

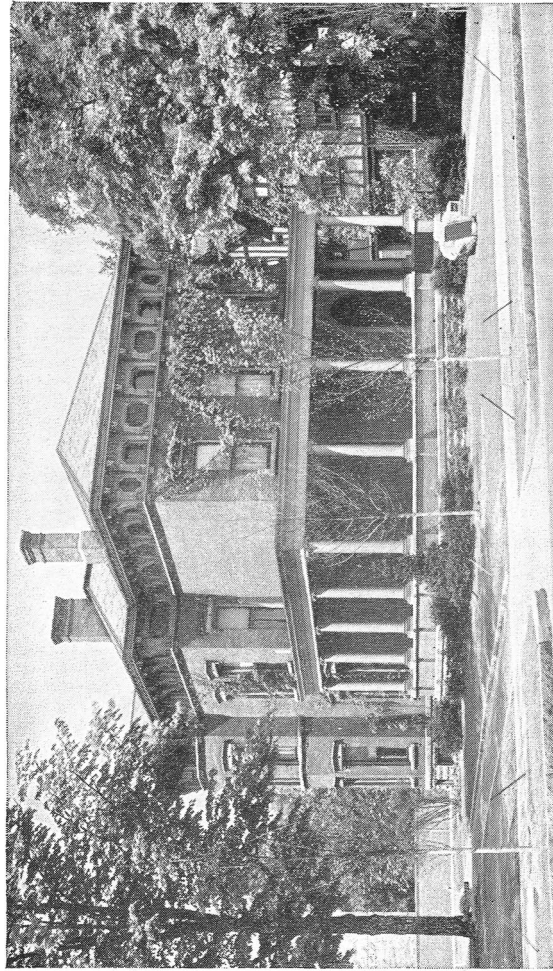
## The Benjamin Harrison Memorial Home

ROSS F. LOCKRIDGE

There is now a rapidly growing interest in the home of Benjamin Harrison, which is located at 1230 North Delaware Street, Indianapolis. It is becoming a national shrine. Such an awakening in this year of 1938 is timely, as it is now fifty years since his election as the twenty-third president of the United States. He went from this home to the White House in 1889—the only man who has gone from Indiana to the presidency. He had lived in this house seventeen years up to that time and he continued to hold it as his home. After his term as head of the nation, he returned to spend his remaining years there, Altogether, it was his home for thirty years, and he died there on March 13, 1901. The property has remained in the Harrison family ever since and has been recently restored by the Arthur Jordan Foundation.

This home became a Mecca for visiting delegations on the day of Mr. Harrison's nomination for president by the Chicago Convention on June 25, 1888. Before evening of that very day, four different delegations called upon him at his home. These were from surrounding towns—Danville, Plainfield, Noblesville and Kokomo. To each of these groups, he expressed a short and gracious greeting. The climax of the day came in the early evening when a voluntary throng of more than 5,000 of his Indianapolis neighbors and friends gathered around his home with joyful demonstrations. Addressing them from his doorstep with deep feeling, he said in part:

Neighbors and Friends—I am profoundly sensible of the kindness which you evidence tonight in gathering in such large numbers to extend to me your congratulations over the result at Chicago. It would be altogether inappropriate that I should say anything of a partisan character. Many of my neighbors who differ with me politically have kindly extended to me, as citizens of Indianapolis, their congratulations over this event. Such congratulations, as well as those of my neighbors who sympathize with me in my political beliefs, are exceedingly grateful [*sic*]. I have been a long time a resident of Indianapolis—over thirty years. Many who are here before me have been with me, during all those years, citizens of this great and growing capital of a magnificent State. We have seen the development and growth of this city. We are proud of its position to-day, and we look forward in the future to a development which shall far outstrip that which the years behind us



*Benjamin Harrison Memorial Home  
No. 1230 North Delaware Street  
Indianapolis, Indiana*

have told. I thank you sincerely for this evidence that those who have known me well and long give me still their confidence and respect.

Kings sometimes bestow decorations upon those whom they desire to honor, but that man is most highly decorated who has the affectionate regard of his neighbors and friends.<sup>1</sup>

His concluding words were: "My house will always open its doors gladly to any one of you when you may desire to see me." Thus was established the spirit of welcome to this home which is now extended universally.

Benjamin Harrison was a typical citizen of the Hoosier capital and wished always to be known as such. It was his chosen home. He came to Indianapolis with his young wife, Caroline Scott Harrison, in 1854, to begin the practice of law at the age of twenty-one. The young couple began their residence in Indianapolis in a humble three-room cottage, rented for six dollars a month. As the family increased and the young lawyer's business prospered, they moved twice, each time into a somewhat larger home. In 1871, already a leader in his profession, Mr. Harrison built the stately but modest mansion, now become a memorial. In 1896, he was married to Mary Lord Dimmick, and his last years in his home were gladdened by his association with her and by the childish affection of their little daughter Elizabeth.

The maintenance of the Benjamin Harrison Home in Indianapolis, as an American shrine, together with the maintenance of another Harrison Mansion also on Hoosier soil—Grouseland, the home of Governor William Henry Harrison in Vincennes—establishes a continuity of important history through several generations of a fine American family. Even families of states are involved in this singular continuity. Virginia, the Old Dominion, was the mother both of states and statesmen. There is no evidence that Benjamin Harrison ever sought or desired even in the smallest degree any personal advantages from his illustrious family heritage. Indeed, the evidence is all to the contrary. He seldom mentioned his family and when he did, it was with exemplary modesty. An example of this is seen in his speech at Roanoke, Virginia, on April 14, 1891, where the first stop was made on his "swing around the circle" as president. At the huge reception there, he said:

The State of Virginia is entitled, I think, to high estimation among

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Hedges, *Speeches of President Benjamin Harrison* (1892), 27.

the States for its great history—for the contribution it has made to the great story of our common country. This fact you discovered, I think, long ago. For personal reasons I have great affection for Virginia. It is the State of my fathers.<sup>2</sup>

He would have been justified in proud elaboration. The first American Benjamin Harrison came to Virginia almost at the beginning of the colony in 1634. He was succeeded in direct line by four more Benjamin Harrisons—all of them planters, burgesses, citizens of prominence. All were leaders in that growing age of the Old Dominion. Greatest of all was the fifth Benjamin, great-grandfather of our own Benjamin Harrison, for he was a member of the Continental Congress and signer of the Declaration of Independence. As Governor of Virginia, three times during the closing years of the Revolution, he had a prominent part in preserving for the nation the daughter states of old Virginia, Kentucky and those carved out of the Old Northwest.

His son, William Henry Harrison, born in Virginia was destined to have a noteworthy part, both as soldier and statesman in saving and developing these states, especially Indiana and Ohio. His twelve years as Governor of Indiana Territory, plus his services in the second war with England, established the fame which led him to the White House, as the ninth president in 1841. He was elected from Ohio in his old age, but he belongs quite as much to Indiana where he built Grouseland, the Harrison Mansion, in old Vincennes where it is maintained to-day. It was, indeed, the White House of the West. Several of his children were born there; among them, his son John Scott Harrison, who became the father of Benjamin Harrison of Indiana and the nation.

There is still to be seen, in the old shutter on a south window of the living room in that old mansion, the bullet hole, supposedly made by an Indian firing from the darkness of the walnut grove surrounding the mansion. That bullet narrowly missed the head of an infant Harrison, whom his father, the Governor, was carrying before the fireplace. That infant was John Scott Harrison, who lived to become the only American destined to be the son of one president and the father of another.

Our Benjamin Harrison was born in 1833 in the home

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<sup>2</sup> *Through the South with the President* (New York, 1891). A Collection of the speeches that President Harrison made while on a tour through southern and western states from April 14 to May 15, 1891, published by the *New York Mail and Express*.

(not a cabin) of William Henry Harrison at North Bend, Ohio. This was the house that became so famous in the presidential contest of 1840—"Log Cabin and Hard Cider" or "Tippecanoe and Tyler, too" campaign. As a boy in his eighth year, the striking features of that dramatic campaign made a lasting impression upon Benjamin. Following the death of General Harrison in 1841, after one month in the White House, his widow came to make her home for the rest of her life with her son, John Scott Harrison, while the boy Benjamin was growing to manhood. Though born and reared in Ohio, this grandson of William Henry Harrison came to Indiana to carve out his career, and, from here, he was elected President in 1888. Sixty years, 1773 to 1833, divided the birthdays of his illustrious grandfather and himself. Forty-eight years, 1841 to 1889, separated their inauguration days in Washington, and there were fourteen Presidents between them. They passed from life just sixty years apart, 1841 to 1901. Surely they represent a most intimate historic continuity of which two Harrison mansions on Indiana soil are truly suggestive.

All this was modestly suggested in a characteristic speech of Benjamin Harrison in his Indianapolis home on July 4, 1888. He was serenaded that night by the Tippecanoe Club of Marion County, which was composed entirely of men who had voted for his grandfather, both in 1836 and in 1840. His address included these passages:

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Tippecanoe Club of Marion County: I am very deeply touched by your visit to-day. The respect and confidence of such a body of men is a crown. . . . I know that at the beginning your respect and confidence was builded upon the respect, and even affection—may I not say, which you bore to my grandfather. . . . I came among you with the heritage, I trust, of a good name, such as all of you enjoy. It was the only inheritance that has been transmitted in our family.

I think you recollect, and perhaps, it was that as much as aught else that drew your choice in 1840 to the Whig candidate for the presidency, that he came out of Virginia to the West with no fortune but the sword he bore, and unsheathed it here in the defence of our frontier homes. He transmitted little to his descendants but the respect he had won from his fellow-citizens. It seems to be the settled habit in our family to leave nothing else to our children.

My friends, I am a thorough believer in the American test of character; the rule must be applied to a man's own life when his stature is taken. He will not build high who does not build for himself. I believe also in the American opportunity which puts the starry sky

above every boy's head and sets his foot upon a ladder which he may climb until his strength gives out.<sup>3</sup>

This has the true Harrison tone and the genuine American ring. He must have received fine inspiration from his distinguished family heritage; but the name of Harrison could no more make him the gallant soldier and famous statesman that he was than make him a brilliant and successful lawyer. Notwithstanding the many interruptions due to public service, he became the acknowledged head of the Indiana bar and is generally conceded to have been one of the ablest lawyers that ever occupied the White House.

Throughout the summer and autumn of 1888, General Harrison received at his home from one to five or more different delegations daily. They represented all classes and occupations from all parts of Indiana and there were many from neighboring states. To each of them he extended a special greeting peculiarly suited to the given group and the place it represented, showing his versatility and his large familiarity with all American institutions. He spoke often in a non-partisan vein.

To a delegation on July 18 from Howard County (where a fresh gas boom was then being enjoyed), he said:

Your county has been conspicuous among the counties of this State for its enterprise and intelligence. You have been favored with a kindly and generous soil, cultivated by an intelligent and educated class of farmers. Hitherto you have chiefly drawn your wealth from the soil. You have had in the city of Kokomo an enterprising and thrifty county town. You have been conspicuous for your interest and devotion to the cause of education—for your interest in bringing forward the coming generations well equipped for the duties of citizenship. I congratulate you to-day that a new era of prosperity has opened for your county in the discovery of this new and free fuel to which Mr. Rayburn has alluded. A source of great wealth has been opened to your people.<sup>4</sup>

As a tariff advocate, he addressed 3,000 men from Clay County, largely coal miners, on July 26:

Gentlemen and Friends from Clay County—I thank you for this enthusiastic demonstration of your interest. I am glad to be assured by those who have spoken for you to-day that you have brought here, and desire to evidence, some personal respect for me; but this demonstration has relation, I am sure, rather to principles than to men. You come as representatives of the diversified interests of your county. You are fortunate in already possessing diversified industries. You

<sup>3</sup> Hedges, *Speeches of Harrison*, 38-39.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-51.

have not only agriculture, but the mine and factory which provide a home market for the products of your farms. You come here, as I understand, from all these pursuits, to declare that in your opinion your interests as farmers, as miners, as mechanics, as tradesmen, are identified with the maintenance of the doctrine of protection to American industries, and the preservation of the American market for American products.<sup>5</sup>

On August 4, he spoke in a similar vein to a Railroad Club from Terre Haute that marched up Delaware Street one thousand strong led by a model, monster locomotive, belching fire and smoke:

You come to-night from one of our most beautiful Indiana cities. It was built on the Wabash in the expectation that that stream would furnish the channel of its communication with the outside world. But the Wabash is a small tributary to-day to the commerce of Terre Haute. The railroads that span it are the great vehicles of your commerce. They have largely superseded the water communication that was deemed so important in the first settlement, and, perhaps, was so decisive in the location of your city. Terre Haute is conspicuous for its industries. The smoke of your factories goes up night and day. The farms about your city have become gardens, and the cordial and harmonious relations between the railroad shop and the factory and the farms that lie about have a conspicuous illustration with you. You have found that that policy which built up these shops, which maintains them, gives employment to the largest number of men, is the best thing not only for the railroads that do the transportation, but for the workingmen, who find steady employment at good wages, and for the farmers, who supply their needs.<sup>6</sup>

In a somewhat facetious vein he addressed a vast Illinois group on July 19:

The States of Indiana and Illinois are neighbors, geographically. The river that for a portion of its length constitutes the boundary between our States is not a river of division. Its tendency seems to be, in these times when so many things are "going dry," rather to obliterate than to enlarge the obstruction between us. But I rejoice to know that we are not only geographically neighbors, but that Indiana and Illinois have been neighborly in the high sentiments and purposes which have characterized their people.<sup>7</sup>

His most touching sentiments perhaps were voiced before the numerous groups of his old comrades of the Civil War, of which these words to a column of veterans on June 30 are typical:

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 75-76.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

I sincerely thank you for this evidence of your respect and comradeship. I am very certain that there is no class whose confidence and respect I more highly prize or more earnestly covet than that of the soldiers who, in the great war from 1861 to 1865, upheld the loved banner of our country and brought it home in honor. The comradeship of the war will never end until our lives end. The fires in which our friendship was riveted and welded were too hot for the bond ever to be broken. We sympathize with each other in the glory of the common cause for which we fought. We went, not as partisans, but as patriots, into the strife which involved the national life. I am sure that no army was ever assembled in the world's history that was gathered from higher impulses than the army of the Union.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps now, it may well be conceived that the walls of his home and its environs are forever ringing with the wave lengths of his familiar voice ever expressing the patriotic human sentiments that distinguished his life and career.

Though it seems not to be known, Harrison was really a wonderful speaker. Even his most commonplace speeches are gems of clear and cogent expression. Few of the world's orators ever adapted themselves better to all kinds of conditions. His swing around the circle—through the South and West—from April 14 to May 15 in 1891, was a demonstration of his adaptability. In this tour of 10,000 miles through twenty-two states all of his more than one hundred fifty speeches were happily adapted to the widely varying situations.

Most touching of all was his greeting to his own home folks in Indianapolis, near the end of that historic tour on May 14. It was his first return to his home since he had left for the White House over two years before:

As I greet my old home friends, I cannot, I fear, command myself sufficiently to speak to you at any length. Our path has been attended by the plaudits of multitudes; our way has been strewn with flowers; we have journeyed through the orchards of California, laden with golden fruit; we have climbed to the summit of great mountains and have seen those rich mines from which the precious metals are extracted; we have dropped again suddenly into fruitful valleys, and our pathway has been made glad by the cheerful and friendly acclaim of our American fellow citizens without regard to any party divisions; but I beg to assure you that all the sweetness of the flowers that have been showered upon us, that all the beauty of these almost tropical landscapes upon which we have looked, that all the riches of those precious mines sink into forgetfulness as I receive to-day this welcome from

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.



my old friends. My manhood has known no other home but this. It was the scene of my early struggles; it has been the scene, and you have been the instruments and supporters, in every success I have achieved in life. I come to lay before you to-day my thankful offering for your friendly helpfulness that was extended to me as a boy and that has been mine in all the years of our intercourse that have intervened until this hour."

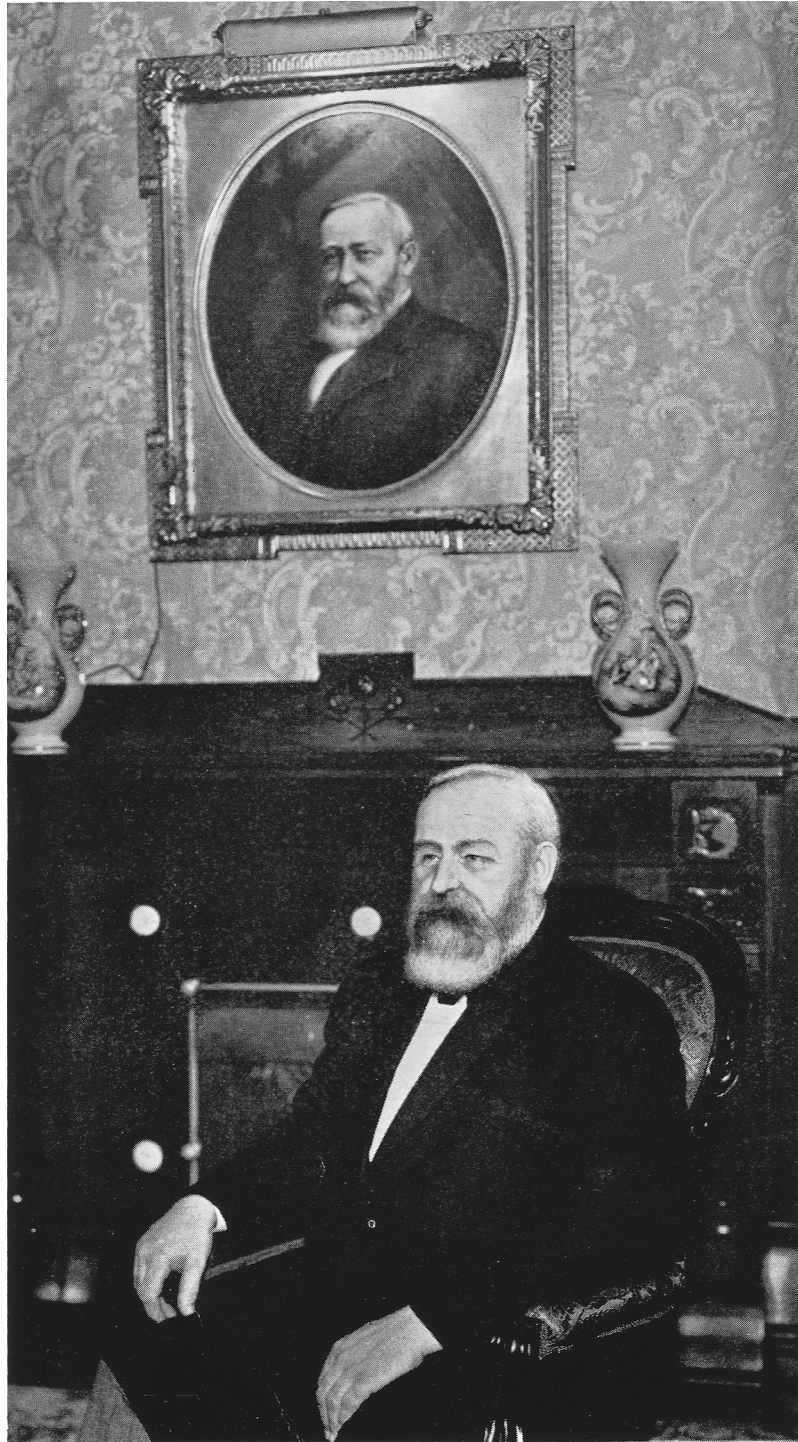
The speeches of Benjamin Harrison would serve as excellent specimens for study and drill by students in our schools to-day, and they offer the best source material for historic site recitals at his home. A Pageant-Drama of Harrison Historical Episodes was given at the memorial home by the Society of Indiana Pioneers on May 21, 1938. A series of pilgrimage programs is being conducted to the home under the sponsorship of the Indiana University Foundation for the purpose of demonstrating the value of such recitals. The spacious rooms, stately portico and shady lawn furnish rare facilities for group meetings. There President Harrison may be known really as the kind neighbor and warm-hearted friend that Indianapolis knew fifty years ago. There also will live the memories of his family. The Daughters of the American Revolution during their Golden Anniversary (1940) will make this home a special shrine in honor of Caroline Scott Harrison, who served as their first President General in 1890.

The Benjamin Harrison home has been fully restored and is equipped throughout with furnishings that belong to the Victorian, or "Gay Nineties", period. Many of these furnishings were familiar parts of the original furnishings when the home was occupied by the Harrison family. They include Harrison's library and numerous family pictures, together with a complete set of fine water colors by Mrs. Caroline Scott Harrison. The General's gymnastic cabinet of weights, Indian clubs and dumb-bells still stands at the foot of his bed.

Benjamin Harrison was always an ardent supporter of the public schools. It is fitting that Old Number 2, the Indianapolis School on Delaware Street only a few squares from his home, proudly bears the name—THE BENJAMIN HARRISON SCHOOL. This was officially decreed by the Indianapolis Board of School Commissioners in regular session on March

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\* *Through the South and West with the President*, 145.



The picture opposite was taken in one of the rooms of the Harrison Memorial Home in Indianapolis, the occasion being the sixty-fourth annual reunion of General Benjamin Harrison's regiment, the Seventieth Indiana, on August 20, 1938. The portrait of President Harrison hangs above the mantle as shown in the picture. The man selected to represent Harrison was Ross F. Lockridge of Bloomington. In the picture, he is seated in front of the grate. At the recent reunion, Mr. Lockridge, standing on the front veranda of the Harrison Home, delivered to those assembled, the speech that General Harrison made to his comrades at their fourteenth reunion in 1888. Impersonating the General with such remarkable fidelity, the presentation of the address by Mr. Lockridge was very effective.—*Editor*.

15, 1901, two days after his death. The following resolution was spread of record:

In the death of Benjamin Harrison the public schools of Indianapolis have lost a loyal friend. General Harrison's face and figure were familiar to the children and his words were an inspiration to them, as the memory of his life will be. He believed in the common schools and he proved his faith by his labors in their behalf. Whatever the people undertook in the way of educational reform was sure of his support and whatever had his support in this community where he was known best and loved best was sure of success.<sup>10</sup>

Benjamin Harrison touched Indianapolis closely in every phase of community life. For fifteen years, he was Superintendent of the Sunday School at the First Presbyterian Church. Notwithstanding the heavy calls to larger duties, constantly made upon him, he was ever attentive to all the common functions of citizen, neighbor and friend.

Through the President Harrison Memorial Home, Indianapolis and all Indiana are presenting a famous Hoosier citizen to the world in the spirit expressed by his friend, James Whitcomb Riley, when he uttered his closing words at the reception of the Indianapolis Commercial Club to Ex-President Harrison in April, 1897:

"Our friend and neighbor—our fellow-citizen . . . the always simple, unassuming and unselfish member of a simple community so signally favored as to do him honor long prior to that universal homage so justly won when he

"Became on Fortune's crowning slope  
The pillar of a people's hope,  
The center of a world's desire."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Records of the Board of School Commissioners of Indianapolis, Minute Book L, 91.

<sup>11</sup> Marcus Dickey, *The Maturity of James Whitecomb Riley* (Indianapolis, 1922), 364.