the draft bill section-by-section before approving the new version. AASHO made only one change. In Oakland, the committee had proposed authorizations of \$25 million a year, with the number of years left blank ("19__"). The executive committee decided to let the House and Senate decide on the amount and number of years. A summary of the meeting stated:

This will avoid any misconceptions regarding the motives of the members of the association who, like practically all citizens familiar with the road situation, are agreed that federal aid is a vital necessity, but are willing to leave the matter of *how much* aid, to those responsible for all government finance.

AASHO adopted several resolutions during its first annual convention. One endorsed the Federal-aid bill, which they believed "will prove to be of great benefit not only from the standpoint of financial assistance, but also in standardizing the work of the different States." ["State Highway Officials Demand One Convention," *Better Roads and Streets*, January 1916, pages 6, 57-58, italics in original]

AASHO submitted the bill to Senator John H. Bankhead (D-Al.), who had become chairman of the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads in 1914, and Chairman Shackelford.

Despite President Wilson's enjoyment of road trips, he played only a limited role in securing highway legislation in 1916. He did not mention the subject during his third annual message, delivered in person on December 7, 1915, although he did discuss problems involving the country's railroad network. ("The transportation problem is an exceedingly serious and pressing one in this country.")

One indication of his interest, however, was contained in an article in the January 1916 issue of *Southern Good Roads* regarding the AASHO draft bill:

Although President Woodrow Wilson has made no expression upon the subject there is a conviction, based on substantial evidence, that he has seen the plan of the association and that it meets with his approval. On the committee which drafted the measure is E. A. Stevens, state highway commissioner of New Jersey, who was named while Wilson was Governor of New Jersey, and who is a close friend of the President. Colonel Stevens was unwilling to pass upon the proposed bill finally until the President's views had been obtained. [“\$25,000,000 in Federal Aid,” *Southern Good Roads*, January 1916, page 20]

The Final Push

Representative Shackelford, chairman of the new House Committee on Roads, introduced a new bill in 1916. It dropped the controversial rental plan, providing instead for a Federal-aid plan along the lines of the AASHO bill. The House approved the bill on January 25 by a vote of 281 to 81.

Upon receipt of the Shackelford bill from the House, Senator Bankhead's Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads substituted its version of the AASHO bill, modified, in part, on the advice of Senator Bankhead's friend, Logan Page. The Senate approved the bill without a recorded vote on May 8. It now included an amendment that Senator Thomas J. Walsh (D-Mt.) had introduced authorizing \$1 million a year for forest roads and trails over 10 years.

A House-Senate conference committee resolved differences between the bill on June 27, with the House and Senate approving the bill the same day. The approved bill mainly followed the Bankhead bill, with AASHO estimating that it had included 90 percent of the AASHO bill. *The First Fifty Years*, page 53]

President Wilson, the one-time bicyclist and now avid motorist, signed the bill in a White House ceremony that was attended by members of Congress and representatives of AAA, AASHO, and farm organizations. He told them:

I take a great deal of pleasure in signing this bill and having a part in the good work that has been done, particularly because it tends to thread the various parts of the country together and assists the farmer in his intercourse with others.

Thirty-four states have now outlined in some form a system of main trunk lines, which is now an augury for the success of the Federal Aid plan just inaugurated. In this connection it is worthy to note that California was the

first State to apply for apportionment of the money, and California is expending \$18,000,000 on two main highways extending from the Oregon to the Mexican line. It should be kept in mind that an application for Federal Aid in the improvement of any road must be made by the highway department of the State. Consequently if anybody in the State desires to have a road improved at the aid of Federal funds, it is necessary that the matter be taken up with the State Highway Department and not with the Federal Government, which will have the final say through the Secretary of Agriculture. [“A Big Program Covering Five Years,” *The Highway Magazine*, December 1916, page 1]

President Wilson handed the pen he used to sign the bill to A. G. Batchelder of AAA. The President cousin, John Wilson, the former AAA president, said:

Ultimately, we received credit for this broad interpretation of the situation, and this recognition is made apparent by the fact that the pen used in the signing of the bill now reposes in the A.A.A. headquarters in Washington. We are just plain American citizens and we have sought general good in our insistence that the time had come for the national government to accept a percentage of the multiplying highway burdens. [“Vast Sums For Roads,” *The Washington Post*, July 23, 1916]

AASHO officials were offended that the pen went to AAA, a slight that it recalled in its Golden Anniversary publication:

The pen used by President Wilson, in signing the Bill, now reposes in the offices of the American Automobile Association, in Washington, D.C., although it was the American Association of State Highway Officials that was the major factor in drafting the legislation. [*The First Fifty Years*, page 53]

Recognizing that AASHO was offended, the editor of *American Motorist* explained in a fall 1916 issue why President Wilson gave the pen to AAA:

When President Wilson gave to A. G. Batchelder as the custodian of the A.A.A., the single pen with which he had just signed the Federal good roads bill he not only did a graceful thing, but a most fitting one, since for more years than the automobile has been in existence, away back in the League of American Wheelman era, to wit, A. G. B. has fought for, talked for, and planned for good roads and better ones. So when in the end Uncle Sam finally saw the logic of it all, and set himself to the task of building these improved highways, it was a particularly happy circumstance that our Uncle Sam’s representative, President Wilson, should hand to “Batch” for “Cousin John Wilson” (who willed it to the A.A.A.) the pen with

which he had signed the law which henceforth makes Uncle Sam the greatest road builder in the world. Take it from me, Uncle Sam, along with you and me, owes a whole lot to A. G. B. for this happy termination of a fight A. G. B. has helped wage for more than thirty years without ever faltering or doubting the eventual victory which now has been won. [“Commentaries,” *American Motorist*, October 1916, page 35]

Getting to Shadow Lawn

Although President Wilson would sign the landmark good roads bill on July 11, 1916, his focus during the year was on other matters. The country’s relationship with Mexico remained a concern even as he tried to find a solution to the problem posed by German submarine attacks on passenger ships. Throughout the year, other issues would rise to the forefront, including a threatened strike by railroad workers. And then, too, he was going to run for reelection.

As President Wilson sought to keep the country out of the European war and to deal with the many issues that came before him, he and his new wife were not willing to give up their regular motor rides. Throughout President Wilson’s first term, he had gone for rides in the White House automobiles during the afternoons and on weekends. During his courtship of Mrs. Galt, those rides had taken on special significance. By 1916, the rides were so routine, they barely constituted news.

On Sunday, April 30, the *Times* carried an article about negotiations with Germany that began:

The feeling of optimism that has prevailed here over the indications that Germany would meet the American demands for the abandonment of present methods of German submarine warfare began to wane today on account of the view that appeared to prevail in Berlin that the issue would be discussed between the two Governments before the German answer was transmitted. This Government wants no discussion. It holds that the time for discussion has passed. There is every reason to believe that President Wilson has determined to break relations with Germany if his demand is not complied with literally.

The long article went on to discuss the latest developments in the bitter diplomatic situation, adding near the end:

President Wilson followed his usual practice on Saturday of not transacting official business and went for a motor ride in the afternoon. [“President Will Not Parley,” *The New York Times*, April 30, 1916]

On May 21, the Wilsons returned in a Pullman sleeping car from a celebration of the 141st anniversary of the declaration of independence approved by residents of Mecklenburg, North Carolina, on May 20, 1775, the first such declaration of independence from Great Britain (its authenticity has been in dispute almost from the time it was published in 1819). President Wilson addressed the crowd about, in part, the difference between that era, when the United States had 3 million residents, and the present, with a population of 100 million:

It was a very big world into which this nation came when it was born, but it is a very little world now. It used to take as many days to go from Washington to Charlotte in those days as it now takes hours. I heard an Irishman say, if the power of steam continued to increase in the next fifty years as it had in the last, we would get to Charlotte two hours before we left Washington.

And as these processes of intercommunication have been developed and quickened, men of the same nation not only have grown closer neighbors, but men of different nations have grown closer neighbors with each other; and now that we have these invisible tongues that speak by the wireless through the trackless air to the ends of the world, every man can make every other man in the world and his neighbor speak to him upon the moment.

Having spoken earlier about the “singular fact about this great nation . . . is that it is made up out of all the nations of the world,” he now added:

While these processes of fermentation and travail were going on, men were learning about each other, nations were becoming more and more acquainted with each other, nations were more and more becoming interrelated, and intercommunication was being quickened in every possible way, so that now the melting pot is bigger than America. It is as big as the world.

After the speech, President and Mrs. Wilson reviewed a parade:

Afterward he was the guest at a luncheon, motoring later to Davidson College, where he once was a student. At the college he visited the room in which he lived as a student. [“President Would Raise Emblem of Peace to World,” *The New York Times*, May 21, 1916]

Arriving in Washington on Sunday, the Wilsons attended morning services at St. Margaret’s Episcopal Church:

In the afternoon the President and Mrs. Wilson took a long motor ride through the parks. [“Wilson’s Back For Church,” *The Washington Post*, May 22, 1916]

The new Mrs. Wilson reintroduced a social side to the White House that had been absent for some time. As a result, the *Post's* Society column covered the White House's activities with greater interest. On July 30, 1916, the column reported:

The President, so long as he remains in town, is a frequent visitor at one or another of the country clubs, where, at the end of a busy day, he and Mrs. Wilson find a congenial diversion in making a tour of the golf links. This, with motor trips and an occasional week-end outing on the Mayflower, are outdoor relaxations which vary their summer in Washington. Occasionally also the President and Mrs. Wilson may be met sauntering through the shady avenues of the northwest section of the city, the ubiquitous secret service man in discreet attendance. [Society, *The Washington Post*, July 30, 1916]

In August, when many officials leave the usually steamy Washington, the column observed:

Country clubs and automobiles have solved the summer problem for scores of women who in former years have helped to form the rocking chair fleets on the verandas of summer hotels. The automobile has restored the nerves of many a hysterical, worn-to-a-frazzle mother, and the country club, with its enticing, shaded lawns, cooled apartments and ready-to-eat meals, is a boon to the housekeeper and hostess when the thermometer hugs the 100 mark

The President and Mrs. Wilson and Miss Bones and Dr. and Mrs. Grayson find many comforts and delights in town, and have suffered no actual hardship in remaining here even through excessive heat. The historic old mansion has been made as comfortable as possible for the President's family with electric fans, screens, awning, summer verandas and terraces, where tea is served, and where dining and even breakfasting al fresco are a delight. [Society, *The Washington Post*, August 20, 1916]

On August 28, the column reported on the family's activities on Sunday:

President and Mrs. Wilson, accompanied by Miss Bones and the Misses Smith, of New Orleans, who are guests at the White House, attended the morning service in the Central Presbyterian Church. They all went in one of the limousines of the White House stables. In the afternoon President and Mrs. Wilson, accompanied by Miss Bones, went for a long motor ride in the country, returning after the storm. [Society, *The Washington Post*, August 28, 1916]

In 1915, President Wilson had begun thinking about the Presidential election of 1916. Like many candidates in years past, especially sitting Presidents, he

decided on a “front porch” campaign. In his view, traveling around the country giving campaign speeches, essentially begging for votes, was not dignified for a sitting President. By tradition, he would stay home, greet delegations that came to see him, and occasionally give campaign speeches from the front porch to supporters assembled outside the house.

That was the type of campaign President Wilson wanted to run, but as President he had a responsibility to give speeches on the issues before him. Therefore, he decided that he would confine political speeches to his “front porch,” and give nonpolitical speeches as appropriate in other locations.

The first step was to decide where his front porch would be. It could not be the White House, a public building owned by the people of the United States. In October 1915, he selected Shadow Lawn, an estate near Long Branch, New Jersey, for what was described as his summer home, just as Harlakenden House had been his summer residence in the past. He consulted his recently revealed fiancée, Mrs. Galt, before accepting his New Jersey friends’ offer. The friends offered the estate without charge; when he insisted on paying rent, they suggested he contribute the amount to charity.

The friends also presented a letter from Governor James F. Fielder urging the President to spend the summer in New Jersey to receive “the glad tidings” that the Democratic Party had nominated him to be its candidate in 1916. “The President only smiled when that was mentioned,” according to the *Post*.

The *Times* described the estate:

Shadow Lawn was built by James Carly of Long Branch in 1902 for John A. McCall, the insurance company President, at a cost of more than \$500,000. The house stands on a knoll about fifty feet above the level of the ocean, which is less than a mile away. About it are fifty-two acres of rolling and wooded land of rare beauty.

The house is three stories high and contains thirty-two rooms, which are richly furnished A porch about 250 feet in length runs about the north, east and south sides of the house, commanding a view of the ocean and of beautiful country. [“President Takes New Jersey Estate,” *The New York Times*, October 16, 1915; “Summer ‘White House,’” *The Washington Post*, October 16, 1915]

Neither President Wilson nor his fiancée had seen Shadow Lawn. They intended to visit it while the President was in New York City for a speech to the Manhattan Club. They were expected to travel to Long Branch by automobile. However, the *Times* reported:

Owing to the necessity of his returning to Washington, the President and Mrs. Galt have abandoned the plan to visit Shadow Lawn, the new Summer White House near Long Branch, N.J. [“Mrs. Galt Shops Here,” *The New York Times*, November 2, 1915]

Following tradition, President Wilson did not attend the Democratic National Convention in St. Louis, Missouri, on June 14 through 16. He remained in Washington, with the intention of going to Shadow Lawn after the convention, where he would be notified formally of his selection.

During the convention, the Democratic Party adopted a platform that endorsed President Wilson’s actions. A section on what the Wilson Administration had done for the farmer, listed many actions and noted that both Houses of Congress had “passed a good-roads measure, which will be of far reaching benefit to all agricultural communities,” although a single measure had not yet emerged for the President’s signature. A separate section, XII, addressed:

XII. Good Roads

The happiness, comfort and prosperity of rural life, and the development of the city, are alike conserved by the construction of public highways. We, therefore, favor national aid in the construction of post roads and roads for like purposes.

Reports at the time indicated that President Wilson wrote Section XII.

The Republican Party, which had met in Chicago on June 7 through 10, selected Charles Evans Hughes as their nominee. Hughes, a former New York Governor (January 1, 1907 – October 6, 1910), was an associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court (1910-1916), having been nominated by President Taft. Justice Hughes resigned from the Supreme Court on June 10 to take on the political task of running for the presidency.

The convention selected Charles W. Fairbanks of Indiana to be the nominee for Vice President. Fairbanks had represented the State in the United States Senate from 1897 to 1905. In 1898, he served on a commission that resolved a boundary dispute between Canada and the territory of Alaska – the Alaskan city of Fairbanks is named about him. He left the Senate to become Vice President under President Roosevelt during his full term as President (1905-1909). After leaving office, he returned to the practice of law in Indianapolis.

The party’s platform did not address good roads, but included the following:

Transportation

Interstate and intrastate transportation have become so interwoven that the attempt to apply two and often several sets of laws to its regulation has produced conflicts of authority, embarrassment in operation and inconvenience and expense to the public.

The entire transportation system of the country has become essentially national. We, therefore, favor such action by legislation, or, if necessary, through an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, as will result in placing it under complete Federal control.

The sentiment addressed the growing desire for increased regulation of transportation, particularly railroads.

By July, Shadow Lawn was ready for the President's family. The *Post* reported that Mrs. Wilson was likely to arrive even though the President had to stay in Washington while Congress was in session:

It is said that Mrs. Wilson is anxious to escape the torrid climate of Washington. Her automobile is now here, and the housekeeper from the White House has been in charge of Shadow Lawn for the last ten days. ["Summer White House Ready," *The Washington Post*, July 8, 1916]

Departure, however, was delayed by Congress, which remained in session until September 8. President Wilson asked the Democratic Party to delay formal notification of his selection as the nominee, originally scheduled for August 5, while Congress remained in session. Vance C. McCormick, chairman of the Democratic National Committee and head of the reelection campaign, explained, "I found the President embarrassed by the thought that he ought not to turn to politics until the business of this congressional session was over." ["Delays Wilson Notice," *The Washington Post*, July 18, 1916]

The Wilsons were still in Washington in mid-August when they held a luncheon for members of the Democratic National Committee. The *Post's* Society column reported, "After the company left[,] the President and Mrs. Wilson went for a long motor ride in the country." [Society, *The Washington Post*, August 16, 1916]

On August 20, the column reported observing progress on the move to Shadow Lawn:

The removal of the President's family to the summer White House began on Saturday, when the first wagonload of furniture left for Shadow Lawn. The President and Mrs. Wilson will go on September 1, unless Congress should adjourn earlier, when they will go immediately after adjournment. [Society, *The Washington Post*, August 21, 1916]

The plans became more certain when President Wilson and the Democratic National Committee agreed that the party would notify him of his nomination on the afternoon of Saturday, September 2, at Shadow Lawn.

Congress remained in session, but the Presidential party departed Washington for Long Branch on Friday, September 1. The train arrived around 9 p.m. A crowd of about 500 greeted the train, while Mayor Marshall Woolley of Long Branch greeted the President and Mrs. Wilson. The party motored to Shadow Lawn, trailed by an automobile parade. After a brief welcoming ceremony, President Wilson told the crowd, "I have been trying to get here for a long time, but have been kept busy." He and the First Lady remained on the porch for about 30 minutes to greet the crowd. ["Wilson At Long Branch," *The Baltimore Sun*, September 2, 1916; "President Arrives At Shadow Lawn," *The New York Times*, September 2, 1916]

A crowd estimated at 15,000 to 20,000 people attended the ceremony at Shadow Lawn during which the Democratic Party formally advised President Wilson that he was the party's nominee for President. His acceptance speech, which he had been working on for weeks, lasted about an hour. He received the first applause early in the speech when he said:

I shall seek, as I have always sought, to justify the extraordinary confidence thus reposed in me by striving to purge my heart and purpose of every personal and of every misleading party motive and devoting every energy I have to the service of the nation as a whole, praying that I may continue to have the counsel and support of all forward-looking men at every turn of the difficult business.

He discussed his foreign policy, his efforts to keep the country neutral in the European war, the progressive steps the Democratic Party had taken, and the deficiencies of the Republican Party, among other topics. Among the Republican Party's deficiencies was that during its long control of the White House, "The country had no national system of road construction and development." By contrast, the Democrats had embarked on a progressive program that included:

We have instituted a system of national aid in the building of highroads [sic] such as the country has been feeling after for a century.

President Wilson's stay in Shadow Lawn would be brief. The following day, the Wilsons left for a brief stay in Washington before leaving for a speech on September 4 in Hodgenville, Kentucky, where he would deliver a speech accepting the Lincoln Farm Association's deed of gift giving the Lincoln Birthplace home to the Nation. While still in his private car at Union Station in Washington, President Wilson signed legislation intended to end the prospect of a

railroad strike by imposing an 8-hour work day on railroad companies. While in his car, he signed several commissions and other papers:

Later the President and Mrs. Wilson took an automobile ride about the city.

When they returned to Union Station, their private car had been attached to the special train bound for Hodgenville. [“8-Hour Bill Is Signed,” *The Washington Post*, September 4, 1916]

On September 4, the Wilsons arrived for the Lincoln ceremony:

What was said to be one of the largest crowds ever gathered in this part of Kentucky came to Lincoln farm in special trains, automobiles and on foot. The President and his party were taken from the station to the farm in automobiles, accompanied by a troop of Louisville police. On the way the President stopped and laid a wreath on a statue of Lincoln.

At the farm he walked up a long flight of broad granite stairs lined with thousands of cheering people to the Lincoln memorial building at the top. Inside he examined silently the one-room cabin made of rough logs and mud and then wrote his name in the register.

His speech began:

No more significant memorial could have been presented to the nation than this. It expresses so much of what is singular and noteworthy in the history of the country; it suggests so many of the things that we prize most highly in our life and in our system of government. How eloquent this little house within this shrine is of the vigor of democracy! There is nowhere in the land any home so remote, so humble, that it may not contain the power of mind and heart and conscience to which nations yield and history submits its processes

This little hut was the cradle of one of the great sons of men, a man of singular, delightful, vital genius who presently emerged upon the great stage of the nation's history, gaunt, shy, ungainly, but dominant and majestic, a natural ruler of men, himself inevitably the central figure of the great plot. No man can explain this, but every man can see how it demonstrates the vigor of democracy, where every door is open, in every hamlet and countryside, in city and wilderness alike, for the ruler to emerge when he will and claim his leadership in the free life. Such are the authentic proofs of the validity and vitality of democracy.

He concluded:

I have come here to-day, not to utter a eulogy on Lincoln; he stands in need of none, but to endeavor to interpret the meaning of this gift to the nation of the place of his birth and origin. Is not this an altar upon which we may forever keep alive the vestal fire of democracy as upon a shrine at which some of the deepest and most sacred hopes of mankind may from age to age be rekindled? For these hopes must constantly be rekindled, and only those who live can rekindle them. The only stuff that can retain the life-giving heat is the stuff of living hearts. And the hopes of mankind cannot be kept alive by words merely, by constitutions and doctrines of right and codes of liberty. The object of democracy is to transmute these into the life and action of society, the self-denial and self-sacrifice of heroic men and women willing to make their lives an embodiment of right and service and enlightened purpose. The commands of democracy are as imperative as its privileges and opportunities are wide and generous. Its compulsion is upon us. It will be great and lift a great light for the guidance of the nations only if we are great and carry that light high for the guidance of our own feet. We are not worthy to stand here unless we ourselves be in deed and in truth real democrats and servants of mankind, ready to give our very lives for the freedom and justice and spiritual exaltation of the great nation which shelters and nurtures us.

They returned to the White House on September 5 for the remaining few days of the congressional session. In the meantime, President Wilson arranged to have a complete executive staff available in Asbury Park, New Jersey, as the *Times* reported:

For the first time since Mr. Wilson became President a complete staff of secretaries, clerks, telegraphers, and other attachés will accompany him on his vacation Although President Wilson intends to spend most of his time at Shadow Lawn, the estate at Long Branch, he will go to Asbury Park as often as necessary to visit the executive offices and attend to public business. A suite of rooms has been engaged in a modern office building there, and office furniture has been sent from the White House. ["Wilson's Office Staff Going to Asbury Park," *The New York Times*, September 8, 1916]

Congress adjourned on September 8, and the Wilsons and their party boarded a train for Atlantic City, New Jersey, where the President was to address the National American Woman Suffrage Association. First, they checked into the Hotel Traymore. Before the suffrage meeting, the President and Mrs. Wilson attended a charity musicale in the hotel for Atlantic City charities. When they entered, "they were greeted with enthusiastic applause." The President did not expect to speak, but the moderator asked him to stand up so the crowd could see

his face. The audience broke “into a roar of laughter” when he said the request that he show his face reminded him of a limerick:

For Beauty I am not a star;
There are others more handsome by far.
My face I don't mind it,
Because I'm behind it;
It's the people in front that I jar.

Addressing the suffrage association, President Wilson assured them, “I have come here to fight with you,” he said. After his 15-minute speech, he returned to the Hotel Traymore. [“Wilson Pledges His Aid To Women In Fight For Vote,” *The New York Times*, September 9, 1916; “Limerick by Wilson on ‘Beauty’ of His Face Gives Audience Laugh,” *The Washington Post*, September 9, 1916]

In the morning, the Presidential party motored to Shadow lawn “in four automobiles, two of them filled with secret service men and reporters.” The vehicles moved at an average speed of 40 miles an hour. The crowd in Asbury Park recognized the Wilsons “and cheered” as their vehicles “drove rapidly down the main street” and from Spring Lake to Long Branch, thousands of bathers “left the surf to shout and wave a greeting of welcome to the President’s party.” According to the *Sun*, the Wilsons, moved by “the unexpected reception . . . returned the salutes, and Mrs. Wilson’s face beamed with smiles.”

In the afternoon, President Wilson motored to Spring Lake to visit his daughter Nell who was suffering from typhoid fever. Later he attended a performance of “John W. Blake,” a new play by Roy Cooper Magrue and Irving S. Cobb at the Broadway Theatre in Long Branch. “He was enthusiastically greeted.”

In addition, “The staff of secretaries arrived at Asbury Park at 6 o’clock tonight to occupy their offices on the top floor of the Asbury Park Trust Company Building. [“President At Shore For Real Vacation,” *The New York Times*, September 10, 1916; “Wilson In Jersey Home,” *The Baltimore Sun*, September 10, 1916]

Supporting the President

Unlike President Wilson, Charles Evans Hughes was on a transcontinental tour seeking support in the 1916 election. Despite calls from party leaders, supporters, and his campaign officials, President Wilson resisted the pressure to campaign around the country. Any speeches outside Shadow Lawn, he said, would be nonpolitical.

At the same time, he and his supporters were not hesitant about discussing the Wilson Administration’s accomplishments, including the Federal-aid bill. On August 11, President Wilson wrote to Representative Asbury F. Lever (D-SC), Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture, after signing the Department of Agriculture's appropriations act for FY 1917:

As the passage of this bill marks the practical completion of an important part of the program for the betterment of rural life, which was mapped out at the beginning of the Administration, I feel that I cannot let the occasion pass without conveying to you and to your associates in both houses my appreciation of the service rendered to the nation in strengthening its great agricultural foundations.

In support of that thought, President Wilson listed the positive legislative and administrative record on agriculture. One of the longest sections of the letter covered the Federal-aid highway program:

Of no less importance for agriculture and for national development is the Federal Aid road act. This measure will conduce to the establishment of more effective highway machinery in each State, strongly influence the development of good road building along right lines, stimulate larger production and better marketing, promote a fuller and more attractive rural life, add greatly to the convenience and economic welfare of all the people, and strengthen the national foundations. The act embodies sound principles of road legislation and will safeguard the expenditure of the funds arising under the act not only, but will also result in the more efficient use of the large additional sums made available by States and localities. [“Wilson Takes Pride In Helping Farmers,” *The New York Times*, August 21, 1916; Commager, Henry Steele, editor, Letter of President Wilson to A. F. Lever, Agricultural Legislation in the First Wilson Administration, *Documents of American History*, 3rd edition, 1947, pages 295-296]

The Baltimore Sun published a series of articles by its Washington correspondent about the successes and failures of the Wilson Administration by department. The seventh in the series covered the Department of Agriculture, which had not yet fully implemented the Federal Aid Road Act. Under the subhead “Roads Policy Yet To Be Justified,” the correspondent wrote:

A policy of federal aid in highway building has yet to justify itself. In many quarters it is viewed with grave doubt. It might too easily degenerate into a new system of “pork barrel” distribution of government money. The theory upon which government participation in road building is based may be sound. It may be altogether defensible for the federal treasury to yield largess to those states which are willing to spend their own money for better roads. But if the beginning which has been made is to vindicate itself, it will be necessary for Congress to jealously guard against the odium which attaches to some other systems of appropriation.

When viewed from the sole standard of the farmer, good roads legislation by Congress is not only defensible, but a measure of the highest merit. There has been very little money spent directly for the farmer by the Government. Rural free delivery is the most important boon which he enjoys. Parcel post comes next and educational work of the Agricultural Department. But the farmer has no harbors and but few rivers to be improved. He has no fine postoffice [sic] buildings to "view with pride." He has been the beneficiary directly of but few appropriations for public works generally. For this reason he feels that Federal subsidies to the states for road building cannot be consistently assailed by the urban population. [J. F. E., "Wilson Regime Most Helpful To farmers," *The Baltimore Sun*, September 8, 1916]

The *Sun*, in an editorial, pointed out that the first Congress of President Wilson's term, the 63rd Congress, had a "remarkable record of legislation" that many observers thought the 64th Congress could not match. Now, with the 64th Congress adjourned, the *Sun* declared that "its record in some respects is even more remarkable than that of the preceding one. It listed many laws, the first being legislation providing for "the national defense on a larger scale than ever before in the history of the country." The second item was a rural credits act, while the third was: "It has provided for Federal aid to the states in construction of rural post roads."

Based on this record, the editorial concluded:

[It] must inevitably bring the voters of the country face to face with the question whether they desire to continue in office an administration that can produce such results as these. ["An Amazing Record," *The Baltimore Sun*, September 10, 1916]

Professor Charles W. Eliot, President Wilson's friend from the Bar Harbor days, published a lengthy article in the October 1916 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* about the achievements of the President and his party. The *Times* reprinted the article, which discussed achievements in many areas, including agriculture:

An important achievement of the Democratic Congress has been the passage of a good roads law giving Federal aid in the construction of roads, provided that the States invest dollar for dollar in their construction, and make satisfactory arrangement for their maintenance. Good roads not only facilitate the marketing of all sorts of products, but promote profitable and pleasant school life in rural districts, and contribute to make comfortable and attractive the wholesome country life which produces a healthy and vigorous population. [Eliot, Charles W., "What Wilson Has Done," *The New York Times*, October 1, 1916]

Secretary Houston issued a statement in mid-September that was picked up by many newspapers, including the *Sun*, which printed it in whole, and the *Times*, which excerpted it. The Federal Aid Road Act and the Cooperative Agricultural Extension Act (The Smith-Lever Act, approved by President Wilson on May 8, 1914, PL 63-95) had, Secretary Houston wrote, established “a new principle in American Government, the principle of co-operation between Federal and State officers”:

They are the only laws I recall which recognize and insist upon this principle. They are, therefore, very significant. Heretofore, Federal and State officers have too frequently looked at one another across the line, sometimes with apprehension as to what the other was going to do or think; sometimes with jealousy, not infrequently with friction.

The Federal Aid Road Act provided for the appropriation of \$75 million for Federal-aid projects, with the States responsible for providing an additional

\$75 million, on a 50-50 basis (\$10 million, as noted, was for forest roads). That was important, but what really appealed to Secretary Houston was that this amount was “relatively insignificant in comparison with amounts the states now are annually expending and will spend during the period covered by the act.” He added, “the majority of people do not realize that the nation is expending approximately \$250,000,000 a year for roads”:

The main question that I am immediately concern with, that the people of the nation are immediately concerned with, is whether we shall get a dollar’s result for every dollar we expend for roads. I am quite sure that if we do so, and we can convince the people that we have done so, they will be willing to put much more money into good roads where they are needed. Therefore, the matter of administering this law, of devising good road systems, of careful selection of roads, of formulating projects, or developing plans and specifications, of having all matters considered on their merit by competent men, seems to me to lie at the root of this business.

If, as the result of this act, the people are induced fully to realize the necessity of placing skillful and experienced men in charge of road building and road maintenance, a great advance will have been made and the efforts of those who labored to secure the legislation will have been rewarded.

To participate in the program, each State would have to have a State highway agency capable of meeting the program’s requirements. The expert engineers the State highway agencies employed for the work would also work on highway

projects funded solely by the State. In short, Secretary Houston wrote, for the expenditure of such large amounts of Federal and State funds, the 1916 Act required “the employment in every state of experts, of real experts” to prepare the plans at the State level and to review them at the Federal level:

I am hopeful that great benefit will accrue to the nation from the wise and efficient administration of this act. It is one of a series of measures recently conceived and enacted for the development of rural life. All these lie in the field of distribution as does this road act, which lies at the foundation of satisfactory and orderly marketing. [Houston, David F., “Federal Aid For Roads Means Expert Building,” *The Baltimore Sun*, September 21, 1916; “Seek Wilson Votes On Good Roads Laws,” *The New York Times*, October 29, 1916. Secretary Houston’s statement about the Federal-aid highway program is based on his August 17 speech to State highway officials who had come to Washington to review and comment on draft regulations implementing the Federal Aid Road Act.]

The Washington Post cited the Federal Aid Road Act in its editorial on the two candidates for President:

The system inaugurated in the Federal aid to road building will bring the States closer to the national government and at the same time bring about greater uniformity. Expedients of this kind could be adopted with reference to other disbursements of the government not purely national in character, and if accompanied by a budget system, which would let the people know where their money goes, there would be a noticeable improvement in the administration of public affairs. [“Government Economy,” *The Washington Post*, November 3, 1916]

Chairman McCormick of the Democratic National Committee issued a statement on November 2 listing the reasons why Progressives, the party that had nominated former President Roosevelt in 1912, should vote for President Wilson. Reason number four: “The good roads law, which extends Federal aid to road building, thereby insuring the extension of the rural free delivery service.” [“Asks Moose Votes On Wilson Record,” *The New York Times*, November 3, 1916]

President Wilson’s Front Porch Campaign

While touring the country in August, Hughes gave a speech in Butte, Montana, accusing the Democratic Party of sectionalism, citing the many Democratic Representatives from the South who chair committees and retain their chairmanships through seniority rules. He did not criticize the chairmen personally, “but I say that an administration under which too many of the committees of the House of Representatives are represented in one section in that

manner is a sectional administration. It is not an American administration in the broad and proper sense given to that word.” In particular, the southern chairmen controlled the committees with oversight of the government’s purse strings, by which he meant “pork.” [“Sees Sectional Rule,” *The Washington Post*, August 13, 1916]

Sectionalism was one of many issues Hughes would raise during the campaign, of course, but President Wilson, who had no control over the selection of committee chairmen in Congress, wanted to address the point. While Congress was in session, he held back and let commentators debate the issue.

By mid-September, President Wilson’s sister, Mrs. Anne W. Howe, was critically ill from peritonitis. On September 11, he and Mrs. Wilson went on the *Mayflower* to New London, Connecticut, to see her. Her physician advised him to return to Shadow Lawn, because she might live for days. Back at Shadow Lawn, President Wilson kept in touch with New London by telegram while resuming discussions with his political team, deciding to delay his front porch campaign until the following weekend.

On September 14:

He did several hours work at Shadow Lawn today before motoring over to the executive offices, and succeeded in clearing up most of the tasks which have been accumulating here since he left for New London on Monday.

A telegram from Mrs. Howe’s physician indicated she was steadily sinking. “The Presidential yacht, *Mayflower*, is being kept off Sandy Hook, forty minutes by automobile from here [Long Branch], so that the President can hurry to New London if necessary. [“Wilson To Accept Hughes Challenge,” *The New York Times*, September 15, 1916]

On Saturday, September 16, President Wilson received a telegram advising that his sister had passed away earlier in the day. After a day in seclusion, President and Mrs. Wilson, along with others, boarded a train for Columbia, South Carolina, where Mrs. Howe was to be buried. [“President Starts On Funeral Trip,” *The New York Times*, September 18, 1916]

The train carrying the Presidential party and Mrs. Howe’s body arrived in Columbia on September 18 shortly before noon. At the President’s request, city and State officials treated the visit as personal, without official welcomes. Upon arrival, the party went by automobile to the First Presbyterian Church. People lined the streets, but did not cheer as the Presidential party’s vehicles passed by:

After the funeral the President took an automobile ride around Columbia, visiting relatives and places he had known in his boyhood days

On the ride the President visited Mrs. James Woodrow, an aunt, who welcomed him as “Tommy” and remarked to Mrs. Wilson: “Since he took to writing books he calls himself Woodrow.”

Mr. Wilson also called at the Columbia Theological Seminary, and was shown the chair and room used by his father as an instructor there Afterward he walked to the house planned and built by his parents and in which he lived for several years. There he talked with four boys who now live in the house. Dr. Grayson asked one of them if he expected to be President.

“I would not wish anything like that on you,” said Mr. Wilson.

The Presidential party boarded the train in the evening, scheduled to arrive in Long Branch at 2 p.m., then travel to Shadow Lawn by automobile. [“President’s Sister Buried,” *The New York Times*, September 19, 1916]

President Wilson made his first campaign speech on the front porch of Shadow Lawn on Saturday, September 23, before a crowd of nearly 2,000 people. He devoted much of the speech to defending the 8-hour work day for the railroad industry that he had signed into law as part of his effort to prevent a strike, a measure that Evans had criticized. [“8-Hour Workday Not Arbitrable, Wilson Asserts,” *The New York Times*, September 24, 1916]

Although President Wilson’s intervention to secure the Lincoln Highway for Baltimore and Washington had not been successful, he did not hold the rejection against the Lincoln Highway Association. On September 26, 1916, with his own reelection in doubt, he motored from Shadow Lawn to Princeton to cast his vote in New Jersey’s Democratic primary. According to the Lincoln Highway Association’s official history:

In 1916, while Woodrow Wilson was President of the United States, he spoke at exercises held to stimulate interest in the highway at Princeton, New Jersey, and planted a tree at the roadside to aid in its beautification. [*The Lincoln Highway*, page 106]

On September 30, before 3,000 people gathered at Shadow Lawn, he delivered his first fiercely partisan speech. The *Times* reported that he spoke for 55 minutes:

The President has been renowned for the intellectual quality of his speeches. Today he took his place beside other great leaders of his party who have won fame for their ability to play on the emotions of their hearers.

More than 3,000 persons followed his every word, laughed when he wanted them to laugh, cheered when he wanted them to cheer, and frowned with anger when it suited the President that they should frown over the iniquities of Republicans. [“Wilson Thrills Crowd; Bitterly Flays Opponents,” *The New York Times*, October 1, 1916]

Over the next 2 weeks, President Wilson spent most of his time at Shadow Lawn, with occasional trips to major cities for nonpolitical speeches. He resisted his aides’ efforts to convince him to address the criticisms from Hughes and go on a campaign tour.

Instead, he began writing letters to groups as part of his reelection campaign. For example, his first letter went to Miss Leona L. Larrabee, president of the Women’s Democratic Club of Portland, Oregon. He regretted, he wrote, that “extension of the suffrage to women,” which he was “a very sincere advocate of,” should become a partisan issue “at a time so critical as this, when the question is about to be determined whether we shall keep the nation upon its present terms of peace and good will with the world or turn to radical changes of policy which may alter the whole aspect of the nation’s life.” [“Wilson Thanks Women,” *The Baltimore Sun*, September 29, 1916]

In his September 30 speech at Shadow Lawn to 3,000 people, he warned:

If they are going to change our foreign policy, in what direction are they going to change it? There is only one choice as against peace, and that is war! The certain prospect of the success of the Republic Party is that we shall be drawn in one form or another into the embroilments of the European war, and that to the south of us the force of the United States will be used to produce in Mexico the kind of law and order which some American investors in Mexico consider most to their advantage. [“Wilson Thrills Crowd; Bitterly Flays Opponents,” *The New York Times*, October 1, 1916]

On October 8, President Wilson and his staff were debating what action to take, if any, after German submarines had sunk four British ships and two neutral steamships off the coast of New England. His previously planned meeting on October 9 with the German ambassador, Count Johann Von Bernstorff, at Shadow Lawn took on new significance.

During this period, news reports occasionally mentioned that President and

Mrs. Wilson had been golfing, but carried few references to automobile trip. Reports on October 8 were an exception:

Mr. Wilson spent most of today quietly at Shadow Lawn, but this afternoon he took an automobile ride. ["President Silent on U-Boat Raids Pending Receipt of Navy Reports," *The New York Times*, October 9, 1916]

The meeting with the German ambassador lasted only 15 minutes and he "was smiling when he left." He claimed to have no knowledge of the recent attacks off Nantucket, but told reporters, "Germany has promised to conduct her submarine warfare in accordance with the rules of cruiser warfare and Germany always keeps her promises. I am convinced that the operations of the submarines off Nantucket yesterday were conducted entirely within the bounds provided by Germany's assurances."

President Wilson had intended to leave Shadow Lawn to attend game 3 of the World Series in Brooklyn, between the Boston Red Sox and the Brooklyn Dodgers (also called the Robins). However, he changed plans to remain at Shadow Lawn for further discussions of the submarine situation. (The Red Sox, with help from pitcher Babe Ruth, won the series, four games to one.) ["Conference at Shadow Lawn Today on U-Boat Raid," *The Washington Post*, October 10, 1916]

The Good Roads Speech in Indianapolis

On October 11, President Wilson, his wife, Secretary Tumulty, and Dr. Grayson, along with Secret Service agents and reporters, boarded a train for Indianapolis, where he would deliver two nonpolitical speeches. He had considered canceling the trip in favor of continued discussions of the German situation, but he decided to keep his speech commitments.

When the train stopped in cities along the way, President Wilson appeared on the rear platform where he waved to the crowds, but refused to make any speeches. In Philadelphia, for example, "He remained on the platform for fifteen minutes shaking hands with men and women. The cheering was renewed as the train pulled out." By telegram, Indiana officials urged him to take a political stance in his speech, but he declined. While on the train, according to news reports, "Mr. Wilson worked until late tonight on the two speeches he will deliver tomorrow." ["Wilson Speeding To Indianapolis," *The New York Times*, October 12, 1916]

The occasion for the visit was the centennial of Indiana statehood, dating to December 11, 1816. In a week during which each day was dedicated to a special purpose, October 12 was designated "Historical Highway Day." A history of the centennial quoted Dr. I. S. Harold, the State chairman:

Adopting the slogan "Let us dedicate with newer meaning our highways to the memory of the brave pioneers, and so wisely plan for their rebuilding

that they shall become a real heritage to all future generations,” October twelfth was set aside for the celebration of “historical highway day” in connection with the State Centennial. The date seemed unusually appropriate since it was a national holiday—Discovery [Columbus] Day, a State centennial day, and a state highway day over the old historic National Road

As President Wilson had always been a good roads enthusiast and had encouraged road legislation in Congress and finally a bill as passed appropriating \$85,000,000, to assist States in building state and national roads, to be known as post roads, it was determined if possible to secure him for the day. A letter was written to him by the Chairman and the Governor of the State. His first answer was rather discouraging, but after almost continuous negotiations and considerable pressure being brought to bear, word was received that he would be in Indianapolis that day for two addresses. [Lindley, Harlow, editor, *The Indiana Centennial 1916 – A Record of the Celebration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of Indiana’s Admission to Statehood*, The Indiana Historical Commission, 1919, pages 300-301]

President Wilson was going to address two groups. His first speech would be to 5,000 good roads advocates at the auditorium of the Indiana Fair Grounds. He then would speak to farmers gathered at Tomlinson Hall.

His train arrived at Union Station in Indianapolis around 11:30 a.m. The thousands surrounding the station cheered as the Pennsylvania Railroad train pulled into the station. Governor and Mrs. Samuel M. Ralston, Mr. Carl G. Fisher of the Lincoln Highway Association and his wife, and others boarded the train to greet the President and escort him to the Claypool Hotel for a luncheon in his honor.

The Indianapolis News reported:

Mr. Fisher, marshal of the parade, led the escort, and the mounted police, the police band and the police marching squad were close to the President. Senator and Mrs. Taggart and other members of the reception committee followed in a long line of automobile.

The route was lined with cheering citizens. The *News* account of the day added:

A warm welcome was given to Mrs. Wilson, wife of the President, by the women of Indianapolis and Indiana From the minute she stepped from the train until she left the city she was the cynosure of all eyes – men and women. Gowned in a smart tailored gown of black satin, with white

Georgette cuffs and collar, and a small tight fitting black hat and sable fur, Mrs. Wilson was a beautiful picture as she stood in the receiving line at the Claypool hotel with the President, Governor and Mrs. Ralston, and Mr. and Mrs. Carl Fisher. Her dark eyes and beautiful complexion are youthful. She greeted each person with a charming smile and strong handclasp.

During the luncheon, President Wilson spoke only briefly:

Now, when the people give the sort of greetings they have given me today, I cannot help having the hope that they approve the spirit that I have tried to express with regard to national affairs. I do not take these greetings as personal, because I think no man in the country has a more distinct impression that he is merely administering a great office and does not himself constitute the Presidency than I have; and that the President of this country is intended to be something more than an administrator. It is his duty to try to express the spirit of the nation.

So when I see the friendly looking faces all along the street, there creeps into my heart the hope that I have expressed the spirit of the nation.

After the luncheon, the Presidential party and other officials returned to their automobiles for a trip to the reviewing stand for the centennial highway parade, organized by the Hoosier Motor Club, the Marion County Good Roads Association, and the Marion County Centennial Highway Committee:

The President continually bowed and stood up, removing his hat, during the progress of the ride from the Claypool to the reviewing stand. Secret Service men, walking, guarded the car on the trip. People in the windows of the buildings downtown clapped and shouted to the President.

It was quiet from Washington and Pennsylvania Streets to the first alley north of that corner. Then the President, in response to a call, lifted his hat, and another demonstration took place, which lasted as the head of the parade swung into Market street.

The balcony at English's hotel was crowded until another person could not have found standing room. A great demonstration swept the crowd gathered there as the President's car passed. The demonstration swept on around the circle among the thousands and came to its climax when the President descended from the car at the reviewing stand.

The boom of a cannon signaled the start of the parade shortly after 1 p.m. Good roads advocates from eastern Indiana came from one direction, while the western Indiana advocates came from another. With the Presidential party and State and

local dignitaries on the reviewing stand, Fisher, the chief marshal, waited at Meridian and Washington Streets (Washington Street was the old National Road). Fisher directed the two lines of automobiles into a two-abreast formation and led them into North Meridian Street toward the Indiana State Soldiers and Sailors Monument installed in the circle in 1902:

There the parties of the President and the Governor waited to review the parade. As the two lines approached the reviewing stand they parted, one line moving east of the Monument, the other to the west, joining again at Meridian street, north of the Monument. The way then led northward in Meridian street to Sixteenth street, west to Capitol avenue, north to Maple road, east to the east entrance to the fair ground.

There never was so many automobiles in Indianapolis before. When

Carl G. Fisher, leading the parade, drew his car up at Meridian and Washington streets, he did not know what a parade he was handling. Behind him in Meridian street a crowd of suffragists waited with banners flying. To the west a long line of automobiles could be seen and some confusion was caused when visiting motorists got tangled with the President's party, but this soon was adjusted.

Then from the east came another long line of good roads boosters. From practically every county east of Michigan road there were automobiles flying their county and town banners. Drum corps and bands were intermingled with the cars. The two lines of cars drew up behind Fisher, the suffragists got right in behind the chief marshal and the parade began. The police succeeded in separating the two lines and sent them toward the reviewing stand two abreast. The National good roads boosters, interested in the resurfacing of the National road between Richmond and Terre Haute came several hundred strong. The ocean-to-ocean highway boosters were out in equally strong numbers, and the Dixie highway and the Hoosier-Dixie highway had strong representation. Practically every main highway in Indiana had delegations here to let President Wilson know that they support good roads

The reviewing parties remained in the stand until, on signal from

Mr. Fisher, they entered automobiles and were driven north on Meridian street, the cars of the President's party passing between the long lines of automobiles in the parade.

The party left the reviewing stand around 2:15 p.m. Throughout the parade, the President “bowed and smiled at frequent intervals.” [All quotes not otherwise cited are from coverage of the visit in *The Indianapolis News*, October 12, 1916]

American Motorist summarized:

Far in excess of a hundred thousand people saw the parade, did honor to the Chief Executive of the Nation, and helped in one way and another to swell the good roads shout. In double columns it required over an hour and a half for the self-propelled parade to pass the reviewing stand, where President Wilson had as his reviewing companions, Governor Ralston, Mayor [Joseph E.] Bell, and former Mayor [Charles A.] Bookwalker, flanked by other Indiana notables.

The First Lady of the Land was an interested observer of the exhilarating proceedings, accompanied by the wife of the Governor and other Hoosier social leaders.

The magazine also reported that at one point, Judge J. M. Lowe, president of the National Old Trails Highway Association, had approached the reviewing stand:

At the reviewing stand the President had received from Judge Lowe the “Van Buren gavel,” made from a plank dug up from the old plank road that formerly was a part of the National Road, which is now the main thoroughfare through Indianapolis. According to the Judge, Van Buren was not favorable to extending Federal aid to roads, so it was contrived to dump him out in a famous mudhole on the Old Trails Road in Indiana. His harrowing experience in that well planned accident changed his mind. He signed a bill which permitted paving the particular mudhole with heavy oak planks. Recently, in grading this road to rebuild it, one of the planks was dug up and the gavel presented to President Wilson was made from it. [“Network of Roads Will Release Locked-Up Riches of the Nation, Says the President,” *American Motorist*, November 1916, pages 12-13, 54; the plank incident is on page 13]

(Judge Lowe referred to this incident on other occasions, but had several details wrong. President Martin Van Buren had left office when he took the stage along the National Road to Indianapolis to deliver a speech in June 1842 as part of an effort to build support for another Presidential run. As President, he had opposed a bill funding improvement of the road in Indiana. Versions of the incident vary, but the stagecoach in which the former President went out of control on a mudhole along the road approaching Plainfield and ended up against an elm tree. Climbing out of the overturned vehicle, Van Buren walked through mud to Fisher’s Tavern in Plainfield in Hendricks County. The site of the “Van Buren

Elm” is noted by a roadside marker on a boulder in front of the Friends Meetinghouse in Plainfield.

(As for the plank road Judge Lowe mentioned, the plank road craze began in the mid-1840s, imported from Russia, and lasted only about a decade, at which point railroads had taken travelers away from the roads while the wooden planks had rotted at a time when toll revenue was not enough to pay for their replacement. As Thomas J. Schlereth reported in his book about U.S. 40 in Indiana, the State granted “control of the National Road through Hancock, Marion, Hendricks, and Putnam counties . . . in 1949 to the Central Plank Road Company, which proceeded to cover the road with oak planks and put up a series of tollgates and tollhouses.” [Schlereth, Thomas J., *U.S. 40: A Roadscape of the American Experience*, Indiana Historical Society, 1985, page 76])

The newspaper set the stage for the speech at the Coliseum on the fairgrounds before an estimated 5,000 people:

President Wilson faced a nonpartisan crowd at the Coliseum when he arrived to make his address. The building was handsomely decorated with flags, and on the front of the railing around the balcony was a line of ninety-two banners, each bearing the name of an Indiana county.

The doors of the coliseum were opened an hour before the arrival of the President and his party in order that there be no jam at the doors when he arrived. There was nothing about the coliseum or the crowd to indicate any politics. The subject of better roads and highways is a non-political proposition in Indiana.

Governor Ralston introduced President Wilson, who delivered the following address:

Governor Ralston, My Fellow Citizens:

I am here because I am interested in the cause of good roads, and because I am interested in the State of Indiana. I was very much interested that this day, devoted to the cause of good roads, should fall in your Centennial Year. It made me think of many of the processes of our national history. Roads have so knit communities together, and communities into counties, and counties into States, and States into the nation, that we must learn how to think, and act, and do things together.

This country was built up without any roads; these prairies, these hillsides and valleys were filled with population in advance of which went no roadmaker, but only the pioneer, making his way over the trackless wilderness, with only his gun, only a little to eat, only a few companions.

And now that you are 100 years old, after these unassisted processes created the State of Indiana, you are turning your thoughts to the necessary means by which you are going to knit the State of Indiana into a unit, and knit her with the rest of the nation, and set afoot processes which will make a new spirit, because of the new intercourse throughout the great continent which we have conquered by our enterprise.

The arguments for good roads from the material point of view, are very obvious. It is true, I dare say, that we had to wait for the rapidly moving automobile to create a large enough number of persons interested in good roads, which would run beyond mere neighborhoods; and I am very grateful to the owners of automobiles, and to the members of automobile associations that they should have insisted with such success, upon the creation of highways.

I note, incidentally, that they use them up almost as fast as we make them, but I will forgive them for that, if they stimulate us to the effort to make them, and to keep them in usable condition.

But, after all, the highway is not intended, first of all, and chief of all, for the pleasure vehicle. It is not intended for the mere traveler. It is not intended for the mere tourist. It is not made in order that some company of leisurely people may travel from coast to coast of this great continent. It is made because we need it in all the material uses of our lives. We need it first of all, and chief of all, in order that our resources may be made use of, for they can not be made use of until they are got to market and you can not get them to market unless you can get them from the mine and the farm, to the nearest railway station.

You can not know what the resources of the country are unless the country is covered over with a network of roads which will release all the locked up riches of all our country sides. Why, there are little pockets in the mountains in some places in America, where there are the richest sort of crops, where nature has made largest of her gifts of fertile soil and genial climate and abundant rainfall, but where they can never get their crops to market, where they burn their corn, so much of it as they can not feed to their cattle, where they raise what they do raise for the consumption of their families, merely, and contribute nothing to the markets of the nation.

For a great many years this country was covered over with segregated, separated, isolated neighborhoods, to which in the winter you could not get, because if you tried it your wheels would go to the hub in the mud, and where, consequently, communities were shut into their own life and to their own separated thought. It is perfectly obvious that you have got to

have an intricate and perfect network of roads throughout the length and breadth of this great continent before you will have released the energies of America.

Good roads are necessary for every practical aspect of our lives—to draw neighbors together, to create a community of feeling, to create those arteries which may be compared to the arteries of the human body. The blood of the nation will not flow in harmonious concord unless it can flow in intimate sympathy. And so the argument, the material argument, the argument about markets and crops and the products of the mines, sinks into comparative unimportance when you consider the spiritual things that you are doing in making roads. You know there is an old saying that the lines between sections are obliterated only by the feet that cross them.

There is a very genial saying of a great English writer, that he never could hate a man he knew; and I dare say that every man and woman here knows the truth of that. I want to tell you, now, that I have loved some great rascals. I have tried to get them into jail, but I have been very fond of them, and it is very difficult indeed to get close to a man and not find some contact of sympathy and community of thought.

We are all human beings; we all touch each other at the heart; we are all alike down at the bottom. We may have had different environments; we may have been brought up differently; we may have been trained differently; but when you strip these things off, there, at the core, we are the same kind of people. Sectionalism is based upon the radical danger of every nation, namely, ignorance. The only thing that breeds darkness in the world is ignorance. The only thing that really blinds us is not knowing what we are talking about. The only thing that binds a nation together is the knowledge of its several parts of each other.

My fellow-citizens, I need not tell you that I did not come here to talk politics, but there is one thing that is pertinent in this connection, which I can not deny myself the privilege of saying. Any man who revives the issue of sectionalism in this country is unworthy of the confidence of the nation. He shows himself a provincial; he shows that he himself does not know the various sections of his own country; he shows that he has shut his own heart up in a little province, and that those who do not seek the special interests of that province are, to him, sectional, while he alone is national. That is the depth of anti-patriotic feeling.

And so one of my interests in roads is that I want to see that thing carried on which I have seen worked to the benefit of this nation in so many parts of it. Take my own State of New Jersey. We have built a great many fine

roads in New Jersey. Now, most people know New Jersey only between New York and Trenton. If you look at New Jersey on the map, it is shaped like a bag with a string in the middle and the Pennsylvania railway from New York to Trenton is the string. New Jersey does not lie along that shortest line. It lies among beautiful hills and lakes and streams in the north and interesting stretches of level and watered country in the south, where the characteristic populations of the State are. Now, good roads have discovered the people of New Jersey to the people who live in other States. By building good roads in New Jersey we have made it possible that people everywhere should know the people of the State of New Jersey.

Wherever you have not got a good road you have created a provincial and sectional population. Wherever you have a good road, you have tied a thong between that community and the nation to which it belongs. And that is my interest in good roads, for, my fellow citizens, my present interest is chiefly in the nationalization of America.

We have created a great people. At least, if I may put it so, we have brought together all the elements, all the component parts, all the necessary characters and industries and material resources of a great nation. And we suddenly find that we are face to face with the problem of assembling these elements, in the sense in which the mechanic assembles the parts of a machine, and, having assembled those elements, to put them together for the creation of one incomparable force, to which the world shall hereafter look for most of its forward impulse, for most of its ideal principles, for most of its example in the practice of liberty. And, therefore, the thing that I am more interested in than anything else in these days is the forces that make for drawing America together into a great spiritual unity.

You will notice all sorts of eddies in our life. Here the stream seems to be turning about; there the stream seems to be running forward; here there is an obstacle; there a free channel, and it sometimes looks as if this turning, whirling movement of our life merely made of us a whirlpool in which every conceivable element out of every population of the world constituted a part. Men look upon it with confusion. They say: "What is the pattern of this life? Whither does it tend? Where are we going?"

Now, my fellow-citizens, we have had time and opportunity until the present to do pretty much what we wanted in America, and to do different things in different parts of America, but just so soon as this great European war is over America has got to stand for one thing, and only one thing in the world, and she must be ready with united forces.

We can not play with the elements of our life any more. We can not first combine them this way and then combine them that way. We have got to combine them in one way, with one definite purpose, and then we can go full steam ahead under expert leadership along the new line of a new age; but so long as we are playing with the elements, so long as we have contrary sympathies, so long as one body of us is pulling in one direction and another body in another direction, we can not do anything either for ourselves or for the world.

America came into existence, my fellow-citizens, not in order to show the world the most notable example it had ever had of the accumulation and use of material wealth, but in order to show the way to mankind in every part of the world to justice, to freedom and liberty. So that the words I want you to carry in your mind in connection with this good roads cause are these:

First, Nationalization—Getting all the fibers of this great vital people united in a single organism.

Second, Mobilization—Getting them so related to each other, so co-ordinated, so organized, so led, so united, that when they move they move as a single great, irresistible conquering force; and the third word that I want you to consider is the word that I suppose affords the key to doing these things; that word is the word "cooperation."

I wish that every one of us could fix in his mind the difference between the way we have been trying to do things and the way we ought to do things. We have been trying to do things by combining, by setting off one powerful group against another, by setting up groups in particular industries or spheres of our life, which try to exclude all other groups by the power or by the method of their destroying competition. That is not the way to build a nation together; that is the way to build it into warring elements. Instead of exclusive combination, I want to see universal cooperation.

There are good signs in the air. Have you not noticed how almost every great industry, every great profession every year holds a congress of some sort. Why, even the advertising men, whom we thought were the sharpest competitors in America, have a national association in which they cooperate. For what purpose? For the purpose of getting ahead of each other? No. For the purpose of guiding one another and setting up standards; and the chief standard they have adopted is the word "truth,"

that they won't fool the people to whom they address advertisements; that they will tell the truth and prosper on the truth.

Then you will find men in highly competitive engineering industries who hold their annual conventions to tell each other the secrets of their success, to make a great profession which is united in the use of the most efficient and intelligent means of achievement. And so, in profession after profession—the most reticent, so far as I can see, being the legal profession—in profession after profession, men are getting together by way of cooperation instead of by way of mutual destruction.

I hold this to be a happy omen. I see the growth in America of this conception of solidarity, of the interest of each being the interest of all, and the interest of each growing out of the interest of all.

There is one field in which we are particularly sluggards, in respect to this. I mean the relations between capital and labor. Nothing can be for the interest of capital that is not for the interest of labor, and nothing can be in the interest of labor which is not in the interest of capital. If men want to get rich, they must have human relationships with those who help them to get rich. That is a lesson that men have been exceedingly slow to learn—slower than any other lesson of cooperation in America. I pray God that their eyes may be opened and that they may see that the future of this country lies in their cooperation, open, candid and cordial, and not in their antagonism, and that if they will once get together and plan in the same spirit the same thing, the industry of America will go forward by leaps and bounds such as we have never yet conceived.

Sometimes it is necessary, in order to arrest attention, to pull men up with a round turn and say, "Stop, look, listen," because presently, if you don't, the great forces of society will correct the things that have gone wrong. Society is the jury. The parties are not going to settle; the nation is going to settle, and I am counsel for the nation.

So, my fellow-citizens, you see how this little plant of the cause of the good roads spreads into a great tree, bearing upon its boughs the fruits of the savor of life. We have got to know each other; we have got to cooperate with each other; we have got to stand together; we have got to have the same conception of our life and destiny; we have got to think the same thoughts and purpose the same purposes. That is all that politics is for. As a contest for office, it is contemptible, but as a combination of thoughtful men to accomplish something for the nation, it is honorable. If I could not be associated with a congress that did something, I would quit. If I did not think that making speeches contributed a little bit to the

common thought, that had nothing to do with selfish purpose, but had everything to do with combined purpose, I would not make any speeches.

Speeches are not interesting because of the man who makes them or the words he uses. They are interesting in proportion as the people who hear believe what he says.

I remember once, after a meeting in which a good many men who were more or less insurgent against society were gathered, a great, hard-fisted fellow came up to me and took my hand and said: "Well, sir, I didn't agree with a word you said, but I thought you meant it."

I said: "What do you mean? Do you mean that most of the men that come here do not mean what they say?"

"Yes, sir," he said, "I mean just that; they talk through their hats."

Now talking through the hat ought to be a dead industry. It ought to be discouraged by silence and empty halls and every man ought to have as a motto over the stage from which he speaks these simple and familiar words, "Put up or shut up."

I am ready to take my own medicine. If I don't put up, I am ready to shut up. (Calls of "go ahead, you are all right!")

You know, we were talking about good roads and you are getting off the road. I want to leave a very solemn thought in your minds. America is about to experience her rebirth. We have been making America in pieces for the sake of the pieces. Now we have got to construct her entire for the sake of the whole and for the sake of the world; because, ladies and gentlemen, there is a task ahead of us for which we must be very soberly prepared. I have said and shall say again, that when the great present war is over, it will be the duty of America to join with the other nations of the world in some kind of a league for the maintenance of peace.

Now America was not a party to this war, and the only terms upon which we will be admitted to a league, almost all the other powerful members of which are engaged in the war and made infinite sacrifices when we apparently made none, are the only terms which we desire, namely, that America shall not stand for national aggression, but shall stand for the just conditions and bases of peace, for the competitions of merit alone and for the generous rivalry of liberty.

It is now up to us to say whether we are going to play in the world at large the role which the makers of this great nation boasted and predicted we

should always play among the nations of the world. Are we ready always to be the friends of justice, of fairness, of liberty, of peace and of those accommodations which rest upon justice and peace? In these two trying years that have just gone by we have foreborne; we have not allowed provocation to disturb our judgment. We have seen to it that America kept her poise when all the rest of the world seemed to have lost its poise. Only upon the terms of retaining that poise and using the splendid force which always comes with poise, can we hope to play the beneficent part in the history of the world which I have just now intimated.

So, my fellow countrymen, build up these new roads in the construction of which the federal government is now to play so large a part, in the spirit of nationality, the spirit of cooperation, the spirit of liberty, the power which only a free people know how to exercise.

As President Wilson left the podium, the “crowd swarmed up to try to shake hands with the President, and it was only with difficulty he was able to get to the car waiting to carry him to Tomlinson Hall, where he made an address before a gathering of farmers.” [“Wilson Urges Unity of Nation,” *The New York Times*, October 13, 1916]

The meeting in Tomlinson Hall had begun before President Wilson’s arrival. *American Motorist* pointed out that the meeting “could not escape from the good roads atmosphere, for the meeting had been opened with a talk by Luke W. Duffy, a well known Indiana highways advocate, and Judge J. M. Lowe.” Judge Lowe was speaking about the history of the National Road when President Wilson arrived. President Wilson’s speech discussed the role of the Federal Government in aiding farming, activities of the Department of Agriculture, including institution of parcel post “whereby the more perishable kind of farm products can be rapidly shipped and distributed in moderately small quantities. He also discussed the Federal Reserve and the Farmers’ Loan and Credit Bank.

After his speech, the President and his party returned to Union Station for the train, which left at 5:45 p.m. for the return to Shadow Lawn.

[In addition to *The Indianapolis News* and *American Motorist*, the account of the visit to Indianapolis includes material from: “Wilson Urges Unity of Nation,” *The New York Times*, October 13, 1916; “Wilson Urges Need of Unity,” *The Baltimore Sun*, October 13, 1916; “Condemns Revival of Sectional Talk,” *The Evening Star*, October 12, 1916; “Scores Sectionalism,” *The Washington Post*, October 13, 1916. Many of these newspaper articles included excerpts from both speeches. The complete good roads speech can be found on pages 302-310 of *The Indiana Centennial 1916*.]

In the election, Indiana was considered a toss-up State, with Democrats and Republicans having reason to think their candidate would win – or lose. In the end, Indiana gave its 15 electoral votes to the Republican, Charles Evans Hughes, and favorite son Fairbanks. [“Indiana Leaders Unable To Predict,” *The Sunday Star*, October 15, 1916]

The Second Term

At around 7 a.m. on November 7, President and Mrs. Wilson left Shadow Lawn for the automobile ride to Princeton. Arriving a little after 9, he cast his vote in the old fire engine house where he had cast all his votes since moving to the city. He needed several minutes to complete his ballot because of the other votes on it.

A newspaper report described the scene:

At the entrance of the Princeton campus a drummer stood awaiting the President’s coming, and as his automobile drove up the drummer beat a tattoo. Almost instantly students appeared from every direction. They swarmed over the campus and rushed toward the voting place. As

Mr. Wilson alighted from his automobile, the Princeton yell went up with a resounding “Wilson, Wilson, Wilson!” at the end.

While the President was inside voting the students continued to arrive and massed in the street outside. They cheered almost continuously while a large corps of moving picture operators and photographers took up strategic positions. A small opening in a window enabled some of the students to peer inside the engine house, and they pushed and jostled for a glimpse of the President. Mrs. Wilson sat in the automobile and laughed at the crowd.

When the President emerged the students again cheered him and called “Speech! Speech!” But the president only shook his head and smiled. He greeted several in the crowd by name. [“Wilson Votes At Princeton,” *The Baltimore Sun*, November 8, 1916]

The President and Mrs. Wilson motored back to Shadow Lawn where they spent the rest of the day. Wilson’s representatives in the States telephoned the results to Tumulty, who forwarded the important results to Wilson.

As the evening evolved, newspapers reported that early results gave the election to Hughes and Fairbanks. Even New Jersey went for Hughes. Tumulty issued a statement indicating that President Wilson would not concede the election until results in several battleground States were certain, and the results from the

western States were in. Tumulty said the President was confident the western States would give him the victory. Berg wrote:

Wilson laughed over the phone and said, "Well, Tumulty, it begins to look as if we have been badly licked." Tumulty heard no sadness in his boss's voice and offered more positive signs from the West. "Tumulty, you are an optimist," Wilson replied. "It begins to look as if the defeat might be overwhelming. The only thing I am sorry for, and that cuts me to the quick, is that the people apparently misunderstood us. But I have no regrets. We have tried to do our duty."

Shadow Lawn darkened. At last, Wilson said, "Well, I will not send Mr. Hughes a telegram of congratulation tonight, for things are not settled." And then his face turned grave as he acknowledged the inevitability of Hughes's bringing the country into the war. Hughes himself remained properly silent that night.

President Wilson went to bed, falling asleep promptly, despite his belief that he had lost.

His wife could not sleep. When news arrived in the night that the western results looked promising, she opted to let her husband sleep. [Berg, 414-415]

The results were so close that in the morning, some newspapers declared Hughes the winner.

President and Mrs. Wilson went golfing in Spring Lake.

On November 10, 2 days after the day of the election, resolution of the California vote totals tipped the election to President Wilson, who won the State by 3,806 votes. As Berg explained, California women, who were eligible to vote in the State, carried the vote based on the idea that President Wilson would keep the country out of the European war, while Hughes would almost certainly add the United States to the war. "Despite their small numbers, women had become an electoral constituency in the United States."

With 266 electoral votes needed for victory, President Wilson won 277 while Hughes picked up 254. The popular vote was:

Wilson: 9,126,868 (49.2 percent)
Hughes: 8,548,728 (46.1 percent)

Berg wrote:

Wilson became the first Democratic President elected to a second consecutive term since Andrew Jackson in 1832. He also was the first man since James K. Polk in 1844 to get elected without carrying his home state. There were other signs of erosion of public support: in Congressional races, the Democrats lost two seats in the Senate; leaving them with a comfortable but decreasing margin of 54 to 42; and they suggested another bad hit in the House of Representatives, dropping to

214 members against 215 Republicans. Because three Progressives chose to caucus with the Democrats, the President's party could cobble together a coalition and maintain control of both houses. The South remained Wilson's igneous base, where he carried some states with more than

90 percent of the vote

Charles Evans Hughes did not concede by telegram until November 22, 1916, claiming he had waited for the official count in California to end. Wilson replied graciously, though he commented to his brother, Josie, that Hughes's wire "was a little moth-eaten when it got here but quite legible." [Berg, pages 416-417]

Recalling what might have been, Mrs. Wilson wrote:

So often we talked of what we would do when he should be emancipated from the burdens of official life. A bicycle tour of Europe was mentioned. My husband loved cycling. When at Princeton he used to go abroad during the summers and wheel alone over the roads of Scotland, England and the Continent, stopping at little wayside taverns and striking up acquaintance with farmers, townsmen and all manner of folk He yearned for experiences of that kind.

She had never learned to ride a bicycle, but was willing to give it a try, as she had golf, to keep up with her husband:

Bicycles were luxuries in southwestern Virginia when I was a girl, and so I had never learned to ride. My husband said the deficiency was easily remedied, and one day there arrived at the White House a brand-new Columbia wheel. Where to take my lessons was a problem. Obviously not in the White House grounds whose paths are clearly visible from the surrounding streets. At length Mr. Wilson had it: the White House basement. It is commodious, and with some clearing away a space sixty feet long was provided. My husband and a couple of the Secret Service men used to go down with me at night. I fell off several times and nicked the enamel on the new wheel. Though I did not master the cycling art we

made up for that in laughter and had such hilarious good times that it was genuine recreation for all concerned. Being a country girl at heart, what I needed was more room, and so the cycling lessons were deferred until we should be free to resume them out of doors, a day, which, alas, never came. [*My Memoir*, page 146]

The day of the inauguration, March 4, was a Sunday; celebration of the event would have to be delayed to Monday. President Wilson took the oath of office at the White House on Sunday, the event witnessed by only about 30 people. [Berg, page 426]

The public inaugural event on March 5 was clouded by events related to the European war. At the end of January, Germany had announced that it had authorized unrestricted submarine warfare. All ships in the war zone would be sunk; well-marked American ships would be allowed in the zone only in a specified route. Germany believed the new policy would bring the stalemated war to a quick end. It was no longer interested in the peace talks initiated in 1916.

Wilson told Tumulty, "This means war. The break that we have tried so hard to prevent now seems inevitable." On February 3, 1917, President Wilson went before a joint session of Congress to announce that the country's diplomatic relations with Germany had been halted. He asked Congress to give him authority "to use any means that may be necessary for the protection of our seamen and our people in the prosecution of their peaceful and legitimate errands on the high seas." He was not ruling out diplomacy, saying, "We shall not believe that they are hostile to us unless and until we are obliged to believe it."

By the end of February, newspapers were reporting that Germany had secretly reached out to Mexico to aid in the war. Upon victory, Mexico's reward would be the return of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas to within its new borders. Germany also invited Japan to join in the war.

President Wilson returned to Congress on February 26 seeking additional authority to arm merchant ships to protect them from submarine attacks. The House of Representatives approved the bill overwhelmingly, but in the Senate,

11 Senators launched a filibuster to block the legislation, blocking approval by the 66 Senators who said they would have voted for it. With the 64th Congress to end at noon on March 4, they had to delay the vote only a few days to kill the bill.

Their success prompted President Wilson to issue a statement after his private inauguration. Berg summarized it:

"In the immediate presence of a crisis fraught with more subtle and far-reaching possibility of national danger than any other Government has

known within the whole history of its international relations,” the President raged, “the Congress has been unable to act either to safeguard the country or to vindicate the elementary rights of its citizens.” He felt the United States, especially in times of crisis, could not proceed in this manner. “A little group of willful men, representing no opinion but their own,” he said, “have rendered the great Government of the United States helpless and contemptible,” making it “the only legislative body in the world which cannot act when its majority is ready for action.”

He called for revising the Senate rules to allow cloture of a filibuster by a two-thirds majority vote of the Senate. [Berg, page 426]

The next day, President Wilson, accompanied by the First Lady, traveled to Capitol Hill for his second inaugural event. Unlike his first Inauguration on March 4, 1913, the event was overshadowed by the growing prospect of American entry into the European war. “Only 50,000 people gathered for the ceremonies; the inaugural parade was half the length of the first; and, again, there would be no Inaugural Ball.”

His brief address stated, “The shadows that now lie dark upon our path will soon be dispelled and we shall walk with the light all about us if we be but true to ourselves.” He advised, “United alike in the conception of our duty and in the high resolve to perform it in the face of all men, let us dedicate ourselves to the great task to which we must now set our hand.”

He did not define the task, but 50,000 or so people observing the speech had little doubt about the prospects. [Berg, pages 426-427]

(The Senate approved a cloture procedure on March 8, the first limitation on the filibuster, a delaying tactic that had been used only rarely in the previous century.)

On April 20, 1917, President Wilson, who had won reelection by promising to keep the country out of the European war, and the First Lady drove through the rain along Pennsylvania Avenue to Capitol Hill to address Congress. Smith sets the scene:

His fingers trembled as he turned the pages, and in the silences between his sentences the sound of drops could be heard hitting upon the roof. He said, "It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, civilization itself seeming to be in the balance. But the right is more precious than peace To such a task we can dedicate our lives and our fortunes, everything that we are and everything that we have, with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the

principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other.”

There was a moment of silence. Then a great roar of applause rolled up to him. Mixed in it were the high rebel yells of Southerners. The troops of cavalry formed up, and with Cary Grayson, Joe Tumulty and the First Lady he drove in silence back to the White House past the crowds of cheering people. “My message today was a message of death for our young men,” he said. “How strange it seems to applaud that.” [Smith, pages 32-34]

Early Years of the Federal-Aid Highway Program

The war, now known as World War I, would affect every aspect of life in the United States, including the Federal-aid highway program that President had launched on July 11, 1916.

On September 1, 1916, construction had begun on California Federal Aid Road Project No. 3, which would be the first project completed under the Federal Aid Road Act. The road extended 2.55-miles from Albany at the Alameda County line to Richmond in Contra Costa County. Highway historian Albert C. Rose described the project:

The work consisted of grading the roadbed, draining and installing culverts flanked with concrete headwalls, and laying a Portland cement concrete base, in the proportions of 1:3:6, with a width of 20 feet and a thickness of 5 inches, surfaced with a bituminous concrete top (Topeka mix) 1½ inches in thickness [The] certificate of completion was issued by the District Engineer of the [U.S. Office of Public Roads and Rural Engineering] . . . on January 30, 1918. The total cost of the project, including the money allotted by the State, was \$53,938.85. [Rose, Albert C., *Historic American Roads: From Frontier Trails to Superhighways*, Crown Publishers, Inc., 1976, page 91]

The program, however, faltered, partly because of defects in its conception but especially because of America's entry into World War I. From engineers to construction workers, those who were to implement the Federal-aid highway program went instead to the war in Europe or to support it. At the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR), as the Federal road agency had been renamed on July 1, 1918, 79 of 189 men and one woman had entered the military by war's end.

Many of BPR's staff who did not volunteer or were not called to military service became involved in stateside military activities. Some were detailed for road building activities in the 16 National Army cantonments and National Guard

mobilization camps. One was detailed to the U.S. Housing Corporation, another to the Emergency Fleet Corporation. BPR prepared detailed highway maps for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and conducted tests in cooperation with the Shipping Board on safe design of reinforced concrete ships. At the request of the Frankford Arsenal in Philadelphia, BPR worked on a device for testing the power of explosives and it loaned one of its impact machines to American University for research in connection with high explosives.

Across the country, personnel shortages were compounded by shortages of road building material. Further, a shortage of railroad cars made shipment of the available materials difficult. Meanwhile, rail shortages gave the fledgling trucking industry an opportunity to secure interstate shipments. The roads that the States did not have the resources to improve deteriorated under the weight of the new loads they were carrying. Even the higher type pavements, cement concrete and brick on concrete, failed.

Auto racing was another casualty of the war. In December 1917, AAA's contest board decided to cease issuing sanctions for motor contests while the war was underway. The *Sun* explained why:

Need of skilled operators of motor-trucks and passenger vehicles, as well as mechanics, brought about the action taken, which will release over a thousand capable men for motoring war work

Practically all of the big speedways in the country are in accord with the action taken, several of them leaving the matter of continuance entirely to the judgment of Chairman Richard Kennerdell and his fellow-members of the American Automobile Association contest board.

President Wilson appreciated the action, as he stated in a communication to his cousin, John A. Wilson, chairman of AAA's Military Preparedness Committee:

I am very glad indeed to learn that it is the purpose of the American Automobile Association to stop automobile racing until after the close of the war. It is so destructive of materials and involves so great a consumption of gasoline that I think every man who cares for the proper fulfillment of our duties during the war and the necessary conservation of resources which the performance of those duties involves must applaud the action of the association in this matter.

Faithfully yours,

Woodrow Wilson

[“Ban On Auto Racing,” *The Baltimore Sun*, December 9, 1917]

By the time the war ended November 11, 1918, the Federal-aid highway program, which had begun with such high hopes, had little to show for the effort that went into its creation. The Federal Highway Administration's Bicentennial book, *America's Highways 1776-1976*, summarized the war's impact on the new program:

By July 1918, the OPRRE had approved 572 projects, totaling 6,249 miles in length, estimated to cost \$42.28 million, of which \$16.05 million was Federal aid. However, only five projects, totaling 17.6 miles, had actually been completed.

President Wilson would have little impact on the evolution of the program, other than signing the Post Office Appropriation Act for 1920 on February 28, 1919. It redefined "rural post roads" to include "any public road a major portion of which is now used, or can be used, or forms a connecting link not to exceed ten miles in length of any road or roads now or hereafter used for the transportation of the United States mails" As *America's Highways 1776-1976* explained:

Senator James W. Wadsworth, Jr., of New York said, "I am convinced that any road that can be made suitable for carrying mail includes any and every road in the United States." This, of course, was exactly the effect desired by the Administration when it proposed the amendment. The new post road definition ended the pretense that Federal aid for highways rested even in part on Congress' constitutional power to establish a postal system. [*America's Highways*, page 102]

After the war, the forces that had proposed a national building program of long-distance highways resumed their agitation. By limiting Federal-aid funds to post roads, the 1916 law had excluded the long-distance roads because mail was carried over long distances on railroad cars, not motor vehicles. The issues would not be resolved until President Warren G. Harding signed the Federal Highway Act of 1921. For further information on resolution of the long-running debate, see "'Clearly Vicious as a Matter of Policy': The Fight Against Federal-Aid" on this Web site at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/hwyhist01.cfm>.

The Post War Period

While in Paris for post-war peace talks, President Wilson had been hailed in public as a savior of Europe. In private, he suffered a stroke as well as heart problems and paranoia. Back in the United States, he turned his attention to seeking congressional support for creation of a League of Nations, one of the key provisions of the Paris peace agreement, to provide a forum for resolving international disputes and preventing wars.

When the Senate balked, he launched a nationwide speaking campaign to gather support for the League. He did so against the advice of Dr. Grayson, who was concerned about the effect of the heat, discomfort, and stress on the President's health. President Wilson understood the risks, but told Dr. Grayson:

If the treaty is not ratified by the Senate, the War will have been fought in vain, and the world will be thrown into chaos. I promised our soldiers, when I asked them to take up arms, that it was a war to end wars; and if I do not do all in my power to put the treaty in effect, I will be a slacker and never able to look those boys in the eye. I must go." [*My Memoir*, page 274]

He departed from Union Station on September 3, 1919. As Mrs. Wilson recalled:

The tour had not progressed far when serious headaches began to afflict my husband. He paid little attention to them, though I could see that each day, each meeting, each appearance, was calling more and more on his depleted reserve of nervous energy I could see how closely

Dr. Grayson watched his patient. The Doctor's disregarded warnings against attempting the tour haunted my sleep, and I do not think that I am one to borrow trouble or look without reason on the dark side. [*My Memoir*, page 276]

On this important tour, the President was followed by a large group of newspapermen, as the *Post* described:

In every town where the President has spoken local committees have arranged an automobile procession in advance for his party and all persons on the special train are assigned to a certain number car in each town.

In Oregon, officials arranged a special treat for President Wilson and his party, a tour of the Columbia River Highway, one of the construction wonders of the good roads era. The Presidential party arrived in Portland on September 15 at around

9 a.m. A party consisting of Governor Ben W. Olcott and Mayor George L. Baker escorted the President, Mrs. Wilson, and the rest of the group to the Portland Hotel along streets lined with enthusiastic crowds. The *Times* reported:

Later the President and his party were taken on a fifty-mile drive along the Columbia Highway, one of the prides of the people of Oregon, who insist that it has not its equal in the country, if in the world.

The party proceeded along the highway to Crown Point, from which spot, hundreds of feet above the river, a magnificent view of the country is

obtained. The President and Mrs. Wilson remained about fifteen minutes here; then the parade of automobiles started on the return trip, stopping on the way at the Gresham Fair Grounds, where thousands of persons were gathered to give welcome.

All along the President's route large numbers of people were gathered, many in automobiles and many on foot, to greet the party.

Mrs. Wilson described the road as a "beautiful drive," adding, "There were the usual mass of people and thousands of cars."

As the *Post* added:

The pilot car which guided the party . . . from here [Portland] to Crown Point . . . hit up a pace that approximated 40 miles an hour at times and members of the President's party were fearful for his safety.

The road in spots is very narrow and over steep hills and inclines and for this reason the drivers were cautioned to preserve a slow rate of speed.

Ben F. Allen of *The Cleveland Plain-Dealer*, Robert T. Small of the *Post* and *The Philadelphia Public Ledger*, and Stanley M. Reynolds of the *Sun*, were assigned to car no. 7. As the group left the hotel for the Columbia River Highway, they found that no. 7 was occupied by townspeople. Instead, they found places in car no. 18 in the procession, driven by a 73-year old area businessman, James R. Patterson, who had volunteered to help the Presidential party. The *Post* described the result:

On the return from Crown Point Patterson's car had some engine trouble and was slightly delayed. When repairs were made he attempted to regain his place in the line and speeded up.

The motor, a large, seven-passenger car, had a clear roadway for a time, but other motorists anxious to slide out from crossroads to trail the President edged in. One of these was C. H. Barnett and his car stalled in the middle of the highway.

Patterson tried to avoid a collision, but his car was traveling at such a high rate of speed that it left the road. Mr. Allen was in the front seat as was Patterson. The three other men were in the rear seat and were thrown clear of the car, which after turning turtle, righted itself on the road.

"Turning turtle" was a common term at the time for a vehicle that turned over on its top. According to an account in the *Star*, no. 18 rolled over and over down the embankment, with the windshield breaking and cutting Allen and Patterson.

Allen and Patterson were killed. Small, Reynolds, and Arthur D. Sullivan of *The Portland News* were injured.

Mrs. Wilson wrote:

We knew nothing of the accident at the time and upon our return to Portland went immediately to a lunch given by the press. Noticing several vacant tables I inquired the reason and was told of the collision and asked to say nothing to the President, as they wanted him to enjoy the lunch. The empty places were those of special friends of the victims.

President Wilson learned of the incident before the luncheon was over, but while all that was known of Allen was that he was being treated at the hospital. When he rose to speak, his first words were:

I suppose you all have learned of the accident, the result of which I fear will be rather tragic. It naturally makes me feel depressed. These men have been traveling with me since I started on this trip, and I have learned to know them as good friends. If we must go and leave them behind seriously wounded, I realize that I am parting from very estimable men.

After learning of Allen's death, he sent a telegram to Mrs. Allen:

Our hearts go out to you in deepest sympathy in the tragical death of your husband, whom we all esteemed and trusted. He will be missed as a true friend and a man who always intelligently sought to do his duty.

The evening of the crash, reporter David Lawrence of the *Star* reported:

Tonight grief grips everybody in the presidential party, from President Wilson to the correspondents and the attaches on the journey, who had come to know Ben Allen as the most jovial and the most unselfish of their number

The accident has depressed the whole party. It was with difficulty that the President made his speeches at Portland, for he knew Ben Allen and liked him. Only today he was joking with Mr. Allen before the party left the train.

Lawrence had been assigned to no. 7, but finding it occupied, decided not to go on the excursion, "having previously viewed the historic Columbia highway."

["Warm Greeting Given to Wilson By Oregonians," *The New York Times*, September 16, 1919; "2 Die On Wilson Trip," *The Washington Post*, September 16, 1919; "Newspaper Man With President Killed-The Sun Correspondent

Among Injured,” *The Baltimore Sun*, September 16, 1919; Lawrence, David, “Ben Allen Killed On Trip In West With President,” *The Evening Star*, September 16, 1919; *My Memoir*, page 278]

President Wilson managed to overcome his own increasing illness on the tour until he reached Pueblo, Colorado, on the return trip. By then, he was so ill that he tried to avoid the planned speech on September 25. When the reception committee urged him to address the 10,000 people waiting for him, he reluctantly agreed, as Smith described. At the fairground he “he drove around in front of the crowd, waving his hat”:

When they went to the auditorium for his speech he seemed to stumble at the single step of the hall’s entrance. The Secret Service man Edmund Starling caught him and almost lifted him up over the step He went onto the platform. It was a little after three in the afternoon,

September 25, 1919. Passing the newspapermen, he said, “This will have to be a short speech. Aren’t you fellows getting pretty sick of this?”

He went up to the cheering and yells and began to speak. His voice was not strong, but he did well enough until suddenly he stumbled over a sentence. “Germany must never be allowed—” He stopped and was silent. “A lesson must be taught to Germany—” He stopped again and stood still. “The world will not allow Germany—” Reporter Joseph Jefferson O’Neill looked up from his notes. This had never happened before in any of the speeches. O’Neill looked at the First Lady and saw terror on her face. Edmund Starling thought to himself the President was about to collapse and tensed to step forward and catch him. But the President gathered himself together, although his voice was very weak, and went on. He spoke of Memorial Day at Suresnes, of the soldiers alive and dead at the cemetery, and of how he wished that some of the Senators opposing the League might have been there on that day. As he spoke of the dead boys in the graves at Suresnes, Joe Tumulty, standing in the wings of the auditorium, saw down in the audience men and women alike reaching for handkerchiefs to wipe their eyes. “There seems to me to stand between us and the rejection of the treaty the serried ranks of those boys in khaki, not only those boys who came home, but those dear ghosts who still deploy upon the fields of France.”

He halted. The people looked at him and he at them.

The President of the United States, standing before an audience of some several thousands of his fellow citizens, was crying.

He had come to the last words of his speech. He said:

“I believe that men will see the truth, eye to eye and face to face. There is one thing that the American people always rise to and extend their hand to, and that is the truth of justice and of liberty and of peace. We have accepted that truth and we are going to be led by it, and it is going to lead us, and through us the world, out into the pastures of quietness and peace such as the world never dreamed of before.”

He turned away and the First Lady came to him. Their tears mixed.

As their train moved east, Dr. Grayson asked the President if he thought a walk in the open air might help revive him. The train was brought to a halt, as Smith described:

The engine stood panting with steam up and the reporters were told that the President and the First Lady and Dr. Grayson were going for a little walk. They had come down out of the mountain country and were on beautiful prairie land with no houses in sight and evening coming on. It was very pleasant. The reporters got out and lay down on the grass to relax and watch the long, lovely September twilight.

The trio walked slowly down a dusty road with Starling idling behind at a little distance. They came to a bridge and paused on it, looking down at the thin Arkansas River, hardly more than a stream at that point. They went on in the comfortably warm Colorado air and saw a farmer in a small auto driving down the road. He came to a stop when he recognized the walkers and took out a head of cabbage and some apples, saying he hoped they would eat them “for dinner tonight.” They thanked him and he drove off, raising a little cloud of dust as he went.

A man and his wife and their friend, they strolled down a silent country road. They came to a field cut off from the road by a fence. Some distance back from the road was a frame house with a soldier in uniform sitting on the porch. The President said, “That fellow looks sick to me.” Grayson said, “Yes, he certainly is.” They climbed over the low fence, Starling following, and went across to the boy and said hello. The soldier’s mother and father and brothers came out and for a few minutes the visitors talked with the farm people. Then they said good-by and, carrying the cabbage and apples, strolled toward the setting sun.

They’d been gone an hour before reporters on the grass spotted them returning to the train. About a hundred yards away, “Grayson and the President broke into a

dog trot and ran by the men on the grass The President was smiling as he went up on the rear platform.” [Smith, pages 81-83]

On September 26, the special train stopped a mile outside Wichita, Kansas. The reporters and Secret Service agents were preparing for an automobile tour of the city before the President’s speech in the city, but Secretary Tumulty came out to address them about the delay in getting started. In a shaky voice, he said, “The tour’s off.”

Illness had again overtaken the President that night and, despite his desire to continue his speaking tour, his wife and doctor insisted they return to Washington and he reluctantly agreed. “I suppose you are right,” he said. [Smith, page 85]

The *Times* told readers about the stress of the President’s cross-country tour. He had given 40 speeches, without amplification, many of them an hour long:

Many of them have been delivered in halls so large that it was necessary for him to use all his energy to make himself heard and so warm that he always has had a rub down and a change of clothing afterward to prevent his taking cold. The texts of his addresses on the trip total about 175,000 words

Aside from the speaking itself, one of the hardest trials for both President and Mrs. Wilson during the trip has been the necessity of riding through many blocks of crowded streets at the slow pace of the military escorts, which have been almost everywhere.

In some cities the rides have been ten miles long and nearly all the way the President has been on his feet in his car with the white-gloved hand of his wife supporting him, waving his hat in response to the cheers of the crowds.

He had not really had a rest since his vacation at Harlakenden House in New Hampshire. His mental strain throughout the war, the peace talks in Paris, and the fight for the peace accord were thought by his friends “to be responsible for his present illness.” [“Grayson’s Order Ends Tour,” *The New York Times*, September 27, 1919]

They returned to the White House as fast as the special train could receive track clearance.

Reaching Union Station the morning of September 28, President Wilson stepped out of his car, the *Mayflower*, looking drawn. His daughter Margaret, who had come running down the trainshed when the special train pulled in, greeted him. The President, accompanied by his wife and daughter, Dr. Grayson, and the Secret

Service agents, walked through the station to his White House automobile. He periodically raised his hand to acknowledge the cheers of the thousand or so people who had come to the station to welcome him home.

Dr. Grayson prescribed total rest. “The President was able to take his short automobile ride this afternoon, but vigorous exercise of any kind was forbidden.” . [“Wilson Returns To Washington Worn and Shaken,” *The New York Times*, September 29, 1919]

On September 29, the President took another automobile ride in the afternoon. The President was accompanied by his wife and daughter on the hour-and-a-half ride in an open car. He wore a steamer cap and was bundled in an overcoat. [“Report President ‘Slightly Better,’” *The New York Times*, September 30, 1919]

After another rough night, President Wilson managed another afternoon automobile ride on October 1. The White House’s daily bulletin reported that the President was “feeling somewhat jaded today.” [“President Is Again Jaded After Another Restless Night,” *The New York Times*, October 2, 1919]

Despite the precaution, the worst was yet to come, as Berg described:

Edith had been having troubles of her own getting through the night, as she awakened frequently in order to monitor her husband’s rest. At dawn on October 2, she found him sleeping soundly, but then around 8:30, he was sitting on the side of his bed, reaching for a water bottle. As she handed it to him, she noticed his left hand had gone limp. “I have no feeling in that hand,” he said. He asked her to rub it. But first, he wanted help in getting to the bathroom. She supported him as he staggered those few yards, but it required a huge effort on his part. More terrifying to her were his spasms of pain with every step. Edith asked if she could leave him alone long enough for her to telephone Dr. Grayson. He said yes; and in that split second, Edith made a curious decision.

Instead of going to the nearby bedroom phone, which connected to operators at the White House switchboard, she hastened down the hall to a private phone wired directly to the desk in the Usher’s Room. Ike Hoover answered the call, and Mrs. Wilson said, “Please get Doctor Grayson, the President is very sick.”

While still on the phone, Edith heard a noise from the President’s apartment. Rushing back, she found her husband lying on the bathroom floor, unconscious. [Berg, pages 639-640]

He had experienced a stroke that paralyzed his left side, diminished his vision, restricted his speech, and impaired his judgment. Although the White House

informed the press that President Wilson was sick and needed complete rest, officials never made clear his level of incapacitation. The lack of clarity and the failure of the President to make public appearances prompted speculation about whether he was capable of performing his Presidential duties.

On November 17, President Wilson was rolled in a wheel chair onto the lawn near the south Portico to enjoy the fresh air and sunshine for an hour or so. This became a daily event, with the White House not being fully honest about his condition. On November 22, newspapers reported:

President Wilson has “materially improved,” but is still very weak, Dr. Francis X. Dercum, the Philadelphia specialist, found today when he paid his regular weekly visit to the White House.

Rear Admiral Grayson, the President’s physician, said that it would be some time before his patient could take an automobile ride. Every sunshiny day, however, the President is wheeled out on the south lawn of the White House to enjoy the air.

The President attended to much routine executive business today. [“Wilson ‘Materially Improved, But Still Very Weak,’” *The New York Times*, November 23, 1919]

In truth, President Wilson would improve slowly, but never recover fully. The White House would put updates implying gradual recovery, but President Wilson remained out a sight as rumors swirled about his true condition. The optimistic updates were in part a response to demands that Vice President Marshall assume the duties of the President.

For the remainder of the Wilson presidency, the First Lady often served as a link between her husband and the outside world, determining what papers he would see and decisions he would consider. One of history’s mysteries, probably never to be answered, is whether in reporting his decisions she was carrying out his instructions or deciding for him.

By March 1920, President Wilson was well enough to become restless with his forced idleness. He wanted to go on a golf outing, but Dr. Grayson was not ready to approve such a trip. On March 2, plans for an auto ride were underway, with one of the White House cars waiting outside the South Portico, but the ride was abandoned at the last minute.

However, on March 3, President Wilson left the White House for the first time since his stroke in October for an automobile drive. The *Star*, in a front page story, reported:

Yesterday the President, anticipating a good day today, suggested that he would like to go riding, and when he renewed the suggestion today,

Dr. Grayson acquiesced. The President's closed car and a secret service machine drew up to the south entrance of the White House at about

11 o'clock. A few moments later the President, accompanied by

Mrs. Wilson and Dr. Grayson, came out from under the colonnade.

The President walked to the car with the aid of his cane. Dr. Grayson was at his side and held lightly to the President's arm. The President was assisted into the car by Dr. Grayson and Mrs. Wilson. He wore his old gray sweater under a medium weight overcoat.

The President and Mrs. Wilson sat on the rear seat, with Dr. Grayson on the seat facing them.

As the car moved into the streets outside the White House, police prevented photographers from taking pictures of the President.

They drove on the Speedway along the Potomac River south of the White House, along Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol grounds before returning to the White House:

Going through the Capitol grounds the President passed Senator [William E.] Borah of Idaho, and recognition was simultaneous, both waving their hands and smiling. Throughout the trip, Dr. Grayson said, the President was delighted and remarked that he felt like he had been away from Washington for a long time.

Passing the vicinity of a market here, the President, who delights always in reading signs when he is motoring, saw a sign quoting pork at 35 cents a pound. Although he has given much serious consideration to the high cost of living, the President remarked to Mrs. Wilson: "This brings it home to you when you see a big sign like that."

During the drive the President passed many groups of people who recognized him and he smiled his acknowledgment of their greetings. Quite often women who recognized him waved to him.

The ride lasted about an hour.

Back at the White House, Dr. Grayson took President Wilson's blood pressure, which was normal. That was a good sign because the ride was seen as preliminary

to a plan for the President to leave town for a period of convalescence. The Mayflower was ready if such a trip would proceed by water. [“President Wilson Takes Auto Ride Through The City,” *The Evening Star*, March 3, 1920; “Wilson Has a Ride; First in 5 Months,” *The New York Times*, March 4, 1920]

(The Road Drivers and Riders’ Association, formed by horse lovers in 1903, established the Speedway “where drivers may speed their horses,” as the *Star* explained. [“The Proposed Speedway,” *The Evening Star*, October 5, 1903] The Speedway, sometimes called the Centennial Speedway, opened in West Potomac Park on May 11, 1904, with thousands of spectators observing the festivities. It extended from the Tidal Basin to 26th Street, SW. It would be reconstructed and extended through East Potomac Park as Riverside Drive, but the old nickname was still in common use in 1920. In 1949, Riverside Drive was renamed Ohio Drive.)

Smith described the first automobile ride since October differently than contemporary news reports:

A platform was put up at the south entrance of the White House so that the wheel chair could be rolled to a position level with the waiting car, and three or four Secret Service men lifted the President to his feet and held him in their arms and put him into the car’s rear right-hand corner—the right side in order that the paralyzed left side of his face would not show to the people in the street—and braced him up so that he might not topple to the floor when the car started, and adjusted his cape (he could not wear a coat; it was too difficult to get the inert left arm into a sleeve) and set his hat square on his head. And so he was driven through Washington, his face devoid of all color, grayish white, thin, waxlike, a bright-eyed old man trying to smile, the lips revealing the teeth only on the right side, the eyes protuberant, a thin face on a thin neck ducked down so as to hide the paralyzed side.

There was to him something cruel and terrifying in the faces of the people who looked at him as the car went by; they did not cheer, but stared as if to see if it was all true what they had heard: that the car held a madman. When they came back to the White House policemen were waiting, and when the car pulled up to a remote rear gate all traffic was halted and they drove quickly into the grounds. As they went in, a small group of people by the gate threw into the thin March sunshine a faint cheer. They were backstairs White House workers whose faces the President would not know, and friends and relatives of Secret Service men, and they had been recruited just for this reason: so that on his ride there might be for him one bit of applause. When the car stopped and the men went to lift him out and carry him to the wheel chair there were tears in his eyes and he

was saying, "You see, they still love me." The First Lady left him for a moment and went to stand by herself so that he would not see that she wept. [Smith, pages 145-146]

For now, Dr. Grayson decided against a convalescence trip outside Washington, but additional automobile rides were likely. The White House implied that in a few weeks, President Wilson might be permitted a round of golf at his favorite course in Virginia; but this type of claim was part of an effort to mislead the public about his condition. His paralysis ruled out golf or any other athletic activity. ["Wilson Impatient; Wants to Play Golf," *The New York Times*, March 5, 1920]

After a snow storm hit Washington, President Wilson, Mrs. Wilson, and

Dr. Grayson were not able to go on a second motor trip until March 8. "A bright sun was shining, but some of the snow from last week's blizzard was still on the ground and a sharp wind was blowing," according to the *Times*:

The President wore a heavy cloth overcoat and a golf hat. He looked the picture of health.

For the first time since the previous October, he was riding in one of the White House's open cars. The ride through Rock Creek Park lasted about an hour. The police again blocked photographers. ["President Out Driving in Open Automobile," *The New York Times*, March 9, 1920]

Newspapers carried brief stories about his third automobile ride on March 10, this one again through Rock Creek Park on the warmest day of the season. His daughter Margaret accompanied Mrs. Wilson, Dr. Grayson, and the President. ["President Takes Third Outdoor Ride," *The New York Times*, March 11, 1920]

On March 14, the Presidential party took a fourth ride, this one lasting 2 hours and covering park roads. Reporters thought that he seemed refreshed after the long ride. ["President Has Two-Hour Auto Ride," *The New York Times*, March 15, 1920; "President Rides Two Hours," *The Washington Post*, March 15, 1920]

On March 17, the photographers who had been blocked from taking shots of the President were rewarded for their patience. As the White House limousine entered West Executive Avenue, the chauffeur drove slowly, and the photographers and movie camera men were allowed to film the President and Mrs. Wilson. The White House had advised the police not to block them.

The *Times* reported:

Four men representing moving picture firms obtained about 100 feet of film each and a dozen still camera men snapped perhaps a total of three dozen views. The films will be shown in motion picture theatres throughout the nation within a day or two.

The President looked pretty fit. He was seated in the tonneau with Mrs. Wilson at his side, and he smiled and raised his cap—an old gray golf cap—in acknowledgment of the persistency of the photographers who dashed about his automobile in a frenzy of activity. Turning to Mrs. Wilson he said: “This reminds me of old times.”

Photographer Clarence Jackson “unwittingly added to the success of the occasion.” After taking his first shot, he “made a mad dash to get in front of the automobile and obtain a second and better view. His movements caused the President to laugh heartily.” As for Jackson, he “got his picture and was happy.”

The President noticed people were wearing green caps. “The President remarked with a show of some vexation that he had forgotten to wear a green necktie in honor of the day—St. Patrick’s Day.” [“President Gives Camera Free Rein,” *The New York Times*, March 18, 1920]

Although President Wilson appeared to be enjoying the renewed auto rides, Smith reported a disturbing trend that reporters may not have been aware of:

He got it into his mind that any car that passed his own was going dangerously fast, although at his orders the chauffeur rarely went faster than fifteen or twenty miles an hour. Whenever a car went by he would order that the Secret Service vehicle overtake and bring back the driver for questioning. Miserably trying to give him the impression that his instructions were perfectly logical, the Secret Service car would chase after the offending auto, always to return with the excuse that the speeder was going too fast to be overhauled. He brooked over this and wrote to Attorney General [A. Mitchell] Palmer asking if the Presidency carried with it the powers of a justice of peace; if it did, he told his people, he was going to make sure the speeders were caught and himself try their cases there by the roadside. (The Secret Service men desperately killed the plan by telling him that the idea was beneath his dignity.) [Smith, pages 146-147]

Mrs. Wilson discussed the motor trips:

Usually we would go for a motor ride in the afternoon, taking Gordon Grayson [Dr. Grayson’s 2-year old son] with us. These rides gave my husband the pleasure of seeing some of our “road acquaintances” again.

One of these was the watchman who lived in a small frame house on the District side of the Chain Bridge. This old fellow was fat and most inert, and sat all day long on the tiny porch of his house. He occupied an armchair and rested his arms on his fat knees with hands hanging limply down, palms inward. As we approached he would make a tremendous effort, pull the hands up to rest on his knees, and when we passed he would slowly turn his wrists so the palm of the hand was exposed for a brief instant and then relax into his former and permanent position. This unique salute afforded us great amusement, and it never varied until the winter cold drove the old fellow into the house.

On the Conduit Road [today's MacArthur Boulevard] towards Great Falls, two little brothers kept a flag ready to raise to the top of a pole. These children knew about the time we would pass, should we drive that way. They must have kept watch day by day, for often it was weeks between our coming. But as the car approached, one or both were always there to pull the cord and send the colours flying to the breeze, while they stood at salute. The President always removed his hat and saluted the flag and the children.

One day, after he had been ill for months, my husband said: "Let's go and see if our two little soldiers are still waiting." So we drove out and, to my great disappointment, there was no one visible. Even the flagpole was gone. I got out and rang the bell to ask about our little friends. A gentle lady answered, and said the little boys no longer lived there, but she knew them and would tell them of our inquiry. I hope some day, now that they must be grown, I will learn that they are still letting their colours fly

Another friend in Maryland, barely more than a baby, with a halo of curls around his head, would pause in his play, stand erect and, putting a tiny hand up in salute, say: "Hi, Wilson!" He was a real charmer, and we loved him. Another road acquaintance, Mrs. W. H. Green, lived near the reservoir on the Conduit Road. This old lady was a real character. She always saluted as we passed, and after Mr. Wilson's illness she came to the White House to bring him an afghan she had knitted "to go over his knees," she said. [*My Memoir*, pages 304-305]

On March 19, 1920, the Senate voted 49 to 35 against the Paris peace treaty, thus blocking entrance into the League of Nations – 7 votes short of the two-thirds needed for approval. Secretary Tumulty gave President Wilson the bad news. That night, President Wilson had difficulty sleeping.

Dr. Grayson slept in the White House that night, periodically stepping into the President's bedroom to check on him. At about 3 a.m., the President told Grayson, "Doctor, the devil is a busy man." He asked Dr. Grayson to read a Bible verse from Corinthians:

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed . . . [Chapter 4, Verses 8 and 9]

The President said, "If I were not a Christian, I think I should go mad, but my faith in God holds me to the belief that He is in some way working out His own plans through human perversities and mistakes." [Berg, pages 677-678]

A few days later, George Creel of the wartime Committee on Public Information visited President Wilson. Creel was shocked by the President's appearance:

I sat with him, miserably fumbling for words of comfort, but it was as though I had not been in the room. All the while his bloodless lips moved continuously, as if framing the arguments and forming new appeals. Only as I was leaving did he look at me seemingly, his eyes filled with an anguish, such as I trust never to see again. "If only I were not helpless," he whispered. [Smith, pages 150-151]

The President went for an auto ride on March 21, even posing for the photographers for about 5 minutes. He then motored through parks in the city and Maryland. ["President Poses Five Minutes For Cameras," *The Evening Star*, March 22, 1920]

President Wilson took another ride, a 2-hour jaunt into Virginia through Alexandria.

However, it would be his last ride for a while. Smith concluded that President Wilson "could not stand the staring eyes—so the auto rides were discontinued." [Smith, page 151]

(The League of Nations, President Wilson's hope for future peace, had gone into operation in January 1920 without the United States. After the March 19 vote on the Paris peace treaty, the Senate would never consider the treaty again, leaving the United States technically at war with Austria, Germany, and Hungary. President Wilson's successor would negotiate separate peace treaties with the three nations, formally ending the United States' war with them.)

The rides resumed on April 11. President and Mrs. Wilson were driven on the Speedway along the Potomac River, then through Rock Creek Park. They were out for about an hour. [“Wilson Goes For Ride,” *The Baltimore Sun*, April 12, 1920]

On April 28, the President had motored through Rock Creek Park again. The next day, the ride was the longest since he resumed his automobile rides on March 3. With Mrs. Wilson and members of her family in the rear seats, the President sat in the front passenger seat. They motored in Maryland as far as La Plata “following generally the route that J. Wilkes Booth took on his ride out of Washington in April, 1865,” as the *Times* put it. This was the first time since March 3 that the President had gone for a ride 2 days in a row. [“President Enjoys Longest Motor Ride,” *The New York Times*, April 30, 1920]

(On June 29, the President’s cousin, John A. Wilson, visited the White House while in town on business. “He spent a half hour with President Wilson and found him much improved in health since a former visit last March.” [“President Sees Cousin,” *The Evening Star*, June 29, 1920])

President Wilson continued his rides through the year on a routine basis.

An exception occurred on August 14. President and Mrs. Wilson were motoring through Rock Creek in the afternoon when a shower began. The chauffeur put up the car’s curtains. When the shower ended, the chauffeur again stopped again, this time to remove the curtains. The car was parked near a swimming hole. The *Sun* reported:

Three boys, their hair still wet and their bathing suits still dripping, recognizing the official party, emerged from the bushes, and grinning broadly, chorused:

“Howdy do, Mr. President.”

“Howdy do,” came the smiling response from the Chief Executive.

With boyish frankness, one youth then said:

“Have you gotten well, Mr. President?”

“At least I am improving,” said Mr. Wilson.

The boys moved on, but the President ordered the chauffeur to catch up with them:

“Would you like to go for a ride?” said the President as he came up with the barefooted trio.

“You bet!” they exclaimed, with hearts that beat as one.

Whereupon the elated youngsters climbed into the automobile, and for nearly an hour they were driven through the park and finally to their homes.

Although the conversation in the car was not reported, “it is known that the President felt himself highly entertained and well repaid for the hospitality extended.” [“Wilson Gives Three Youngsters Long Ride In White House Car,” *The Baltimore Sun*, August 15, 1920]

On August 28, the *Star* reported an improvement in the President’s condition:

President Wilson stepped into his automobile in the rear of the White House yesterday for the first time since his serious illness without assistance and in sight of a large number of persons. He was accompanied in the drive by Mrs. Wilson and his daughter, Mrs. William H. McAdoo [Eleanor]. They all got into the rear seat of the big car.

It was apparent to the onlookers—at some distance, outside of the fence and hedge—that an inclined runway had been constructed to a level with the door of the car, up which the President walked when entering the automobile. [“President Walks To Car,” *The Evening Star*, August 28, 1920]

The *Star* reported another first that occurred on September 7:

With only the assistance afforded by a stout cane President Wilson walked from the White House yesterday afternoon, through the front entrance and stepped into his automobile, while an interested throng in Pennsylvania avenue looked on.

It was the first time since his illness that the President had started on a motor trip by that route, all trips heretofore having started from the rear grounds.

The crowd rushed to the gate as the car approached Pennsylvania Avenue. The President “lifted his hat and smiled.” The *Star* described the ride:

The President drove around town for an hour, and then went to the Union station to meet his son-in-law and daughter [Jessie], Mr. and Mrs. Francis H. Sayre, and returned with them to the White House. The car took its

place in a procession of taxicabs, and despite the bustle and rush around the station, the crowds recognized the President and stopped to give him a respectful greeting. [“President Walks With Aid Of Heavy Cane Only,” *The Evening Star*, September 8, 1920]

The *Post*'s Society column described an unusual ride on Sunday, November 19:

President and Mrs. Wilson did not attend church yesterday morning, but enjoyed the perfect weather in the afternoon, when they went for a motor ride. They went uptown for Mrs. Wilson's mother, Mrs. Bolling, and then for a spin about the Speedway on Potomac park. They had a pronounced demonstration of their popularity and were enthusiastically greeted on almost every street they turned into. As they whirled around the corner of the Army and Navy Club [at the intersection of Connecticut Avenue and

I Street, NW., overlooking Farragut Square] a sightseeing automobile slowed up to permit them to pass, and as quickly as the guide recognized the President he announced it to the passengers, who rose in a body and cheered long and loudly. The President doffed his hat and Mrs. Wilson rewarded the sightseers with her bright smile. When the White House turned into the Speedway it attracted a long procession of cars, which dropped into line, driving as close to the side of the President's car as they dared and keeping as closely behind it as they could. At frequent intervals the President lifted his hat and smiled to the enthusiasts and Mrs. Wilson smiled brightly and bowed graciously. [“President and Mrs. Wilson Out on Motor Spin Cheered by Throngs,” Society, *The Washington Post*, November 20, 1920]

The 1920 Election

The rides would continue virtually every day, although less newsworthy during the 1920 election. Behind the scenes, President Wilson thought that a third term might be possible. Berg described the idea:

No President of the United States had ever defied George Washington's tradition of leaving office after two terms. But along with other talk that sounded slightly deranged, Wilson told his physician that he was considering it. Even though he said, “Everyone seems to be opposed to my running,” Wilson had conjured a plot in which the Democratic Convention would find itself in a “hopeless tie-up,” and, with the world in so much turmoil, the Peace Treaty with its League of Nations would become the dominant issue. Then, Wilson said, “there may be practically a universal demand for the selection of someone to lead them out of the

wilderness. The only person he could envision, of course, was himself. He roughed out a new Cabinet.

Dr. Grayson was skeptical in view of the President's physical and psychological problems:

Wilson believed that the man elected that fall would determine "whether the United States will be the leader of the world or back among the stragglers." He had no intention of backing any Democrat for the nomination. Like a broken-down fire horse, he waited for the sound of the bell. [Berg, pages 684-685]

Meeting in Chicago in early June, the Republicans initially were deadlocked between General Leonard Wood and Governor Frank O. Lowden of Illinois. Finally, Senator Warren G. Harding of Ohio emerged with the nomination on the 10th ballot. Senator Harding, a newspaper publisher, had served as a State senator and Lieutenant Governor, but had lost his bid for election as Governor in 1910. In 1914, he won election to the U.S. Senate, and now had the nomination for President. Governor Calvin Coolidge of Massachusetts was his running mate.

President Wilson had a low opinion of Senator Harding. On August 19, 1919, Senator Harding had joined his colleagues on the Committee on Foreign Relations when they went to the White House to discuss the Paris treaty with the President. After the President read a long statement in support of the treaty, the Senators "grilled him for the next three hours":

Only once did Wilson seem agitated—when first-term Ohio Senator Warren G. Harding raised a series of questions about America's moral obligations as opposed to the legal, which suggested he had not listened to the answer Wilson had just provided. He struck the President as having "a disturbingly dull mind, and . . . it seemed impossible to get any explanation to lodge in it." [Berg, pages 617-618]

In San Francisco, 10,000 Democrats were deadlocked between Ohio Governor William O. Cox and President Wilson's son-in-law, former Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo. At the White House, President Wilson briefly saw the possibility emerging that a deadlocked convention would turn to him for a third term, but on the 43rd ballot, Governor Cox finally took the nomination, with the 44th making it unanimous. The Vice Presidential nominee would be Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt, a cousin of former President Roosevelt.

Presidential stenographer Swem believed that President Wilson was “a bitter man” after Cox secured the nomination, “not because he disliked Cox but because he didn’t get it himself.” [Berg, page 691]

On July 18, the Democratic nominees visited the White House to meet with the President. Initially, the President appeared weak and frail. “But Wilson revived when he spoke of the campaign ahead, as he briefed the two hopefuls with substantial details and humorous anecdotes.” Governor Cox stated that he was a million percent with the President in support of the League of Nations, earning Wilson’s appreciation. In a barely audible voice, he replied, “I am very grateful. I am very grateful.” [Berg, pages 691-692]

Former President Taft had said of the 1920 election that, “The issue which the American people are going to vote upon, no matter what Mr. Cox wishes, Mr. Wilson wishes, Mr. Lodge wishes, or Mr. Harding wishes, is whether they approve the Administration of Mr. Wilson.” Harding encapsulated that idea with his theme of “Return to Normalcy.” (Smith noted that, “The First Lady took the word as a personal insult to herself, saying that she had done her best to keep things normal.”) [Smith, page 166]

The election was held on November 3, 1920. Senator Harding voted in his hometown of Marion. According to biographer Francis Russell, he then changed into his golf clothes and went to play at the Scioto County Club:

By the time they left Columbus in the late afternoon it had begun to rain and Harding urged the chauffeur to “step on it.” Ten miles outside Marion the car skidded, veered off the road, and almost hit a telegraph pole. Somewhat shaken, chilled, and hungry, Harding arrived home to find himself the center of a surprise birthday party, arranged by the Dutchess [nickname for his wife Florence]. [Russell, Francis, *The Shadow of Blooming Grove: Warren G. Harding in His Times*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1968, page 416]

Although President Wilson considered Senator Harding shallow, voluble, and “nothing,” he could do little during the campaign:

The President spent part of Election Day engaged in physical therapy—struggling with a cane to mount a few low steps. When he paused for news, he learned that Cox was trailing badly. [Berg, page 693]

He voted by absentee ballot in Princeton on November 2 as a technical resident at 10 Nassau Street across from the university. Mrs. Wilson, whose name had been placed on the list of eligible voters on the last day open for registration, voted by mail as well. Women secured the right to vote when the New Jersey legislature

ratified the 19th Amendment to the Constitution earlier in the year (“The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”). Mrs. Wilson would not have been allowed to vote in the District of Columbia, whose residents, males and female, did not have the right to vote in presidential elections until 1964. [“Mr. and

Mrs. Wilson Vote,” *The New York Times*, November 3, 1920]

According to the *Times*, “During the afternoon the President and Mrs. Wilson took their daily automobile ride.” [“President Wilson Stoical In Defeat,” *The New York Times*, November 4, 1920]

In the morning, President Wilson learned that Senator Harding had won 37 States, with Governor Cox securing only 11, leaving the electoral college vote at 404 to 127. The popular vote was 16.1 million for Senator Harding and 9.1 million for Governor Cox. The congressional elections also favored the Republicans. The Senate would have 59 Republicans and 37 Democrats, while the Republican majority in the House was even more lopsided, 302 to 131.

It was, in short, a slap in the face to President Wilson. “The victors,” Berg summarized, “were only too happy to embrace Wilson’s premise that the election had been a referendum on his League.”

President Wilson worried about America’s role in the world. He told Tumulty, “It is the country and its future that I am thinking about. We had a chance to gain the leadership of the world. We have lost it, and soon we will be witnessing the tragedy of it all.” After all, he said of President-elect Harding, “How can he lead when he does not know where he is going.”

As Berg also noted, “The day after the election, the Wilsons took their automobile ride through Washington, as though nothing had happened.”

On November 8, the *Sun* reported that many observers believed that President Wilson had decided to stay in Washington after he left office, although he had not issued an official statement about his intentions:

The belief is based on the fact that it is the home of Mrs. Wilson and also because of the often expressed statement by the President that Washington approached his ideal city.

Those in close touch with the White House say the President for the last few weeks has taken a keen interest in real estate on his daily automobile ride. He has displayed special interest in two particular sections, Georgetown and the modern fashionable residential section of Chevy Chase.

The president [sic] often has his car stopped near the old colonial mansion recently purchased by Rear Admiral Cary T. Grayson, and this has given rise to the belief that while Dr. Grayson has insisted that the home was purchased for his own use it ultimately will be turned over to Mr. Wilson. ["Wilson To Make Home In Washington, Is Belief," *The Baltimore Sun*, November 8, 1920]

Around Christmas, Mrs. Wilson was looking for a new home, as Smith described:

At Christmas they held a little family dinner party and got together small gifts for the children along the country roads. They at first considered building a home, and the President spent much time looking through architectural magazines, but as time grew short they gave up the idea and sought an already-constructed one. They looked very seriously at a house near Alexandria and at one in Massachusetts Avenue park, and at one situated upon twenty-six wooded acres through which a quiet stream ran, but the plans for purchase did not work out. One morning she went to see two possible places in S Street—one of them would shortly be purchased by Herbert Hoover [the incoming Secretary of Commerce and future President] but neither met their needs. She was about to leave S Street, which in Washington in 1920 was the point at which country began to take over from city, when the agent with her asked if she would not look at a third house on the block, Number 2340. She did so and decided the house was perfect. She returned to the White House and told the President that she thought this was the place. That afternoon she went to a concert by the touring New York Philharmonic and when she returned he was in the Oval Room with the deed to the house in hand. The President had not seen the house at all, but the next day they went to it together

The house at 2340 S Street, NW., completed in 1915, cost the Wilsons about \$150,000, "an extremely large sum by 1920 standards. The President was aided in the purchase by ten friends who contributed \$10,000 each to assure him a proper residence." [Smith, page 174]

The White House announced the purchase of the home, in the Kalorama-Embassy Row area, on December 17, 1920. The *Sun* told readers:

The home is regarded as one of the finest examples of Colonial architecture in Washington. It is built of Colonial brick and Indiana Limestone and is fireproof throughout.

The entrance is through a large hall. A wide Colonial stairway leads to the second floor, and from the first landing a beautiful view is obtained of the floral garden in the rear of the building.

The second floor contains a large library, a formal reception room and a dining room. An unusual feature is an oval sun parlor which affords a commanding view of the city looking south toward the river.

Six master's [sic] bedrooms and four baths comprise the third floor. Servants' quarters are located on the fourth floor. ["Home In Washington Bought By President," *The Baltimore Sun*, December 18, 1920]

Before the Wilsons would move in, they undertook about \$4,000 in improvements, including installation of an elevator.

The Hardings, during the President-elect's Senate years in Washington, lived a few blocks away in a new brick duplex at 2314 Wyoming Avenue.

President and Mrs. Wilson spent their last New Year's Day in the White House:

President Wilson looked at the new year today with a smile. He was feeling better than for some time. He received members of the family and a few intimate friends in the morning and saw a moving picture in the East Room, laughing at the presentation. In the afternoon he took an automobile ride through Rock Creek Park and exchanged messages with the Rotary Club of Baltimore. ["President Greets New Year Smilingly," *The New York Times*, January 2, 1921]

Inauguration day on March 4, 1921, involved many tasks that President Wilson's condition rendered questionable. At 10:30, the Hardings and the Congressional Inauguration Committee arrived at the White House. As Harding biographer Russell observed, the contrast between the President and the President-elect was great. The President who had danced a jig after his wedding "had become an old man, with the querulous twitching look of age, his gray hair wisping unkemptly about his ears, the inherited strength of his eroded features only dimly apparent." As for President-elect Harding, Russell wrote:

The President-elect . . . was an impressive sight. His lusty black eyebrows contrasted with his steel-gray hair to give the effect of health. Although fifty-five years old, he looked older, but with an unimpaired statesmanlike virility. If he had been wearing a toga instead of a double-breasted chesterfield he could have stepped on stage in a production of *Julius Caesar*. Of all the members of the United States Senate in the years that he had served there, he most resembled the classical model. [Russell, pages 4-5]

Their mental outlook was equally different. President Wilson had been a scholar, author, professor, and college administrator who loved to read, enjoyed reading poetry and prose to his family at night, and embodied the idea of an intellectual.

President-elect Harding enjoyed cards, drinking, gambling, golf, and spending time with his friends.

The cars were waiting, with 50 police officers to prevent any photographs from being taken until the President was seated. The inaugural committee had supplied a Packard Twin 6 for the trip. The contemporary account in the *Times* reported:

President Wilson walked out of the front door on the arm of Mr. Harding. On the porch Mr. Wilson used his cane and Mr. Harding dropped his arm. Mr. Wilson walked unaided a distance of about forty feet to the waiting automobiles This little forty-foot trip for Mr. Wilson was a very trying ordeal.

The President smiled faintly at the onlookers surrounding the portico. It had been arranged that no moving picture should be taken until after the Presidential party had entered the automobiles. Mr. Harding stood at the edge of the platform, while "Colonel" Arthur Brooks, the colored valet of the President, took tender hold of the President's right arm, at the same time handing the President's cane to a Secret Service man standing in the automobile. James Sloan, another Government Secret Service man who had been serving with Mr. Harding since the election, aided Mr. Wilson to enter the car. Care had to be taken because it was quite a long stride for the President from the top of the steps to the running board of the automobile. Mr. Wilson was guided by the Secret Service man as the President stepped forward

The expression on the face of Mr. Harding as he gazed upon the tragic figure of his predecessor slowly getting into the automobile was a very interesting study. There was something brotherly about Mr. Harding's look and an apparent realization of the real weight of the load that American Presidents cannot evade.

The battery of the motion-picture men literally "went over the top" the moment Mr. Wilson and Mr. Harding were seated

As soon as he himself had entered the automobile President Wilson turned his head and looked up at Mr. Harding, who was still standing until certain that Mr. Wilson was comfortable. Mr. Wilson then lifted his hat to

Mr. Harding, who responded with a bow.

The Presidential procession moved onto Pennsylvania Avenue for the ride to the Capitol, accompanied by cavalry, swords drawn.

At the Capitol, President-elect Harding and Vice President-elect Coolidge, along with members of the party, went up the steps to the President's Room. President Wilson was driven to a ground floor entrance where he could avoid the steps. He entered by wheelchair, walked to an elevator, and finally reached the President's Room.

“Mr. Wilson divided his time in the President's Room between the signing of bills and receiving visitors”:

Later it was learned that this [entrance] was a reply to an inquiry whether Mr. Wilson thought he would be able to go into the Senate Chamber or to the Senate portico. It was also learned that during their automobile ride from the White House to the Capitol Mr. Harding told Mr. Wilson that he would quite understand if he should find it impossible go through with all of the inaugural ceremonies. Mr. Wilson did not care to go to the portico, if he felt he could not remain until after Mr. Harding had been inaugurated, as he thought it would be ungracious to leave during the ceremonies.

After he had become fatigued at the Capitol Mr. Wilson came to appreciate also that if he attempted to walk all the way to the portico the slowness of his stride might delay the movement of the rest of the program.

In the President's Room, President Wilson signed the final bills of his second term:

- PL66-377 - New Mexico Enabling Act Amendment, 1921
- PL66-379 - Federal Farm Loan Act Amendments, 1921
- PL66-380 - Alaska Coal Land Leasing Act of 1914 Amendment
- PL66-381 - Missouri 100th Anniversary 50-Cent Piece
- PL66-382 - Carson National Forest Land Consolidation Act
- PL66-383 - Chickasaw and Seminole Tribes of Indians in Oklahoma Memorial Monument
- PL66-387 - Rainier National Forest Land Exchange Act
- PL66-390 - Homestead Entries Validation, 1921
- PL66-391 - Army Personnel Property Claims Settlement
- PL66-394 - Army Equipment Transfer to Nation Museum
- PL66-395 - Bridge Across the Detroit River near Detroit, Michigan
- PL66-397 - Memorials and Tombs at the Arlington Memorial Amphitheater

As others moved to the Senate for administration of the oath of office to Governor Coolidge, President and Mrs. Wilson returned to their automobile:

Outside waited one of the White House automobiles. This was not the hired inaugural committee's car in which Mr. Wilson had ridden to the Capitol, and which was standing at the same door to convey Mr. Harding, once inaugurated, back to the White House. The White House car which was available to Mr. Wilson for the last time was one in which he has made many of his suburban journeys around Washington. Mrs. Wilson, Secretary Tumulty, Admiral Grayson, Brooks, the valet and secret service men accompanied Mr. Wilson on his ride as a private citizen

Instead of taking the direct short cut across the city two motorcycle policemen led the way for Mr. Wilson along Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House around Madison Place to Seventeenth Street, to Massachusetts Avenue, to Sheridan Circle and to the broad-fronted three-story [sic] residence for which Mr. Wilson recently paid \$150,000.

As the automobile moved along Pennsylvania Avenue, "there were flurries of applause." Before the ceremonies inaugurating Vice President Coolidge were finished, the Wilsons had reached their new home at 2340 S Street, NW. ["Wilson's Exit Is Tragic," *The New York Times*, March 5, 1921]

Conclusion

President Harding, who had been so considerate to his predecessor before the inauguration despite their political and policy differences, acted without public notice to help the former President through his remaining years. The *Times* reported in August 1923:

Without a request or suggestion from anybody, and without any one knowing of it, President Harding personally gave an order to the Navy Department that Dr. Grayson was to be assigned to duty in Washington, where his services would be available to Mr. Wilson and that in no circumstances was he to be ordered elsewhere without the President's consent.

Woodrow Wilson probably will get his first knowledge of Mr. Harding's action if he read this dispatch. ["Harding Kept Grayson Within Wilson's Call," *The New York Times*, August 4, 1923]

The Wilsons had favored the White House's 1916 Pierce-Arrow, a right-hand drive vestibule sedan, that they had used on many of their rides around the area. Now, just before leaving office, he purchased the automobile and would use it for the rest of his life. The Presidential seal was painted over for his private use. (Mrs. Wilson would eventually donate the automobile to the Woodrow Wilson Birthplace Foundation at Staunton, Virginia.) [Collins, page 138]

He began using the automobile immediately, with a new chauffeur. On March 5, former President Wilson and his wife went for an afternoon ride through Rock Creek Park. The plan was to rest from the exertions of his final days in office. ["Wilson Begins Rest At His New Home," *The Washington Post*, March 6, 1921; "Citizen Wilson Enjoys First Day of Freedom," *The Baltimore Sun*, March 6, 1921]

(At the White House, the Hardings were settling into their new routines. On March 6, "they went for an hour's automobile ride, trailed by a Secret Service machine." Automobile rides would become part of their regular relaxation. For the new President, however, golf would be a regular feature for recreation. President Wilson had taken up golf at his doctor's recommendation, but for President Harding it was a long-time passion:

At least two afternoons a week Harding played golf, and nothing but a downpour could keep him from the course. Yet, though his golfing was given much publicity, he actually spent less time on the links than had Wilson before his stroke Once on the links, he played as if his life depended on every shot, and made so many bets that sometimes he was betting against himself on individual shots and holes, on low score against his partner, or with his partner six dollars Nassau against their opponents (meaning six dollars out, six dollars in, and six dollars across). ["Harding Spends Sunday Quietly," *The New York Times*, March 7, 1921; Russell, page 445])

The Wilsons settled into a routine of an automobile ride every afternoon, as

Mrs. Wilson recalled:

Relief from the burdens of official responsibility was such a boon that the first few days we simply basked in it, doing little except read the mail. This was heavy. Letters poured in from everywhere, from men and women of every walk and station in life

Soon we had to develop a daily routine or be swamped After lunch he would retire for an hour's complete rest, then keep appointments until about 3:30 After this came our daily drive. As the reader knows,

Mr. Wilson loved motoring and he was always cheered by the greetings that met him on every side. [*My Memoir*, pages 324-325]

They also visited the theater on Saturday evenings. Smith described the routine on theater night:

Few could get to see him at his home, but they stood in the rain and in the snow and wind each Saturday night to see him when he went to the vaudeville at Keith's Theatre. "Wilson Night," it was called—Saturday night after a week in which the ticket sellers had constantly to say, "This is as near to him as I can place you." Always he sat in the same seat, U-21. At eight in the evening a police lieutenant with a squad closed off G Street between 14th and 15th to all vehicular traffic and took up station in a little alley by the side of the theater. The street filled up with people—always they were there, no matter what the weather; and week by week they grew in their numbers—and a little after eight the big Pierce-Arrow came slowly down the way and halted in the alley.

The servant Scott, in black suit instead of the white jacket he wore at home, helped the ex-President out of the car and to the alley door held open by a member of the theater staff. He was always in evening clothes. As he came out, behind him there would be a thrill of excitement in the waiting crowd and a series of audible whispers: "There he is!" Inside, Edith helped him out of his coat and took off his hat and put them in a little vestibule, and he moved to Seat U-21 [sic], she preceding him with a guest or two, John Randolph Bolling, perhaps, or Margaret down for a weekend. The theater's house detective stood in the aisle to keep people away. He had always loved the theater and in another day used to put a record on the Victrola that stood in the Oval Room at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue and dance to it in imitation of the stage hoofers. Now there could be no dancing for him, but still he could laugh at the stunts and the jokes. When he missed a line, Edith whispered it to him, and when he dropped his handkerchief she picked it up.

At the end of the performance people dashed out of the main entrance and circled back to the alley to see him into his car. Often a group of performers waited there to hand him a spray of flowers and say a few words. Cary Grayson remembered a young actress still in costume and stage make-up offering flowers and speaking for the other girls with her, saying, "We simply want to tell you that we love you dearly." [Smith, pages 217-218]

Now that he was out of office, his daily automobile rides were no longer news except on occasion. On November 2, 1921, for example, the *Post* reported that "Woodrow Wilson went for an automobile ride yesterday for the first time in almost a week since his attack of indigestion. He was out for more than an hour, riding over the Virginia hills. ["Wilson Goes For Auto Ride," *The Washington Post*, November 2, 1921]

Former President Wilson would make few official appearances, but he intended to attend dedication of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery on November 11, 1921. The day had been designated Armistice Day, a national holiday honoring the end of the great European war. (November 11 is now Veterans' Day.)

His physical condition limited where he could walk, as it had during President Harding's inauguration. The *Times* described his role:

Ex-President Wilson was not there as he had planned to be, but he rode in the funeral procession through the streets of Washington as far as the White House and received an ovation all along the route.

The crowds along the line of march were imbued with the solemnity of the occasion and showed an appreciation of the funeral spirit. But when they saw the stricken man who had been Commander-in-Chief of the forces with which the Unknown Warrior fought they broke into cheers.

It was apparent that the sight of Wilson, his once strong body broken by ill-health, his limbs too frail to permit his marching with the other great men who followed the Unknown caisson on foot, was a grim reminder that he had been an outstanding figure in the world conflict which today's ceremonial typified.

In the procession, President and Mrs. Wilson rode in a horse-drawn open barouche behind the Quantico Marine Band of 60 men playing funeral marching anthems. The Wilsons were followed by about 200 old men, all members of the Grand Army of the Republic. The *Star* added that after passing the White House, the Wilsons' carriage left the procession and took them home. "The comment was heard in the crowd that the former President, long a sick man, looked better than many folks expected." ["Solemn Journey of Dead," *The New York Times*, November 12, 1921; "Comrade Escort to The American Stiffles [sic] Grief in Patriotic Pride," *The Washington Post*, November 12, 1921; "Reverent Throngs Bow in Respect As Cortege Passes By," *The Evening Star*, November 11, 1921]

The day was not without mishaps, as the *Star* described:

A small touring car, Washington bound, ran out of gasoline in the middle of Highway bridge [cite of today's I-395/14th Street Bridge complex] this morning and precipitated a traffic jam which prevented hundreds of Washingtonians from attending the services at Arlington, caused the automobile bearing the President of the United States to leave the main road and cut across the field three times, and drove a special squad of policemen nearly frantic in their efforts to straighten out the tangle.

The touring car stalled in the middle of the bridge and held up a long line of machines behind it, all Washington bound. Some of them tried to pass and met the vanguard of the hundreds of machines which had left Washington and were on their way to the Arlington Cemetery.

In short time the bridge and its approaches were jammed with automobiles, on some roads four abreast, and the two traffic policemen stationed at the entrance to the bridge, sent in hurry calls for help.

Forty or so policemen responded and worked for more than an hour breaking up the tangle

The President's car left the White House on schedule time [sic]. When the machine, preceded by secret service men and policemen mounted on motor cycles, reached the outskirts of the jam, it left the road three times and cut across the grass, reaching points ahead where the road was comparatively clear.

At times the secret service men in the car got out and walked ahead, clearing space for the White House car. When the presidential party reached the Arlington experiment station the car was driven off the roadway and through the lanes which cut through the farm. ["Auto Causes Huge Tangle In Traffic," *The Evening Star*, November 11, 1921]

(The Arlington Experiment Farm of the Department of Agriculture was located in Virginia along the Potomac River near Columbia Island in sight of Arlington National Cemetery. BPR maintained an outdoor experimental laboratory on the farm.)

President Wilson turned 65 on December 28, 1921. Other than a family dinner, the Wilsons did not have any other celebration of the occasion, which brought more than 1,000 communications from around the world to their home on

S Street:

Mr. Wilson was in better health today than he has enjoyed for several months. He was strong enough to receive a few intimate friends, but the names of these were not made public

In the afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Wilson went for a long automobile ride. Many who saw him commented on the fact that his condition seemed improved since he participated in the parade in honor of the Unknown American who was buried in Arlington Cemetery on Armistice Day. ["World's Greetings Reach Wilson at 65," *The New York Times*, December 29, 1921]

The following year, on Armistice Day, November 11, 1922, more than 5,000 “friends and admirers” showed up at the Wilsons’ S Street home to honor the former President. The crowd was so large that “the street car lines had to put on extra cars to handle it.” The 45-minute ceremony began at about 3 p.m. with the singing of several southern songs, including “Take Me Back to Old Virginia.” He came outside to greet the crowd:

Mr. Wilson was very happy. There could be no question about that. His friends maintained that physically he appeared to be in better condition than he was a year ago. The old ring of his voice was missing, but his enunciation was clear and distinct and reached to most parts of the crowd.

He was assisted to his position on the stoop by his colored attendant, but stood without support while he was making his speech, by far the longest he had made since he was stricken in the Fall of 1919. For a while he remained with head uncovered. Then with a smile he placed his hat on his head.

He began by thanking the crowd, but discussed his views on the armistice that the day honored:

I have been reflecting today that Armistice Day has a particular significance for the United States because the United States has remained contented with the armistice and has not moved forward to peace.

It is a very serious reflection that the United States, the great originative nation, should remain contented with a negation. Armistice is a negation; it is a standstill of arms; it is a cessation of fighting, and we are so bent on a cessation of fighting that we are even throwing our arms away.

It is a singular circumstance . . . that while we prescribed the conditions of the armistice we will not concur in the establishment of permanent peace. That, of course, was brought about by a group in the United States Senate who preferred personal partisan motives to the honor of their country and the peace of the world. [Applause.]

They do not represent the United States, because the United States is moving forward and they are slipping backward. Where the slipping will end, God only will determine.

And I have been reflecting upon the radical difference between armistice and peace. Armistice, as I have said, is a mere negation; it is refraining from force. But peace is a very positive and constructive thing as the world stands nowadays, because it must be brought about by the systematic maintenance of common understanding and by cultivation—not

by amiable phrases, but the active co-operation for justice; and justice is a greater thing than any kind of expediency. [Applause.]

America has always stood for justice and always will stand for it. Puny persons who are now standing in the way will presently find that their weakness is no match for the strength of a moving Providence.

If you will pardon an invalid for putting on his hat, I will promise not to talk through it. [Laughter and applause.]

I think, then, we may renew today our faith in the future though we are celebrating the past. The future is in our hands, and if we are not equal to it the shame will be ours and none others.

I thank you from a very full heart, my friends, for this demonstration of kindness by you, and bid you and the nation godspeed.

The *Times* described the end of the ceremony:

When the demonstration at the Wilson home had ended the great crowd formed two lines on either side of S Street, in lines extending for two blocks beyond Connecticut Avenue. Through these cheering lines the ex-President left his home for his daily automobile ride. He lifted his hat time and again and smiled his deep appreciation of the tribute accorded him. ["Wilson See Nation Moving Forward; Hits At His Foes," *The New York Times*, November 22, 1922]

On December 27, 1922, the day before the former President's 66th birthday, Franklin D. Roosevelt, visited S Street. Berg wrote:

Franklin Roosevelt informed him that in a little more than year, the organizers of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation had raised \$1 million. The fund's income would be used, Roosevelt said, to prompt public welfare, democracy, and peace through justice.

Roosevelt was the foundation's chairman:

The next day, Wilson's birthday, he welcomed four of the Foundation's board members and learned that most of the funding had come not from wealthy benefactors (such as Henry Ford, who had contributed \$10,000) but from thousands of ordinary citizens, each of whom supported his vision with a dollar. The delegation left Wilson speechless. 'I wish I could have controlled my voice so I could really have expressed what I felt,' he told Edith afterwards, "but I could not trust myself lest I break down and cry."

His S Street home was again flooded with greetings and strangers waiting outside, despite a heavy rain, in hopes of a glimpse of the former President:

When the delegation emerged there was a rush of people through the rain to the gate at the side of the house behind which Mr. Wilson's closed automobile was waiting at the porte cochere. There was enthusiastic cheering when Mr. Wilson appeared, wearing a soft brown hat and a cape over a Winter overcoat. He hooked his cane over his left arm and stood alone with his hat in his right hand, bowing and smiling. Then he tossed his hat into the car and was assisted to a rear seat.

"Don't catch cold," cried one woman, bobbing up and down under her umbrella, while figures behind her were loud in lamentation over the obstruction in front of their cameras. Mr. Wilson smiled again and put on his hat. Then Mrs. Wilson entered the car and they drove off for an hour's ride around the Potomac speedway.

Those who had not seen Mr. Wilson for several months found him looking heavier and fuller faced, with possibly more color. Although he did not move his left arm and side with freedom, he appeared to depend less upon his cane. [Berg, pages 724-725; "Senate Felicitates Wilson On Birthday," *The New York Times*, December 29, 1922]

On June 20, 1923, President Harding, his wife Dutchess, and other officials and aides boarded a train at Union Station for a 15,000-mile, 2-month Voyage of Understanding across the country and to the territory of Alaska. Biographer Russell wrote:

For all his feigned heartiness as he waved good-by, Harding's face was crossed with fatigue and his olive complexion sallow. Yet, in spite of his obvious physical and mental weariness, he seemed on the transcontinental journey incapable of resting or relaxing. Confined to the plush and burled-walnut elegance of the Superb, he grew restless, never remaining long in his seat but moving from side to side and peering through the windows at the now-browning landscape. Above all he wanted to play bridge, and when not at the bridge table he wanted to talk. Never did he want to be alone. [Russell, page 574]

Already, the early reports of corruption in his Administration had emerged, the scope of which would undermine his reputation as President.

On July 4, after a series of speeches and events across the country, he left Tacoma, Washington, for the 4-day voyage to Alaska:

Harding had concluded most of his trip's formal speechmaking although he still planned a major address on the way back at San Francisco on his now dominant and dominating issue of the World Court. Defining himself as he never had before, moving beyond his party in his determination to become leader of his country, he was willing to stake his reputation on the World Court as Wilson had dared to stake his on the League of Nations. Yet, in spite of the fact that his speeches showed him moving toward a new conception of himself and the Presidency, there was an undercurrent of doom to his Voyage of Understanding, a feeling of malignant fate in the offing. Convinced that he had been betrayed, Harding could not shake the feeling. [Russell, page 581]

After the tour of Alaska, the Harding party ended at Sitka on a ship for the return to the States. Restless again, President Harding went into the dining room where Ora M. "Reddy" Baldinger, once a delivery boy at Harding's newspaper, now his military aide, was enjoying a crab feast. Baldinger invited the President to join him. "For over an hour the old editor and his delivery boy squatted there in their shirt sleeves, elbows on the table, cracking the shells and picking out the meat as they talked of old times in Marion, their relaxed faces smeared with butter." [Russell, pages 587-588]

The ship took the party to Vancouver, where President Harding appeared listless during the few events. "He did his best, making five impromptu speeches and then speaking bareheaded to 40,000 people at Stanley Park, but he appeared worn and in spite of his bulk almost frail."

Several events, including an auto parade, were scheduled for Seattle, as well as a speech, written by Secretary Hoover, before 60,000 people in Seattle Stadium:

Those near him could see the exhaustion written into his slack face, the slightly green tinge to his cheeks, the way his jaws set in pain. Several times while speaking he hesitated, slurred his words, called Alaska "Nebraska." Then, halfway through he faltered, dropped the manuscript, and clutched the lectern in front of him with both hands. An alarmed and solicitous Hoover, sitting directly behind him, managed to pick up the scattered pages from the flood, handed him the next few, and sorted out the rest while the President caught his breath and continued speaking. [Russell, page 589]

A planned speech in Portland was canceled, while the train took the Presidential party to San Francisco without stops, much to the disappointment of crowds at stations along the way.

Doctor Charles E. Sawyer thought the President's problem was "a slight attack of ptomaine" that would have "no serious aspects." President Harding went to bed as soon as the party arrived at the Palace Hotel. He seemed to be regaining his strength, but on August 2, 1923, at 7:32 p.m. President Warren G. Harding passed away.

The shocked Presidential party returned to Washington for the ceremonies attendant to the death of a President in office:

During that long, fog-streaked night while the Palace stirred and hummed like a beehive that has been disturbed, far on the other side of the country in the quiet of a Vermont hill village, Calvin Coolidge—the prim, tight-lipped Yankee whom the Dutchess despised—was being sworn in by lamplight as the thirtieth President of the United States. [Russell, page 592]

Thousands viewed the train as it traveled east, carrying the remains of President Harding to Washington, arriving in Washington's Union Station on August 6.

As plans for the funeral emerged, Chief Justice Taft, one of only two living ex-Presidents, planned to attend. Whether former President Wilson would be able to attend was uncertain. Initially, his health prompted President Wilson to decline to participate. On August 6, however, he wrote to ask President Coolidge to reserve a place in the procession for him. "It will be with feelings of the utmost solemnity and reverence that I will attend. I regret to say my lameness makes it impracticable for me to attend the exercises at the Capitol." ["Wilson Asks Place in Funeral Procession Be Reserved for Him," *The Evening Star*, August 6, 1923]

On August 7, President Wilson motored with Mrs. Wilson to the New Willard hotel where President Coolidge was staying. He left his card with the doorman in an envelope marked "For the President." It was one of hundreds of cards left for the new President. ["Wilson Leaves His Card," *The New York Times*, August 8, 1923]

The procession on August 8 began at the White House. The *Star* reported:

A little less than a half hour before the procession was to start Woodrow Wilson, accompanied by Mrs. Wilson and Rear Admiral Grayson, arrived at the north door of the White House. As his car came to a stop before the great pillars, past which he, too, had looked out upon the world many times in high hope and then in disappointment, the infantry guard stationed there saluted him, and he returned the salutation with a wave of his hand. The car then waited to take up its place in the funeral line

While waiting in his 1916 Pierce-Arrow, President Wilson held a palm leaf fan in his right hand to deal with the intense 95-degree heat of the day.

The procession began with President Harding's coffin on a black caisson drawn by four black horses onto Pennsylvania Avenue. Mrs. Harding's car followed, its curtains drawn.

President Coolidge followed in his car, with former President Taft's car behind him:

Then came a figure who was a reminder, too, of a gayer and happier day. Woodrow Wilson had come from the seclusion and quiet of the house where he bravely and patiently waits for his summons from the Creator, to show his respect and ease a genuine sorrow.

Only a little while ago he rode over the same way with Warren Harding beside him in the full bloom of vigorous life, about to take up the burden he was laying down. Harding's consideration for the sick man beside him touched every heart and dimmed many eyes that day. It touched Woodrow Wilson's heart as few things had and today he came to pay it back and put his heart upon his sleeve. Little did anybody dream that Woodrow Wilson would be helping lay Warren Harding under the sod, but death had given a respite to the one and abruptly summoned the other

The crowd was respectful, but not cheering the former President who had seen the country through the great war.

The coffin was placed in the Rotunda of the Capitol for a prayer service before being taken to Union Station for the trip to Marion.

The *Star* described the participation of four Presidents in the procession—Coolidge, Harding, Taft, and Wilson—saying, “Washington had never known such a procession of the Presidents before. No dead President has ever before been mourned by two of his predecessors in the White House.” Of Wilson, the article said:

And last of all came Wilson, broken on the wheel of duty just short of four years ago, pale, exceedingly gray, but with the spirit of the crusader still burning strong within him. Wilson, who was eight years in the White House, the longest continuous term of any President since Grant

He rode with the wife who has scarcely left his side in the four long years since he was stricken—stricken as he fought to lead the nation in the way he thought it should go, as he fought to carry out with his own people the

commitments he had made in their name at the peace councils of the old world

Mr. Wilson could not take part in the services within the Capitol building. Bravely he had accompanied Mr. Hardin to the Capitol for his inauguration, but the effort at walking was too great.

[“Cortege Passes Through Lane Of Grief On Journey From White House To Capitol,” *The Baltimore Sun*, August 9, 1923; “Pomp Of Nation In Parade,” *The New York Times*, August 9, 1923; “Silent Tens of Thousands Pay Tender, Tearful, Final Tribute To Harding, Martyr To Country,” *The Evening Star*, August 8, 1923; Small, Robert T., “Four Wearers Of Presidential Mantle Rode In Cortege Today,” *The Evening Star*, August 8, 1923]

Dr. Grayson had advised President Wilson not to undertake the ordeal, but the President had gone ahead. The *Sun* followed him on this day of mourning:

A man limped through the door of an S street house about 9 o'clock this morning. He leaned heavily upon a cane which he carried in his right hand. His left arm hung practically lifeless at his side. His left leg responded only indifferently to the pressure upon it. His shoulders were slightly stooped and his body was bent toward the left.

As he emerged a negro butler and an able-bodied chauffeur assisted him into an automobile. Once he was seated, his figure seemed to straighten. His head became erect. His cane fell to the floor of the car. All manifest evidence of physical disability disappeared.

He was dressed in a formal frock coat, with high silk hat. He wore narrow-striped trousers, black shoes and black necktie. As he drove away his right hand rested comfortably upon the cushion of the car.

The man was Woodrow Wilson. He was on his way to participate in the capital's last tribute to his own successor in the Presidency, Warren G. Harding. He went contrary to the advice of his physician and against the best judgment of Mrs. Wilson.

Riding beside him and glancing solicitously toward him from time to time was Mrs. Wilson. Riding in front of him, beside the chauffeur was Rear Admiral Cary T. Grayson, for 10 years his personal physician. Following immediately in his wake as he drove slowly down S street to Connecticut avenue, thence to the White House, were two motorcycle officers.

The *Sun* article recalled President Harding's inaugural parade 3 years earlier:

As the car moved slowly along its route, tens of thousands of their countrymen applauded—some one man, some the other. But who there in all that vast multitude as he looked upon the robust Harding and the invalid Wilson would have dreamed that in less than three years the invalid would have followed that same route a second time in the cortege of the man into whose hands he had placed the reins of Government.

Now, on the same avenue lined by somber people, President Wilson “saw thousands upon thousands of men, women and children instinctively pressed forward to catch a nearer glimpse of him. There were no cheers. There were no outbursts of any sort. Men lifted their hats as he passed, just as they had lifted them when the flag-covered casket passed. Children pointed eagerly in his direction. But that was all.”

After President and Mrs. Wilson returned to S Street, Dr. Grayson told reporters that the President had stood the ordeal well. “Mr. Wilson is stronger today than he was a year ago. He came through today excellently.” [Essary, J. F., “Wilson Joins With Nation To Honor Harding,” *The Baltimore Sun*, August 9, 1923; “Ordeal For Wilson To Attend Funeral,” *The New York Times*, August 9, 1923]

Smith recounted an anecdote involving Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (R-Ma.), one of the leading opponents of the League of Nations:

As they sat in the heat a stone’s throw from where they had their greatest moments, both personal and official, and also their most terrible ones, a red-faced and perspiring colonel of cavalry came up. The officer said in an excited voice, “Mr. Wilson, may I ask you a question?” “Certainly, Colonel.” “Mr. Wilson, do you know where I can find Senator Lodge?”

Woodrow Wilson looked at the man. “I am not Senator Lodge’s keeper,” he said evenly. The Colonel saluted and spurred his horse and dashed off. Woodrow Wilson said, “What asylum did that Colonel escape from?” [Smith, page 225]

On Armistice Day, November 11, 1923, thousands of admirers came to S Street (Smith says 20,000). “The trolley lines put on extra cars to carry them. They were not the elite of Washington or the government, noted [journalist] William Allen White, and among them were fewer than a dozen persons whose names a regular newspaper reader would recognize.” It was “the largest crowd ever to go to S Street.”

Smith narrated the scene:

At three-thirty Senator Carter Glass of Virginia came out of the house, and with him was the servant Scott, and behind them, leaning heavily on his cane but outfitted in morning coat and gray trousers, was Woodrow

Wilson. The band played *Over There*. Some ex-soldiers wearing their old uniforms were directly in front of the house, and when during the music and the cheering their old Commander in Chief looked at them he found a smile to give back in exchange for those on their young faces.

Senator Glass spoke about the day and the reason they were there, his remarks interrupted by cheers:

Cheer after cheer rose from the people. Glass stepped back.

Woodrow Wilson's eyes were on the ground as the applause slowly quieted. Edith stood behind him in a moleskin cape with sable collar. He moved forward one step and put on his hat so that he might lift his cane and with his good hand hook it into the top pocket of his overcoat. Then he took off his hat again and for perhaps thirty seconds he stood silent, swaying slightly. He raised his bowed head and peered at the ex-soldiers in front and at the people in the street. He moved the right hand holding the high silk hat in a vague gesture and then he began to speak.

“Senator Glass, ladies and gentlemen: I am indeed deeply touched and honored by this extraordinary exhibition of your friendship and confidence; and yet I can say without affectation that I wish you would transfer your homage from me to the men who made the Armistice possible. It was because our boys had beaten the enemy to a standstill. You know—if you will allow me to be didactic for a moment—‘Armistice’ merely means ‘standstill of arms.’ Our late enemies, the Germans, call an Armistice ‘*Waffenstillstand*,’ an armed standstill; and it was the boys who made them stand still.” There was laughter and applause. “If they had not, they would not have listened to proposals of armistice. I am proud to remember that I had the honor of being the commander in chief—“ Someone yelled, “The best on earth!”—the commander in chief of the most ideal army that was ever thrown together—“ And his voice broke and his eyes filled for a moment and he said, “Pardon my emotion,” and went on: “Of the most ideal army that was ever thrown together, though the real fighting commander in chief was my honored friend [General John J. “Black Jack”] Pershing, to whom I gladly hand the laurels of victory. Thank you with all my heart for your kindness.”

He turned away and put on his hat. He said, “That’s all I can do.”

He started to leave as the band began the hymn *How Firm a Foundation*, but then the former President halted. “Stop the band,” he whispered to those nearby, “I have something more to say.” At a signal from those around the former President, the band stopped and the crowd quieted:

Before, Woodrow Wilson had spoken in a monotone, and what he said was mild, graceful enough, of no real significance. It was a sick old man's few remarks in front of his house, it meant nothing. But now he was going to speak again for one moment, one paragraph, and he was going to find it in him to speak so that his voice, suddenly strong, would carry to the outermost reaches of the crowd ranging down S Street's hill; to the little boys perched up in the maple trees; to the people on the sloping mud banks across the street. For this moment, this one last instant, that voice was the voice of the Professor Wilson who long ago called to the students at football games that they should cheer louder for the team; the voice was that of the President in the West crying aloud that there would be a terrible war if the nation did not enter the League. These the last words he was ever to say in public. The long crusade was over. This was summation—valedictory. And no tears.

He said:

“Just one word more; I cannot refrain from saying it. I am not one of those that have the least anxiety about the triumph of the principles I have stood for. I have seen fools resist Providence before, and I have seen their destruction, as will come upon these again, utter destruction, and contempt. That we shall prevail is as sure as that God reigns. Thank you.” [Smith, pages 231-232]

The *Times* added:

The ceremony lasted eleven minutes. As the band played “Onward, Christian Soldiers” and “Dixie,” the former President lingered a moment longer on the portal after he had finished speaking. Then Mrs. Wilson and a servant came to his assistance and he went within doors.

It was announced, when the crowd showed no disposition to leave the scene, that Mr. and Mrs. Wilson would leave for their afternoon drive within a few minutes. The band played and there was singing along the densely filled street until the car appeared, with Mr. and Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Bolling, Mrs. Wilson's mother.

The man who had just thrilled his audience by proclaiming that his principle would yet prevail received continuous tribute as the car moved slowly through the packed street. [“Wilson Overcome Greeting Pilgrims; Predicts Triumph,” *The New York Times*, November 12, 1923]

In early December, the news tickers carried the news that President Woodrow Wilson had died. Newsmen showed up at 2340 S Street for more news of the sad end:

Captain Randolph Bolling, Secretary to Mr. Wilson, reassured the reporters that Mr. Wilson was “as fine as ever and had just returned from a two-hour automobile ride.

Later, Dr. Grayson assured the reporters that the former President had not experienced any change in his condition and that any reports to the contrary had no foundation. [“Rumor Of Wilson’s Death,” *The New York Times*, December 7, 1923]

For the holiday season, Helen Bones visited S Street, the cousin who had introduced President Wilson to his wife Edith. On Christmas Eve, they went to Keith’s where the headline act was the madcap comedy team Olsen and Johnson. Smith, again, narrated the occasion:

[The] final set was of a living room with a fireplace. Above the fireplace was a portrait of Woodrow Wilson. The cast came out on the stage for the finale, and the actress Nan Halpern stepped forward and said to the audience in the dark, “Merry Christmas to you and you and you.” She turned her back and went to the picture and looked up at it and said, “And to you, an abundance of Yuletide blessings and a bountiful year.” The people in the theater were entirely silent then, both those on the stage and those sitting before them, for she was raising herself to the picture and she was holding it in her arms and pressing her lips to it in a long sweet embrace. Down the aisle came showgirls. They carried roses. They went to Row U and handed them over. Onstage the cast began to sing *Auld Lang Syne* and at the first slow familiar notes the audience got up—every last one of them, Olsen noted—and stood and turned toward Seat U-21 and sang along with the orchestra. This was no ordinary singing, Olsen thought. He had never heard such singing. At the end there was a long silence that seemed to Olsen to last and last until one of the girls on the stage stepped forward to the footlights. The brightness illuminated her tears glittering down through the mascara and stage make-up. She said, “Merry Christmas, Mr. President.” [Smith, pages 232-233]

December 28 was his 67th birthday:

Outside when he went for his afternoon drive at three o’clock there waited a magnificent birthday gift from a group of his old friends and associates. It was a Rolls-Royce, specially constructed to make his entrances and exits easier. It was black with a thin orange stripe—Princeton’s colors. On the door was “W.W.” [Smith, page 233]

By February 1924, the former President was declining, with Dr. Grayson and other specialists unable to reverse the trend. Word that the end was near brought reporters to S. Street:

Grayson went to speak with them. There was no attempt to minimize the gravity of the situation; Grayson said frankly that the situation was very bad

Grayson went into the sickroom to say that the two doctors were coming in to make an examination. When they came in behind Grayson, there was a tiny smile from the patient, and a faint whisper: "Too many cooks spoil the broth."

Last jest, thought Grayson.

Later that night, Dr. Grayson told Wilson that he was dying. "Woodrow Wilson listened and breathed, 'I am a broken piece of machinery. When the machinery is broken . . . ' His voice petered out. [Smith, page 237]

Crowds outside the S Street home grew, newspapers carried the bad news, President Coolidge issued a statement saying that he was much disturbed. Two of Wilson's daughters had been too far away to reach Washington in time, with only Margaret in attendance.

Saturday night, February 2, he seemed to be unconscious:

For a moment [Edith] went out of the room. It had seemed he was totally unconscious, unmoving, eyes closed, hands limp on the blanket, but he sensed that she was gone. It could not have been that he knew it with his eyes, for he was blind now, not with his ears, for his hearing was gone now, but he knew that he was alone now, for all that Margaret and Grayson and the nurses were there. The last word he would ever say came from his lips:

"Edith!"

On Sunday, the large crowd outside 2340 S Street was quiet:

Upstairs, the blue-gray eyes closed. They had been open for some ten minutes. The wife said, "Woodrow. Woodrow." It was a few minutes past eleven. In the street the people were getting up one by one.

The telegraphers were ready, and the reporters in front of the house and down by the telephones. Edith was still holding the right hand and Margaret the left. Weeping, Nellie was heading east on the California Limited. Jessie was in Siam. Grayson was bending over him, holding his wrist, and the two nurses stood at the foot of the bed. He had been three days dying his long death when, at 11:15 a.m., February 3, 1924, Grayson straightened up and stepped back.

Dr. Grayson stepped outside and said, “The end came at eleven-fifteen.” Reporters immediately began reacting, some waving to their colleagues at the telephones beyond the crowd. [Smith, pages 243-244]

Edith and the two daughters (Jessie was too far away to reach Washington in time) decided on a family funeral service in the S Street home, and to bury President Wilson in the crypt of the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul, known as the Washington National Cathedral, not yet completed “atop Mount Saint Alban, the highest elevation in Washington.” This would not be a state funeral, and the body would not lie in state.

Wednesday, February 6, was cloudy, wet, and cold. President Coolidge and the First Lady, Grace, left the White House for the short drive to S Street where the services would take place in the drawing room at 3 p.m. The guests included members of the Wilson Administration, such as former Agriculture Secretary Houston, a few friends, and even two doormen from Keith’s Theatre who had been helpful on Wilson Nights. After the brief service, eight servicemen carried the black steel coffin to the hearse. The family and guests entered their cars:

The procession got under way, a slow rolling line of cumbersome high-roofed black automobiles heading down S Street’s hill. By the first car, the hearse, marched servicemen. Other servicemen, the soldiers and marines standing in a two-mile line to the Cathedral, one by one came to a salute as the hearse reached them. For as far as could be seen hands came up and stayed at foreheads for a moment and then dropped. No sidearms of any kind were worn, and there were no muffled kettledrums, no gun caissons, no horse with empty saddle and stirrups reversed, no band to play a dirge. At the junction of S Street and Massachusetts Avenue some young American Legionnaires stood with standards and flags, the only color in the gray afternoon.

They turned up the Avenue and headed northwest, the crawling line of cars going no faster than the slow march of the boys by the hearse, the unbroken line of people under the black dripping umbrellas motionless save for those women—and men, also—who reached under their coats and brought out handkerchiefs. Fort Myer’s guns thudded

Up Massachusetts Avenue wound the silent procession approaching Mount Saint Alban and the towering arches of the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul. The sound of the tolling bells came through the wet air to meet the cars, and when the hearse turned into the spacious grounds the bells played *Nearer, My God, to Thee*.

The tires of the cars whispered through the slush on the winding road leading past the gardens to the church itself.

When the procession halted, the eight servicemen removed the casket and carried it through the door of the Bethlehem Chapel:

The boys carried their burden down the narrow corridor leading to the chapel sepulcher, passing thousands and thousands of banked flowers, the greatest floral display Washington had ever seen

After a brief service, President Coolidge led the mourners out, leaving behind only the family, Dr. Grayson, the eight servicemen “at attention in the rear of the room and the workmen who would move away the marble slab in the aisle that covered the entrance to the underground cavern where the casket would rest.

The serviceman placed the casket on the beams that would lower it into the vault.

The casket, with its simple plate on it (Woodrow Wilson Born December 28 1856 Died February 3 1924) was lowered into the ground. “Edith turned and headed blindly toward the door. McAdoo took her arm and led her out, and the two girls trailed after them.” [Smith, page 251-260]

President Woodrow Wilson’s final automobile ride was over.