



The last photo of President McKinley, taken minutes before the assassination, in the Temple of Music on grounds of Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, New York. September 6, 1901

SOUTHERN CALLS

# PRESIDENTIAL PASSINGS

Written by Bob Boetticher Sr.  
Chairman, National Museum of Funeral History

PART FOUR OF OUR 8-PART SERIES

## *The Long Ride Home to Canton*

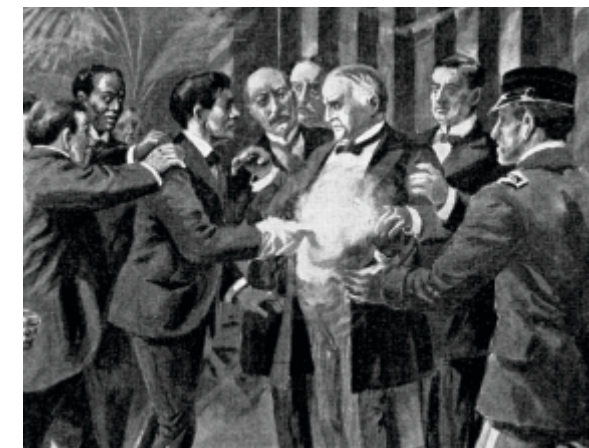
### THE WILLIAM MCKINLEY FUNERAL TRAIN

President and Mrs. William McKinley stepped off their private Pullman Palace car, which he used extensively, when they arrived in Buffalo, New York, on Sept. 4, 1901, to attend the Pan-American Exposition. After several days of touring the Exposition and attending receptions, McKinley, in formal dress, entered the Temple of Music for a reception. Within minutes, Leon Czolgosz approached the president, a .32 revolver concealed under a handkerchief in his right hand, and, as the president reached out to shake his hand, fired two shots into McKinley's abdomen.

Eight days later, at 2:15 a.m. on Sept. 14, 1901, the 25th president of the United State was dead of gangrene poisoning from his gunshot wounds.

His body was prepared by the undertaking firm of Drullard & Koch in Buffalo and placed in a solid Santo Domingo mahogany casket with a metallic copper plate liner and a full-length beveled-edge glass top furnished by the National Casket Company. The national colors, along with floral emblems, covered the casket.

The funeral plan stated that McKinley was to be ceremoniously returned to his home in Canton, Ohio, for burial, with a stop in Washington, D.C. Word was sent to John Arnold, owner of the J.L. Arnold & Sons Undertaking Co. in Canton, to start planning the funeral events.



Leon Czolgosz shoots President McKinley with a revolver concealed under a cloth rag. Drawing by T. Dart Walker

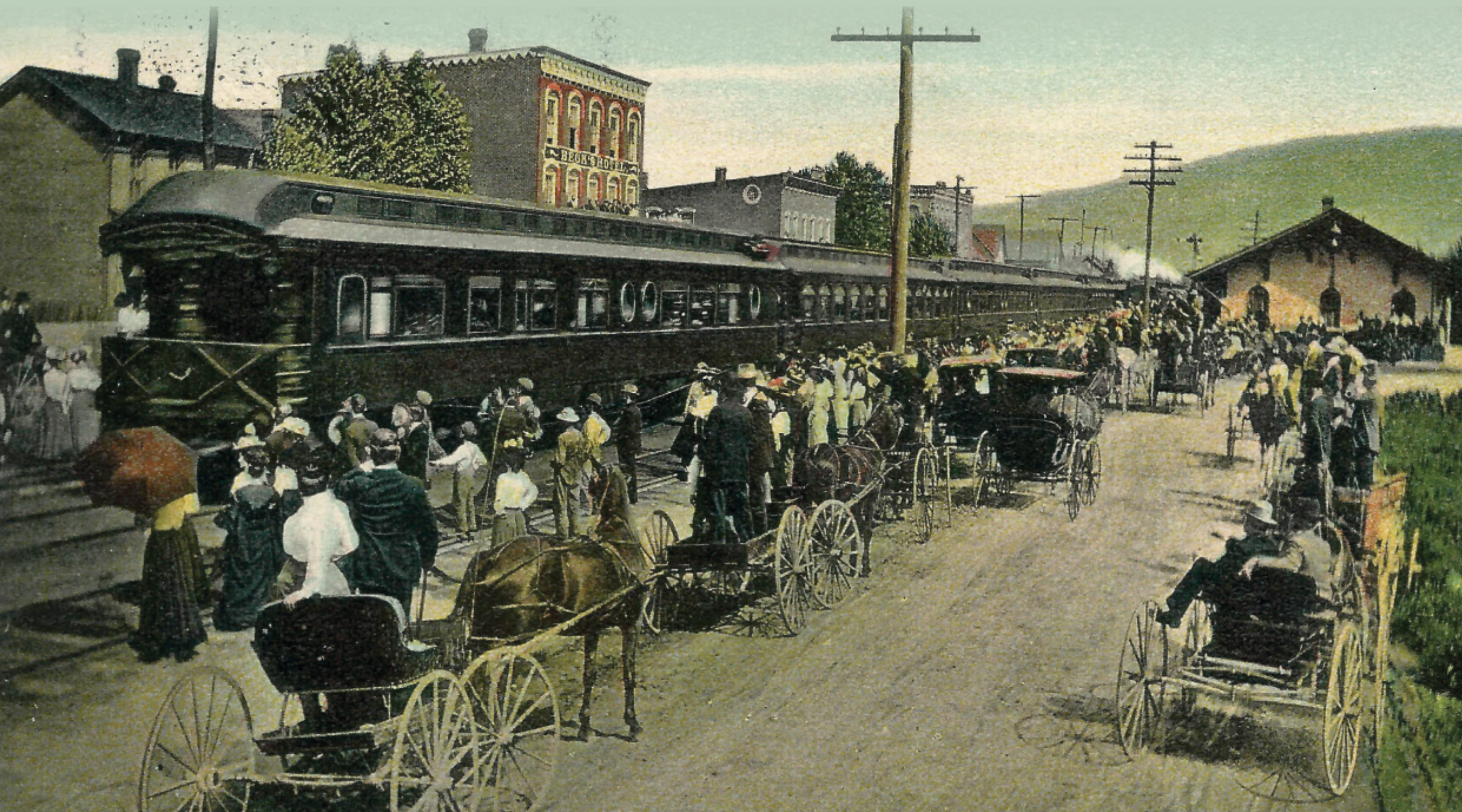




Vintage McKinley Funeral Train Postcards



Train Bearing Body of President McKinley Passing Through Arcade, N. Y.



Rev. Dr. Charles E. Locke conducted private services on Sept. 15 at the Millburn House where the McKinley's were guests, and then the casket was transferred on this rainy day to lie in state at City Hall. At the conclusion of the afternoon and evening public visitation, it was estimated that 75,000 mourners had filed past the president's casket.

The next morning, his flag-draped casket was taken from City Hall and placed in a black hearse drawn by four dark horses, which proceeded past the dense crowds of people lining the streets. Many mourners took to the upper floor windows of the downtown buildings to watch as the funeral procession solemnly proceeded to Union Station, where the special funeral train, draped in black bunting, had been waiting since noon.

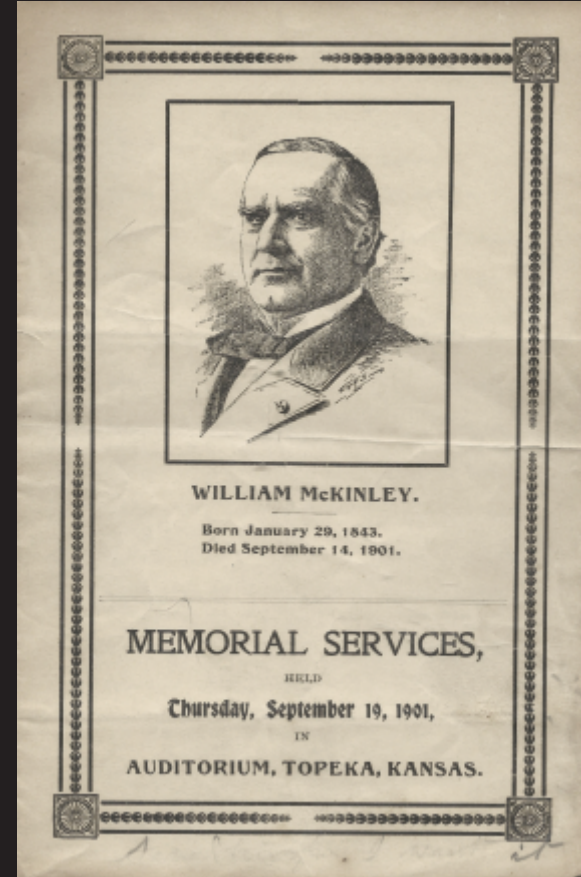
The Pennsylvania Railroad funeral train consisted of a steam locomotive covered with black bunting and seven pristine Pullman train cars: the Raleigh and Belgrade (press); the Waldorf (dining); the Naples (senators); Hungary (President Theodore Roosevelt's cabinet); the Olympia (Mrs. McKinley); and the Pacific, the observation car. The doors on the Pacific observation car were not wide enough to accommodate the casket, so the only option was to remove one of the large windows from the right side of the car. The casket gently passed through the window and was placed on a raised platform so mourners could get a glimpse of it through the crystal glass. Manned by two honor guards, the car was filled with flowers, and the casket was flooded with a light.

Struggling with grief, Mrs. McKinley, President Roosevelt, cabinet members and invited guests all boarded the train



Left: McKinley funeral train passing through Lock Haven, Pennsylvania. Flag draped casket can be seen in large two rear windows. Above: McKinley locomotive No. 2037 Steam engine decorated by ladies of Santa Cruz, California





Above Left: The J. William Lee Sons Company had the distinct privilege of serving the William McKinley family in Washington, DC. Mr. Lee is seated in the front row center. Above Right: Memorial Folder, National Museum of Funeral History  
Below: Assassinated Presidents casket taken from train on its arrival at Canton, Ohio - Alamy Photo



with the assistance of conductor Frank Powers. Secret Service Officer George Foster from Ohio, who was with McKinley from his inauguration until his assassination, also boarded the funeral train.

A pilot train departed the station 15 minutes prior to the special funeral train, clearing the track of the throngs of mourners. The engineer, with his head out of the cab, gave the all clear and released the brakes. With the steam hissing loudly, the funeral train jerked forward and slowly rolled out of Buffalo's Union Station at 8:30 a.m. The observation car, containing the president's casket, was the last car of the train, and Mrs. McKinley rode in her car just in front.

As the funeral train rolled along its scheduled route, the tolling of church bells could be heard in the distance as more than a half million people lined the train tracks in the cold, hoping to catch a glimpse of their beloved president. After nine scheduled stops of an all-day trip, the funeral train arrived at 9:15 p.m., only 15 minutes behind schedule, at the Baltimore Potomac Station in Washington, D.C., on the evening of Sept. 16, 1901.

To the sound of "Taps," the president's casket was removed from the observation car and carried on the shoulders of four artillery men and four sailors to a waiting black, hand-carved hearse drawn by six black horses furnished by J. William Lee Undertakers. The funeral procession stopped at the White House entrance, and the mahogany casket was carried inside and placed on two black pedestals under the large crystal chandelier in the East Room.

The following day, at 9 a.m., the flag-draped casket was taken to the U.S. Capitol for the state funeral. Following the ceremony, Mrs. McKinley went directly to the funeral train, and the funeral procession, without music, traveled down Pennsylvania Avenue, arriving at the station some time later. Mrs. McKinley was most anxious to get her husband back home because her strength was rapidly declining.

To save time, the 19-car funeral train from Washington to Canton, Ohio, was divided into three sections, with trains leaving in 10-minute intervals. The first train, consisting of seven Pullman cars, led the way, carrying President Roosevelt, cabinet members and government officials. The second train consisted of eight Pullman cars carrying the casket, Mrs. McKinley, relatives and dignitaries, and the third train, made up of four Pullman cars, was for soldiers, sailors and baggage.

Concerns about safety persisted, and Superintendent Colin Studds, who was in charge of the funeral train, said: "No man will make a mistake on this run." Railroad man C.T. Wilcott was aboard the funeral train with a telegraph outfit and a tapping key to be used in case of an accident.

With smoke billowing from the stack, the iconic funeral train left the station at 8:10 p.m. and headed down the track on a cold, starless night for the final journey home. It rumbled along at 25 mph and followed the Ohio River for miles. Riverboats blew their whistles in sorrow, with their flags at half-staff.

Along the route, mourners placed silver coins, spoons and other metal items on the rails, and, after the train



Left: The McKinley cortege leaving the White House, September 17, 1901. Underwood & Underwood, 1901  
Right: Funeral procession of the martyred President, passing the U.S. Treasury in Washington. Underwood & Underwood, 1901



thundered past, they raced to the track and to retrieve their cherished keepsakes. Other mourners placed flowers on the tracks. In the parks and along the tracks, boys in their long pants and knickers sold mourning buttons for 25 cents.

With a stop in Harrisburg, Mrs. McKinley's condition worsened. Her physician, Dr. Rixey, requested that she leave the train, but she refused.

The funeral train arrived in Altoona for an engine change to a class TZ locomotive No. 1964, then thundered on to Pitcairn to change out the engines and get fresh water and a new crew. The replacement crew of the second train carrying the body of the president consisted of engineer Henry Hukill and fireman F.P. Carr, who were longtime railroad men. After a brief stop, the train rolled out of the depot and continued along the countryside, passing country crossings and through towns where brick buildings and wooden houses were draped in black crape. The train steamed past thousands of mourners, many with handkerchiefs in their hands, standing mute along the many miles of steel track.

On a cloudy overcast Wednesday morning, it was requested as the train approached Canton that there be no cannon salutes by the artillery battery because they might unnerve Mrs. McKinley. As the special funeral train came into view, the only sounds you could hear were those of church bells ringing as locomotive No. 9 slowly steamed through the lines of veterans of the Civil War standing at attention with their heads uncovered. They watched in sorrow as the black-draped funeral train slowly chugged passed them and the locomotive brakes screeched to a stop at the little Pennsylvania Railroad station at 11:58 a.m. Canton funeral director J.L. Arnold, with his horse-drawn black hearse, was waiting to take charge.

An estimated 10,000 grief-stricken people, many of them friends and neighbors of the McKinleys, gathered at the train station, along with the entire military of the state. The casket was removed gently through the heavy black-draped observation car side window and was lifted onto the shoulders of eight sailors to a waiting black hearse with two large silver lamps on either side. While the casket was being transferred to the courthouse rotunda, Mrs. McKinley was taken directly home and put to bed.

At 9 p.m. the flag-draped casket was returned to McKinley's house on North Market Street.

The following day at 2:30 p.m., a funeral service was held at the First Methodist Church. The funeral procession proceeded to West Lawn Cemetery for the committal service. All trains on the Pennsylvania system stopped, regardless of their location, for 10 minutes, out of respect until his casket was lowered into the grave.



President William McKinley, Lying in State  
U.S. Capitol, Washington DC  
Photo by William H. Rau