

January 21, 1933

[Montgomery, Alabama]

7:30 pm

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FDR Speech File

INFORMAL EXTEMPORANEOUS REMARKS BY PRESIDENT-ELECT ROOSEVELT  
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

January 21, 1933, 7.30 P.M.

(The President made his address from the steps  
of the State Capitol. He was introduced by  
Governor Miller.)

Governor Miller, My Friends and neighbors of Alabama:

This meeting tonight is a fitting climax to one of  
the most interesting days that I have ever spent. It is a great  
privilege to me to stand in this sacred spot where a great American  
took oath of office as the President of the Confederacy. (Applause)

I have been thinking, as I came here through the State,  
of how little the younger generation in the South and in the North  
know today of the failings and the effects that were brought out  
by the war between the States. I am not so very old -- just half  
a century, that is all -- and yet even I, in my boyhood, can  
remember the troubles and the difficulties within a family that  
were caused by that war. As some of you may know, one of the  
Roosevelts married into a Georgia family and I can remember, as  
a small boy, that two very distinguished gentlemen, intimately  
connected with the Navy of the Confederacy -- mind you, this was  
in the 80's -- came to New York to visit the Roosevelt family and,  
because those two brave and distinguished officers had fought in

**Franklin D. Roosevelt Library**

This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

(The President made his address from the steps of the State Capitol. He was introduced by Governor Miller.)

Governor Miller, my friends and neighbors of Alabama:

This meeting tonight is a fitting climax to one of the most interesting days that I have ever spent. It is a great privilege for me to stand in this sacred spot where a great American book took shape in the President of the Confederacy. (Alabama) I have been thinking, as I came here through the State of now little the younger generation in the South and in the North knew today of the fallings and the effects that were wrought out by the war between the States. I am not so very old -- but still a century, that is all -- and yet even I, in my boyhood, can remember the troubles and the difficulties which a family that were caused by that war. As some of you may know, one of the Roosevelts married into a Georgia family and I can remember as a small boy that two very distinguished gentlemen, intimately connected with the Navy of the Confederacy -- and that was in the 30's -- came to New York to visit the Roosevelt family and because those two brave and distinguished officers had fought in

the Navy of the Confederacy, there were some Roosevelts who still regarded them as "Pirates".

Now, that is hard to understand by the younger generation in all parts of this country and yet that was less than half a century ago that that happened. I know, and I am glad to know that my own daughter who is with me today and all the rest of my children and all of the younger generation just laugh heartily at hearing brave officers of the Confederate Navy referred to as pirates. (Applause)

Now, the war between the States is not only over but, here in the birthplace of the Confederacy, I believe that I can say and be rightly understood in the North, in the South, in the East and in the West that in many ways that war between the States has done more than anything else to bind the nation into a unified whole. (Applause)

I am particularly happy, as one who is about to occupy another White House, to have had the privilege of seeing the first White House of the Confederacy as I turned the corner to come here to the Capitol. (Applause)

This morning, early, I saw with my own eyes what I have been waiting to see ever since the days when I served in Washington as a Lieutenant of that great Democrat and great American President, Woodrow Wilson. (Applause) I was not only impressed with the size of the great operation at Muscle Shoals but I can tell you frankly that it was at least twice as big as I ever had any

conception of it being. It was distressful to me and I think it was distressful to almost every other member of the party, for we had with us distinguished members of the Senate and of the House of Representatives, together with engineers and others from every part of the United States, I think we were all distressed by the fact that so much of that great plant has been lying in idleness all these years. My friends, I determined on two things as a result of what I have seen today. The first is to put Muscle Shoals to work. (Applause) The second is to make of Muscle Shoals a part of an even greater development that will take in all of that magnificent Tennessee River from the mountains of Virginia down to the Ohio and the Gulf. (Applause)

Muscle Shoals is more today than a mere opportunity for the Federal Government to do a kind turn for the people in one small section of a couple of States. Muscle Shoals gives us the opportunity to accomplish a great purpose for the people of many States and, indeed, for the whole Union, because there we have an opportunity of setting an example of planning, planning not just for ourselves but planning for the generations to come, tying in industry and agriculture and forestry and flood prevention, tying them all into a unified whole over a distance of a thousand miles so that we can afford better opportunities and better places for millions of yet unborn to live in in the days to come. (Applause)

So, my friends, I believe that the Governor was right in at least one sense when he spoke of this being a red-letter day

because I am convinced that what was seen by the Members of the national Senate and the national House of Representatives and what was seen by your President-Elect means that just as soon as we possibly can up in Washington we are going to start something practical, useful and necessary. (Applause)

My one regret in coming here is that it is dark and I shall not have the opportunity tonight of seeing this wonderful old city. I hope it will be my privilege, my friends, to come back here some day from Warm Springs, to come back when the sun is shining.

And I will always regard this as a red-letter day for another reason, because I have had the opportunity to come here and stand where Jefferson Davis once stood. (Prolonged applause)