

Oldest Inhabitants Association and the Washingtonian



With regards of
By
Theodore W. Noyes

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ADDRESS

BY

THEODORE W. NOYES

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ON THE ASSOCIATION'S FORTY-FOURTH
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Oldest Inhabitants Association and the Washingtonian.

Address by President Theodore W. Noyes at the Association's Forty-Fourth Birthday Anniversary.

At the last anniversary meeting of the Association I stated that the needs of the Oldest Inhabitants, as an organization, were: (1) To secure from Congress legislation authorizing us to occupy jointly with the Veteran Firemen the old Union engine house, and, (2) to increase the Association's membership from eligible and worthy Washingtonians. Both of these needs have been met wholly or in part. The desired legislation concerning the use of the engine house has been secured, and sixty-four new members have been added to the rolls, a net increase, after deducting deaths, of forty-five. The Association now numbers 356 members. Analysis of the 334 applications which remain on file shows that fifty-six of this number are between 50 and 60 years of age, 129 between 60 and 70, 108 between 70 and 80, thirty-five between 80 and 90, and six between 90 and 100. Thus the bulk of the membership is between 60 and 80 years of age.

The Association is a representative and democratic organization, bringing together many occupations and conditions of men in Washington on the common plane of Washingtonianism.

I have to report no long record of works for the public welfare achieved during the year by the organization directly or through committees. The Association is not devoted to either civic or commercial development of the capital. It is a rival neither of the Chamber of Commerce nor the Board of Trade. The latter organizations deal primarily with the material Washington of the present and future, its buildings, streets and parks, its commerce, and its manufactures. The Oldest Inhabitants Association is concerned with the men of Washington, and primarily with the past. Its main function is reminiscent and preservative. It preserves the records, souvenirs, traditions and memories of Washington's past, and influences the city's present and future only as they are built upon the precedents of the past. It fosters the loyalty of the Washingtonian to Washington, the self-respect of the Washingtonian, and the affection and pride which he feels in his own and the Nation's city.

Washingtonianism.

The basic requirement of the Association is that identification with Washington which comes from thirty-five years' local residence of a man at least half a century old. While its strength is in reminiscence, not in action, its foundation and basic principle of Washingtonianism furnish one standard of public action, under which it may rally all its members.

It is naturally the organized champion and defender of the Washingtonian as a man, leaving to other organizations the material development of Washington as a city. It may appropriately feel that its characteristic and exclusive public function is the defense of the Washingtonian himself against all assailants, the advocate of all movements to elevate and dignify his status. And in this connection the Association might well create as its only public welfare committee a strong and representative committee on the status and rights of the Washingtonian.

The Oldest Inhabitants Association, thus founded solely on Washingtonianism, furnishes the Nation a sometimes much needed demonstration that such things as Washingtonians exist. It answers in part the query: "What is a Washingtonian?" which with the equally perplexing questions, "What is whisky?" and "What is a democrat?" has attracted public attention.

"What is a Washingtonian" as tested by eligibility to membership among the Oldest Inhabitants?

He is not necessarily a native of Washington. That foundation would be too narrow. There are too many forces reducing to a minimum the opportunities of local self-support and too many other disabilities which drive the Washington youth from his native city.

He does not necessarily abandon voting residence in the States. Hundreds of Washingtonians employed in the government service, thoroughly identified with the city from long residence here, have been able to retain voting and other State privileges elsewhere, and are welcomed, the other eligibility conditions being met, as members of the Oldest Inhabitants Association.

While there is no requirement that a member of the Association shall have legal residence nowhere else than in Washington, those who have lived here for thirty-five years will in very few instances have retained their outside residence; if retained, it is held only by a feeble grip; and their sons, for whose welfare and not their own the Oldest Inhabitants now take most anxious thought, will never have acquired it at all. Thus the Oldest Inhabitants Association, while not nominally

composed of Washingtonians claiming residence nowhere else, is substantially and in fact representative of this class of Washingtonians, which grows larger and larger every year, increasing not only in numbers but in resources and influence, and is destined finally perhaps to include all the people of the District.

Isolated Washingtonian.

What is this isolated Washingtonian claiming residence nowhere else? What are some of his characteristics as suggested by friend or foe?

He is among all Americans by far the largest contributor to the upbuilding of the National Capital—as donor of the city's site, and of lots sold to get funds to erect the original public buildings, and as taxpayer, local and national—yet in his financial relation to the Nation he is pronounced by the ignorant or malicious a greedy mendicant!

He is an American who is told that his only rights in his home city are those of petition and emigration, to supplicate or evacuate, to beg or get out; and if he does not or can not get out, and proceeds to petition, he is denounced by the ignorant and malicious as an impudent beggar!

He is one whose exclusive legislature, to whose tender mercies his interests are solely confided, in effect forbids to his sons the local means of self-support provided by the commercial and manufacturing industries of the ordinary American city, and then by the apportionment of offices law (of late extended and even more rigidly applied and enforced) practically shuts out the Washington youth from the classified service and in effect bars them from the only great industries which it permits to exist in the nation's city.

As a candidate either for certain national offices exercised in the nation's city which are in effect local offices, or for its purely local offices, which elsewhere are filled as a matter of course from the local community, he is coming more and more each year to be greeted with the derisive and humiliating announcement: "No Washingtonians need apply!"

He is the citizen of a State when burdens are imposed and not the citizen of a State or even of a Territory when privileges are conferred.

For example, the District has been pronounced a State (by the courts), under a treaty with France, a construction conferring privileges on aliens, but not a State under the Constitution, whose people can sue in the Federal courts. The District is a State (in the Constitution) when direct taxes are to be collected, but not a State (in the Constitution) when representatives are apportioned, though the Constitution

couples the two things. Public attention has recently been called to the fact that the Washingtonian is not the citizen of a State or even of a Territory in the distribution of educational appropriations under the Morrill acts.

Capital-Maker.

On the other hand, the isolated Washingtonian has the honor of being an effectively working, though silent, co-partner with the Nation in developing a National Capital of which every American is proud.

His municipal government, in the opinion of some of us, meets the spirit of the principle of no taxation without representation, and the converse principle of no representation without taxation, and in raising and disbursing taxes reflects the will of the taxpayers more completely than in any other large American city. Here Congress, representing the half-taxpayer, decides all tax and appropriation questions, after consulting with the representatives of the other taxpayers, to whom in the grant of the power to submit estimates it gives the initiative of suggestion in respect to appropriative legislation. Here the great majority of the taxpayers are back of every legislative decision concerning appropriations; in other large American cities, under a misapplication of the principle of government by unlimited popular suffrage, the organized nontaxpayers control, as a rule, the city's purse and spend as they please the money contributed by taxpayers.

While denied representation as Americans in the national legislature and electoral college, the Washingtonian is the most national American of all Americans, the only exclusive American owing no divided allegiance to State and Nation.

How many are there of the isolated Washingtonians thus briefly characterized? What should be their status and rights? Are they to grow in American privileges and national consideration until they become (except for national legislative control through Congress) a distinct American community, or are they to be destroyed as a community and scattered in citizenship among the States of the Union?

The next census should through appropriate questions determine definitely the number of isolated Washingtonians. The present tendency is for Washingtonians to lose State residence and become isolated in spite of the disabilities which attach to this status. When this local community is shown by the census to exceed the number of Americans represented by each member of the House there should follow either (1) recognition of a distinct American community entitled to all American rights consistent with the exclusive legislative control of the District by the Nation through Con-

gress, and including representation in Congress and the Electoral College, or else (2) the class of isolated Washingtonians should be emptied by law and the community dissolved. Under this alternative the municipal functions would be distributed among the Federal departments.

Legal Residence.

No District citizenship or legal residence therein will then be recognized. A citizen of a State who comes here in the public service or otherwise will retain automatically, by force of law, his legal residence in his State, and his children after him, though born in the District. Those who have no State residence elsewhere might appropriately, without leaving the District, become Marylanders, since citizens of Maryland were the original inhabitants of this portion of the ten miles square who voted for a Congress in which they were not represented, and, in theory, for all future Congresses to the end of time, as the exclusive legislature for all future Washingtonians. And when every inhabitant of Washington is the legal resident of some State, with rights and a legal domicile which he can not lose either for himself or his sons by living in Washington, provision might well be made for the exercise of his voting right in Washington itself, without requiring the expensive transportation of voters to polls half-way across or clear across the continent. Ballots might well be cast and collected here for counting in the States, just as votes of soldiers at the front in the civil war were collected and counted as if cast in elections in their respective States.

The Oldest Inhabitants Association naturally favors the preservation and development of the independent status of the isolated Washingtonian and not his elimination. It undoubtedly feels that it would be better for both Nation and capital that Washington, instead of becoming merely the national camping ground, the temporary abiding place of transient Americans, should be, though under exclusive national control through Congress, a distinct American community, with local citizens, local traditions, local self-respect, and local pride.

But whatever the actual solution may be, the problem must be solved of the status—political, judicial, industrial, material—of a populous and intelligent American community, living at the National Capital, but politically outside of the Nation; and this problem promises to become in the not remote future, with the notable growth of the class of isolated Washingtonians, one of the most important and urgent which will confront the President, Congress, and the American people.

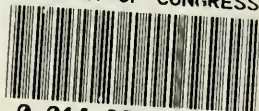
Association's Influence.

The Oldest Inhabitants Association increasing steadily in numbers and influence, can help to prepare for this day, and for the wisest and fairest solution of the problem. For several reasons the Oldest Inhabitants Association may appropriately and without presumption consider the status and rights of the Washingtonian. Its labors will be largely unselfish and disinterested. In working to increase the American rights of the Washingtonian its members will not be seeking benefits so much for themselves as for their sons and the adopted Washingtonians who come after them. The representatives of the Oldest Inhabitants will labor for what concerns especially the youngest inhabitants, and the Association thus links together old and young. An Oldest Inhabitants Association committee on the status of the Washingtonian would approach its task with the knowledge of and sympathy with Washington which come from more than thirty-five years of local residence and with the conservatism of judgment which may be expected from men averaging over sixty years of age.

The Oldest Inhabitants Association based solely on Washingtonianism, would have the advantage of concentration and singleness of purpose in considering the status of the Washingtonian. It would not be embarrassed as other organizations might be by complexity of purposes and motives. It is not seeking appropriations from Congress or appointments from the President. It is not devoting all its energies to the promotion of the material capital of the future, and it may therefore without embarrassment and with good effect seek consideration for the men of Washington.

In the Association's campaign of 1910 to enlarge its membership and swell the class of isolated Washingtonians the interests of Washington and of the Association are the same. The long identification with Washington on which the Oldest Inhabitants organization is based is the most essential factor in strong, influential and loyal local citizenship. As fast as the city fills with men who have been long resident in it as home owners, whose property and sentimental interests are both identified with it, who loyally work for it under the impulse of pride and affection, so fast will the city wholesomely develop. Whatever tends to hold Washingtonians to Washington, to cause the city's young inhabitants to develop in due course into old inhabitants, not only swells the membership list of the Association, but strengthens and builds up Washington the city.

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