

**President Benjamin Harrison's
Train Stop Speech in Lehi
May 9, 1891
By John K. Haws Jr.**

President Benjamin Harrison's stops in Utah on May *, 1891 and his speech at Lehi was part of a 9,232 mile train record-setting procession in the Western United States. It was largely planned and mostly paid for by the former Governor of California, Leland Stanford. He invited the President to the dedication of Stanford University and to discuss with him a professorship at the University.¹

He traveled by a five car passenger train. It was an exquisite decorated train line. The President's car was called the New Zealand. It was furnished with a blue plush drawing room and a separate sleeping chamber. The other cars were named: Aztlan, Coronado, Ideal and Vacuna.²

The procession was well-advertised and hordes of people met Harrison wherever he stopped. He was accompanied on the trip by Postmaster General Wanamaker, Secretary of the Agriculture Rusk, his military advisor and his daughters. His wife was critically ill and stayed at home with the

¹ Winder, Mike and Ronald L. Fox. "When the White House Comes to Zion", Covenant Communication Inc.:2001 page 26.

² Moore, anne Chieko Moore. "Centennial President: Benjamin Harrison. Nova Publishers: 2006. page 128

President's secretary. ³

The President gave his speeches from the back of the observation car. He made a 140 speeches over this journey. His stenographer Tibbett recorded the speeches at each stop. He was on his way back to Washington when he made the stop in Salt Lake. He made a stop in Pocatello, Idaho, went through Ogden in the middle of the night with no stop and ended up in Salt Lake.⁴ Utah Territory Governor Thomas joined the President in Pocatello and rode to Salt Lake on the train⁵

President Benjamin Harrison had been elected in November 1888, on a Republican platform “ to stamp out the ...wickedness of polygamy”. It also stated that “The political power of the Mormon church...is a menace to free institutions and dangerous to be longer suffered.”⁶

Wilford Woodruff issued the Manifesto in 1890 doing away officially doing with polygamy. President Harrison thought it was a trick to gain statehood. He addressed Congress warning them against granting statehood too

³ Scofield, Homer E. “Benjamin Harrison and the American West” Kansas State University:1985 page 129

⁴ Scofield, Homer E. “Benjamin Harrison and the American West” Kansas State University:1985 page 129

⁵ Winder, Mike and Ronald L. Fox. “When the White House Comes to Zion”, Covenant Communication Inc.:2001 page 23.

⁶ Winder, Michael K. “Presidents and Prophets”. Covenant Communication: 2007 page 167

hastily.

In the initial itinerary for President Harrison's visit, a speech at Lehi was not on the agenda. President Harrison's trip was to be a major address in Salt Lake. This would be his first contact with the Mormons since he was elected and the Manifesto was issued.⁷

The Mormons had decorated their city for the President. The Salt Lake temple was draped with a flag. A huge banner covered an entire side of the temple saying "Fear God, Honor the President." The Beehive House, The Gardo House and other church buildings were decorated with flags, buntings and banners which said "Welcome to the Grandson of Tippecanoe" and "Under Harrison, Freedom Dawned on Utah". President Harrison met for a short time with the First Presidency when he first arrived in Salt Lake.⁸

President Harrison was believed to be giving a speech at the Salt Lake Tabernacle. A host of children from the LDS Sunday Schools of Salt Lake, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and a packed house were waiting for the President. Instead of speaking at the Tabernacle, he followed the Governor and the Editors of the Tribune's advice and avoided the Mormon

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⁸ Winder, Mike and Ronald L. Fox. "When the White House Comes to Zion", Covenant Communication Inc.:2001 page 23.

venues.

They proceeded to Liberty Park where he gave a major speech. The First Presidency was on the stand. 7,000 youth sang at the Park “My Country Tis of Thee” and the “Star Spangled Banner”. The children of Utah touched President Harrison greatly.⁹ He also opened a new Chamber of Commerce building in the community.

Instead of giving a speech in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, it was decided that he would board his train and make stops throughout Utah County. The First Presidency sent Elder John Henry Smith of the Twelve to Utah County to encourage the people to make a fine showing as the President traveled through Utah County.¹⁰

“The first stop after leaving the capital of Utah was at Lehi City, where a large sugar factory is located. The Committee of Reception consisted of Mayor A. J. Evans, Bishop T. R. Cutler, James Harwood, and C. A. Granger”.¹¹

The railroad stop was down by the Lehi Sugar Factory. The President was serenaded with a flag-waving tune by the Lehi Silver Band. President Harrison was given a speech of welcome by Sugar Company General Manager Thomas R.

⁹ Winder, Michael K. “Presidents and Prophets”. Covenant Communication: 2007 page 171-2.

¹⁰ Winder, Mike and Ronald L. Fox. “When the White House Comes to Zion”, Covenant Communication Inc.:2001 page 23.

¹¹ Speeches of President Benjamin Harrison. United States Government.

Cutler.¹² (It is interesting to note that the official Government documents had him down as Bishop and not as the Sugar Factory General Manager.) Cutler’s speech was longer than the speech given by the President.

The President made a brief address, saying : “My Friends, this industry which you have established here is very interesting to me. I hope it is to open the way to a time when we shall have a home supply of sugar for every household. [Cheers.]”¹³ That was the extent of it and the train rolled away to the tunes of the Lehi Silver Band.

President Harrison also made stops in American Fork, Provo and Springville before heading to Ogden.

After his visit, President Harrison said that he was especially impressed with what he saw as he went through Utah County. He said, “It has been very pleasant to-day to ride through this most extraordinary valley, and to notice how productive your fields are and how genial and kind your people are.”¹⁴

¹² Van Wagoner, Richard. “Lehi-Portrait of a Utah Town” Lehi City Corporation: 2000 page 390

¹³ Speeches of President Benjamin Harrison. United States Government.1891

¹⁴ Winder, Michael K. “Presidents and Prophets”. Covenant Communication: 2007 page 172

