



THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION OF 1900.

BY SEWELL FORD.



On Tuesday, June 19, about 20,000 loyal and enthusiastic Republicans will gather in Philadelphia. They will proceed, in the deliberate manner of all large bodies, to nominate candidates for president and vice president.

Only about 900 of those present will be authorized delegates. As many more will be alternates. A hundred or so will serve as officers of the convention. The other 18,000 will stand around, talk a great deal, shout whenever there is opportunity and add to the general picturesqueness and importance of the affair.

This will be the twelfth national convention held by the Republican party. The first one was held in Philadelphia, as this one will be. That was in 1856, when John C. Fremont was nomi-



GEORGE N. WISWELL.
[Sergeant-at-arms.]

inated. Philadelphia has not had a Republican national convention since 1872, when Grant was unanimously re-nominated.

Like the convention of 1872, it is expected that the coming one will be simply a grand ratification meeting at which the McKinley administration will be indorsed and the present chief executive named as a candidate to succeed himself.

Philadelphia wanted this convention so much that she paid \$100,000 in cash and is to spend nearly as much more in entertainment. One of the chief items of expense is the provision of the convention hall. You may count on the fingers of one hand the buildings large enough and at the same time suitable for accommodating a national political convention. Chicago has one and New York has another, but both these cities have come to the conclusion that political conventions are expensive luxuries. They do not pay.

Generally it has been found necessary to put up a building especially for

Export exposition and not only possesses architectural attractions, but is solidly built. The Philadelphians insist, too, that the big auditorium which is to be created under its roof will have all sorts of desirable qualities.

The auditorium was originally used as the main exposition building and was divided into several halls. Out of these the carpenters have constructed one mammoth hall with a floor space of 88,500 feet and a seating capacity of 18,000. The floor will be elevated in tiers, and there will be numerous large aisles. There will also be committee rooms, press bureaus and telegraph offices. It is costing about \$35,000 to put the building in shape.

The acoustics of the great building, which are already excellent, will be further improved by the erection of an immense sounding board directly over the stage, and experts claim that the hearing properties will then surpass those of any hall ever used for a similar purpose. The new stage will be semicircular and raised in steps, so that the speaker may be seen from any point in the building, the speakers' platform being placed well forward.

The committee has also given careful attention to the matter of handling the crowds at the hall, and extensive arrangements are being made to insure order, to limit admission to the building to those having credentials or tickets and to obviate all crowding or difficulty in reaching seats.

The delegates will be arranged according to states, each state having a separate section, in the center of which will rise a big placard bearing the state's name, very much as sections are arranged at stock exchanges.

Provision is made for a small army of newspaper men and telegraphers, so that the will of the convention may be announced to the country the moment a platform is accepted and candidates are chosen.

The convention hall is located at Thirty-third and South streets, within 15 minutes' ride of the heart of the city, and, surrounded by the various buildings of Philadelphia's most noted seat of learning, the University of Pennsylvania. Only half a square away is the magnificent University museum, recently opened in memory of the late Dr. Pepper, and Franklin field, the scene of many hard fought intercollegiate contests, is directly across the street. But a little farther removed are laboratories, dispensaries, hospitals and other buildings devoted to intellectual development.

National conventions are always costly. It has been estimated that the people of the United States spend more than \$10,000,000 once in every four years merely on the business of nominating presidential candidates. This seems almost improbable until you begin to reckon up the various items.

Let us say, for example, that 20,000 Republicans will go to Philadelphia.

news \$66,250, and this does not include the salaries of the reporters.

These are only a few of the expenses, but you can see how they foot up. Yes, we pay well for our political excitement, but where is the economist who would suggest curtailing of expenses? What would he leave out? No, we could not spare the big crowds, the pages of printed reports, the music, the fireworks or the refreshments.



PRESIDENT M'KINLEY.

These are the things upon which partisan spirit feeds.

The machinery of a great political convention is very simple in theory and very complex in practice.

In theory you have the nine hundred and odd delegates who meet, organize into a body, prepare a platform in which they set forth the political principles of the party and proceed to ballot for candidates. The man who gets the most votes is chosen as the standard bearer.

Why, a schoolboy could understand that.

But actually a national convention is something very different. It is much more subtle. The influence which one strong mind has over others, the evolution of an intangible and unspoken sentiment into a well defined movement, the struggle of concentrated mental energy against a mass of unstable individuality—all these things enter into the doings of a political convention.

Sometimes the deep laid, well matured plans of strong leaders—plans which have been months in the molding, which have been perfected secretly at midnight—are forced upon the surprised delegates and driven through by sheer strength.

Then, again, it is a half hysterical woman who only jumps on a chair and shouts and waves her parasol while several thousand usually calm, self possessed men are hypnotized into following her lead.

Probably the most unsubstantial honor and yet one highly prized is that bestowed on the chairman of a national convention. In the first place, the honor is brief. The permanent chairman is not selected until the convention is organized. Then for a few brief hours he is much observed. His name is on all tongues. But then come the nominating orators with their pyrotechnics of eloquence, the fever interest of the balloting, and before the chairman realizes it the great body which has set him for a moment before the country has done its work and dispersed.

The really important officer of the convention is the sergeant-at-arms. He begins his work long before the convention meets, and he is a figure of prominence every moment it is in session. The chairman has almost no patronage at his command, but this other functionary gives it out in chunks. His title would be far more accurate were he termed the convention's business manager.

The sergeant-at-arms is appointed by the convention's subcommittee of the national committee. All matters of general convention policy are discussed and settled by the subcommittee, but the carrying out of the details is entrusted to the sergeant-at-arms solely. In short, the sergeant-at-arms is in the way of doing either a good deal of good or a good deal of harm, according to his lights.

Financially his responsibilities are heavy, since besides the large amounts he pays out in local expenses he has to arrange in a measure for the expenditure of several times as much more,

and thus the total expenses of a convention may be greatly increased or decreased by the sergeant-at-arms. It certainly may be said with truth that he must be a man of exceptional judgment, great capacity and unusual executive force.

If the duties of the convention sergeant-at-arms were fully indicated by the foregoing paragraphs, he would have comparatively an easy time, but his work would be only partially done were he to stop with getting the hall in good order and making the arrangements for the press.

Providing for the comfort and convenience of the delegates is really the most important of all his tasks. This involves arranging the seats in the body of the hall and the galleries so that all shall be satisfied and furnishing the various subcommittee rooms and the like. There are tickets and badges to be printed, and, though you might not think it, this is a job of no small magnitude. Giving out the contract for printing the tickets is one of the first things attended to. It has already been looked after by the Re-

publican organization and executive work. In the handling of political conventions he is already experienced, having been assistant sergeant-at-arms of the Republican national conventions at Chicago in 1888, at Minneapolis in 1892 and at St. Louis in 1896.

Sergeant-at-arms Wiswell will have the assistance and advice of Colonel Swords, who has probably had more experience in the direction of conventions than any other man in the country.

Among other members of the Republican national committee who will be very much in evidence in Philadelphia during the convention is Major Charles Dick. Major Dick is at all times a busy man, and he will be very much so when the delegates are assembled.

Just at present Dick is major general, commanding the national guard of Ohio; chairman of the Republican committee of the state, the representative from the Nineteenth or Garfield, Wade and Giddings district, and secretary of the national committee. Incidentally it may be observed that this active young man is also a member of a law firm and does his share of the work, so that his two partners have no cause to complain.

If Senator Hanna's rheumatism puts a veto on the president's request that he manage next year's campaign, it is a moral certainty that Mr. McKinley will ask Dick to undertake the Herculean task. Even if the senator remains at the head of the committee, the ubiquitous and never ruffled Dick will be the chief of staff. He will be the Kitchener of the campaign. Dick was chief of staff in 1896, although nominally he was but an assistant secretary of the national committee. William McKinley Osborn, now consul general at London, held the title.

Another member of the national Republican committee who will be in the forefront of things at Philadelphia in June is First Assistant Postmaster General Perry S. Heath, who is chairman of the committee on organization and literature. Mr. Heath is a well known newspaper man who is slated for higher honors.

Then there will be numerous old war horses who will be able to recall the early history of the party. Perhaps there may be one or two present who were actual spectators of the events which occurred in Philadelphia in 1856, and which resulted in the birth of the Republican party. The convention which nominated John C. Fremont was much unlike a modern national convention. In the first place, there were less than 600 delegates assembled, and they by no means represented the whole country.

The issues which then made politics so stirring have been so long dead that they have almost been forgotten.

At the beginning of the year 1856 there were four parties in the eastern states—the Democrats, the Whigs, the Know Nothings and the Republicans. The Whigs and Democrats inclined to unite against the Republicans, who were fast gaining strength. Most of the Know Nothings joined the Republicans. In the west, except in Ohio, where the Whigs still prevailed, the parties were Democratic and Republi-

It will become in the end either all slave or all free."

And in this homely sentence he had conveyed to his party in the west more forcibly perhaps than Seward had the same truth which was in the mind of each.

Strange and uncouth looked this man of the prairies to the cultured people of New York, but they listened to his inspired words and were won over. When the convention met in Chicago, May 16, 1860, the delegates were very much split up, with Seward in the lead. As the balloting progressed, however, the states swung into line for Lincoln.

Occasionally a political convention furnishes a stirring and dramatic scene which is long remembered. It is not often that they are entirely dull. The coming gathering in Philadelphia prom-



MAJOR CHARLES DICK.
[Secretary of national Republican committee.]

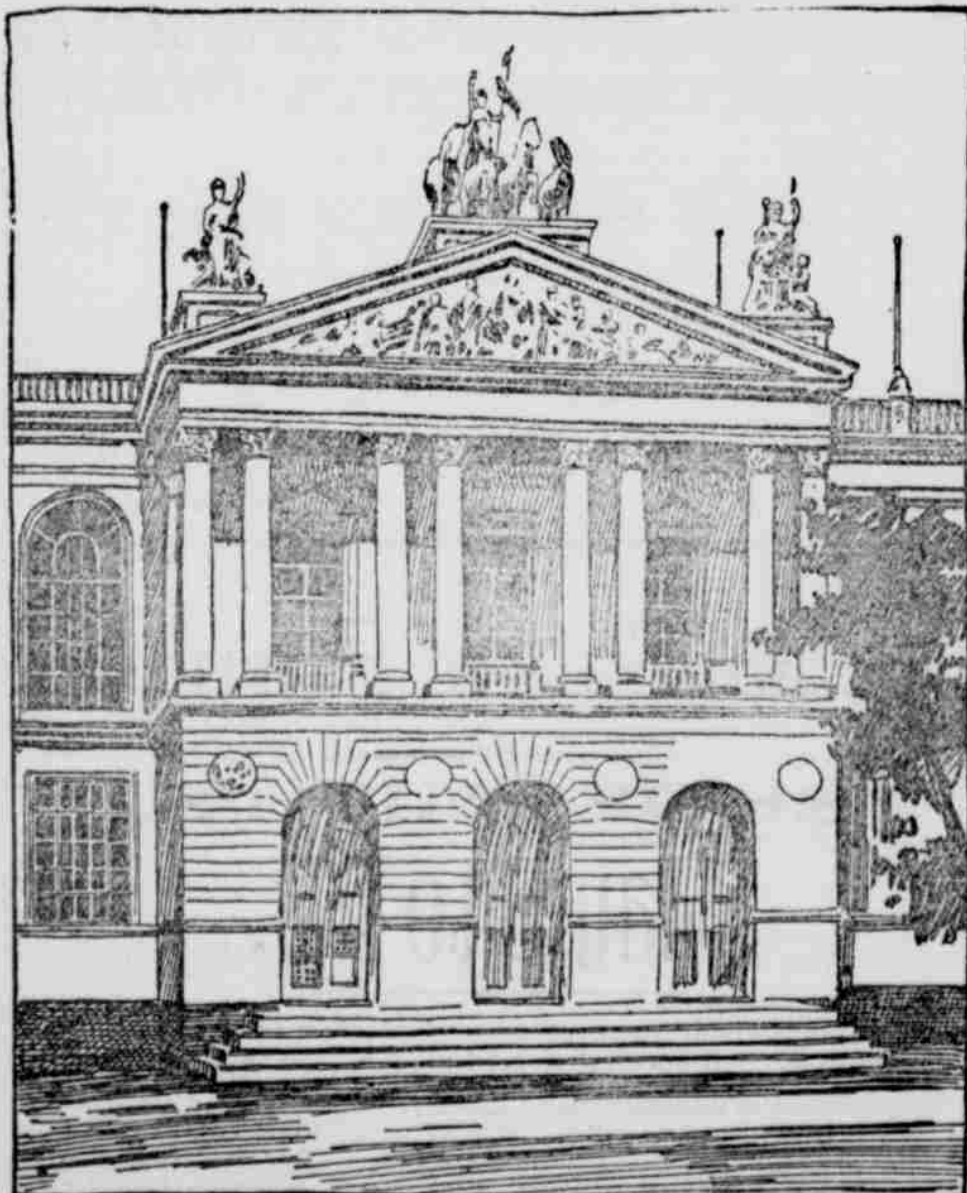
ises nothing like the battle royal which was seen at Cincinnati in 1876, when Blaine and Conkling faced each other on the platform as they had often faced each other on the floor of congress.

Never were more brilliant nominating speeches made. That of Ingersoll, in which he named the Plumed Knight of Maine, is counted among the political classics. It was at this convention that the Cameron forces were held so strongly together that when Indiana gave her vote to Hayes at the fifth ballot the stampede of delegates followed and the dark horse came under the wire.

The Republican convention of 1900 will be more apt to reproduce something of the scene at Chicago when in 1868 Grant was first nominated. The Grant convention was full of the enthusiasm that must inevitably associate with the name of the victorious general of a great war. There was no contest, and the spectacle was rather a mass meeting to celebrate the restoration of the Union and the end of the term of the almost impeached Johnson than a convention of a political party.

For hours the vast assembly did little but stand on its feet and cheer and sing patriotic songs. Old Jesse Grant, father of the general, stood near the front of the stage, the tears coursing down his cheeks, witnessing the glorification of his son.

Only once in the history of Republican conventions has that scene been equaled, and that was in Minneapolis in 1892 when more than 10,000 people cheered for a full half hour as they chanted, with a pretty woman stand-



ENTRANCE TO PHILADELPHIA AUDITORIUM.

convention purposes. These temporary structures have often been barnlike, ramshackle affairs, lacking ventilation, acoustic properties and all comfortable qualities. In them the delegates have sweated and anticipated sudden death from collapsed walls. It is almost wonderful that no serious accidents have ever marred any of the big conventions.

But the building in which Philadelphia will house the Republican delegates is said to be well fitted for the purpose and far more substantial than many structures formerly used for such purposes. It was built for the National

Each one will spend on an average \$20 in car fare, which, considering the round trip and the fact that they come from California, from Maine and from Texas, is conservative. There is an item of \$400,000 at once.

Suppose, in the three or four days that they remain in the convention city, they spend an average of \$10 each. There you have \$200,000 more.

Now, take account of the telegraph tolls on the columns of news dispatches sent from the convention to every section of the country. In 1896 it is estimated that the newspapers of the country paid for their convention

publican sergeant-at-arms of this year's convention and probably by the corresponding Democratic functionary also.

Arrangements have also to be made by the sergeant-at-arms with the hotels as to headquarters for the various delegations and with the railroads concerning rates of fare and the running of special trains. Cordial relations must be cultivated with the local police and fire departments, and there are almost numberless other matters of detail that the convention's business manager must see carried through to a successful finish.

The appointing of assistant sergeants-at-arms is by no means one of the least of his troubles. There are generally 150 of these at least, apportioned among the various states, and the demand for places on the staff of the convention's manager is extremely lively. Nominally he decides who shall serve, but actually his decisions are based upon the recommendations of the delegates. Each of these is almost sure to ask for more places than can be given, and the sergeant-at-arms sometimes has a hard time to avoid making enemies in rejecting those for whom places cannot be found.

Unlike the deputy sergeants-at-arms and the doorkeepers, the office help, messengers, watchmen and scrubwomen are paid for their services, but the sergeant-at-arms himself receives no direct pay. His expenses are borne by the committee, but he goes through all the work and worry of getting the convention preliminaries into shape and keeping the crowds in good order during its sessions for the honor there is in it and the wide acquaintance it will give him among the prominent men of his own party.

Because of these things the place is in great demand every four years, and

absorbed the Whig strength.

The first Republican convention was anomalous in American history. Its delegates were not chosen by any set rule, and no regard was paid to the number of votes to which a state was entitled. All the northern states were represented. John C. Fremont was nominated for president. An informal ballot was taken for vice president. It resulted in 259 for William L. Dayton of New Jersey, 110 for Abraham Lincoln of Illinois. Mr. Dayton was then unanimously nominated.

The selection of Fremont was due to his previous nomination by the seceding Know Nothings. The Republican platform denounced slavery and demanded that Kansas be admitted as a free state.

Perhaps the greatest surprise ever sprung on a Republican convention was the discovery of Lincoln. Up to within a few months of the convention it was a foregone conclusion that Seward would be the nominee. There was some talk of Lincoln for second place. Then the "Rail Splitter" was invited to go east and make an address to the New York Republicans.

Even before Seward made his announcement of the coming conflict Lincoln had declared in a speech that this nation could not exist half slave, half free.

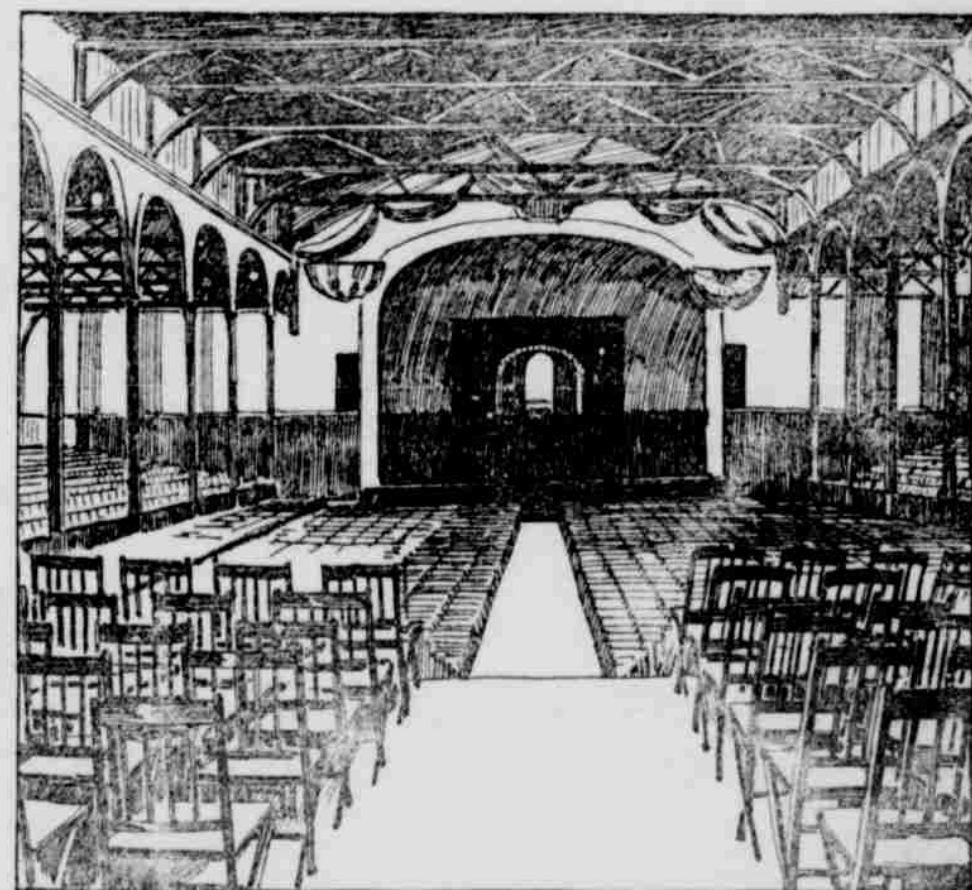
"I do not expect to see the Union dissolved," said he, "but I do expect that



PERRY S. HEATH.
[Chairman of committee on organization and literature.]

some of the liveliest fights in the history of the two national committees have been waged over the conflicting titles of various candidates.

The man who will act as sergeant-at-arms for the coming Philadelphia convention is Mr. George N. Wiswell of Milwaukee. He has acknowledged



INTERIOR OF THE CONVENTION HALL.

ing on a chair and beating time, that familiar slogan of—

Blaine, Blaine,
James G. Blaine!

And the delegates, after they had shouted themselves into an exhausted condition in repeating the name of Blaine, voted for Harrison when the time came.

This year there will be more than unusual interest in the contest for second place on the ticket. We are constantly told that the vice president is a mere figurehead and that the senate rostrum is the top shelf of political oblivion. Yet there is never a lack of aspirants for this discredited post. As a matter of fact, there are few men whose political ambitions are so lofty that they would scorn the vice presidency, so we may expect a lively scramble for the place.

There is also certain to be a lively interest in the building of the platform. No party was ever so wholly united that varying ideas as to party policy have been eliminated. There are always radicals and conservatives. So at Philadelphia there is bound to be much talk about the planks which go to make up the platform.

What will be the nature of the dramatic scene which will make this convention unlike all others? No one can tell. For this reason the country at large waits with interest at the turning of that leaf of the future on which we may read the story.