

Dedicatory Tablet in the Grand Court Written by President Taft

BOOK ONE.

THE STORY OF DEDICATION DAY.

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT,
DEDICATING THE WANAMAKER HOUSE OF BUSINESS,
DECEMBER 30, 1911.

*"Mr. Wanamaker, Mr. Burnham, Mr. Mayor and Governor Tener, Ladies and Gentlemen of Philadelphia, My Fellow-Citizens:—*It is now twenty years ago since I had the pleasure of joining the Administration of Benjamin Harrison at Washington and there becoming acquainted, as an humble associate in that Administration, with John Wanamaker of Philadelphia, then Postmaster-General. (*Applause.*)

*"It has been a great pleasure to me to know and to feel that the friendship and mutual respect there begun have continued until the present day, and it has given me the greatest pleasure to come here and take part in this ceremony at the moment of the greatest triumph of John Wanamaker's long and useful life. (*Applause.*)*

"We are here to celebrate the completion, in its highest type, of one of the most important instrumentalities in modern life for the promotion of comfort among the people. The department store—which brings under one roof the opportunity to purchase, at the lowest reasonable, constant and fixed price, everything that is usu-

ally needed upon the person or in the household for the sustaining of life, for recreation and for intellectual enjoyment (except food alone)—means a reduction in the cost of living and necessary effort that we do not always appreciate.

“It has been given to Mr. Wanamaker, the founder of this great institution, to begin the formation of this new instrumentality for the betterment of the condition of men, and to pursue the work of its improvement for fifty years, until now the end crowns his labor. The introduction into the conduct of his business of rigid rules as to the fixedness of the price; accuracy of representation as to the quality; the conveniences accorded to all in the return of unsatisfactory goods; and the delivery without cost, or at a reasonable cost according to the distance, of the goods to the home of the purchaser; together with such economical arrangement in sales as to reduce to a minimum the effort necessary to examine the goods to be purchased; the concentration and co-operation of the different branches of the business to reduce expense and increase efficiency; all call for an executive genius that hardly finds its counterpart.

“With no adventitious aid, with no combinations in restraint of competition, but simply by a natural growth and aggregation of means to an end, this great business was built up here in Philadelphia, and there in New York, to form a model for all other stores of the same kind throughout the country and throughout the world. Growing, as it has, out of the traditions of a fifty years’ life of business, it seems to have acquired its own personality, different even from that of the founder, so that he finds himself bound by the very rules he created and the traditions that have worked to eminent success.

“On this day, when we can look back half a century to the humble beginnings of this enormous business machine with its thirteen thousand employés and its millions of constant customers, it is right that there

should be a ceremony dedicatory and congratulatory, to show the appreciation that the country at large has for the successful creation of an aid to the happiness of the people that is substantial and permanent.

“The feature which Mr. Wanamaker has introduced in his Stores of an educational system, in which his working employés can add to their intellectual attainment and increase their efficiency in the discharge of their duties, is the most noteworthy feature of his whole system; and the retirement plan, by which he takes care of those who become superannuated in his service, and offers to those who look forward to the future a comfortable old age, shows the long foresight that he has exhibited in all his business, whereby human nature, both in the people at large and in his own employés, responds in full measure to the justice and generosity that he metes out to them, by the patronage that his customers give, and by the faithful, enthusiastic and most effective service which his employés render.

“I congratulate Mr. Wanamaker that he has been spared in his long and active life until this moment, and that he can look around and see, in all its inspiring whole, this enduring monument to the clear-sightedness and genius of his business career.”

Here, at the close of the President’s formal address, he looked about the great marble Court of Honor, with its tier on tier of humanity rising to the roof. With a sweep of his hand he expressed his admiration and wonder, and added spontaneously:

“As I came in the carriage with Mr. Wanamaker, I said to him: ‘I have a few words here to say—not more than five hundred or a thousand.’

“He said: ‘It doesn’t make any difference how many you have got down—you will have to say a good many more when you get there!’

"And it is true. No one can stand here in this magnificent structure without being awe-inspired, and without thinking that it is inspired in this: that it has been worked out in the brain of the greatest architect in America in order to develop the genius and show the magnificent work of the greatest merchant in America. (Applause.)

"I have been asked to direct the words of a tablet to be erected in this marble chamber."

The President closed his address by reading the following words for the Dedicatory Tablet to be placed in the Grand Court.

IN THIS MARBLE COURT
WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT
PRESIDENT
OF THE
UNITED STATES
ON THE 30TH OF DECEMBER, 1911
AT THE CLOSE OF
THE GOLDEN JUBILEE YEAR
IN THE PRESENCE OF
THIRTY THOUSAND CITIZENS
DEDICATED THIS BUILDING
A LANDMARK OF LABOR
AND A SIGNATURE IN STONE
TO THE POWER OF
CONCENTRATION AND CO-OPERATION
IN MERCANTILE PURSUITS
UNDER FREEDOM OF COMPETITION
AND THE BLESSING
OF GOD

THIS STAR LOCATES
 THE PLACE WHERE
 THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
 WILLIAM H TAFT
 DELIVERED THE ADDRESS OF DEDICATION
 OF THIS BUILDING
 DECEMBER THIRTIETH 1911



Tablet Showing Place Where President Taft Made His Address

CHAPTER I.

"SURELY, no store was ever dedicated in so imposing a manner as that of John Wanamaker yesterday," said the *Public Ledger* (Philadelphia) of December 31st, 1911. "It may be in keeping to say that few buildings or monuments have ever received such a baptism.

"President Taft, in the presence of thirty thousand persons, and under circumstances that will mark the incident as a bit of the history of Philadelphia, pronounced the dedicatory words and delivered an address that aroused that great throng to storm after storm of cheers."

"One of the most notable tributes ever paid to any individual in his private capacity," commented *The North American*, Philadelphia, "and probably the most notable ever paid to any private business in the history of the world, was that which was offered yesterday to John Wanamaker and to the great mercantile enterprise which he created. The central figure in this tribute was the Chief Magistrate of 90,000,000 people, President Taft.

"On rare occasions in the history of the country the President of the United States has lent the prestige and dignity of his great office to honor some business of a public character—the opening of a trans-continental railroad which was to add an empire to the domain of the republic, a vast exposition to celebrate some towering historical event, or some event of a similarly public character.

"But probably never before has the head of this or any other great nation had occasion to honor so signally a business man, who, howsoever public have been the benefits his business bestowed, is still a simple, private merchant, an advanced exponent of the old-fashioned idea of private ownership of business regulated by the natural laws of competition."

"Yesterday's dedication was the final and crowning event of Mr. Wanamaker's jubilee year," *The Philadelphia Record* said. "For a whole twelvemonth his big establishment, occupying a whole city block and facing the City Hall, has been the scene of one continuous celebration. When the year began the store was still far from completion. But it was Mr. Wanamaker's idea that the structure should be finished before his fiftieth year in business should end. So work was rushed, and the opening of each section from time to time during the year was made a special event; then, as the year drew to a close, the building was finally completed in all its details and ready for dedication. It was decided to hold this event on the last business day of the year. But the Wanamaker Store did no business yesterday. It was closed to all buyers and open only to those bearing cards of admission for the exercises, of whom there were more than thirty thousand."

"Philadelphians have watched with interest and pride the growth of the big store that covers an entire block," wrote *The Evening Telegraph*. "Many of them remember the little store on Market Street over which Mr. Wanamaker presided, and year by year they saw him enlarge his business, never standing still, but forever, like some restless spirit, forging ahead and building and expanding. His efforts are being crowned today, when his new Store, the most modern, the biggest, and the most complete of its kind in the world, is being officially dedicated."

"The dedication exercises, held on the last business day of the present year, mark the close of twelve months of celebrations of various characters marking the fiftieth anniversary of Mr. Wanamaker's start in business, as well as the completion of the new Store."

The impressions of some of the spectators are thus recorded in the following newspaper excerpts:

"Long before the President reached the Store great crowds had assembled there. Had there been space enough inside, at least 75,000 persons would have greeted the President," was the comment of the *Philadelphia Record*. "Crowds stood outside the doors of the Store,

vainly hoping for admission, but only those bearing invitations were permitted to enter.

"Inside the Store there was one densely-packed mass of humanity. The Grand Court in the middle was cleared of all its merchandise counters, and a broad space was left open, in which about fifteen thousand men and women were standing. The Court reaches up through six floors of the building, and upon each of the six balconies were other crowds looking down upon the throng below."

"The scene that presented itself to the special guests as they came upon the platform was a remarkable one," said *The Evening Bulletin*. "In the very heart of the great Store counters and show cases—everything indicative of the daily business transacted there—had been cleared away, and in their places stood thousands of people."

"The great marble Grand Court, with its lofty ceiling eight stories above the Main Floor, and the gray light of the day filtering through an immense skylight, was filled not only from end to end, but the crowds extended on and on, almost to the outer walls of the Store itself."

"And above, tier upon tier where the upper floors open in balconies upon this Court, people stood five and six deep, hoping to get a glimpse of the President and the other dignitaries, and to hear some of the speeches."

"Back and beyond these, other balconies and galleries held still more people."

"Here and there was a splash of color made by the brilliant uniforms of officers of the Army and of the National Guard of Pennsylvania. Along the railing of the First Floor balcony, immediately under the broad spread of the great organ, was the Wanamaker Chorus, which furnished music for the exercises. And all about, on every side and hemming in this brilliant array, in close-packed ranks, stood the guests by thousands."

"The throng fortunate enough to be present was crowded over the gray stone floors in front of the stand and massed upon the balconies rising far above the Court. Only a vivid imagination can picture the sight," the *Public Ledger* said. "The very presence of Mr. Taft served to fill the vast audience with enthusiasm. But

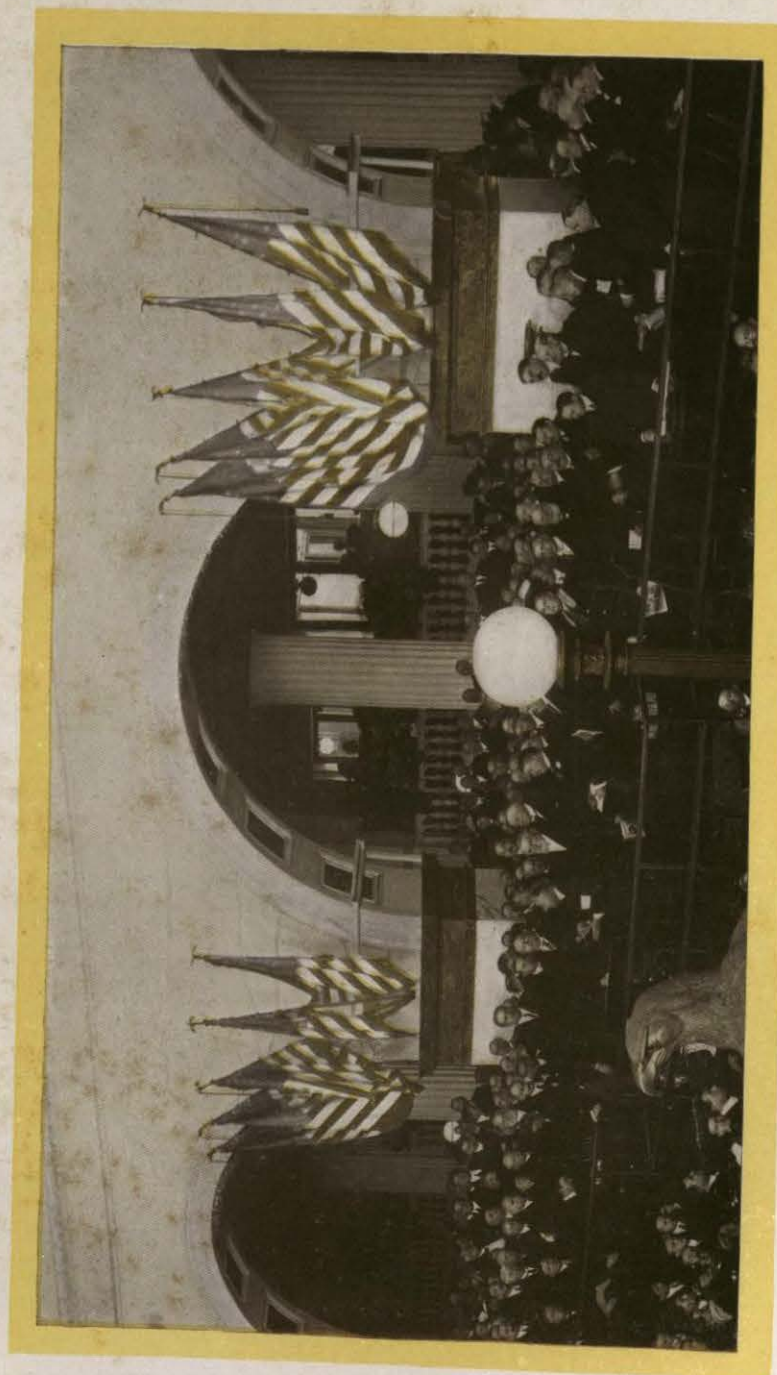
there seemed to be a power more potent than a mere presence of one man—great as he may be—in the atmosphere of the occasion.

“Only by being there could one appreciate the magnificence of the ceremonies. The great organ, thundering forth the wonderful clarion notes of Rhadames’ Triumphant March from ‘Aida’ and the Coronation March from ‘Le Prophete,’ and the two bands—the First Regiment and the John Wanamaker Commercial Institute—consolidated to form a glorious prelude to the order of the day.”

Yet the throngs in the new building were not all who were to listen to the day’s exercises. One hundred miles from Philadelphia, the officers and heads of departments of the Wanamaker Store in New York, through the utilization of electrical forces heard everything that went on in the Philadelphia Store at the instant it happened. For, directly in front of the speakers’ desk on the platform, was a special long-distance telephone apparatus connected with the New York Store, by means of which every part of the program—speeches, music and applause—was heard there.*

Furthermore, all the proceedings that were transmitted over these wires were at the same time recorded by the newly-invented “telegraphone” installed at the switchboard in the Philadelphia Store—reproduced on three

*“The circuit connecting the Wanamaker Stores in the two cities consisted of a pair of loaded No. 12 open wires. At the Philadelphia end two three-unit special transmitters were placed on the railing of the platform directly in front of the speaker’s table. These transmitters rested on soft wool felt pads, and were draped in velvet to prevent any possible reverberation or echoes from interfering with the transmission. To insure proper operation an additional circuit was provided, equipped with telephones at both ends, and was used to keep in touch with the working of the main circuit and to pass information regarding the progress of the exercises. A special table beside the speakers’ stand was provided for telephone representatives in charge of the work. Every word of the speeches in Philadelphia and every note of the music were heard with distinctness in the New York Store.”—From “*The Telephone News*,” Philadelphia, January 15, 1912.



Guests on Platform at Dedication of New House of Business

reels of steel wire, which are to be preserved. Much like phonographic records, these reels can be made to reproduce their records at any time, by merely running a fine magnet over the surface of the wire.

Special police arrangements were made for the day, both inside the building and out. More than four hundred police and officers were stationed at various posts inside the Store to insure perfect safety for the crowds.

As the hour for the ceremonies approached, the speakers' stand filled with the chiefs of the Store and the special guests, including the following:

The Governor of Pennsylvania, His Excellency John K. Tener, and members of his Staff in uniform.

United States Senator Boies Penrose.

The Honorable Rudolph Blankenburg, the Mayor of Philadelphia, and Mrs. Blankenburg.

Mr. Rodman Wanamaker.

Mr. Daniel H. Burnham, architect of the building.

Judges of the Supreme, Superior and Common Pleas Courts.

Officers of the United States Army.

Officials of various City Departments.

Representatives from the New York Store, and department heads from the Philadelphia Store.

Many distinguished bankers and business and professional men from Philadelphia and other cities.