

Baltimore Morning Herald
July 7, 1904

***Enthusiastic Cheers for Mr. Cleveland Mark Opening of Big Democratic Convention,
But the Opposition to Parker is Waning.***

***Mention of Sage of Princeton's Name by Temporary Chairman
John Sharp Williams Signals for Wild Outburst of Applause.***

Fist Fight Further Enlivens Occasion

***Parker's Name Unmentioned, One of His Supporters
Shows Enthusiasm by Battling with Tammany Shouter.***

Many Suffered from Heat.

Barnlike Auditorium was Stifling and Speakers and Auditors were Uncomfortable.

St. Louis, Mo., July 6.-For exactly eleven minutes this afternoon the democrats of the United States, by their representatives in convention assembled, cheered Grover Cleveland.

Officially, most of them were here to cheer Alton B. Parker, but not once during the first day's session of the national gathering was his name mentioned.

William Jennings Bryan, once the star of assemblages such as this, but now an exile without the breastworks, sat in his place with the Nebraska delegation and smiled a sarcastic smile while the uproar continued.

It began among some of the New Yorkers when Congressman John Sharp Williams, of Mississippi, the temporary chairman of the convention, mentioned the former president in his speech. Before it ended there was a fist fight on the floor between a Parker man and a Cleveland man. Toward the end the former's friend pulled themselves together and hissed, and the hisses were as loud as the cheers.

But nevertheless the tumult lasted eleven minutes, and while it lasted it was loud and hearty. Delegates arose to their legs and yelled, and others sprang to their seats and howled, and still others tooted horns and whistled and bawled Cleveland's name.

Chairman Williams Smoked.

Mr. Williams, after rapping for order in vain, finally dropped into a chair on the platform and lighted a cigar. He had a long speech in manuscript before him and but a small part of it had been delivered. His address, in truth, was a remarkably long one. He began it at 12.22 o'clock and struggled on desperately, despite the sickening heat and a thousand interruptions, until 2.10 o'clock. It was a speech calculated to arouse democrats, and at the expense of Mr. Williams'

ease and collar it did arouse them, but not one of its eloquent periods received the applause that followed his reference to the Sage of Princeton.

Frequently the yells of "Louder!" from the rear of the hall and the noise of shuffling feet and of a multitude of voices made it necessary for the speaker to pause and rap for order. Several times perspiring delegates out of earshot bawled "Time!" and once or twice there were interruptions of a minute or more. But those who heard the speech applauded it long and often, if not vociferously, and those who did not usually joined in.

Barnlike Meeting Hall

The Coliseum in which the convention is meeting is an enormous, barnlike building, with bad exits and scarcely any ventilation at all. Covering the entire roof is an immense ceiling of yellow bunting, and hanging from the center of this is a huge furled banner, which will be dropped at psychological moments to inspire the crowd, while bunting hangs over the gallery rail, like "wash" on a line, and banners of the St. Louis fair colors—red, white, yellow and blue—are on every hand.

When the crowd shouldered its way into the hall today a heavy odor of chlorine gas made many gasp and cough. The place is used ordinarily for horse shows, prizefights and similar exhibitions and chloride of lime had been spread about the basement as a sanitary precaution.

Apparently no effort was made to insure the safe exit of the crowd in case of a panic and certainly there was no attempt to make it comfortable. The bare boards are visible in all directions and the aisles run all ways. The press seats are so located that it is impossible from them to see more than the head of a speaker at the front of the platform and difficult, without great effort, to hear much of what he says.

Those who attended the Chicago convention compared the admirable arrangements made by Sergeant-at-Arms William F. Stone there with the lack of arrangements here and the comparison was creditable to the Marylander, to say the least.

Heat Was Appalling

Most of the "kicks" registered today, however, may be credited directly and entirely to the appalling heat. As soon as the crowd got into the hall the mercury began to rise, and by 12.30 it seemed to be near the hundred mark.

Delegates shed their coats and collars, and after an hour or so the hall was gay with the varied hues of colored shirts. On the platform Mr. Williams perspired like an ironworker. Behind him National Chairman James K. Jones of the national committee, who called the convention to order; Senator Joseph W. Bailey, of Texas, who will be permanent Chairman, and the other notables mopped their brows and groaned.

A good many women were compelled to leave, but the majority of the men stuck gallantly to their posts until the long speech of the temporary chairman was concluded.

When he sat down, at last, the band played "The Star-Spangled Banner," and after a brief pause plunged into "Dixie." This brought the delegates to their feet with a bound, and for a minute or more rebel yells and Northern cheers made the efforts of the perspiring musicians seem puny.

After that the crowd began to go home, and by the time the tiresome enrollment of committees was completed the hall was nearly empty.

The convention adjourned for the day at 2.48, after having been in session exactly two hours and three-quarters. The heat put a damper on the session and all the delegates were glad to get out into the open air.

Mr. Bryan Entered Unnoticed.

Not once during the day, except when Cleveland's name was mentioned, was there very exciting applause. Mr. Bryan entered unnoticed, and the Hearst boomers from California, who came in with a big banner, had to do their own cheering.

The Texans carried a Lone Star flag, and the delegates from the Philippines, as a token of their threatened bondage, dragged in an American flag wrapped close about its staff.

Tonight the hotel corridors are crowded and noisy, and, with the convention under way, the delegates are looking forward to a wild time Friday. Banners and horns have been ordered, enthusiasm is being summoned up and bottled, and throats are being oiled. When the time comes—well, unless the hall is still warmer than today and all of the shouters are overcome by the heat, there should be a riot of cheers worth hearing.

"A won't be no frost, like they had at Chicago," said a Georgian tonight, "and you can bet your last nickel on that."