

Gen. William Henry Harrison

(9 Feb 1773 – 4 Apr 1841)

William Henry Harrison rode to his inauguration on horseback through a rainstorm. Hatless and coatless, he was sworn in on the East Portico of the Capitol, and then gave a speech which took an hour and forty minutes to read. After attending three inaugural balls, he took to his bed with a chill. This turned to pneumonia, and he died a month after taking office.

The National Intelligencer, Friday, April 9, 1841

The Funeral

What all the pomps and triumphs of our lives
But legacies in blossom!
Young

When, but four weeks since, it was our welcome task to lay before our readers a sketch of the joyous scenes which marked the Inauguration of beloved Chief Magistrate, how little did we—alas! How little did any one—anticipate that our columns would so soon be occupied with the particulars of his Funeral Obsequies? It seems, even yet, but as a dream—some false, but affrighting vision. Could the deep solicitude of the best and the wisest men—could the fond, the sanguine hopes of innumerable personal and political friends—could the prayers, the sincere and fervent prayers, of a multitude of Christian people—could the undivided affection of almost an entire nation, have secured to one human being prolonged life and unimpaired health and felicity, these would assuredly have been the lot of William Henry Harrison. Never, since the times of Washington, has any one man so concentrated upon himself the love and confidence of the American People; and, never, since the melancholy day which shrouded a nation in mourning for his sudden death, has any event produced so general and so profound a sensation of surprise and sorrow.

So brief had been the late President's illness, that now, as in the case of Washington, there had scarce been time for us to begin to fear, when the stunning blow of the reality fell upon us like the stroke of thunder from a cloudless sky. Men looked aghast, and staggered, as if amazed by something they could scarce believe. But it was true. He who, with open beaming countenance passed along our streets in the joy of his heart—he, the welcome, the long-expected, the desired, on whom all eyes were fastened, to whom all hearts went out, who had within him more stirring subjects of exhilarating consciousness than have met in any single bosom since Washington was crowned with wreaths as he came back from Yorktown, was on Wednesday last, within one month, "one little month," borne along the same crowded avenue—crowded, not as before with a jubilant People gathered from every quarter of the country, but with sincerely sorrowing multitudes following his bier. As the shouts which then rent the air were the free spontaneous expression of the love and joy of freemen, delighting to confer their highest honors on one whom they believed to have richly deserved them, so, now, the tears which fell from the eyes of woman, the sighs and looks of grief of gray-headed men, the general, universal aspect of public sorrow, were the unbought, the unpurchasable tribute of a bereaved People to public virtue and devoted patriotism. This was not the momentary gush of feelings wrought upon by the pomp and circumstance of a funeral procession. It was not the sable car, the nodding plumes, the slow and mournful array—it was the event itself—the loss of such a man, at such a time, which drew forth these expressions of public feeling. They will be substantially the same in every part of the country. As it was here, so it will be every where. When the words "THE PRESIDENT IS DEAD" met the ear, the man of

business dropped his pen--the artisan dropped his tools--children looked in the faces of their parents, and wives into the countenances of their husbands, and the wail of sorrow arose as if each had lost a parent or some near and dear friend. Could Gen. Harrison now look down on the land he loved, he might, indeed, "read his history in a Nation's eyes;" and those, whose bosoms glow and struggle with high purposes and strong desires for their country's good, may learn in what they now behold, wherever they turn their eyes, how glorious a reward awaits the memory of those who faithfully serve their country.

But, while we mourn ourselves, there is no cause of mourning on behalf of the deceased. The ray of his country's gratitude, though late, shone in full splendor on his departing hour. He had attained all that man can reach of human honor. Freely, spontaneously, unanimously, had his countrymen placed him in the highest seat they had to give. He had done enough, during the brief time he occupied it, to show that, as he had passed with honor through many lesser trusts, so he was equal to this last and highest trial to which his character and powers could be subjected. As much as he had opportunity to do, he did well. The candid, even among his enemies, (if there be any who do not now blush to own that title) will admit this. But he had not so far entered on the tempestuous sea of public affairs as to expose himself to new and personal enmities from the discharge of his duty. Before the storm had time to gather--before envy, and detraction, and party fury had begun to muster their stores of coming vengeance to pour without mercy upon his head--that venerable head, silvered with the frosts of age and of long and arduous devotion to his country's service, is gently laid on the pillow of death. In that sacred sanctuary, which nothing earthly can invade, he sleeps in safety from the strife of tongues. His name, free from the semblance of a spot and illustrious in the halo of an imperishable fame, is delivered over to history as a sacred trust, to be written on the same page with that of those pure patriots who, in every age and every land, have been the disinterested friends of human freedom and happiness. The beautiful union of private excellence with public virtue has never been more winningly exhibited than in the case of Gen. Harrison. His frank simplicity and freedom from all ostentation--his attachment to his soldiers--his urbanity and condescension to men of humble fortune--his charity to the poor--his open-hearted and open-handed hospitality--his incorruptible honesty in every pecuniary trust--his uniform, unwavering devotion to his country, illustrated in his dying moments by the expression of his attachment to the Constitution, and sanctified by the sentiments of personal piety--unite to entitle him to the inscription on his tom of "The Good President."

The Funeral Ceremonies

Wednesday, having been set apart for the solemnities of the Funeral of the late President, some anxiety was felt, in the early part of the morning, as to the weather, for the sky was overcast, and fears were entertained lest it should come on to rain; but, as the day advanced these apprehensions were dissipated, and though it continued rather cool, this did but favor the march of the troops and of the other numerous collections of persons who formed portions of the Funeral Procession.

At sunrise, the sound of cannon from the several military stations in the vicinity of the city heralded the melancholy occasion which was to assemble the citizens of the District and its neighborhood, and minute guns were fired during the morning. In entire consonance with those mournful sounds was the aspect of the whole City, as well its swellings as its population. The buildings on each side of the entire length of the Pennsylvania avenue, with scarcely an exception, and many houses on the contiguous streets, were hung with festoons and streamers of black, not only about the signs and entrances, but in many cases from all the upper stories. Almost every private dwelling had crape upon the knocker and bell-handle of its door, and many of the very humblest abodes hung out some spontaneous signal of the general sorrow. The stores, and places of business, even such as are too frequently seen open on the Sabbath, were all closed. Everything like business seemed to have been forgotten, and all minds to be occupied with the purpose of the day.

The railroad cars approaching the city were crowded to excess, although the trains were doubled, and a large portion of the passengers stood up, from necessity, the entire way from Baltimore hither. The steamboats brought crowds of people from Alexandria, and the individuals entering the city from the adjacent country on horseback and in vehicles of every description seemed to be more numerous than even on the occasion of the late Inauguration. The great point of attraction was the President's Mansion. Toward that all steps, all thoughts were tending. There lay the Body, closed in its leaded hearse, and covered with its solemn pall seated in the deep repose which nothing shall break but the Archangel's trump. It lay on a bier in the East Room, (an occupation how different from its wont!) and ladies were admitted all the morning, who heaped upon the coffin offerings of the most beautiful flowers. The northern portico of the Mansion was hung with long banners of black, extending from column to column. The iron gates of the enclosure in front were closed, save when the carriages of the Foreign Ministers, Members of the Cabinet, and attending Physicians, the Clergy, and some other privileged persons were admitted, preparatory to their taking the places assigned them in the Funeral Procession.

The military portion of it, constituting the Funeral Escort, began to form in line on the New York avenue, immediately north of the President's House, and a most noble and imposing appearance it presented. Without undertaking to give the exact order of all the details of the military part of the procession, it must suffice us for the present to state that of volunteers, besides the Light Infantry, National Blues, and Columbia Artillery of this city, and the squadron of Potomac Dragoons from Georgetown, there were present the Eagle Artillerists, Eutaw Infantry, Invincibles, Independent Greys, National Guards, Maryland Cadets, and Military Association, of Baltimore, the Annapolis Greys, from the city of Annapolis, and a part of the York Riflemen and Washington Blues from York, Pennsylvania. Then there was a battalion of United States Marines, and a division of United States Light Artillery, commanded by Capt. Ringgold, from Fort MCHenry. But one of the most impressive portions of the military part of the procession consisted of the dismounted and mounted officers of the Army, Navy, Militia, and Volunteers. Seldom has there been exhibited within a space so limited so many distinguished military men; the sight of whose well-known figures led back our thoughts to many a bloody field and many an ensanguined sea, on which the national honor has been well and nobly maintained.

The civic part of the Procession was not less striking than the military. It embraced the municipal officers of the District, the Clergy of all denominations, the Judiciary, the Executive officers of the Government, including the President of the United States and the Heads of Departments, the ex-members of the late Cabinet now in the city, the Comptrollers, Auditors, and Commissioners, Treasurer, Register, etc. with a numerous column of clerks in the several departments. Such members of both Houses of Congress as are in the city also attended, and Ex-President Adams in his place. Next followed Officers and Soldiers who had served under Gen. Harrison in the late war. Another division of the Procession consisted of public Societies and Associations, preceded by their banners, and wearing their respective badges--among whom we noticed the Society of Odd Fellows, very richly attired, the Washington Catholic Temperance Association, with their white banner displaying the Cross which is the symbol of their faith, the Typographical Society, several Schools and Lyceums, and, to close all, the different Fire Companies of the District, in their showy and picturesque uniforms of cloaks, hats, and accoutrements, and with appropriate ensigns.

The music was excellent; several fine bands playing mournful airs, giving place, from time to time, to the muffled drums of the military, beating slow marches.

But the object of chief interest, and one which as it passed, hushed every other sound, and caused many a tear to fall, was

The Funeral Car

containing the body of the deceased President. It was of large dimensions, in form an oblong platform, on which was a raised dais, the whole covered with black velvet. From the cornice of the platform fell a black velvet curtain outside of the wheels to within a few inches of the ground. From the corners of the car a black crape festoon was formed on all sides, looped in the center by a funeral wreath. On the coffin lay the Sword of Justice and the Sword of State, surmounted by the scroll of the Constitution, bound together by a funeral wreath formed of the yew and the cypress. The Car was drawn by six white horses, having at the head of each a colored groom, dressed in white, with white turban and sash, and supported by pall-bearers in black. The effect was very fine. The contrast of this slowly-moving body of white and black, so opposite to the strong colors of the military around it, struck the eye even from the greatest distance, and gave a chilling warning, beforehand, that the corpse was drawing nigh.

The entire Procession occupied two full miles in length, and was marshaled on its way by officers on horseback carrying white batons with black tassels. The utmost order prevailed throughout; and, considering the very great concourse of people collected, the silence preserved during the whole course of the march was very impressive.

Before the body was removed from the Presidential Mansion, religious services were conducted in presence of the President of the United States and Ex-President Adams, with members of the late and present Cabinets, the Foreign Ministers, and the mourning household, by the Rev. Mr. Hawley. The Reverent gentleman declined making any address upon the occasion, but pointing to a bible and Episcopal prayer-book which lay upon the table, stated that they had been purchased by the deceased President immediately after his arrival in the city, and had been in daily use by him since then; that the late President had declared to him (Mr. Hawley) personally his full belief in the truth of the Christian Religion, and his purpose, had not disease intervened to prevent it, to have united himself to the Church on the succeeding Sabbath.

On the firing of the signal gun at the appointed hour, the Procession, having received into its ranks the Funeral Car and the Family Mourners who followed the remains of their relative to the tomb, moved along Pennsylvania avenue, under the fire of minute guns near the President's House, repeated at the City Hall on the head of the column arriving opposite to it, and at the Capitol on its reaching the western gate of the enclosure. Having reached the Capitol Square, passing on the South side of it, the Procession advanced over the plains eastward till it reached the space in front of the Congressional Burying Ground. Here the Car halted, while the line was formed by the Military as they arrived, and then passed slowly on, being saluted as it passed with colors lowered, the troops presenting arms, and the officers saluting it in military form. Having reached the principal entrance, the Car was again halted; the coffin was taken down and placed on the shoulders of the bearers; the Clergy advanced, and the Rev. Mr. Hawley, reciting the solemn funeral service of the Episcopal Liturgy, the Procession advanced down the principal avenue of the Cemetery until it reached the receiving vault, where a space had been kept open by sentries under arms and where a hollow square being formed, the coffin was lowered into the vault. A signal being given to the troops outside, the battalion of Light Artillery, who were placed on an adjoining eminence, fired a salute, which was immediately followed by the several military bodies in line, who commenced firing from the left to the right, and continued the salute till it had thrice gone up the whole line.

The Procession then resumed its march, and returned by the same route to the city, where the troops were dismissed, and the citizens retired to their several abodes. By five o'clock, nothing remained by empty streets and the emblems of mourning upon the houses, and the still deeper gloom, which oppressed the general mind with renewed power after all was over, and the sense of the public bereavement alone was left to fill the thoughts.

It is highly creditable, as well to the present Heads of Departments by whom the Funeral of the late President was arranged, as to the Ex-Members of the Cabinet of the late Administration now in this city,

that the latter were individually and particularly invited to attend, and all did attend, the Funeral of Gen. Harrison.

That no honor might be wanting which it was possible to pay to the memory of the deceased patriot President, the Legislature of the State of Maryland, being in session, adjourning for the purpose, came to this city in a body, attended by their officers and the symbols of their authority and joined in the Funeral Procession.

From the Legislature of Pennsylvania, too, also in session, a joint committee of both Houses arrived in the city on Wednesday morning, and truly represented the feeling of that great State on this melancholy occasion.

There is something touching and morally beautiful in the merging of all party distinctions, the above instances, in the feeling of respect due to the memory of the honored dead.

The following gentlemen, as Pall-Bearers, were designated to represent the several States and Territories which are attached to their names at the Funeral of the late President:

R. Cutts, Esq.	Maine	Hon. J.B. Moore	N.H.
Hon. C. Cushing	Mass.	M. St. C. Clarke, Esq.	R.I.
W.B. Lloyd, Esq.	Conn.	Hon. Hiland Hall	Vt.
Gen. John Granger	N.Y.	Hon. G.C. Washington	N.J.
M. Williams, Esq.	Pa.	Hon. A. Naudain	Del.
David Hoffman, Esq.	Md.	Major Camp	Va.
Hon. E.D. White	N.C.	John Carter, Esq.	S.C.
Gen. D.L. Clinch	Geo.	Th. Crittenden, Esq.	Ky.
Col. Rogers	Tenn.	Mr. Graham	Ohio
M. Durald, Esq.	La.	Gen. Robert Hanna	Ind.
Andersen Miller, Esq.	Miss.	D.G. Garnsey, Esq.	Ill.
Dr. Perrine	Ala.	Major Russell	Mo.
A.W. Lyon, Esq.	Ark.	Gen. Howard	Mich.
Hon. J.D. Doty	Wis.	Hon. C. Downing	Fla.
Hon. W.B. Carter	Iowa	R. Smith, Esq.	D.C.

It must not be overlooked that among the most sincere mourners at the grave of our late President were the entire Corporate Bodies of the cities of Washington, Georgetown, and Alexandria, with their Executive officers.

The National Intelligencer, Monday, June 28, 1841

Remains of President Harrison

The mortal remains of the late venerated President Harrison were removed from the Government burial grounds, in this city, on Saturday last, at the hour and under the ceremonies prescribed by the order of Congress, to be conveyed to their final resting place on the banks of the Ohio, at North Bend. The body was attended by the son of the deceased, John Scott Harrison, Esq. and by the committee of gentlemen from Cincinnati to whom was assigned the pious duty of accompanying the remains to North Bend. The President of the United States, with the Heads of Departments, the committee of the two Houses of Congress, and a large number of citizens, attended at the place of departure from the city, to offer the last testimony of respect to the earthly remains of the lamented Chief whose memory will ever be cherished by every true-hearted American.

A detachment of Marines by order of the President, attended the body as an escort to North Bend. We understand that when the order was addressed to Col. Henderson, (commander of the Marine Corps,) to furnish the detachment, and to designate an officer to command it, he replied that, being

himself the senior officer, he conceived it to be most proper and respectful that he should act on the occasion, and accordingly assumed to himself the melancholy duty of heading the escort.