

The Paterson Businessman Who Became Vice-President

By Fred W. Bogert

NOV. 25, 1899, was a clear, cold day in Paterson. The bite in the air was evident to the President of the United States as, accompanied by members of his Cabinet, Chief Justice Fuller, three Associate Justices of the Supreme Court, and a group of Senators and Congressmen, he stepped down from the platform of his special train at the Market Street station.

William McKinley, 25th President of the nation, with his colleagues, had come to pay a last tribute to his former running mate and Vice-President, Garret A. Hobart, who died in office 4 days earlier at Carroll Hall, his residence in Paterson, after a period of illness.

A special bond of friendship and warm feeling had existed between these two men. Hobart, a businessman-politician, had been Speaker of the New Jersey Assembly and President of the New Jersey State Senate, but was little known outside the State.

Through his position as Chairman of the New Jersey State Republican Committee and member of the Republican National Com-

na, who was looking for a likely candidate to run with his choice for President in 1896, William McKinley. Through Hanna's influence and the votes of the delegates at the Republican National Convention in St. Louis, Hobart catapulted into national politics when he was chosen as the Vice-Presidential nominee.

News of Hobart's selection had been received with tremendous enthusiasm in Paterson. The city's favorite son was hailed in a Paterson newspaper, which boasted: "Nothing that could be done to show the gratitude of the people of Paterson was left undone and all that was done was done noisily. Cheers, fire-crackers, sky-rockets, Roman candles, guns, church bells, factory whistles, drums and brass bands were brought into play. The supply of fireworks in the city was soon exhausted and messengers hurried over to Passaic for more."

Trains of illuminated trolley cars with bands and shouting citizens swept over the city lines. The whole population seemed to pour into the streets, particularly in the area of Hobart's home at the corner of Carroll and Ellison

mory with more than 15,000 persons assembled to pay homage to Hobart.

The 1896 Presidential election found McKinley and Hobart opposing William Jennings Bryan and Arthur Sewall of Maine. Although Bryan's famous "Cross of Gold" speech had stirred delegates at the Democratic convention and the Nebraskan waged a strenuous campaign, making 600 speeches in 29 States, he lost the election to McKinley.

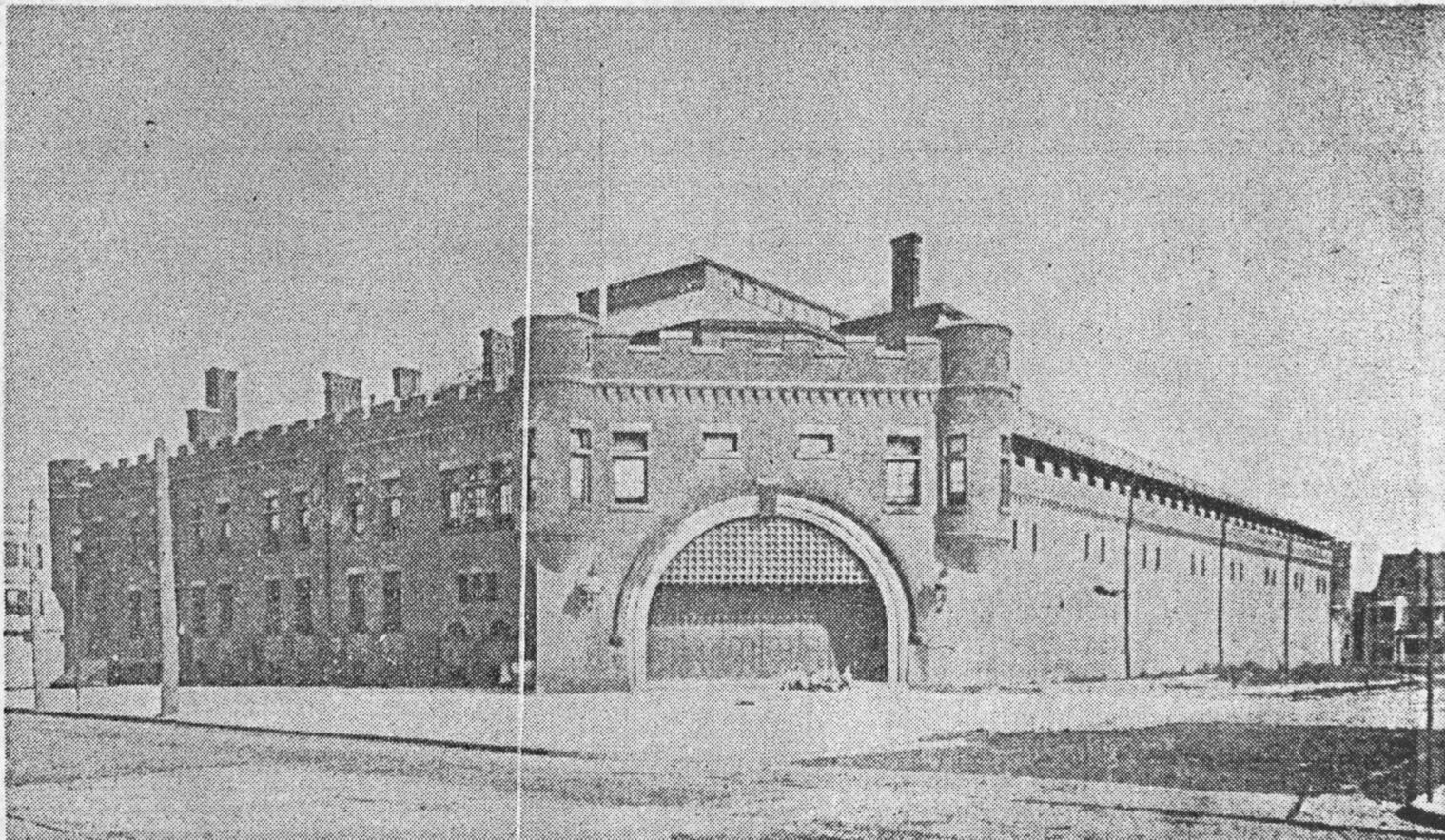
On March 4, 1897, before a packed gallery in the United States Senate chamber that included President-Elect McKinley and retiring Vice-President Adlai Stevenson, Hobart took the oath of office. Following this ceremony, he accompanied the Presidential party to the front of the Capitol to witness the swearing-in of the new Chief Executive.

Historians generally agree that Hobart was more than just a Vice-President in name. He is credited by Edwin Conklin as having a special talent for organization, manipulation, and leadership of men. Conklin further described Hobart: "Always singularly unpretentious and unselfish . . . he would rise to



Above; this statue of Garret A. Hobart stands in front of Paterson's City Hall.

At right, The Fifth Regiment Army was the scene of a gigantic reception when Hobart was nominated for the Vice-Presidency, and the honor guard for his funeral was briefly quartered there.



Weekend

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JEROME J. SULLIVAN, EDITOR

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ing to another pen to complete the signature.

Mrs. Garret A. Hobart in her personal reminiscences relates how President McKinley delegated the unpleasant task of asking Secretary of War Russell A. Alger to resign to her husband. It was a doubly distressing duty for the Vice-President because Alger was a close, personal friend of Hobart. "Yet in the performance of this task," wrote Mrs. Hobart, "he used such understanding and finesse that the New York Sun, commenting on it, called Mr. Hobart a 'man of crystal insight and velvet tact.' The matter settled, the President sent a wire inquiring about Mr. Hobart's health (the Vice-President was, at the time, ill and resting at his summer home near Long Branch, N. J.). I received it at our seaside home and answered, signing my husband's name: 'My crystal insight is as clear as ever, but the nap on my velvet tact is somewhat worn.'"

When news reached the White House that the Vice-President had died, special trains were made up to carry the Presidential party and members of Congress to Paterson. Two companies of the 5th Artil-

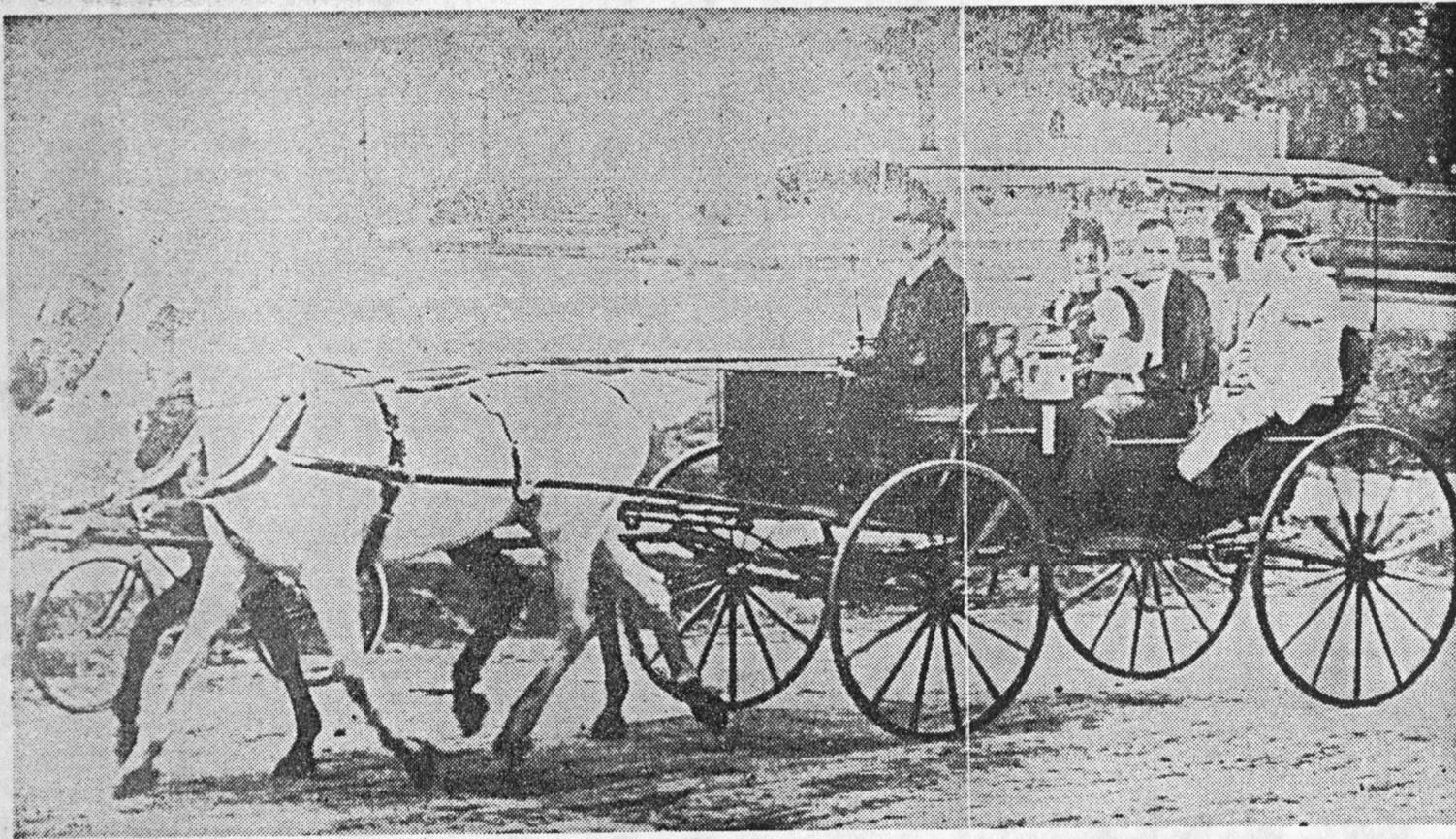
MRS. HOBART.

Except for the tolling of church bells, Paterson was a silent city the day of the funeral. It was necessary for the military honor guard to keep the streets open for the passage of the hearse and carriages from Carroll Hall to the Church of the Redeemer where services were held. After the services, President McKinley accompanied the cortege to Cedar Lawn cemetery where the remains of the Vice-President were placed in a vault. Then he boarded his special train to return to Washington.

In addition to the chief executive, Paterson citizens saw many other national, State, and local figures of note on that day. Among the pallbearers were the Attorney-General of the United States and a former Governor, John W. Griggs, a close friend of Hobart; and two future Governors, Franklin Murphy and J. Franklin Fort; and bankers E. T. Bell and George F. Baker. Cabinet members who traveled from Washington with McKinley included John Hay, Secretary of State; Elihu Root, Secretary of War; Lyman Gage, Secretary of the Treasury; and Charles E. Smith, Secretary of the Navy. The most prominent



This 1903 photo shows the Hobarts' home in Paterson's East Side section.



This old photo shows President and Mrs. William McKinley and Vice-President and Mrs. Hobart out for a drive together.

among big men. He never lacked the courage of his convictions."

Others have concluded that Hobart was well liked by the Senators over whom he presided and was useful to the Senate and the President. Conklin also felt that Hobart decidedly influenced McKinley's decision to declare war on Spain in 1898. Historian Margaret Leech seems to confirm this theory in her book "In the Days of McKinley" by writing that McKinley used Hobart's pen to sign his first name on the declaration of war passed by Congress, switch-

lery were also detailed to duty in Paterson as a military honor escort. Upon arrival, the soldiers went to the Armory to be fed before marching to Carroll Hall where the body lay in state.

From 2 to 6 P. M. on the day before the funeral, an estimated 12,000 persons filed past the bier. The City had filled with crowds, one local newspaper stating, "Not fewer than 50,000 persons came to Paterson on that day by regular and special trains." The next day, when the President arrived, he went at once to Carroll Hall to see

member of the Senate there was Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts; the State was represented by Governor Foster M. Voorhees and Chief Justice William J. Magie of the New Jersey Supreme Court. Mayor John Hinchcliffe of Paterson led the City officials.

Perhaps the best epitaph for Garret Hobart is a statement which he made shortly after he assumed the office of Vice-President. When asked why he had entered politics by a reporter, he replied:

"I believe that every American citizen should take part in politics. The salvation of our country, in fact, rests upon our young men. They should take part in all elections and especially the primaries. . . . I believe it pays a young man to do this. It gives a man new acquaintances and brings him into contact with businessmen and with those on whom he has to depend for his living. It identifies him with the community in which he lives and it is, in all ways, a good thing."