

**South Christian's Day
in The Sun**

**A Vice-President From
Christian County**

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"South Christian's Day In the Sun" The Vice-President from Christian County

Two days ago the electorate in this nation journeyed to the poles in order to exercise a freedom of choice - our political leadership for the next four years. Tons of paper, hours of radio and television time, and endless conversations over issues were produced to influence public opinion. However, remembering a cardinal rule of this society to refrain from the discussion of current politics, - this speaker chooses to reflect on another day and time - a century ago, when a native of Christian County, Kentucky, was elected Vice-President of the United States.

Calling to mind the theory of history held by this historian and promoted by another Athenaeum member, W.H.O.P. News Director Jim Love, "that anything important in the history of the world has a connection with Hopkinsville and Christian County," then it is only natural that this community at some point in time would have shared in the spotlight of the national political arena.

Several candidates for what some call the "ticket to obscurity" have brought their campaigning to this community.

Native Kentuckian John C. Breckinridge, who at 36 became the youngest Vice-President and served under President James Buchanan campaigned here in October, 1860, while running for President in the scrambled election of that year as the nominee of the Southern Democratic Party.

Theodore Roosevelt made a campaign appearance here in October, 1900, as the Republican candidate for vice - president on the slate with President William McKinley. His thirty minute speech at Union Tabernacle on West Seventh Street was dubbed "far to short" by local admirers of the "Rough Rider."

Charles W. Fairbanks, who served as vice-president in Roosevelt's full term (1905-1909), campaigned here in October, 1916, then running for vice-president with Charles Evans Hughes.

Four years later Franklin D. Roosevelt, running on the ticket with James Cox against Harding and Coolidge, spoke from the band stand in Virginia Park while Mrs. "F.D.R." was served breakfast at the Dixie Cafe on Ninth Street.

Charles H. Curtis, running for his second term as vice-president with Herbert Hoover, made a campaign speech at Union Tabernacle in September, 1932.

"The Veep," Alben W. Barkley, of Paducah, made many political appearances here, the last one in October, 1954, but none while serving as vice-president under Harry Truman. Barkley and the subject of this paper shared mutual ancestry here in the county. Barkley's great great grandmother was a sister of Stevenson's grandfather.

Vice-President Spiro Agnew visited Fort Campbell upon the return of the 101st Airborne Division from Viet Nam in 1972.

Then Vice-President George Bush came to Oak Grove in 1988 when he was campaigning for President and finally, Vice-President Dan Quayle campaigned here in Hopkinsville last Sunday, the first incumbent vice-president to appear locally in sixty years.

All of these celebrity appearances pale in light of the *HOPKINSVILLE KENTUCKIAN* headline - "A Great Day," when Adlai Ewing Stevenson returned to his birthplace to campaign for the vice-presidency, September 2, 1892.

The first Stevenson in America, William 1725-1809, arrived in Pennsylvania from Ulster in northern Ireland in 1748. He married Mary McLelland and settled in Washington County, Pennsylvania. In 1763, they moved to what is now Statesville, Iredell County, North Carolina. A Presbyterian convert, his oratory and short stature led to his becoming widely known as "Little Gabriel."

James Stevenson, 1767-1850, the fifth of William's twelve children, married Nancy Brevard, daughter of Colonel Hugh Brevard, a veteran of the American Revolution.

James and Nancy Stevenson in the company of their relatives and fellow Presbyterian neighbors in Iredell County, North Carolina, the Moss, McKenzie, Sherrill, McCormick, and Ewing families, crossed the Cumberland Mountains and settled in South

Christian County, Kentucky, about 1815. These families bought land and established farms in the present neighborhoods of Beverly, Herndon, and Bennettstown. A church and graveyard were established by this group south of Beverly on the Palmyra Road at a place called Sinking Springs - so named for a spring located in the bottom of a large sink hole. The church was moved to Blue Water, north of Herndon about 1830, then to LaFayette in 1831. In 1883 the congregation moved to Bennettstown, where it was named McKenzie Kirk, in honor of Judge William Washington McKenzie, an elder in the church.

John Turner Stevenson, 1808-1857, the sixth of nine children of James and Nancy Stevenson, and father of the future vice-president, married Eliza Ann Ewing, 1809-1900, a daughter of Adlai Osborne Ewing 1777 - 1820, and Sophia Gillespie Wallis Ewing 1786 - 1848, in Christian County on April 26, 1832. Their marriage license, bearing date of April 23, is recorded in the Courthouse here. James Stevenson and the Ewing couple, grandparents of the vice-president, are buried in the Presbyterian graveyard located south of Beverly.

Adlai Ewing Stevenson I, was born October 23, 1835, on a farm located about one mile southwest of Herndon on what is now the Lonnie Walker Highway, connecting Herndon with Binns Mill. The log constructed and weatherboard covered structure was torn down about 1900. The following story was told years later on the future vice-president. "The youth cared little for farming, and he didn't like to plow one bit, but he did love to read. So young Adlai would take a book with him when plowing the corn, and would stop under a shade tree and read. To stop the practice, Adlai's father placed a bell around the mule's neck, and when the bell failed to ring he would know that his son was loafing on the job again. Young Adlai got around the job again. He continued to stop and read under his favorite shade tree, but now he tied the plow line to his toe in order to ring the bell and fool his father." The formal education for this little red headed boy began at the age of five, under Dr. Thomas F. Worrell, a teacher and country physician, in this South Christian community.

When Stevenson was sixteen, his father lost the dark-fired tobacco crop to frost (August, 1852). Freeing their few slaves, the family moved to Bloomington, Illinois, where they operated a sawmill and farmed. Adlai worked with his father and taught country school to earn money for college where he enrolled at Illinois Wesleyan University.

Returning to Kentucky at the age of 21, he enrolled in Centre College, Danville, a citadel of Presbyterianism presided over by the Reverend Lewis W. Green. Adlai promptly fell in love with his daughter Letitia and after a long courtship, they married on December 20, 1866 in Chenoa, Illinois. Their wedding trip took them home to Kentucky to visit many friends and relatives. They had four children: Louis Green 1868-1928, the father of Adlai Ewing Stevenson II, 1900-1965, Democratic Presidential candidate, 1952 and 1956, Mary Elizabeth 1872-1895, Julia Scott born 1874, and Letitia Ewing born 1876.

Resolving to devote his life to the study and practice of law, Adlai began to read law in the office of Williams and Packard, later Williams and Burr. In 1858, at the age of twenty-three, he was admitted to the bar, beginning practice in Metamora, Woodford County, Illinois. Here he remained for ten years, holding office as Prosecuting Attorney twice during that period. From 1861 to 1865 he held the position of Master in Chancery. In 1864, he was named as a presidential elector from his district in the Lincoln - McClelland campaign and that same year he was elected District Attorney for a four year term.

In 1869 Adlai moved to Bloomington and formed a law partnership with his cousin and old college classmate James Ewing. Adlai was a warm, generous, outgoing, buoyant personality, a great story teller, and he was well liked even by political opponents. The family became active members of the Presbyterian Church where he would serve as an elder.

Stevenson was an extra ordinarily faithful Democrat. He campaigned for Stephen A. Douglas against Abraham Lincoln in the Illinois Senatorial race in 1858 and again in the Presidential race in 1860. The six foot tall young Democrat heard some of the debates including the first one held at Ottawa.

In his autobiography, "Something of the Men I Have Know," Stevenson relates several Lincoln stories.

"One of these was told to Stevenson by John B. Henderson, who had been a Union Senator from Missouri and supporter of Lincoln during the Civil War. In the dark days of 1862 Lincoln was constantly importuned by abolitionists to issue a proclamation of emancipation. Three of these zealots were especially persistent, visiting the President's office frequently to plead the case for instant emancipation.

Henderson was with Lincoln in the White House on an afternoon when the President looked out the window and saw the three gadflies approaching again. Lincoln was reminded of his brief and rustic school days, "where our only reading book was the Bible. One day we were standing up reading the account of the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. A little tow-headed fellow who stood beside me had the verse with the unpronounceable names; he mangled up Shadrach and Meshach woefully, and finally went all to pieces on Abednego. Smarting under the blows which, in accordance with the old-time custom, promptly followed his delinquency, the little fellow sobbed aloud. The reading, however, went round, each boy in the class reading his verse in turn. The sobbing at length ceased, and the tow-headed boy gazed intently upon the verses ahead.

"Suddenly he gave a pitiful yell, at which the schoolmaster demanded: "What's the matter with you now?" "Look there," said the boy, pointing to the next verse, 'there comes them same damn three fellows again!"

In 1874 Stevenson ran for the 44th Congress in a strong Republican district. Grant was President, and his party controlled the legislature by large majorities and they had built walls of bitter emotion. Despite the odds, Stevenson won. He was renominated for a seat in the House in 1876, but lost by 250 votes. He won again in 1878, to serve in the 46th congress but personal popularity and constant speaking appearances could not sustain a congressional career in such a staunchly Republican territory. He lost the race in 1880 by 200 votes; and again in 1882 by 350 votes.

When Grover Cleveland won the Presidency in 1884, the first Democrat to do so since 1857, he appointed the Bloomington Democrat First Assistant Postmaster General and he was referred to as "General" from that time on.

The Republicans, having been in power so long, had naturally loaded the Post Office Department with virtuous members of their party. To Stevenson was assigned the task of righting this wrong. He did so according to one authority, "as painlessly as anyone could have done it," replacing as many as 40,000 deserving Republican Post Masters with 40,000 deserving Democrats. The ensuing resentment in the Grand Old Party was more than balanced by the satisfaction experienced on the other side. For this he gained both fame and notoriety, depending on the political viewpoint and was nicknamed "The Headsman." When Cleveland then appointed Stevenson to a federal judgeship, revengeful

Republicans blocked it! Back home in Bloomington, Stevenson took an active interest in promoting the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

In the summer of 1892, Democrats assembled in Chicago for their national convention. The nomination front runner, former President Grover Cleveland of New York was mildly challenged by Tammany Hall in their support for David B. Hill, former Governor and now Senator from The Empire State. However, Cleveland, the favorite, was nominated on the first ballot. Stevenson headed the Illinois delegation to the convention and helped to promote the nomination of Cleveland.

For past loyal service and to appease the Silverites, whose suggestion for free silver was vetoed in the convention, the party leaders picked Adlai E. Stevenson of Illinois. On June 23 Congressman Worthington of Illinois addressed the convention with the following nomination speech: "Mr. Chairman and Fellow-Delegates: Illinois has presented no Presidential candidate to this convention. It has within its borders more than one favorite son whom it would have delighted to honor, and who is worthy of all the political honors that could be conferred upon him. But here in this great City of Chicago, in this great commonwealth of Illinois, bordering upon the lake and the Mississippi, in the center of this great Republic of the Democracy, catching the vibrations of the ground swell that came from the South and the East and the West, we put aside our favorite sons, for the time buried our State pride, and with Texas, Connecticut, and California, with 48 votes shouted the name of Grover Cleveland.

"But for the Vice-Presidency, for the second highest place in the gift of the people, it has a candidate so fully equipped by nature and education that it feels that it would be a political fault to fail to urge his name for nomination before you. I stand here, then, gentlemen, to name as a candidate for that position a man who is known by every woman and child and voter that ever licked a postage stamp in any village or hamlet of the land.

"He is big-bodied, big-hearted, big-brained man; a man of commanding presence, of dignified mien; a man whose courtesy in his every-day manners is rarely equaled and never excelled; a man who in the administration of his duties in the last Democratic administration was the beau-ideal of an honest, honorable, useful, and efficient Democratic office-holder, like his great leader who bears your banner.

"He believes that a 'public office is a public trust,' but he believes, also, that the Democrats are the best trustees of this public trust. Nor can the pride of office make him proud or haughty. I appeal to every Senator and Congressman who is here if ever he found the haughtiness of office, the chilling indifference of a little brief authority, in the atmosphere of the room of the Assistant Postmaster-General during Cleveland's administration.

"Gentlemen, we have nailed our banner to the mast. A Democrat never surrenders. We propose to make true what our Republican friends say of us-that we do our quarreling before the convention, and our fighting against our enemies afterward. We believe that every Democrat will put on his armor. We of the West have been making a magnificent campaign of late years. We have been educating the people, and the proud results are seen in Boyd of Nebraska, Boies of Iowa, and Peck of Wisconsin.

"They are seen in that grand old man who represents Illinois in the United States Senate; they are seen in the reduction of the Republican majority from 60,000 to 13,000 in Illinois; they are seen in the election of a Democratic Treasurer and Superintendent of Public Instruction in this State. We propose in this campaign to attack the last citadel. We have a governor that we are going to elect.

"Will you help us give the twenty-four electoral votes to Grover Cleveland? If you will vote for the man whose name I now present, a man who does not have to get a certificate from a labor organization to prove that he is a friend of the people, a man that we all love-give us Adlai E. Stevenson of Illinois."

Both major party platforms contained many words but few ideas. The Republicans recounted the many blessings from the past four years of the Harrison administration and the Democrats condemned Republican protection as a fraud, demanded a tariff for revenue only, and made a pledge for honest government.

"Cleveland's running mate, proved to be a skillful campaigner, especially in the Northwest. The big issue there was whether the majestic mountain in Washington should be called Rainier or Tacoma and people wanted to know what he thought about it. He solved the problem neatly. In every speech he made from the rear platform of his train he devoted his peroration to discussing the beauty of the mountain and then concluded: "This controversy must be settled, and settled right by the national government. I pledge myself

here and now that if elected I will not rest until this glorious mountain is properly named. . . ." At this point he would pull a secret cord to notify the engineer and his remaining words were always drowned out by the scream of whistles and blast of steam as the train moved out of the station."

The gale winds of that campaign a century ago blew from neither major political party, but from discontented farmers. In the South and West agrarians suffered from high mortgages and foreclosures, freight rate abuses of the railroad companies, and the corrupt and brutal force of big business and its control of government.

These forces formed a third choice - the People's or Populist Party. This group nominated a Union veteran, James B. Weaver of Iowa. They called for free and unlimited coinage of silver and gold, a graduated income tax, establishment of postal savings banks, to nationalize the railroads, public ownership of the telephone and telegraph, a secret - ballot election system, pensions for Union veterans, an eight hour work law, a single presidential term, and the popular election of U.S. Senators.

The campaign got under way. It was a clean, dull, listless event, devoid of personal issues. Dull - that is - except in Christian County - September 2.

The first news announcement that the Democratic Vice-Presidential candidate would make a campaign visit and reunion among his kin in South Christian County came in a Kentucky New Era interview with former local U.S. Congressman James A. "Quinnine Jim" McKenzie on July 2. McKenzie, returning from a visit with the candidate at his home in Bloomington, indicated that "he will visit his native Christian County during the campaign." "I would like to see a grand ratification at Bennettstown, the capital of the Democratic principality of Flat Lick, where Adlai Stevenson was born, McKenzie stated." He also refereed to his cousin as "the bare-footed boy of Flat Lick."

Both of the local papers, the KENTUCKY NEW ERA and the HOPKINSVILLE KENTUCKIAN, provided thorough coverage of the events.

Ten days prior to the big day the announcement was made that the illustrious county native, General Stevenson, would return for a political rally. Committees were formed. The first, one on finance, consisted of prominent Democrats from each voting precinct

throughout the southern part of the county. Through solicited contributions money was raised to meet expenses incurred by the barbecue and political rally.

The Herndon Reception Committee consisted of the General Director, J.R. Caudle, the Barbecue preparation supervisor, Captain Sam R. White, both of Julien, the Master of Ceremonies Esquire J.T. Coleman, T.L. Moss, and J.E. Stevenson, the last three of Bennettstown.

Hopkinsville, not to be out done by Herndon, had a reception committee of its own. It included Kentucky New Era owner, attorney Hunter Wood, chairman, County Judge Thomas L. Morrow, Councilman Frank W. Dabney, Sheriff W.M. West, City Collector Samuel G. Buckner, Major John Phelps and Charles M. Meacham, chairman of the Christian County Democratic Committee.

The Stevenson party reached Hopkinsville by train at 5 a.m. from Vincennes. He was met at the train by the Hopkinsville Reception Committee and escorted to the residence of Hunter Wood, located on East Seventh Street on the current site of Haydon-Henderson-Moorefield Lumber Company. There he slept for a while and ate breakfast.

At 9:30 he was driven to the Ohio Valley Railroad (later the I.C. R.R.) Depot, located at Ninth and Water (later Bethel) Streets where a special train of six coaches was waiting for the distinguished guest. The trip to Herndon was made over the Ohio Valley Railroad to Gracey and along the C&P Branch of the L&N Railroad, now highway #117, to Herndon.

Four hundred people were in the crowded coaches when the train left Hopkinsville and an additional 200 joined the group along the way. The run was made without incident though the slow time made - eight miles an hour - is still a mystery to everyone but the railroad people.

"There is little wonder that the guest of honor and the train he was riding was late when one considers the size of the crowd, the short length of trains in those days, and the number of trains traversing the lightly constructed C&P branch to a station with no turning facilities and only one siding. In addition to the L&N's two regularly scheduled trains that morning the branch handled either three or four specials, each of which would have had to go back to another siding in order to clear the line."

Arriving at the Herndon depot at 12:05, General Stevenson accompanied by his brother, William W. Stevenson, and the escort were taken in carriages to the home of Mr. & Mrs J.T. Coleman, located north of Bennettstown, and "given an opportunity to dust up before going to the grounds." It must have been quite a busy day for Mrs. Coleman as she gave birth to twins that evening.

At Herndon a crowd estimated at from seven to ten thousand people had assembled. "The people had come from every direction and it was almost impossible to get about for the vehicles. The rail line was blocked by 26 coaches." Special trains had come from Clarksville, Paducah, and Henderson. "In every conceivable manner they had come. Every vehicle known to modern times had been pressed into service. On the tracks stood long lines of railroad coaches luxuriously furnished and gorgeously finished, seemingly the very triumph of comfort in traveling; in the edge of the woods there was the old mule hitched to the paintless spring wagon of a former generation. The tried and tested yeomanry of Kentucky Democracy was there in legions; the old Volunteer State sent streamer bearing supporters; there were Hoosiers by the hundred; suckers by the score; and there were pickpockets aplenty. The journalists were there galore to flash over the wires north, south, east and west, the story of how Kentucky welcomed her distinguished son." Before the arrival of General Stevenson the throng had been entertained with a rousing speech by "Little Joe" Washington, Congressman from the Hermitage District.

A special table had been reserved for the visiting party, but Mr. Stevenson never reached it to eat. He was headed off by relatives who took him to a private picnic spread upon the ground, where he satisfied his hunger between the handshakes of delighted relatives and friends. There were 115 carcasses barbecued and six of those were left untouched. Everybody had enough to eat and the meat was cooked in Captian Sam White's very best style. "There was not only plenty to eat, but plenty of ice water, plenty of shade, plenty of oratory and and plenty of congenial company. Seats were the only thing scarce and several of the plank seats collapsed from the surging mass of humanity. No one was hurt.

Dinner was over by 1:30. The candidate was escorted to the speaker's stand by Esquire Coleman, the Master of Ceremonies there to be welcomed by his 89 year old uncle, Judge Washington McKenzie. Judge McKenzie, the father of former Congressman

"Quinnine Jim" McKenzie, had voted the Democratic ticket every election since Jackson in 1828.

"Scarcely had his commanding figure appeared upon the platform when cheers went up which echoed again and again among his native hills." It was fully five minutes before quiet was restored and then W.R. Howell, a local attorney, in a graceful speech presented the next Vice-President of the United States. This was the signal of another burst of applause."

General Stevenson at the outset of his able address spoke in eloquent and feeling terms of the sentiments inspired by the occasion and its surroundings. He then launched into an able and analytical discussion of the chief issues of the pending campaign. speaking for an hour and a half. At the conclusion of the address, General Stevenson was greeted with prolonged cheers."

Hon. W.T. Ellis responded in a brief speech in which he promised a victory for the Democrats in November. Hon. James A. McKenzie, after repeated calls, addressed the crowd in his characteristic manner. His address was in his happiest vein, replete with flights of eloquence, keen satire, wit, learning, and logic. His speech was pronounced by men of eminence a gem of campaign oratory. He referred to his cousin as the "bare-footed boy of Flat Lick."

Hon. W.J. Stone, representative of the First Congressional District, spoke for thirty minutes. Hon. Rufus K. Rhodes, a young journalist of Alabama, made a very interesting talk. The orations were concluded about 4:30.

General Stevenson was afforded a fine reception that evening at the residence of Mr. & Mrs. T. L. Moss, west of Bennettstown. A story is related concerning the dinner given at the Moss home that night. As the dishes were being removed from the table the old family cook, Aunt Mariah Gee commented to Mrs. Moss, a cousin of the candidate, "I don't know who them gentlemen wuz, but they ain't no skimmed milk."

After the night spent with relatives at Bennettstown, he was brought to Hopkinsville by buggy up Palmyra, (now LaFayette) Road where he took the 9:57 train for Illinois.

The Cleveland - Stevenson ticket won by a plurality of 372,736 out of a total vote of 11,700,000 cast. They carried Illinois by 26, 000 and Kentucky by 40, 000 votes. Christian County, with a strong Republican majority, failed to support her native son. The county vote was 2,868 for Harrison to 2, 324 for the Democrats.

The Stevenson years in Washington demonstrated how important Letitia was to her husband's career. She was a keen observer and a good judge of people, and a charming hostess. She worked hard to establish the Daughters of the American Revolution and served four terms as President General, succeeding Mrs. Benjamin Harrison. She was also an early leader in the National Congress of Parents and Teachers.

Letitia's Washington friendship with Mrs. Phoebe Appearson Hearst of California, wealthy widow of Senator George R. Hearst, had far-reaching consequences. Her son, William Randolph, turned the wealth his father had made in western copper and gold mines to the building of a newspaper empire. The Stevenson son, Lewis, later worked for both mother and son, as a result of which California would become the birth place of the future governor of Illinois the presidential candidate, and the U.N. Ambassador.

In 1900 Stevenson was again nominated for Vice-President, this time with William Jennings Bryan. They lost decisively by 900,000 votes nationally. The ticket lost Illinois by 94,000 votes, but carried Kentucky by 8,000 ballots. Again Christian County went Republican, 4,423 to 3, 264.

In 1897 he was sent to Europe by President William McKinley as a member of the commission which sought in vain to encourage international bimetallism.

It was a measure of Stevenson's intellect, wit and wisdom, that his party would nominate him to run for the governorship of Illinois in 1908, when he was well into his seventies. He lost by 28,000 votes, to the Republican candidate Charles S. Denneen, a great achievement considering his age and the density of the Republicans in Illinois.

Adlai E. Stevenson I retired from public life to enjoy well - won prestige in Bloomington. Following the long illness and death of his wife on December 25, 1913, Mr. Stevenson suffered a decline in his health. He was taken to a hospital in Chicago where he died on June 14, 1914. Their modest two-story brick home, facing Franklin

Park in Bloomington at 901 North McLean was the scene of a large gathering of sorrowing relatives, friends and supporters.

The former Vice-President's body was moved by train back to Bloomington where his funeral was conducted at the Second Presbyterian Church on Tuesday afternoon, June 16. Services were conducted by his son-in-law, Rev. Martin D. Harden, of Chicago. Vice-President Thomas R. Marshall, of Indiana, came from Washington to attend the funeral. Burial followed in Evergreen Cemetery, Bloomington. He left an estate of \$100,000, equally divided among his three children.

The Stevensons epitomized one of the mainstreams of migration which built America. They moved west from North Carolina through Kentucky to Illinois, contributed greatly to American home, religious and political life and left their mark on the annals of this nation - but for Christian County residents no day was ever more joyously celebrated and remembered than September 2, 1892, South Christian's Day in the Sun.