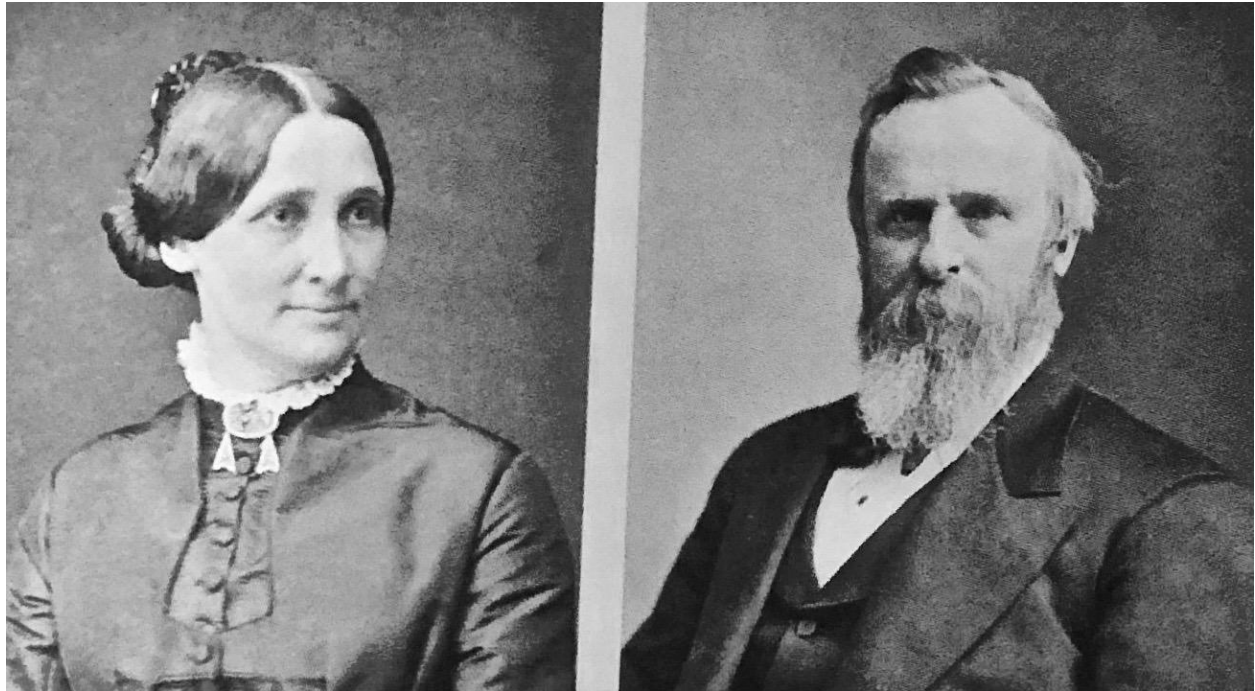


## President Hayes Visits Orange, 1878

From Historian Ann Miller in an *Orange County Historical Society Newsletter*:



**Mrs. Rutherford B. (Lucy Webb) Hayes and President Rutherford B. Hayes. From the Brady-Handy Photograph Collection at the Library of Congress.**

--Photo Courtesy of Ann Miller

“In the summer of 1878, the Board of Trustees (later known as the Town Council) of Orange learned that President Rutherford B. Hayes, a great admirer of James Madison, was contemplating a visit to Madison’s life-long home, Montpelier. Seizing the political moment, the Trustees passed and sent the President a resolution inviting him to Orange.

“On the morning of October 9, President Hayes, accompanied by his wife Lucy, Attorney General Charles Devens, Interior Secretary Carl Schurz, and others, took the 6:30 train from Washington, arriving in Orange four hours later. At various stops along the way the presidential party had been joined by others, including Colonel John S. Mosby, and shortly before the train arrived in Orange a local delegation—including two of Madison’s great nephews, Colonel John Willis and John M. Chapman---boarded the train as well. (In addition to being a member of the family, Chapman, whose residence is today’s Holladay House in Orange, was also President of the town’s Board of Trustees, a position analogous to Mayor of the town. After making a brief speech in honor of Madison and the Constitution, Hayes’s party and the other guests entered a carriage for the ride to Montpelier. President Hayes left a personal description of the trip to

Orange and to Montpelier in his diary, paying particular attending to the large trees around the house and the neglected condition of Madison's former property:

*October 18, 1878--Yesterday went with Lucy, General Devens, General Schurz, and Mr. Rogers to Montpelier, the residence of Madison. We left the depot about 6:30 A.M., after an early breakfast at the Home, and reached Orange Court House, eighty miles, about half past ten A.M. At eleven we started in carriages for Montpelier, about five miles distant. On the cars we were joined by Colonel John S. Mosby, who had charge of the party, his sister, Miss Mosby, Captain Chapman, his brother, Mr. Mosby, and by Mr. Hill, a senator of Maryland, Prince George's County. At Alexandria, by Lewis Mackenzie, postmaster, Mr. Payne and his son, the clerk of the court, and Miss--; at Fairfax by ex-Lieutenant Governor Thomas ("Judge"), Mr. Brook, senator of Loudon [sic] and Fairfax, and others. Before reaching Orange Court House a committee of trustees, Mr. Chapman, Edward C. Marshall, son of Chief Justice Marshall, Colonel Willis, a nephew of Madison, and others.*

*A crowd of people met us at Orange and there was speaking. Our train of carriages on a fair Virginia road reached the mansion in an hour. It was a satisfaction to find an admirable a place. The house large, with piazza and tall large pillars like, somewhat, Arlington, on an elevation with perhaps fifty acres of lawn in front and a noble view of the Blue Ridge. The great trees were very interesting to me.*

*A white oak near the grave twenty-one feet in circumference! A chestnut on right flank of lawn thirty-seven feet in circumference. A black walnut, right of house, fifteen feet. A poplar (tulip) eighteen feet. The oak and chestnut were low and apple-tree shaped; the poplars and walnuts, of which there were many, tall and beautiful. The place is not well kept up and is for sale cheap. Forty thousand dollars certainly would buy it with eleven hundred acres, and probably thirty thousand dollars. A great lack of enterprise, thrift, and comfort in that region, but the people were many of them well informed and generally, perhaps universally, friendly and well-disposed to newcomers.*

*A Mr. Brasee, of Baltimore, has bought and finely improved an estate this side of Montpelier eight miles at Rapidan. His elegant barouche and four with driver were at our service and took us to Montpelier. On the piazza we were welcomed with hearty hand-shaking by the present owner Mr. Carson, and by a carefully prepared speech by Colonel Willis. An interesting and enjoyable day.*

"Not surprisingly, the press was on hand for the occasion. The correspondent for the *Richmond Dispatch* reported that 'quite a respectable crowd' turned out in Orange to greet Hayes, whom he characterized as 'a bluff, burly, plain man, straightforward and well-meaning,' and noted that the

barouche provided by Mr. Bresee for the ride to Montpelier was 'lined with brilliant red satin and drawn by four handsome bays' and boasted a coachman in blue and white livery.

"However, an opposing view had been voiced by the editor of the local *Gordonsville Gazette*, who was--to put it mildly--not a Hayes supporter: 'Tomorrow the greatest fraud of the age, Mr. Hayes, will visit Montpelier, the former home of the illustrious Madison and there weep over his grave. We fully expect to hear of Madison's crumbling bones turning over in their grave when the weeping commences.'

"Following the tour, President Hayes and his party returned to town, where they were treated to dinner in what the *Richmond Dispatch* called 'true Democratic style' before returning to Washington on the evening train. E.M. Coleman, the proprietor of the Virginia Hotel, presented his bill to the town Trustees, who promptly approved the payment. The account, \$26 'For entertainment of President Hayes and party,' and the record of payment can still be found in the Town Minutes."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ann Miller, "President Hayes Visits Orange, 1978," *Orange County Historical Society Record*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Spring 2010), 4-5.