

y Archive: FDR Papers

Speech Drafts: Address at the Dedication of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, June 30, 1941

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library & Museum

Collection: Grace Tully Archive  
Series: Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers  
Box 13; Folder = Speech Drafts:  
Addresses at the Dedication of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library,  
June 30, 1941

52

-----  
A D D R E S S E S  
-----

GIVEN AT

THE DEDICATION OF THE

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT LIBRARY

HYDE PARK, NEW YORK

-----  
MONDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 30, 1941

FOUR O'CLOCK  
-----  
-----  
-----  
-----

I N D E X

Invocation ----- Page 1  
Rev. Patrick J. Nee

Address ----- Page 2  
Hon. Frank G. Walker

Address ----- Page 4  
Dr. R. D. W. Connor

Address ----- Page 8  
Dr. Samuel E. Morison

Address ----- Page 10  
The President

Benediction ----- Page 14  
Rev. Frank R. Wilson

INVOCATION  
by the  
Reverend Patrick J. Lee,  
Rector of the Church of Regina Coeli,  
Hyde Park, New York

Oh Almighty and Eternal God, Father of Mercies, in  
Whom we live, move, and have our being, graciously look down  
upon us here assembled.

Enlighten our minds with the light of Thy Holy  
Spirit so that we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His con-  
solations.

Grant to us that peace which can come into our  
minds only through the fulfillment of Thy Commandments.

Direct, we pray Thee, all our actions by Thy Holy  
Inspirations, and further them by Thy continual assistance,  
so that every prayer and work of ours may begin with Thee,  
and by Thee be happily ended, through the merits of Jesus  
Christ Our Saviour.

Amen.

---

ADDRESS OF THE HON. FRANK C. WALKER,  
TREASURER OF THE FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT LIBRARY, INC.,  
PRESIDING OFFICER AT THE DEDICATION OF THE LIBRARY

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are assembled here today to dedicate the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, not to any individual, not to any group, but rather we are dedicating this splendid historic edifice to the American people.

Here, in the shadows of the birthplace and home of our President now stands, fully completed, a fine building of dignity and importance that will serve as the store-house for the records of a period that has no parallel in the history of America, and of the world. Within these walls shall be found, in the days to come, a collection of rare documents that will well and truly record much of our part in World War I. Here will be found papers that will faithfully tell the intimate story of the ambitions and aspirations, the suffering and sorrows, and the final triumph of the American people of the New Deal Era - here, conceivably, may come a collection of documents that may provide more accurate source material delineating the world's greatest catastrophe, World War II, than may be found in any one collection of papers of an individual in the world.

This unusual occasion is made possible by the fine understanding and appreciation of our President who did that which is unique when he presented to the people of America his private records that tell a story of a most interesting and important era in world history. I am wondering, where else in

the world would a Chief Executive be so truly cognizant of the need for close relationship between the statesman and the historian and make such generous disposition of such priceless material.

This, too, is an unusual occasion in another sense, because this grand repository was conceived and came to pass by reason of the generosity of fine Americans, 20,000 in number, from every walk of life, representing every State in the Union and the several Possessions.

To you fine representative Americans who helped so nobly to make this possible, I say, we are sincerely thankful.

To you, Mr. President, may I say, we are most grateful.

ADDRESS OF DR. R. D. W. CONNOR,  
ARCHIVIST  
OF THE UNITED STATES

In normal times the average person thinks little and cares less about the past; he is quite content to let the dead past bury its dead; for him the living present is sufficient. But when times are out of joint, when new ideologies appear to challenge traditional ideologies, every champion of either the new or the old looks to the past for help, and feels himself at liberty to use or abuse the helpless Muse of History as suits his purpose.

We ourselves are living in such a time. Everywhere new and strange isms are engaged in a life and death struggle with old and familiar isms. In our own land, according to our American custom, the struggle is being waged within the framework of constitutional principles and practices. Other lands and other peoples have not been so fortunate. From Europe, from Africa, from Asia, come reverberations of war and revolution. But whether waged with ballots or with bullets, the conflicts everywhere, in one respect at least, follow the same historic pattern. In the present as in the past, protagonists of the new and defenders of the old are busily thumbing the pages of history in search of arguments to support their own particular brands of isms. No one who wades patiently through the "Public Pulse" columns of our daily papers can fail to admire the zeal if not the knowledge of these champions.

The interests which make such uses of history are as

numerous and varied as the interests of humanity itself. Ambition to live in history has always been a powerful influence in the conduct of men. From earliest times, conquerors and rulers have had the records of their actions preserved, falsified, or destroyed, as the case might require, in the hope that history might speak well of them; leaders of lost causes have appealed for vindication from the verdict of their contemporaries to the verdict of history; and martyrs of every philosophy have found consolation in handing over their persecutors to history's avenging pen. But respect for the judgments of history is not confined to individuals; society itself, in every form, has acknowledged its power. The Exchange, the Church, the State, have feared its condemnation and courted its praise.

In a national crisis, men instinctively seek to find the spirit of the past inspiration to strengthen the morale of the present. Not long ago the President appealed to the American people for national unity in the present crisis. Only through national unity, he told us, "can we successfully defend our national heritage" and pass it on "not only intact, but stronger than ever, to all generations yet to come." But what is our "national heritage" if it is not our national history? And how can we pass it on intact and stronger than ever if we do not respect its truth and defend its integrity? The product of false history is a spurious patriotism and a spurious patriotism is no more to be desired in a democracy than in an autocracy.

The raw materials of history are the records of past human affairs, and only when such records have been preserved

and made available to him can the historian truly reconstruct and interpret the past. It must have been some such thought that inspired the idea that finds concrete expression in this library which we dedicate today. No thoughtful person will seriously question the fact that the political, economic, and social development of both the domestic and foreign affairs of the United States during the past two decades marks this period as a distinctive era in our national history; nor can it be doubted that this period will be the subject of intensive study by the historians, political scientists, economists, and sociologists of the future.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, the historian, was quite as well aware of this fact as was Franklin D. Roosevelt, the statesman, when, on December 10, 1938, he announced to the country his plan for the establishment of this library. After describing the rich and varied materials in his collections, he said: "It is my desire that they be kept as a whole and intact in their original condition, available to scholars of the future in one definite locality ..... It is, therefore, my thought that funds can be raised for the erection of a separate, modern, fireproof building ... so designed that it would hold all of my own collections and also such other source material relating to this period in our history as might be donated to the collection in future by other members of the present Administration." Thus there would be "set up for the first time in this country what might be called a source material collection relating to a specific period in our history."

That plan has now been carried into effect, and we have met here today to dedicate the building and its contents to the service of the American people. We do this in confident expectation that for generations to come, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library will be the Mecca for scholars and statesmen who would learn how in the midst of a world conflict between autocracy and democracy a free people preserved their freedom and strengthened their democratic institutions.

-----

ADDRESS OF DR. SAMUEL E. MORISON,  
PROFESSOR OF HISTORY  
AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

One of my favorite quotations to announce an historical address, however short -- especially when a poet is present -- is from Don Quixote. "It is one thing to write as a poet, another as an historian. The poet is able to say or sing things, not as they were, but as they ought to be. The historian has to write of them, not as they should have been, but as they were, without adding to them or subtracting from the truth in any way."

Now, Mr. President, it will be possible to write the truth, the whole historical truth, about your Administrations, on account of this wonderful collection that you are bringing together in this building. Yours will be better documented than any earlier Presidential administrations in history. Think, for instance, of the number of unnecessary, futile, misleading books about the great Abraham Lincoln that we might have been spared, had their heirs brought together such a collection of papers as this. But, Mr. President, if you are going to keep a Smug Harbor for all your collections and your papers from the White House, I shall have to warn you to give some of those "Oddities" the 'deep six' or they will overflow and take up the space needed for documents. I know you are the nation's No. 1 collector, but collecting can be overdone, even by No. 1.

I want to say to the President's neighbors from Dutchess County here assembled, if you feel an impulse to give the President that old hair trunk in the attic, or horse buggy, don't do it!  
(laughter)

Not that I am one of those who regard all historical material as being on paper or in ink. Far from it. I should like to see, for instance, in this Library and Museum, -- well, a straw from that Literary Digest Straw Vote. I should like to see some of those Blades of Grass that didn't grow in the Streets of our Cities. I would like to see a Plank out of that famous Walk that led out from the White House, and has now happily come full circle, back again.

And when I go below here, Mr. President, down into the hold of this building I cannot help approving those ice-boats and carriages, even if they do take up a lot of space. They are going to be very interesting to historians in the future.

Mr. President, you and I went to sea first at about the same time, and in the same waters, along the coast of the Bay of Fundy, where there is an awful lot of fog, and I know that learning to sail through the fog has been extremely useful to me, and I shouldn't wonder if it hadn't been sometimes useful to you, Mr. President. (laughter)

It was down in those regions a summer "yetter" asked a native lobsterman what the lighthouse at 'Tit Manan looked like. The lobsterman said, "Well, sir, I am afraid I don't know. I have been living down here and lobstering for fifty years, but I ain't seen it yet." Now, Mr. President, you know as well as I do that seamen don't like sailing through fog, nor do historians. But owing to the wise and generous provisions that have been made, there will be no historical fog over the history of your Administrations. (laughter and applause)

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AT THE DEDICATION OF THE  
FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT LIBRARY,  
HYDE PARK, N. Y.,  
JUNE 30, 1941

MR. WALKER, DR. CONNOR:

It seems to me that the dedication of a library is in itself an act of faith, to bring together the records of the past and to house them in buildings where they will be preserved for the use of men and women in the future. A nation must believe in -- in three things.

It must believe in the past.

It must believe in the future.

It must, above all, believe in the capacity of its own people so to learn from the past that they can gain in judgment in creating their own future.

Among democracies, I think through all the recorded history of the world, the building of permanent institutions like libraries and museums for the use of all the people, it has been among democracies that such building has flourished. And that is especially true in our own land, because we believe that people ought to work out for themselves, and through their own study, the determination of their best interest rather than to take another kind of course, rather than to accept such so-called information as may be handed out to them by certain types of self-constituted leaders who decide what is best for them.

And so it is in keeping with the well considered trend of these difficult days that we are distributing our own historical

collections more widely than ever before throughout the length and breadth of our land. From the point of view of their safety -- the physical safety of our records, it is, it seems to us in later times to be wiser that these records should not be too greatly concentrated. And from the point of view of accessibility of these records, greatly concentrated in any one place in the United States, modern methods that we are accustomed to now make study and dissemination of these records in many places possible for the modern historian.

This particular Library is but one of many new libraries. And so, because it happens to be a national one, I as President have the privilege of accepting this newest house in which peoples records are preserved -- public papers and collections that refer to our own period of history.

And this latest addition to the archives of America is dedicated at a moment when government of the people by themselves is being attacked everywhere.

It is, therefore, proof -- if any proof is needed -- that our confidence in the future of democracy has not diminished in this nation and will not diminish. (Applause)

As all of you know into this Library there has gone, and will continue to go, the interest and loving care of a great many people. Most of you who are here today are old friends and neighbors of mine -- friends and neighbors throughout the years. And so all of you, my friends and neighbors, are in a sense Trustees of this Library through the years to come.

We hope that millions of our citizens from every part of the

land will be glad that what we do today makes available to future Americans the story of what we have lived and are living in our lives, and what we are living today, and what we will continue to live during the rest of our lives.

And so I am grateful to all of you for all that you have done.

I think that the ceremonies are now over, except for one very important addition that relates to the future. Under an Act of the Congress of the United States, there was appointed -- authorized to be appointed a Board of Trustees, who will be responsible for this Library from midnight tonight, through the years to come.

I am glad that you have come today, because as I suggested at lunch to some of the Trustees, this is the last chance you have got to see this Library free of charge. (laughter) At midnight tonight the Government of the United States takes over, and they take over through this Board of Trustees, of which Dr. Connor, the Archivist -- the National Archivist of the United States -- is to be the Chairman, and on which will serve ex officio our own neighbor from this County, the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States -- Henry Morgenthau, Jr. (applause)

And incidentally, I have appointed a number of very old friends of mine to serve as additional Trustees: My old law partner, Basil O'Connor from New York (applause); and Frank Walker, who in addition to being a very old friend is also the man who carries your mail (laughter and applause); and Dr. Morison, an old sea-faring friend of mine. (laughter and applause) And now

let us see, who else is there? Oh, I asked him but he couldn't get here today. He was terribly sorry, but he said, quite frankly, that Long Island was cooler than Hyde Park. (laughter) Another old friend, whom you have seen here many times with me -- Harry Hopkins. (applause)

And so -- and so I am asking the first Federal Judge to be appointed from Dutchess County for I don't know how many generations, our old friend Eddie Conger of Poughkeepsie, to step forward when I give out these -- I won't call them diplomas, but they look like diplomas -- to these new Trustees. I am going to ask Federal District Judge Conger to administer the Oath of Office.

(the Oath of Office was then administered to Basil O'Connor, Dr. Morison, and Frank G. Walker)

(the following Benediction was then pronounced by the Reverend Frank R. Wilson, Rector, St. James' Church, Hyde Park, New York)

THE PRESIDENT: Now I hope you will all feel very welcome to come in and see the building and what is in it.

-----

BENEDICTION  
BY THE REVEREND FRANK R. WILSON,  
RECTOR, ST. JAMES' CHURCH,  
HYDE PARK, N. Y.

May the blessing of God Almighty, the  
Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, rest  
upon our people and upon all our work done  
in His Name. May He give us light to guide  
us, courage to support us, and love to unite  
us, now and for evermore.

Amen.