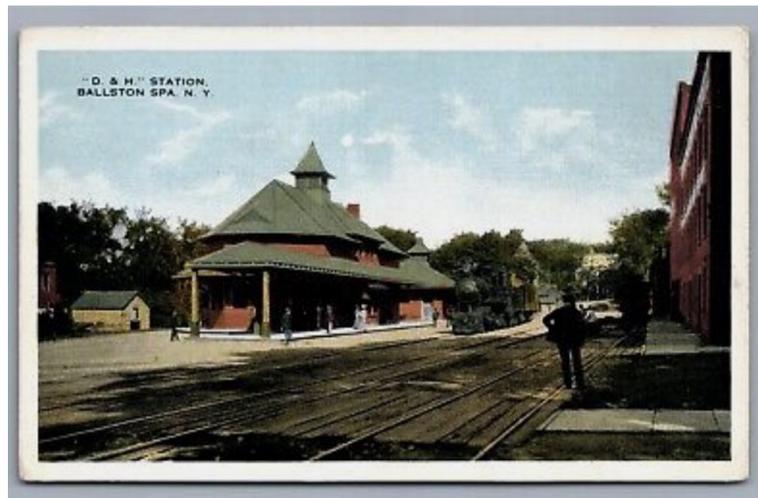


Epilogue. North Creek to the Whitehouse

Theodore Roosevelt, his secretary William Loeb Jr. and C. D. Hammond, Superintendent of the Delaware Hudson Railroad, settled into the car which had special clearance all the way to Albany. George Hydorn of Green Island, the engineer, pushed his locomotive to its limit as it ran in the morning mist down the Hudson River valley.¹ Passing stations at Riverside, The Glen, Thurman and Corinth, through Saratoga Springs, the train stopped at Ballston Spa at 7:00 A.M. long enough to permit Roosevelt to send off a number of dispatches.²



Ballston Spa railway station

One of those dispatches was this telegram to his wife Edith at the Tahawus Club.

Balkston N.Y. Sept 14^{1/2}
To Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt
Tahawus N.Y.
President died 2:15
this morning
Theodore Roosevelt

From the Tahawus Club registry this is a good example of the “telegram” messages that would be written down by Michael Breen, Lower Works clubhouse manager, as dictated by telephone from North Creek then delivered to the Tahawus Club Upper Works two hours by Horse.

The train was forced to make one other stop when “it overhauled a hand-car being pumped along the rails by two section-men. The men jumped and were unharmed, but the cowcatcher knocked the handcar off the track. The train was delayed 15 minutes while the crew went back to see what happened.”³

The train arrived at Albany a little before eight A.M., where the car was switched to a New York Central engine for the trip to Buffalo. Breakfast was whisked aboard along with the morning papers.⁴ They pulled out of Albany at 8:02 A.M.



New York Central Railroad station, Albany New York

The train made two brief stops at 10:36 A.M. in Syracuse and at 12:15 P.M. in Rochester for water, reaching Buffalo at 1:30 P.M. in record time.⁵

At Buffalo, obeying security instructions, the train steamed past the N.Y.C. Exchange Street station where thousands of people had gathered, to the Terrace Street station and a waiting private carriage with twelve mounted police for an escort.⁶



Terrace Street station

“Roosevelt’s companion in the carriage was Ansley Wilcox. A Buffalo friend who had put him up on earlier, happier visits. Wilcox suggested that they go to his home at 641 Delaware Avenue for a quick lunch. McKinley’s body, attended by a quorum of the Cabinet, lay in the Milburn House, one mile farther uptown.”⁷



Wilcox mansion September 14, 1901

At 2:30 P.M., Roosevelt emerged onto Wilcox's porch refreshed in borrowed clothes to be transported to the Milburn residence. Upon arrival, he was greeted by George Bruce Cortelyou, McKinley's secretary and informed the physicians were performing the autopsy upstairs, and Mrs. McKinley was "too prostrated" to receive him. As they entered the parlor, the six members of the Cabinet solemnly rose to greet him. He told Secretary of War Elihu Root, the plan to move the inauguration to the Wilcox residence would be "more appropriate," and Root bowed assent. A procession of carriages then moved the mile south.

In the Wilcox parlor, forty-three people witnessed the historic inauguration. Arranged in a semi-circle around Federal Judge John R. Hazel, shortly after the clock struck 3:30, Elihu Root on behalf of the Cabinet formally requested that Roosevelt take the oath of the President of the United States.

Roosevelt replied "I shall take the oath at once. And in this hour of deep and terrible national bereavement I wish to state that it shall be my aim to continue absolutely unbroken the policy of President McKinley for the peace, the prosperity, and the honor of our beloved country."⁸

One of the shortest acceptance speech in history.

Judge Hazel proceeded, "Please raise your right hand and repeat after me: *I, Theodore Roosevelt...*" At the end of the oath, Roosevelt bowed his head for a couple minutes, then lifted his head and the judge presented the certificate of oath to be signed. Roosevelt's pen scratched across the parchment making his Presidency legally binding.

Footnote to history. Although Roosevelt officially became president at 2:15 A.M. that morning during his frantic Adirondack ride, a new president has no legal power until they have taken the oath and signed the Certificate. It is this signature that must be used on all Presidential documents throughout the President's term of office.



Sketch from Nashville, Tennessee News, October 13, 1901

Meanwhile in the Adirondacks, Edith writes in her diary;

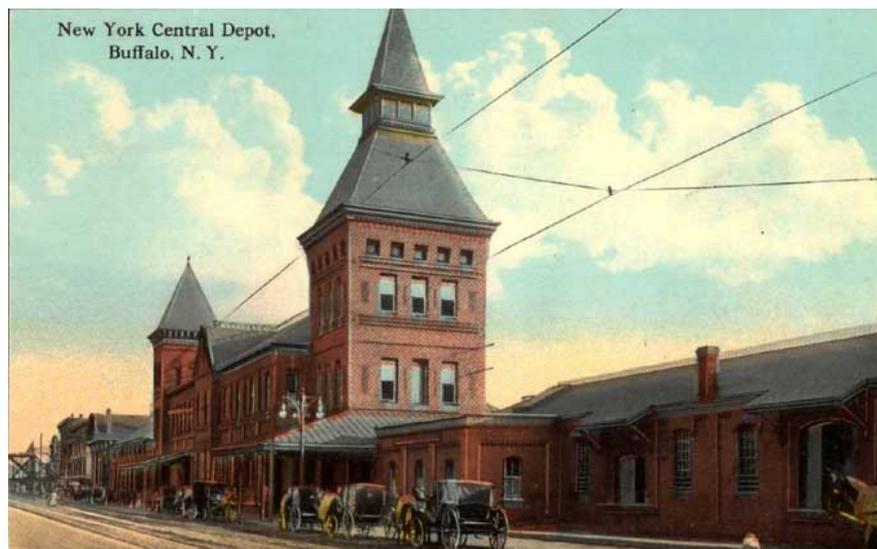
“Saturday, September 14. Started with the children. Archie very miserable with tonsillitis but better as the day went on. At Lower Works found message from Theodore that the President had died at 2:15 [a.m.] I was very tired and anxious, but the children were as good as gold, and Ted was happy talking to a nice girl, about Alice's age, Kate Richardson, who came down with me.”

They were transported from the Tahawus Club to North Creek, and then by railroad to Albany. They caught the night boat from Albany to New York City.

“Sunday, September 15. Arrived in New York on Albany night boat. Sent the others to Sagamore while Molly and I took Quentin to the aurist's [ear doctor]. Had such difficulty in finding anyone in town. Got home to Oyster Bay for lunch. Emlen [Roosevelt] and his family were on the car. He had been with Theodore when he took his oath of office at 2:00 on Saturday. To see Aunt Lizzie, and then tried to get small pebble out of Quentin's ear.”

Theodore, after a good night's rest at Wilcox's home, spent Sunday in Buffalo attending a memorial service at the Milburn house. The funeral train to Washington would leave Monday morning.

Shortly after 8:15 A.M. on Monday the 16th, Roosevelt escorted by a small troop of mounted policemen, rolled down Delaware Avenue to the Exchanged Street station. He stood watching at the station entrance as soldiers carried McKinley's coffin to the waiting train. The train, courtesy of the Pennsylvania Railroad, consisted of two black draped locomotives, a baggage car, a saloon car, and five sumptuous Pullmans. The train pulled out of the station at 8:57 A.M. on its way south.



New York Central Exchange Street Depot, Buffalo New York

Slowing at villages and towns along the way, with water stops at several stations, it traveled through western New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland arriving in Washington at the Sixth Street Station at 8:38 P.M.⁹



Sixth Street Station, Washington D.C.

Edith also traveled to Washington on Monday to meet Theodore. From her diary excerpts:

“Monday, September 16, 1901. Started with Ted on very early train for New York. Stopped at Hollander's to get a black dress. Bamie (Roosevelt's older sister) and Governor Allen of Puerto Rico went on New York car with me, and Mr. J. A. Hassen came to lunch. Will (Cowles Bamie's husband) met us. Soon after we got to Bamie's, Theodore came, looking very grave and older but not at all nervous. All the country seems behind him.” Bamie was Roosevelt's sister living in Washington, and was married to Naval Aide Commander William Sheffield Cowles. Theodore was staying with the Cowles until Mrs. McKinley vacated the White House.

The next day was the funeral procession in Washington. As Edith described it:

“Tuesday, September 17. Started for White House at 9:00. Waited in Red Room and then followed President's hearse up Pennsylvania Avenue to Capitol. Theodore and I and Will, as naval aide, in one carriage. Bamie, Ted, and Col. Whitney, army aide, in other. Services very impressive. After, called at White House and saw Mrs. Barber [Mrs. McKinley's niece] . Theodore left after dinner.”

Following services at the United States Capitol, the President's body was placed back on the funeral train for his final trip to Canton. On September 19, President McKinley's body was

interred at the Wertz Receiving Vault in Canton's West Lawn Cemetery. After the services, several of the President's closest advisors, including William R. Day and Ohio Senator Marcus Hanna, met to discuss the location of a proper memorial to serve as a final resting place.¹⁰

Edith left Washington after the services;

"Wednesday, September 18, 1901. Ted and I left in morning after a little shopping. Arrived at Oyster Bay. Bob came out in the evening. Found all children well and Marne much improved."

"On the morning after McKinley's internment, Friday, 20 September 1901, a stocky figure in a frock coat sprang up the front steps of the White House... He sought out the executive office over the East Room... As the President worked, squads of cleaners, painters, and varnishers hastened to refurbish the private apartments down the hall."¹¹ The Roosevelts had chosen to break tradition and occupy the sunny south corner of the White House as opposed to the cold white light of the northern exposure.

By Monday morning, September 23rd, the Presidential suite was ready for its new occupants. Not wanting to spend his first night in the White House alone, he invited younger sister Corinne and husband Douglas Robinson to come down from New York. That evening, Bamie and William Cowles joined them for dinner at the White House. The three siblings were together and thoughts turned to their father Theodore Senior. Teddy commenting "What would I not give if only he could have lived to see me here in the White House."¹²

"Two evenings later, a carriage drew up outside the White House... Not until a boy and a girl rumbled into the light of the portico did reporters... realize that Edith Roosevelt had arrived."¹³ Kermit and Ethel were with their mother, and Archie and Quentin would come later with their nurse. Ted had gone to Groton, and Alice, true to her independence at seventeen, would find her own way to the capital. President Theodore Roosevelt and family had come a long way from the Tahawus Club at the Upper Works in the Adirondacks to the White House in Washington D.C



The White House Circa 1901 before Roosevelt's additions

1. Albany Times Union, February 2, 1958
2. Buffalo Evening News, September 14, 1901
3. Albany Times Union, February 2, 1958
4. Morris, *Rex*, page 9
5. Buffalo Evening News, September 14, 1901
6. Morris, *Rex*, page 11
7. Ibid, Page 11.
8. Ibid, Page 14
9. Ibid, Page 39
10. The William McKinley National Memorial, Canton, Ohio;
<https://mckinleymuseum.org/mckinley-national-memorial/>
11. Morris, *Rex*, Page 43
12. Ibid, Page 46
13. Ibid, Page