

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## EX-PRESIDENT TAFT STOPPED HERE



It was just seventy-five years ago that Ex-President William Howard Taft paid a visit to Orleans County. The March 11 edition of the Orleans American reported as follows:

"We are informed that during the history of Albion, two former presidents of the United States have visited the village, the first was the late Theodore Roosevelt and the second, William H. Taft." To the best of my knowledge that is still true of former presidents although Franklin D. Roosevelt was here prior to being president but never during his presidency.

"As to President Taft, the Orleans American went on to say that he arrived in Albion on Monday, March 8, 1920 and was met at the 12:55 train by a committee of the Albion Chamber of Commerce consisting of William E. Karns, R. Titus Coan, Gerald B. Fluhrer, Thomas A. Kirby, Oscar Sammett, William H. Kenyon and George Whelen. These individuals escorted Taft to the Orleans House where he was given a fine luncheon attended by nearly one hundred people. Following the luncheon, the ex-President gave a thirty-minute address which was very well received. He spoke of the beauties of the village and was much pleased with its attractive and surrounding highlights. He also alluded to Socialism and the Bolsheviks and the depredations experienced in Russia. After his speech, Democrats, Republicans and Prohibitionists alike, were glad to grasp his hand. At five o'clock ex-Pres. Taft was tendered a public reception in the Elk's parlors. In the evening he gave a forceful address in the Albion High School auditorium on the League of Nations. Every seat was filled. Music was furnished by the Albion High School orchestra. During his speech he made it plain to the audience how important it was for this nation to join the League of Nations. Everyone was impressed and pleased with the way he handled the fourteen points. The ex-Pres. remained in Albion that evening and slept at the Orleans House. At 6:35 the next morning he boarded a train for Titusville, Pa. via Buffalo.

Taft had the courage to break away from his old associates on the subject of the League of Nations

proposed by Pres. Wilson. The Orleans American noted "... that this raised him in the estimation of millions of people and that he was more popular with the common people of America goes without saying."

This wonderful bi-partisan photograph was taken on March 8, 1920 in front of the Orleans House on East Bank Street in Albion. It was last April that this landmark was destroyed because of fire. The photo shows Ex-Pres. Taft, third from the left in the front row along with some of those who hosted his visit here. Ones which I can identify from left to right include: Herbert T. Reed, (2nd row, derby hat) who was an attorney and County Republican Chairman for many years, William E. Karns (next to Taft) who owned a monument business, Spencer Tanner (3rd row, derby hat), and R. Titus Coan (next to Taft). Both Tanner and Coan were associated with the Citizens National Bank. Moving along, we can also see Bernard Ryan (2nd row) a prominent attorney who later was appointed by Gov. Roosevelt as Chief Judge of the N.Y.S. Court of Claims, and finally, at the far right is County Judge Gerald B. Fluhrer who won his judgeship as a Democrat. Indeed, this is a bi-partisan group. I hope perhaps some of our older readers will be able to identify others in the photo.

We are indebted to Mrs. Alice Coan Daifuko, granddaughter of R. Titus Coan for the loan of this picture which she so graciously sent to me from her home in France.

William Howard Taft 1857-1930 was the 27th President of the United States who was elected on the Republican ticket in 1908. He served one term 1909-1913 and was succeeded by Pres. Wilson. In 1921 Pres. Warren Harding appointed Taft Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, a position he held until his death.

Taft was born in Cincinnati, Ohio into a Unitarian family. Following high school he received his education at Yale and the Cincinnati Law School. He married Helen Herron (1861-1943) and they had two boys and one girl. During his presidency, New Mexico and Arizona were admitted as states.