

# MANSFIELD MEMORIES: ‘The pure force of logic’ - Calvin Coolidge comes to town

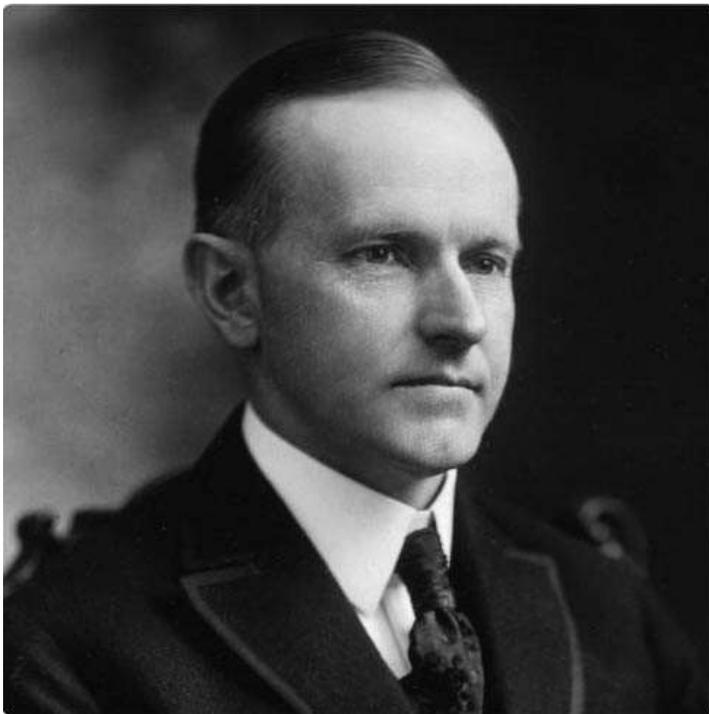
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By Kevin McNatt and Andrew Todesco

Feb 18, 2020

MANSFIELD - Calvin Coolidge wasn't much of a talker. "Silent Cal" spoke as little as possible. He had a direct and minimal style. Perhaps it made him more popular.

But Mansfieldians heard the future president speak no less than twice at local political events. The first was in 1915 when he was campaigning for lieutenant governor alongside Samuel McCall. He returned as lieutenant governor the following year in support of the national Republican ticket.



Before he was elected president, Calvin Coolidge twice visited Mansfield for speaking engagements

Coolidge spoke in Mansfield on October 19, 1915. A crowd gathered for a rally at 3 p.m. on the North Common (now Lowney Common). Coolidge was introduced by William Mowry of the Republican Town Committee.

Coolidge began by stating McCall would arrive by train momentarily. He then assailed the administration of Democrat Woodrow Wilson, saying it was responsible for idle mills and unemployment nationwide. He also said that Democrats undermined the economy when they lowered tariffs on imported goods.

He claimed that these policies forced the state legislature to expend \$125,000 in unemployment relief. "Realizing this, is it any wonder that men heretofore of all political faiths are this year urging a return to power of the Republican Party?"

"Republicans have been accused of putting the dollar above the man," Coolidge continued. "The Democrats have put the dollar out of the man's reach. What's the use of compensation for workmen when he has no work?"

McCall soon arrived and delivered a similar speech.

After a successful election Coolidge returned as lieutenant governor on August 16, 1916 for a meeting of a local organization dedicated to the candidacy of Charles Evans Hughes for president. At this meeting were Clarence Barnes of Mansfield, who would later be elected attorney general of Massachusetts; State Senator Joseph Martin of North Attleboro, who would later become US Speaker of the House; and Coolidge, who would later be president of the United States.

The “smoke and talk rally” was held at Odd Fellows Hall in the Lovell Block (North Main and West streets). Martin spoke first on the need for protective tariffs. Barnes then introduced Coolidge, calling him “a man from the Berkshires, Calvin Coolidge of Northampton, a man who rules by the pure force of logic.”

Coolidge said the welfare and vitality of the nation were at stake in the upcoming presidential election.

“We welcome immigrants but we should see to it that American institutions are perpetuated and that American ideals prevail,” he said.



Prior to his presidency, Calvin Coolidge spoke at the Odd Fellows Hall in the Lovell Block, shown above on August 16, 1916 in support of Charles Evans Hughes campaign for president.

He claimed Wilson only won in 1912 because the Republican Party was divided. He urged the return of government control to the Republicans and the establishment of a protective tariff.

Coolidge was elected governor in 1918 when McCall didn't seek reelection. In 1920 he was elected vice president and became president upon Warren Harding's sudden death in 1923.

Coolidge was elected to his own term in 1924 and did not seek a second full term. He died in 1933 at the age of 61.

In 1935, Clarence Barnes spoke of his friendship with Calvin Coolidge. He recalled the speech at Odd Fellows Hall.

“Cal spoke for five or 10 minutes — that was a long speech for him.”

Coolidge then stayed at Barnes' home (79 Rumford Avenue) for the night.



State Senator Joseph Martin of North Attleboro, who would later become US Speaker of the House, left, and were Clarence Barnes of Mansfield, who would later be elected attorney general of Massachusetts.

Barnes also recalled visiting Coolidge at the Willard Hotel in Washington DC when he was vice president.

“I said ‘You are going to be president one of these days.’”

Within a month President Harding died and Coolidge took the oath of office.

“But Coolidge said to me when we talked of the presidency, ‘I’ll do my own job and let the future take care of itself.’”