
Young Ralph Plumb Reacts to 1896 Democratic Convention

Ralph Plumb (1881–1976) was a Wisconsin native who as a teenager attended the 1896 Democratic Convention in Chicago, Illinois. Plumb later joined the Republican Party and became active in Wisconsin politics. He held the position of alderman for five years in his hometown of Manitowoc and served on the Board of Curators for the Manitowoc County Historical Society. Plumb also wrote several books on politics and the history of Wisconsin. – Lindsay Simonsen

Source: Ralph G. Plumb Papers, Green Bay Area Research Center

Chicago July 8 1896

Dear Mama and [Papa] –

I couldn[']t begin to tell what I have se[e]n today. I started off with Archie (a cousin) this morning and [bade] him good bye on State St. Then I went to the Palmer House and saw Mr[.] Hamilton (Mr[.] Henry P Hamilton o[f] Two Rivers, a delegate). He ga[v]e me a ticket for today bu[t] told me to bring it back tonight because L.J. Na[sh] and his brother J.E. Hamilto[n] were coming down. This I did. There was an awful crowd at the Palm[er] house which is the big headquarters. I went into lots of the state headquarter rooms. At 10 o[']clock I arrived at the convention hall. You ought to have heard the magni[ff]icent band play before the convention opened. It was grand. One by one the delegates filed in ? till at 11[:]30 the convention [w]as called to order by Senator Daniel. I never saw such a crowd of people congregated under one roof before. There must have been 10,000 or 12,000 people as the seatin[g] capacity of the Coliseum is 15,000 and it was nearly full. We heard lots of speeches by big men. All of them were silverites. They wouldn[']t allow[]a gold man to[]address the convention. Oh how those silverites did take down the East. That made the Easterners mad and a Tammany man sitting near me said "What can they do without New York[?]" I cheere[d] for[]Boies, for Bland and for Hill. It didn[']t make any difference to me. [T]he Democrats will get beat[]at any rate. I pitied the gold men though. Tell grandpa that among the big men I saw were[]Gov. Daniel of Vir[gi]nia, Ex Gove Hogg of Texas, Gov. Culbertson of Texas[,] Gov. Altgeld of Illinois, R. P. Flower of New York and Blackburn of Kentucky. Altgeld and Blackburn made stirring silver speeches[.] Some cheere[d] the former [and] some hissed him. [A]t two o[']clock the c[on]vention adjourned till 5 o[']clock. I returned to the Palmer House[,] gave up my ticket and stayed around a[]little hearing the discussions which different men were having on the money question. Two men would get to talking and a crowd[]would soon surroun[d] them. I haven[']t told half what I have seen today. It would fill a book. I would like to go to the convention tomorrow but I don[']t see how I can. Read today's conv[en]tion news[]and think how I have seen and heard what has gone on. With love I must close.

Yours,
Ralph

P S This was written hurriedly.

[This text was created by Lindsay Simonsen as part of the "Documenting Wisconsin History" project, supervised by Professor David Voelker at the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay. This project had support from UWGB's Research Council.]



This electronic text is © 2006 David J. Voelker. Permission is granted to reproduce this text freely for educational, non-commercial purposes only. All users must retain this notice and cite <http://www.historytools.org>.