

John Quincy Adams in Buffalo 1843

While visiting Niagara Falls in July of 1843, John Quincy Adams accepted an invitation given by a Buffalo delegation to visit their city, which he did. The citizens met him in Court House Park (now Lafayette Square) and the former president gave a short speech. Adams then returned in October for a brief stop in Buffalo while on his way West to lay the cornerstone for the Cincinnati Astronomical Society observatory.

John Quincy Adams

The life of John Quincy Adams in the public sphere is as impressive as any American individual in history. The son of the second President, J. Q. Adams served as a diplomat to Prussia, Russia and Great Britain. He was the main American negotiator for the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812. He served as a U. S. Senator and later, as Secretary of State in the administration of James Monroe. In that latter role, he is credited for being the main author of the Monroe Doctrine. And in what would have been for most Americans the high point of their life, Adams was the 6th President of the United States from 1825 to 1829. However, this was not the end of his public service. There was one more chapter to be acted out.

Congressman Adams (1831 – 1848)

Defeated and crushed after his 1828 presidential re-election bid, Adams traveled home to Massachusetts for what he considered a retirement from the political sphere. In 1830, the Plymouth District of Massachusetts elected him to Congress in the House of Representatives. Adams disagreed with those that felt the office was beneath that for a former president. “No person can be degraded by serving the people as a Representative of Congress.”

On December 5, 1831, John Quincy Adams, at 64 years of age, was the oldest freshman Congressman reporting to the 22nd Congress. Taking seat no. 203 in the House, he began the final chapter of his long and illustrious career; reaching levels of popularity and fame that he never imagined. Adams clashed in Congress to uphold the First Amendment right to petition by fighting against the “Gag Rule”, which shut down all congressional petitions against slavery. According to author Joseph Wheelan, he used his accumulated political knowledge “to torment the slave power during the 1830’s and 1840’s, to condemn the government’s cruel removal of eastern Indian tribes, to uphold the right of women to participate in the political process, and to argue against the war of aggression against Mexico.” And to top it off, Adams was the final lawyer to successfully represent the Amistad captives in the United States Supreme Court. “Adams became Congress’s conscience—a prickly, sarcastic, and highly articulate voice of reason.” It was this 17-year period where he became a folk hero to those in the North (“Old Man Eloquent”) and a fiercely demented old man deserving of hanging (or worse) to the slaveholding South.

It was with this reputation, not only as a former president, but as a greatly admired individual who is protecting the country from the abuses of the slave power, that John Quincy Adams came to Buffalo in July of 1843.



Congressman Adams on Vacation July 1843
Buffalo Commercial Advertiser, July 19, 1843

Ex-President Adams – We learn today from the Glen Falls Clarion that the Ex-President passed through that village on Thursday last on his way to Lake George, Montreal and Quebec. Notwithstanding his intention to travel incog. the news of his coming had preceded him, and a large number of citizens assembled to meet him on his arrival.

Mr. Adams may or may not have attempted to be incognito on this trip, but he most likely wished it so. He often expressed in his diary how awkward it was for him to be in front of a crowd:

I believe there is not a man in the world more unfit for self-exhibition at public meetings and banquet dinners— When I go to them it is with feelings of a culprit to punishment than of a victor to triumph

I have got into a great crowd of Strangers; a position always painful to me, and for which from a perpetual want of presence of mind, I am not fitted

On Thursday, July 6, 1843, he began his vacation, leaving his home in Quincy, Massachusetts. In Boston, he took his seat on the Western Railroad and began a journey through the Northeast and Canada.

The Season is delightful. The face of the Country like the garden of Eden— It is the Season of hay-making and throughout our way, the mower with his scythe, the cocking of the grass, or the spreading it from the cock to dry, followed in alternate succession, and the atmosphere was charged only with varieties of fragrance— Fields of Indian corn, Rye, Potatoes and Oats interchangeably with pastures covered with grazing cattle, neat and comfortable houses and kitchen gardens and Orchards laden with ripening fruit, attested a genial climate a fruitful Season and a region of Peace, plenty and contentment

In Lebanon Springs, he toured a Shaker Village and experienced the medicinal hot baths of the region. Tuesday, July 11th, was Adams's birthday, now 76 years of age. He traveled through Albany and Troy to Saratoga Springs where on the 12th, he visited the site of the famous Revolutionary battle of 1777. The entourage next trekked through Glen Falls on its way to Lake George, the ruins of Fort Ticonderoga and north through Champlain to Canada. They continued on to Montreal, up the St Lawrence to Quebec City and the Plains of Abraham, a return to Montreal with short stops at Ogdensburg and Toronto before finally arriving in Niagara Falls on Saturday July 22.

John Quincy Adams at Niagara Falls July 1843

We left Toronto at 5. p.m. and crossed the Lake to Niagara and Queenstown whence the steamer passed over and landed us at Lewistown— The passage from Toronto to Niagara is 35 miles to Lewistown 7 miles more, and thence by a horse rail way seven Miles to Niagara Falls. — From Kingston to Toronto is 177 miles. We rode in the dark from Lewistown, and reached the Cataract house at the Falls at 9 in the Evening 438 miles from Montreal in 2 days and 9 hours. We found at the Falls, Mrs N. L. Frothingham, and three of her Sons, Octave, Francis and Mr Silliman of New-York with his Sister, and multitudes of others.

The Niagara Falls, N. Y. Cataract House was the largest and most popular hotel in the city. It was located next to the upper rapids of the American Falls in today's Heritage Park across from the Red Coach Inn. Its history and importance to the Underground Railroad in Western New York is indisputable. Before the Civil War, its African-American staff of waiters were very active in processing the escape to freedom of many enslaved brought there by the visiting slaveowners.

Niagara Falls Sunday 23 July 1843.

I slept to the sound of the Cataract, and on rising this morning before the Sun I saw the foam of the rapids hurrying to the Falls, right under my window. We breakfasted at 1/2 past 7. with about 150. other visitors to the falls. — Immediately after breakfast General Peter B. Porter came over from his house nearly opposite our hotel, and insisted with so much cordiality on my removal to his house that I consented with great reluctance to part from my company for the time— The houses being so near together that it is little more than occupying a distant apartment of the hotel.

General Peter B. Porter had briefly served as the United States Secretary of War (1828 -1829) in Adams' administration.



General Peter B. Porter

Adams asked about a possible church he could attend and commented in his diary of July 23, 1843:

I enquired for a church to go to for public worship, and found there was a methodist, and a presbyterian church near the hotel, but that attendance at church was not fashionable among the visitors at the falls— But Mr Silliman had formed a party to go to the Tuscarora Indian Settlement 7 miles from the falls, and attend at their church service— General Porter took Mr and Mrs Grinnell and me with him in his carriage and we reached the church while they were singing just before the sermon— An orthodox Presbyterian Calvinist Missionary was the preacher, and in the pulpit which was like the bench of a judicial Court, he and an Indian Chief interpreter stood side by side— The text was from Luke the parable of the Sower and the seed— the way side hearers and the Stony-ground hearers.— The Indian chief interpreted sentence by sentence, what was said by the missionary— A collection was taken up for a sick and destitute Old woman— The Missionary at suggestion of Genl. Porter announced and the Interpreter repeated that John Quincy Adams once President of the United States was present; whereupon I made to them a short address.— Then at the request of Genl. Porter they sang an English hymn and we departed—

On their way back, they stopped at the Whirlpool before returning to the Falls.

I went down the steps to the whirlpool—an arduous performance— It was between 3. and 4 when we got back to the falls

Keep in mind that this is a 76-year-old man climbing up and down the Niagara Gorge.

Dined at General Porter's with his family and after dinner took a first view of the falls, at the spot at which they are approachable to the very edge of the precipice, and also upon goat or Iris Island. Then returned to the Cataract house, and was detained by visitors till 10 in the Evening when I came to Genl. Porter's for the Night.

Adams's first significant view of Niagara Falls took place during the evening of Sunday July 23, 1843. General Porter acted as Adams's host while he was visiting the city. On the 24th, Porter took the visitors to his farm 2 miles upstream.

This morning after breakfast, General Porter, with his nephew and namesake, the judge's son, took me, with Mr Brooks and Mr Grinnell to a farm house and farm owned by him on the brink of the river two miles above the falls, and to Schlosser a mile or more higher up, and in 1837. the Scene of that memorable transaction, the seizure and destruction by a party from the British side of the river, of the Steamboat Caroline, an incident, which brought us nearer to a British, border and civil war than any other since the Peace of Ghent. At Schlosser there is only a single house but a landing place at the rivers edge— In the middle of the river Navy Island, belonging to the British, and Grand Island, to the United States and part of the State of New-York, both covered with forests of primeval trees are so narrowly separated by the channel of the river, that they seem at Schlosser to be one continuous island, and just below them commence the rapids rushing to the falls render the river impassable in boats— There is no trace of the tread of hostile feet remaining, and nothing noticeable on the spot, save its reminiscences. We stop'd at the general's farmhouse and more solid and more costly lime-stone barn, which Mr Brooks thought would suit well at Medford, and John Quincy thought a very good house to live in— The house-wife of the place by a liberal distribution of dough gathered round us a populous tribe of Turkeys, geese, ducks, and dunghill fowls among which the sable crested poularde family from Normandy were conspicuous. The soil of the farm is rich, but bound up in limestone of which the General has made durable and substantial Stonewall fences. The cultivation is in the process of défrichement, with a plenteous kitchen garden and a young orchard surrounded by fields of wheat, barley, oats, corn and potatoes, interspersed with lots of lofty, but girdled forest trees, and others bestudded with stumps standing like the pins of a vast bowling green—

Schlosser referred to the old British Fort Schlosser, located on the upper river at the end of the Niagara portage trail. The fort, built around 1760, replaced the old French fort of Fort Petite Niagara. Part of the original French fort was the Old Stone Chimney, which was incorporated into Fort Schlosser and, to this day, still exists as a historical ruin in Niagara Falls.



We returned to the Falls where Mr. Brooks and Mrs. Charles with her Son dined in family at General Porter's; and after dinner with all our party we again visited the falls upon Goat or Iris Island— There is a kitchen and fruit garden there through which I passed with General Porter; and I went to the top of the tower, built by General Porter at a point on the island whence the view of the falls is on this side the river most grand and picturesque— Returning again to the Cataract house several visitors at the falls were introduced to me –

Congressman Adams's visit in Niagara Falls continued for another one and a half days, which included a ferry ride to the Canadian side and visits to the War of 1812 battlefields at Lundy's Lane and Chippewa.

July 25th, 1843

I went this morning with Genl. Porter to Goat Island to bespeak a warm bath at the bathing house just above the single sheeted fall from which it borrows the stream that supplies the bath— They had then no heated water, but promised to have some ready for me this evening.— I then walked about an hour before breakfast with the General to re-inspect all the points from which the cascades and the rapids are seen to the best advantage— The sky was unusually clear, the Sun shining in cloudless splendour and the snowy foam of the spray reflected the burning beams in a constantly shifting rainbow adding exquisite beauty to the awful grandeur of the falling flood.— After breakfast, General Porter, with Mr Brooks, Mr and Mrs Grinnell, Mrs Charles and her Son, descended the steps to the ferry, and crossed the river in a small ferry boat over a placid and gentle stream scarcely conscious of the falling tempest so close above them— The ascent on the western side, of the river, though steep and rocky, is practicable, and we found at the landing two Carriages waiting for us, in which we ascended the heights, and rode first to view the scene of the Action at Lundy's Lane on the 5th. of July 1814. in the last War with Great Britain— We then went to the Clifton house and ordered dinner— Then leaving the Ladies there we proceeded to the plains of Chippewa, where General Porter explained to us the movements on the battleground at that place, on the 25th of July 1814 of which day this is the anniversary— Returning we stop'd and saw the phenomenon of the burning spring and I drank a tumbler of its cool sulphuric water. Dined at the Clifton house— Visited the table rock and the cavern under it— Returned over the ferry. Warm bath— Evening party at Genl. Porter's.

Finally, on his last day in Niagara Falls, July 26th, Adams recorded the following

This morning Genl. Porter took me over to see his brother the judge, who within a few months has been crippled by an accident in which his hip bone was broken, and he can scarcely rise from his seat. At his house I found four clergymen of different denominations who were introduced to me; but whose names escape from my memory. — After a tour in his garden from one corner of which there is a fine view of the falls, I visited with the General their Saw Mill where they were sawing planks— There was also a machine for sawing shingles, not working, but which had been seen and much admired by Mr Brooks. I enquired of one of the workmen, how long the saw which the machinery drives through the log in half a minute and turns out a plank. He said four months and was entirely worn out in that time. —

John Quincy Adams in Buffalo July 1843

The citizens of Buffalo were following the journey of John Quincy Adams. When he arrived in Niagara Falls, it was time to invite the former President to their city.

Tuesday, July 25th (Buffalo *Daily Courier*, July 25, 1843)

Yesterday morning a number of citizens assembled at the American Hotel, and appointed a committee to invite Mr. Adams, who is now at Niagara Falls, to visit Buffalo. Hon. M. Fillmore, F. P. Stevens and T. M. Foote were the committee.

The committee members left Buffalo by train at 9 AM on the 25th to offer the invitation.

Adams's diary Tuesday, July 25th

Mr. Millard Fillmore and Mr Love, heretofore members of Congress came this day, deputed from the City of Buffalo to invite me to visit that place, and Mr Fillmore delivered to me a similar written invitation signed by 13 citizens of Syracuse—

The committee returned on the afternoon train and reported that Adams had accepted the request and would arrive on Wednesday afternoon by train. A committee of 26 was chosen to prepare for the former president's reception. (See Appendix 1 for the Committee members)

Tuesday, July 25th (Buffalo *Daily Courier*, July 25, 1843)

This committee met last evening, and appointed the necessary sub-committees. It is proposed to procure a steamboat and bring Mr. Adams up from Schlosser on the river, and take a turn in the bay. A committee, Hon. T. C. Love, Hon. N. K. Hall, Hon. W. A. Mosely, Hon. J. G. Masten, and Gen Randall, was appointed to obtain Mr. Adams' consent to a change from the Railroad to the boat.

The Plan for John Quincy Adams' Visit

Buffalo *Daily Mercantile Courier*, Wednesday, July 26, 1843 and Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, Wednesday, July 26, 1843

The steamboat *Bunker Hill* will leave the foot of Lloyd Street, with the Committee of citizens, and of the Common Council, at 9 o' clock in the morning...

The boat will leave Schlosser at 12 o' clock M. on its return, and will arrive at the wharf at the foot of Main Street, at 4 o'clock, P. M.

Mr. Adams will be addressed on behalf of our citizens, by Mr. Fillmore, in the Park in front of the Court House, and make a reply.

Mr. Adams will take rooms at the American Hotel, where he will receive the calls of citizens, at half past 7 o'clock, P. M.

At 8 ½ o'clock there will be a torchlight procession by the Fire Companies.

The Visit and Reception

JQA Diary Wednesday July 26, 1843

General Porter took me in his Carriage to Schlosser, and there all our party met, precisely at Noon, the time which had been fixed, the Committee from Buffalo, with a numerous company of Ladies and gentlemen who had taken this opportunity for an excursion of pleasure, and all cordially greeted me and all our party. Here General Porter took leave of me, declining from indisposition the earnest invitation of the Citizens of Utica to accompany me thither. — There was another Steamer the Cleveland with a company of Ladies and Gentlemen, equally numerous on a separate excursion, but joining us as in procession— The passage from Schlosser to Buffalo occupied four hours; the banks of the river on both sides presenting a succession of beautiful landscapes. Some of us landed on Grand Island, and inspected the pyramid announcing in Hebrew and in English the city of Ararat founded by Moses M. Noah

The steamer “Cleveland” had left the Buffalo harbor soon after the “Bunker Hill”. This was a pleasure excursion to raise funds for the benefit of the Bethel Society. On reaching Niagara Falls, they joined the outward excursion back towards Buffalo, forming in some respects, a procession. Landing at White Haven on Grand Island, Adams and his contingent viewed the remains of the once hoped for Jewish State founded in 1825 by Mordecai Noah, a New York City politician and Jew. His desire was to create a Jewish homeland on the island. Noah bought over 2,000 acres but after several public pomp and ceremonies, the promise of a homeland fell through and he returned to New York City.

— We dined in the Steamer: a cold-water dinner, and at 4. O’Clock entered in beautiful Style, the harbour of Buffalo, at the entrance of Lake Erie— We were received by shouting multitudes at the landing.

The Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser* described Adams’ arrival

As she approached our harbor, it was discovered that every vessel in port had put on its gala dress.

Upon arrival at the Buffalo harbor, Mr. Adams traveled up Main St in an open barouche to a Stage at the Court House Park. Along the way, hundreds of Buffalonians showed their excitement and enthusiasm by cheering the former president. Finally, at the Park, on the stage, and in front of several thousand, Millard Fillmore offered a short welcome to which John Quincy Adams responded with a bit longer talk. (See Appendix 2 below for the speeches of both Fillmore and Adams).

Adams continued in his diary:

After this I rode round the City with Mr Fillmore and the Mayor, then to the American Hotel, and shook hands with some hundreds of men and women— Firemen’s torch light procession— Thunder Shower and Evening party.

At 8:30 A.M. the next morning, Adams left Buffalo for Rochester. The train stopped in Batavia for wood and water, during which time he stepped off and, for a few minutes, shook hands

with as many of the people that he could. His visitations continued across the state for several more days until he finally returned home during the first week of August.

How memorable was this journey for John Quincy Adams? In his diary dated October 2, 1843, just a couple of months after returning home from this vacation, Adams wrote:

Isaac H. Adams dined with us, and assisted my granddaughter Mary Louisa in making up the Memorial of my July tour to Canada, and the Falls of Niagara—in **many respects the most memorable period of my life**— It consists of the Newspaper reports of the complimentary receptions which I met at Saratoga—Ogdensburgh; the Falls, Buffalo, Rochester, Canandaigua, Auburn, Syracuse, Utica, Herkimer, Little-falls, Schenectady, Albany and Pittsfield; which I pray God may not have turned my head. I have gathered the articles containing the notices of my progress—the addresses made to me and my answers, and now have the slips pasted into an old book for Wedgwood's copying press

Apparently, he thoroughly enjoyed not only visiting the tourist sites but also enjoyed the opportunity to meet so many of his fellow citizens. His humility comes forward when he prayed that God would not give him a big head for all the praise and commendations that he received. But from reading his diary, it is obvious that he did enjoy the positive attention; an experience rather unique in his career and life.

John Quincy Adams in Buffalo, October 1843

In the autumn of 1843, John Quincy Adams once again traveled through Buffalo; this time on his way to Cincinnati where he was to lay the cornerstone for their astronomical observatory. He arrived in Buffalo on a Saturday and stayed through to Monday morning. Millard Fillmore acted as his host and accompanied him to church on Sunday morning at the Unitarian Church on 110 Franklin Street.

JQA diary October 1843

The day was fine and from 8. A.M—till past midnight, we past it in the rail way Cars— I take the list down of the places which we passed through, from Albany to Buffalo with the distances, as follows from

Albany to Schenectady	15 miles
Amsterdam	15
Caughnawaga	10
Palatine bridge	12
Little Falls	21
Herkimer	7
Utica	16
Vernon	17
Syracuse	
Auburn	27

Cayuga	9
Seneca Falls	3
Waterloo	4
Geneva	7
Canandaigua	16
Rochester	36
Batavia	37
Buffalo	43

...At every station where the cars stopped for wood and water, there is a table spread with hot tea and coffee, bread and butter cakes, puddings and pies, of which any passenger may partake at his option for a cent or a dollar. From the rail-road depot at Buffalo to the American hotel we came in a double cab—At a quarter before one Sunday morning they gave me a small bed-chamber for the night, and at two I was in bed.

The room in which I slept was so small, so cold and so dark, that they gave me another this morning, very comfortable, the same in which I had slept last July.

After breakfast ... Mr. Fillmore immediately after came in and invited us to tea at his house this evening, and offered us seats in his pew at the unitarian church which we accepted. The preacher was Mr. Hosmer and his text was from Matthew 6. 31. "What shall we eat? Or What shall we drink? Or, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" He left out the preceding words of the verse "Therefore, take no thought saying" so that the Sermon was not directly upon the negative precept, but upon the anxious cravings of mankind for the supply of these wants incident to their physical nature – The discourse was an earnest and affectionate exhortation to the auditory not to indulge this excessing anxiety for the necessaries of life, but to guard against them by industry moderation and frugality and most especially by suppressing their propensities to lavish and extravagant expense, which he pronounced the besetting sin of the age and especially of the place. – An excellent and eminently practical Sermon. —Mr. Hosmer gave notice that the anniversary festival of the protestant reformation would be held this evening. I observed that the usage of the worshippers here is to be seated during prayer, and to stand at the singing of the hymns. They use the compilation of the late Dr Greenwood – We dined at the Hotel and by invitation of Mr Rogers attended the evening service of the episcopal church: where a stranger, read prayers for the 20th Sunday after Trinity and Mr Hawkes, the settled minister was the preacher—His text and his sermon have slipped from my memory, which is the fault not of his mediocrity, but of my lethargy. Mr Hawkes is a young man, a brother of the celebrated Dr Hawkes; and married a sister of Mrs Edward Stanly. Returning from church I met in the street my old friend Albert H. Tracy, and was visited at the hotel by Lieutt. Williams the engineer, and others – We attended a tea and evening party at Mr Fillmore's – Mr. Love having insisted that I should first stop in at his house where his eldest daughter sung and played on the Piano the old armed Chair – Conversation with Tracy.

On Monday morning, Adams left at 8:00 A. M. by steamer on Lake Erie. They were soon caught in a snowstorm and forced to dock at Point Abino on the Canadian side until it was safe to resume his journey westward to Cincinnati.

Thus ended John Quincy Adams's two visits to Buffalo.

Thoughts on the Visits of John Quincy Adams

A contemporary account from the Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser* expressed the thoughts of many Buffalonians as to their views and feelings towards Mr. Adams.

The feeling excited by Mr. Adams is of a higher and purer character. He is no candidate for the suffrages of the people, he has no party, no patronage to bestow, and all his triumphs have been only those of intellect, patriotism, truth and justice, over the ignorance, the passion, or prejudices of men. No false ambition, no selfish, sinister purpose of aspiring men, alloys the tribute which the people pay to his eminent worth. It is his rare good fortune to realize in his own person that "truth crushed to earth will rise again", and assert his majesty. No man has been more maligned, and there is no man in the nation whose name or presence now awakens a more profound feeling of reverence and affectionate regard...He is indeed a living illustration of the excellency of integrity and truth... Fortunate and venerable old man, who has lived to see the bitterness of party strife, that once raged so furiously around him, expiring in murmurs at his feet, men of all parties and creeds uniting in paying homage to his services and virtues, and in his serene old age enjoying the happy consciousness of the applauding verdict of posterity.

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John Fagant

August 2023

APPENDIX 1

Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser* Tuesday, July 25, 1843 Committee of Arrangements for the Reception of John Quincy Adams in Buffalo

Millard Fillmore	Joseph Stringham
Heman B. Potter	Geo. R. Babcock
Frederick P. Stevens	John L. Kimberly
Samuel Wilkeson	Walter Joy
Thomas C. Love	H. J. Stow
Joseph G. Masten	Stephen Champlin
William A. Moseley	Elisha Maynard
Dyre Tillinghast	Robert Hollister
Moses Bristol	Samuel F. Pratt
Henry K. Smith	Nelson Randall
Nathan K. Hall	Silas Sawin
Thomas M. Foote	Charles L. Emerson
H. A. Manchester	Gatl Hornung

APPENDIX 2

Welcome Speech of Millard Fillmore to John Quincy Adams July 27, 1843 At Court House Park *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* July 27, 1843

Sir: I have been deputed by the citizens of this place to tender you a welcome to our city. In the discharge of this grateful duty, I feel that I speak not only my own sentiments but theirs, when I tell you that your long and arduous public services, -- your lofty independence -- your punctilious attention to business, and more than your unsullied and unsuspected integrity, have given you a character in the estimation of this republic, which calls forth the deepest feelings of veneration and respect.

You see around you, sir, no political partisans seeking to promote some sinister purpose -- but you see here assembled the people of our infant city, without distinction of party, sex, age or condition, -- all --- all anxiously vying with each other to show their respect and esteem for your public services and private worth.

Here, sir, are gathered in this vast multitude of what must appear to you strange faces, thousands whose hearts have vibrated to the chord of sympathy which your written speeches have touched. Here is reflecting age, and ardent youth -- age, and lispng childhood, to all of whom your venerated name is as familiar as household words

– all anxious to feast their eyes by a sight of that extraordinary and venerable man of whom they have heard and read and thought so much – all anxious to hear the voice of that “*old man eloquent*”, on whose lips wisdom has distilled her choicest nectar – here, sir, you see them all and read in their eager and joy-gladdened countenances and brightly beaming eyes, a welcome – a thrice-told, heartfelt, soul-stirring welcome to “the man whom they delight to honor.”

Welcome Response of John Quincy Adams July 27, 1843
At Court House Park
Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser* July 27, 1843

Mr. Fillmore—Mr. Mayor and Fellow Citizens:

I must ask your indulgence for a moment’s pause to take breath. If you ask me why I ask this indulgence, it is because I am so overpowered by the eloquence of my friend the Chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means, whom I have so long been accustomed to refer to in that capacity, that with your permission, I will continue so to denominate him now that I have no words left to answer him. For so liberal has he been in bestowing that eloquence upon me, which he himself possesses in so eminent a degree that, while he was ascribing to me talents so far above my own consciousness in that regard, I was all the time imploring the god of eloquence to give me, at least at this moment, a few words to justify him before you in making that splendid panegyric which he has been pleased to bestow upon me; and that the flattering pictures which he has presented to you, may not, immediately be defaced before your eyes by what you should hear from me.

There was, however, in the midst of the prolusion of compliments, the sincerity of which I am not permitted to doubt, one word caught my ear most gratifying to my feelings, and of the truth of which I was certain, -- that word was **welcome** – welcome -- welcome for him, welcome for you; and if I felt that of all the rest of his discourse, I could not flatter myself I was at liberty to receive as well founded, it made up in itself, for all the exaggeration of partial friendship in the rest. That word at least was perfectly intelligible, and the answer to it was ready at hand, it consisted also of one single word **thanks –thanks** –and still **thanks** – beginning and ending with thanks. Having said this, I return to my embarrassment.

What shall I say to you? But as for the return for welcome is gratitude, and as gratitude is somewhat loquacious, I must say something farther to you. What can I say but to congratulate you? I congratulate you then upon your condition in the world. I congratulate you upon that freedom which you enjoy – I wish I could say above all upon earth. I congratulate you upon the land in which you live – a land flowing with milk and honey – a land of mountains and valleys – of mountains, and mountains all over the world are the abode of liberty. Liberty is a mountain nymph; but beside that general property possessed – in every quarter of the globe, you possess a blessing reserved by the Creator for you alone – and that is the phenomenon of which so late in life, I have,

within the last few days, been a witness. Your land is not only a land of mountains, but of Cataracts and Whirlpools – objects of nature in which the Creator of the world has displayed his sublimest power. In visiting them – in gazing at them – in dwelling upon them, as in the last four days I have done, I have felt somewhat as I seem to feel in your presence. I felt unable to speak. It seemed as if there was a suspension, not only of words, but of thought – that it threw a man seeing them for the first time into the condition ascribed to the prophets of old – as if the spirit of God came upon him – as if he saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance having his eyes open. The fall of those dashing and roaring waters – the instant destruction with which we know them to be fraught – the danger, the leap which they tempt us to make and mingle with them -- the serene tranquility of the long river open in vista before them, and the smooth and silent current in which they flow again after the fall, showing in contrast at one view, the extreme of violence and repose – and above all that rainbow set in cloud, the covenant pledge of God to man, that what in its nature is destruction shall not destroy – from altogether a picture for the imagination which one feels that words cannot express. When the recollection comes that the intelligence and industry of man have made those waters tributary to a great public improvement, and the Cataract itself an instrument of the bounty of God for the benefit of the human family, by borrowing from this stupendous wonder of Nature a portion of its stream for manufacturing purposes, we can not but exclaim, “Great and marvelous are thy works Lord God Omnipotent! –in wisdom hast thou made them all.”

I congratulate you on the state of your social feeling – upon the men whom you possess, and upon whom you have lavished your honors. I came from the house of one of them (General Peter B. Porter) whose hospitalities I enjoyed during my visit to the Falls. A man illustrious in war and in peace –a statesman and a soldier with whom I have long had the happiness of enjoying a cordial and uninterrupted friendship; whose mind and heart and temper, I have had numerous opportunities of observing in various, and important relations; and who, in spite of age and infirmity no longer ago than yesterday accompanied me to one of the scenes of his danger and his glory, in the dominion of our neighbor, the British Queen. I have seen the fields of Lundy’s Lane, and of Chippewa; and there he pointed out to me the spots of those glorious incidents of the late war in which he himself had taken so distinguished a part. There was no trace left there of those desolations of war, which in former days exhibited such bloody testimonials. While blessing God for those energies displayed by my countrymen in the cause of their country, I blessed him still more for that peace and tranquility which have now made the rivals of that day, neighbors and friends. This sentiment has been deeply impressed upon my mind through the whole course of the short excursion which I have just made into those dominions of her Majesty Queen Victoria. Yesterday, while I contemplated the stupendous object of the Cataract on that side of the river, I could not but consider that the Creator of the world, and of all worlds, in creating that stupendous and unrivalled monument of his power, had divided the gift between the two nations, as too great to be bestowed on one alone, and as a perpetual admonition to enjoy it common between themselves.

I congratulate you again upon your possession of another dear and intimate friend of mine, in the person of the gentleman who has just addressed me in your name, and whom I have taken the liberty of addressing as Chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means – the capacity in which he has rendered so recently services of the highest importance to you his constituents, by whose favor he was enabled to render them – to us, and to our common country. And I cannot forbear to express here my regret at his retirement in the present emergency from the counsels of the nation. There, or elsewhere, I hope and trust he will soon return; for whether to the nation or to the state, no service can be, or ever will be rendered by a more able or a more faithful public servant. I congratulate you still farther upon the possession of a gentleman whom I have heretofore met, and with whom I have acted in harmony at the seat of the General Government, who is among those citizens to whom you committed the charge of inviting me to your city.

Fellow citizens, I congratulate you upon your attachment to Moral Principle. My friend, the Chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means, has interdicted to me the topic of politics in addressing you at this time; and my inclinations must cordially concur in the interdiction. He has, however, alluded to your sympathies with my speeches in the public council of the nation, and I cannot in justice to myself, or to you, deny myself the satisfaction of saying that, in all the troubles which have befallen me within the last few years, I have received more warm and cordial testimonials of sympathy from the Western part of the State of New York, than from any portion of this vast and almost boundless Union. In former years, in the heat of the Masonic and Anti-Masonic controversy, in which I took a deep and solemn interest, it was in sympathy with the people of Western New York. That cause of dissension has, happily, passed away. In later times, and on two several occasions, when my sense of duty to my country led me into difficulty and danger in my public capacity, in relation to the right of petition, I have again received more cheering and encouraging testimonials of sympathy from the people of Western New York, than from any other portion of the Union. In both of those cases the object of contention was **moral principle**; and I could not but consider that the standard of moral principle must be elevated among a people taking so deep an interest in its conflicts with lawless power.

Of your attachment to moral principle, I have this day had another, and pleasing proof in the dinner, of which I have partaken in the steamer in which by your kindness I have been conveyed to this place. It was a sumptuous dinner, but at which *Temperance* was the presiding power. I congratulate you on the evidence there exhibited of your attachment to moral principle in your co-operation in that great movement which is promoting the happiness and elevation of man in every quarter of the globe.

And here you will permit me to allude to an incident which has occurred in my recent visit to Canada, in which I perceived the co-operation of the people of that province in the same great moral reformation. While at Quebec, I visited the Falls of Montmorenci, a cataract which, but for yours, would be among the great wonders of nature. In going to it, I passed through the parish of Beauport, and there by the side of the way I saw a column with an inscription upon its pedestal, which I had the curiosity to stop and read. It was a column erected by the people of Beauport in gratitude to the

Virgin for her goodness in promoting the cause of temperance in that parish. Perhaps I do not sufficiently sympathize with the people of Beauport, in attributing to the Virgin so direct an influence upon this moral reform; but in the spirit with which they erected that monument I do most cordially sympathize with them. For under whatever influence the cause may be promoted, the cause itself can never fail to make its votaries wiser and better men. I cannot make a speech. My heart is too full, and my voice too feeble. **Farewell**, and with that farewell, may the blessings of heaven be upon you throughout your lives.