

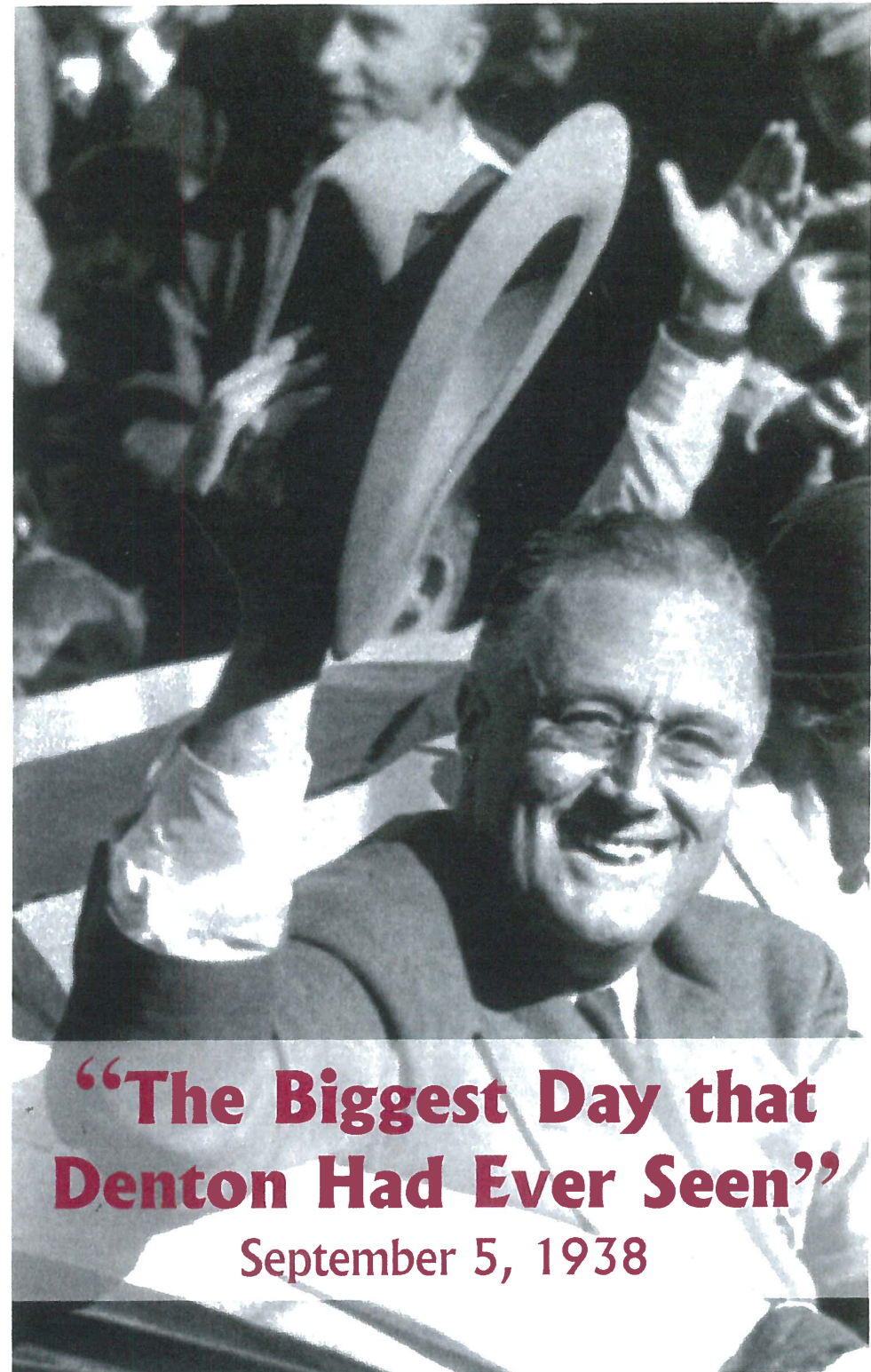


As soon as the President's speech was completed, the massive crowd dispersed and work began to dismantle the special broadcast stand and ramp (above) that the President had used. After resting for a time at the *Goldsborough House*, as described above, President Roosevelt departed with his large entourage of aides, security personnel, and journalists to catch the Matapeake Ferry back to the Western Shore.

Denton quieted down at about five o'clock.... It was much the biggest day that Denton had ever seen, and as twilight fell over the town, the consensus of opinion was that the town had done a big job well.

The Preston News and Farmer, September 8, 1938.

Prepared by J.O.K. Walsh and Chrissie Barr



**“The Biggest Day that
Denton Had Ever Seen”**

September 5, 1938



The People of Maryland listen to the President of the United States

The President departed the *Goldsborough House* and arrived at the "special broadcast stand" erected in front of the Law Building at 1:57 p.m. The radio broadcast began at 2:00 p.m.

The radio commentators introduced Denton Mayor Melvin James, who introduced Congressman Goldsborough, who introduced the President.

The crowd was consistently estimated by the various news sources at between 8,000 and 10,000 people.

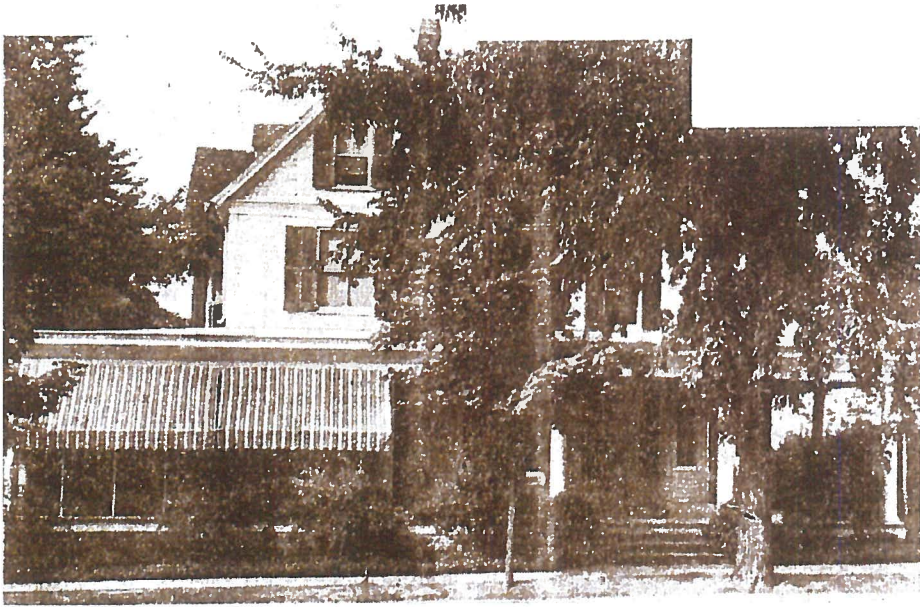
News coverage of the President's speech was extensive. It was broadcast to a nationwide audience by the CBS, NBC, and Mutual radio networks. Five newsreel companies recorded the speech, including Pathé and Movietone News. Two telegraph companies provided batteries of keys so that newsmen could file their reports. A total of 90 journalists, photographers, and radio personnel were present.

The Secret Service enforced a rule: "No pictures while the President is walking."

The President's speech (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15534>) was delivered in 27 minutes. The crowd applauded "loudly and frequently" according to the *New York Times*.

After the speech, the President returned to the *Goldsborough House* and rested before departure for the Matapeake Ferry and the Western Shore. The *Preston News* noted the following.

While resting on the front porch of the Goldsborough home, he was greeted by many admirers who came forward to shake his hand, wish him well and compliment him on his masterly address. President Roosevelt seemed to enjoy himself immensely and was particularly pleased with his Eastern Shore reception, which he described as "wonderful."



The President had lunch at the *Goldsborough House* (above, photographed in September, 1938), and later greeted admirers while resting on the front porch.

Six Denton residents attended the luncheon. They included the three town commissioners and the event planning committee. Mrs. Goldsborough was the hostess and only woman present.

Away from the *Goldsborough House*, Denton was alive with activity. The *New York Times* further reported as follows:

People from miles around flocked to Denton for the occasion. Refreshment stands were opened in many homes and on street corners to provide soda pop and 'hot dogs' for the hungry. Hawkers with Roosevelt buttons plied their wares.

Some of the local townspeople, whose homes front on the courthouse square, took advantage of the occasion to earn a little money for themselves by renting seats on their porches to spectators, tired and hot from standing in the square in the sun. The local hotel, on a corner of the square, was equally businesslike. It sold "reserved seats" on the second floor porch for 75 cents each and did a landoffice trade.

Presented by J.O.K Walsh on September 5, 2008

Although it was the fourth visit of President Roosevelt to the Eastern Shore, this time it was strictly political: He was attempting to defeat U.S. Senator Millard E. Tydings in the pending Democratic primary in Maryland. Tydings' supporters referred to the extremely unusual effort (a Democratic president attempting to defeat a senior incumbent Democratic senator) as a "purge."

However, the President's "New Deal" legislation, put forth in the midst of the Great Depression, was meeting increased opposition in both Congress and the courts. Roosevelt was attempting to use his own personal popularity to remove seven key "conservative" Democrats like Tydings. Tydings had voted against New Deal legislation a whopping 77% of the time.

As an alternative to Tydings, Roosevelt was supporting Western Shore Congressman David J. Lewis, a Democrat who was the House sponsor of Social Security and an "ardent New Dealer." Lewis, together with Congressman T. Alan Goldsborough of Denton, rode with the President in an open (convertible) touring car as the President campaigned on the Eastern Shore.

The major event of September 5, 1938 was a speech to be broadcast by radio to the nation from Denton, but the trip began in Crisfield. Along the way to Denton, the press carefully noted the political atmosphere. The reporter for the *New York Times* observed the following:

Everywhere the President was greeted with applause and the majority of the communities through which his motor caravan passed were decked with flags and bunting. However, there were ample indications that the people of the Eastern Shore had not forgotten Senator Millard E. Tydings, object of the New Deal "purge."

Left, a full-page photograph of the large crowd in Denton, estimated at up to 10,000 people, appeared on page 15 in *Life Magazine* on September 19, 1938.

All along the line of the 200-mile route of the President's tour, Tydings banners and placards outnumbered the Lewis posters better than three to one. And some of the Tydings banners, strung across streets down which the President rode, bore such slogans as "Don't Surrender Maryland to Outsiders" and "Keep the Free State Free."

The page-one article in the *Times* on September 6, 1938 was titled "Maryland Cordial to Roosevelt, Even as Tydings's Banners Fly." In Denton, local Tydings supporters led by J. Owen Knotts and William J. Rickards unfurled a large banner declaring "We Want Tydings" just as the President began his speech, which praised candidate Lewis but never mentioned Tydings.

The President's mission would ultimately be unsuccessful: Tydings would be reelected by 60,000 votes. However, no one knew that on September 5, 1938 when the political spectacle surrounding the President's visit set the stage for what the *Preston News* described as "the biggest day that Denton had ever seen."



Seated behind the President in Denton were (left to right) Congressman T. Alan Goldsborough, Mayor Melvin James, and Congressman David J. Lewis. Also visible is the "We Want Tydings" banner, unfurled as the President spoke.

The Events in Denton on September 5, 1938, Compiled from Newspaper Accounts

September 5, 1938 was Labor Day, a Monday. That morning, the presidential yacht *Potomac* landed the official presidential party at Crisfield at 8:30 a.m. From there, the party proceeded to Denton via Princess Anne, Pocomoke City, Snow Hill, Berlin, Salisbury, Sharptown and Federalsburg.

At Federalsburg the President paused briefly to hear the town band and shake hands with "several leading citizens."

The President arrived at Denton at 1:05 p.m.

The procession was led from the outskirts of Denton down Fifth, Market and Gay Streets by the Chestertown Band, the Denton Volunteer Fire Company, and representatives of the local units of the National Guard and Boy Scouts.

The *New York Times* on September 6, 1938 reported: "The real decorations of the day were provided by Denton. This little village of 1,600 souls was in holiday mood. The streets were gay with bunting and nearly every home displayed at least one flag." The Courthouse and Law Building had been decorated by the Bangert Company of Philadelphia for \$125."

Protection for the President was provided by 16 State Troopers, 12 Baltimore City traffic patrolmen, and a minimum of 18 Secret Servicemen; i.e., a security detail of 46 persons.

The official traveling party included a U.S. Senator from Delaware, four Congressmen, the Postmaster General, and the president of the University of Maryland plus President Roosevelt's secretary, senior naval aide, and physician (with two assistants).

The procession went directly to the home of Congressman T. Alan Goldsborough at 103 Gay Street where a luncheon that had been prepared by Mrs. Goldsborough was served to the 19 guests.