

## **Teddy Roosevelt Swooped Through Grayson County Like a Rock Star in 1905**

In 1905 on April 5th, the biggest star on earth was swooping around our nation like a 1970s rock star. That was the day that [President Teddy Roosevelt](#) visited Denison, and Sherman, Texas.

Thirty-five thousand people turned out to hear Teddy speak on the Sherman town square at the Grayson County Courthouse. Teddy and his presidential party arrived in horse-drawn carriages after a short stop in Dennison. In the southwest in 1905, 35,000 people certainly added up to a huge audience. The charge of anticipation began in the Katy rail yards when Teddy arrived in a special three-car train that crossed into Texas on the Red River Bridge. People climbed on rooftops and plastered themselves against every available window in surrounding buildings. The colored people assembled on the transfer platform of the freight depot.

Teddy received a four-by-three-foot wreath of flowers in the form of the Texas flag from the Denison school children while at the Katy depot. The flowers that made up this wreath consisted of lilacs, begonias, sweet alyssum, Dutch hyacinths, carnations, and roses arranged on a bed of smilax, lace ferns, and asparagus sprengeril. Teddy's train then departed for Sherman where his party transferred to horse-drawn carriages for the ride to the square.

A Texoma-area contingent of the Rough Riders on horseback led by U.S. Marshal Ben Colbert and ten wagons loaded with lush flowers preceded President Roosevelt's carriage procession in a six-abreast formation. The Grand Army (the Union Army) led by Dr. C. C. Haskell and Ex-Confederate soldiers led by Capt. John H. LeTellier formed a single-file marching line on each side of the presidential carriages and escorted them to the square. As the parade progressed, the marching band fell into line immediately in front of the Rough Riders.

The Kidd-Key student, white high school student, and colored student assemblies took their places on adjacent grounds and vacant lots. The local executive committee granted the press access in front of the podium where Teddy spoke, but requirements mandated that they wear a press badge. The electrifying excitement bolted through the presidential assembly and parade and spread through the crowd. I can almost feel the excitement of that day when Teddy Roosevelt came to town!



Courtesy: Sherman Museum, Sherman, Texas

### **Would 35,000 Texomans Attend a 15-Minute Performance Today?**

Reports claim that people came to hear Teddy's speech from all over southern Indian Territory and north Texas. Teddy's visit created a lifetime memory for those 35,000 people. The Sherman Democrat building burned down in later years, and the paper probably recorded his whole speech, but our local archive of it was lost in that fire. The president's host for his Texas tour, Colonel Cecil Lyon, chaired the Republican Committee that year. Teddy finally took to the podium amid colorful bunting and American flags.

"The president doffed his hat to the Confederate monument and began his speech with 'My fellow countrymen and fellow Americans. . .'" (2) Several reliable sources report that Teddy praised Texas as one of two or three greatest states in the Union. He also spoke about his own personal heritage from both the south and the north and said he was delighted with the national reunification of the United States.

And with a fifteen-minute speech behind him, Teddy's host whisked the presidential party off to Dallas where Teddy reported that he had just passed through the garden of the Lord through April fields of bluebonnets and paintbrushes. I sure wish I knew what all those people did after Teddy departed. I bet Grayson County celebrated into the early hours of the next day and business owners reaped rewards! I wonder if the police had their hands full along with the jail and what the socialites served at their celebratory dinner parties. I wish I had been there. I would cherish a memory like that too.

Soon after his Texas tour finalized, Teddy camped with Chief Quannah Parker on Comanche lands near Frederick, Oklahoma, where he killed a five-foot rattlesnake with his whip and witnessed famous "Catch-em-alive" Jack Abernathy literally catch wolves and coyotes single-handed. (2)\*



Courtesy: Sherman Museum, Sherman, Texas

### **A Copy of Teddy's Speech**

(This is not 15-minutes of copy, and I have not documented its accuracy)

[At Sherman, Texas, April 5, 1905:](#)

You can have no idea what a pleasure it is to me to be here again. If you are half as glad to have me as I am to be here we will call it square. It is nearly seven years ago that I came here to take part in raising the regiment, some of my comrades from which are here to escort me today.\* You who wore the blue and gray know how close the tie is that binds you to the men by whose side you have faced bullets, with whom you have lain in trenches, with whom you have known fatigue and hunger and thirst and danger. I know that in greeting all of you none of the rest of you will object to my saying that there is a peculiar pleasure to me in being greeted by the veterans who wore the blue or the gray in the great Civil War.

It was the greatest war of the century, and it left behind the most perfect peace of the century. Think of what it means to our country to have the President of the United States, a man with both Northern and Southern blood in his veins, come here and drive up between, as a guard of honor, on the one side of the Union, and the other the Confederate veterans.

I cannot thank you for all that your coming here argues. I want to say how deeply touched I am by the reception accorded me. Excepting only the Union and Confederate veterans, the people whom I have been most pleased to see are the school children and the college girls. I admire the men and women of Texas, and I am glad to see the children of the right quantity and quality.

I saw in one of the papers today the statement that they hoped I would go out of Texas thinking more of it. I do not know that that is possible, because I think so much of it already; but if I could have thought more of it I would have thought more within the last half hour, since coming within its limits.



Courtesy: Sherman Museum, Sherman, Texas

### **Why did Teddy visit Texomaland?**

#### **The Texas Historical Commission Marker 107 on the Grayson County Courthouse Square Text:**

One of the most festive events in Sherman's early history, [Theodore Roosevelt's 1905 appearance](#) here marked the first visit of a President of the United States to Grayson County. Traveling to San Antonio to attend a reunion of the "Rough Riders" . . . his special troops in the Spanish-American War...Roosevelt stopped first in Denison on that same day, April 5, and was there presented with a Texas-shaped floral piece from excited youngsters. His train proceeded then to Sherman, where a record crowd of 35,000 had come by buggy, horse, and special trains from as far as 175 miles to see him. Led by a unit of Rough Riders, Roosevelt and his party rode up the banner-decked streets in nine handsome carriages, passing between lines of Union and Confederate Civil War veterans. They arrived at the speaker's stand amid loud applause. Here (at this corner) he spoke for 15 minutes, praising Texas as "one of the two or three greatest states in the Union." He emphasized his own heritage from the South and North and his delight in national reunification. Within an hour Roosevelt left for Dallas, having provided for the people of this area one of the most memorable occasions in their lives.



This picture is called a [stereograph](#), and it is better viewed on its [website](#). When there, hover your cursor over it and you can see close-up expressions on the faces of the crowd. You can see that there were black and white people standing together, so maybe life was not as segregated as historical accounts lead me to believe.



Courtesy: Sherman Museum, Sherman, Texas

**Check out Elaine Bay's enlightening version of Teddy's visit from GenWeb\*\*:**

<http://txgenwebcounties.org/grayson/ANewLand/History/Roosevelt/Roosevelt.html>

\*Jack Abernathy and his sons make up a colorful historical account that I would love to write about, but Jack's family did not make history in Texomaland. Please Google "Catch-em-alive" Jack Abernathy.

**\*\*I want to thank Ms. Elaine Bay for showing me where to find even more Grayson County history in the Portal to Texas History and for permission to use her information.**

### **Sources**

Courtesy of the Sherman Museum: Copy of the Roosevelt Programme: April 5th, 1905

Sherman Democrat: Sunday, Feb. 25, (1979) Page 5

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