

The University of Maine

DigitalCommons@UMaine

WLBZ Radio Station Records

Manuscripts

8-16-1941

Description of President Roosevelt's Arrival in Rockland, Maine, After the Atlantic Conference

WLBZ Radio

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/wlbz_station_records



Part of the [History Commons](#), and the [Radio Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

WLBZ Radio, (August 16 1941) "Description of President Roosevelt's Arrival in Rockland, Maine, After the Atlantic Conference". *WLBZ Radio Station Records*. MS 608. Tape 27, part 1. Special Collections, Raymond H. Fogler Library, University of Maine.

https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/wlbz_station_records/151

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in WLBZ Radio Station Records by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.

University of Maine Raymond H. Fogler Library Special Collections Department

Transcript of a sound recording in MS 608, WLBZ Radio Station Records, Bangor, Maine, 1931-1973

Title: Description of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Return to the U.S., Rockland, Maine

Date: March 16, 1941

Recording number: Tape 27, part 1

Length of recording: 23:49

[Transcript begins]

ANNOUNCER: President Roosevelt returns to the mainland today from his momentous meeting with England's Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. He will land at the little town of Rockland, Maine, from the presidential yacht *Potomac*. Before he boards a train for Washington, he is expected to interview newspaper and radio representatives. Later today the National Broadcasting Company expects to bring you, over many of these stations, a report of the press conference.

At this time, we want to give you a brief picture of the scene today from NBC's headquarters on the dock where the President is expected to come ashore. For this word picture, we take you now to Rockland, Maine.

GRAUER: Good morning, radio friends. This is NBC at Rockland, Maine. This usually quiet northeast seacoast town, for today, is front-page news the nation over. For in just a few hours, the presidential yacht *Potomac* is expected to dock here, carrying the Chief Executive of the United States on route back to Washington, together with the highest-ranking Army and Navy officials and members of his staff. The exact spot where Mr. Roosevelt will set foot on the American mainland, following his epoch-making Atlantic Conference with Winston Churchill, is Tilson's Wharf here in Rockland, and NBC has moved its microphones to the very dock itself to which shortly the gracefully hulled *Potomac* will be moored. Here in Rockland, the air is tense with activity. The picturesque and narrow streets have been hastily festooned with the Stars and Stripes. The whole community has taken on a festive air. Newspapers, newsreels and radio men are here from Boston and New York, and the special train which will take Mr. Roosevelt back to Washington pulled into the yards about three hours ago, carrying members of the president's staff awaiting him. At this moment, the weather for the day in which Mr. Roosevelt has chosen to return is not particularly auspicious. There's a chill wind sweeping off the far reaches of the Atlantic. There's a haze over the blue water and looking out to the east, some are out there, as the *Potomac* is probably at this moment steaming toward us here in Rockland. The visibility is extremely limited, and the crowds which are expected to line this rugged New England coastline may be disappointed in obtaining a glimpse of the stately yacht as she sweeps into Rockland Harbor.

Well, that's the picture. Rockland, Maine, a city of 10,000, county seat, County Knox, bustling with activity today, an air of expectancy everywhere, everyone waiting for the President to return. Carleton Smith, NBC's announcer for the President, heads the special events crew, which is on the scene, and Smith, assisted by yours truly, will describe over many of these stations the arrival of the presidential party which will be sometime later in the day. We can't say exactly how soon, but we will keep you

posted from this point and with NBC bulletins as to just when we will go on the air from Tilson's Wharf in Rockland on the New England coast.

This is the Blue Network of the National Broadcasting Company. [Three musical notes, NBC sound effect]

SMITH: ... take precedent shattering meeting at sea with Britain's Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. The good ship *USS Potomac*, presidential yacht, is just now being tied in to the dock here and in a few moments, we expect to get the first glimpse of the President. He's been at sea for thirteen days, you know. The whole world has been waiting to hear some of the details between the meeting of the heads of these two great nations, and perhaps we'll have that for you a little bit later. The ship rounded the breakwater here at Rockland just about 15 minutes ago and she's been coming in very leisurely, everybody on board looking rested. At the moment, Commander Leahy, Skipper of the *Potomac*, is supervising her tying up. Last night the *Potomac* was in Pulpit Harbor just off North Haven. That's about 10 miles out, you know. And the night before that, it is supposed to have been, well, we're not quite certain, but well beyond. Somewhere perhaps about 90 miles out in the neighborhood of Cutler Island. That's 90 miles north and east of here.

At the moment, the sun is shining beautifully. The fog has lifted, the clouds have pushed away, and all is brightness here now as the President lands at Rockland, Maine, thirteen days after he left New London, Connecticut. And during those intervening days, of course, everyone in this wide world knows what has taken place. We hope, as we told you, to be able to attend the President's press conference but that's going to come a little bit later and we've just talked with Admiral McIntire as he came alongside of us, here, and he advises us that the press conference will be held aboard the *Potomac*. So, if we leave you in a few minutes, we'll be back just a little bit later, if we can, and when we have the opportunity to report to you the details of the press conference.

There's still many unknown facts to be reported, you know. Some of them will be divulged to us, perhaps soon, and others will remain unknown to the public at large until world affairs will permit their release. We were advised last night of the persons aboard the presidential yacht *Potomac* which left New London 13 days ago. First, the President, and then there's Harry Hopkins. We haven't yet seen him either. The Lend-Lease Administrator, you know, and he's been in London and Moscow for the past several weeks, and it's believed, popularly, that he perhaps came across with the Prime Minister for their meeting on the sea with the President. Admiral McIntire, the Navy's Surgeon General and personal physician to the President, is here, and we also got away from President Secretary and Military Aide, Major General Edwin M. Watson. And we see standing down here alongside the rail now the President's Naval Aide, Captain John R. Beardall. Last night's message from the *Potomac* did not state whether the Roosevelt sons Eliot and Franklin, Jr. were still aboard. And as yet, we haven't seen them. Course, there's very much unreported of this meeting between the President and the Prime Minister. We know that conferences took place aboard the cruiser *USS Augusta* and the British ship *Prince of Wales*, but where, that is, where on the sea, and when, that is, for how many days, those are questions that we haven't yet had answered for us. And where is Mr. Churchill at that, at this time, that's another question that we want answered. Maybe we'll get the answers to some of these at the President's press conference in just a little while.

For the past 24 hours, or more, the *Potomac* has been hovering off this Maine Coast, but now she's tied up here at Rockland, this thriving little fishing village of some 9,000 souls, and believe me, it's a big day in the city of Rockland. Flags all along the principal streets and I think the entire population out to get a glimpse of the President and welcome his return to the United States. Well, perhaps he's been in United States waters all the time, that we don't know, but in any event his return to land. A great many of that of the Rockland citizenry outside Tilson's Dock here, which has been used for many, many years for vessels plying these waters around here. And the rest of the citizenry lined up along the principal streets and back at the railroad station where the President will entrain for Washington.

And now, there have been two ferry steamers in here this afternoon. They've both pulled out. Alongside us here on the deck are General Watson and Admiral McIntire and Captain Beardall. They're just pacing around waiting for the runway to be put down and that's being done now with some aid of Uncle Sam's husky Naval boys pushing it and leveling it away so that the President will have no difficulty at all in getting off the deck and onto the dock, here. His car is parked just inside the closed shed and he'll have only a short distance to walk before getting in his automobile which will take him to the train. A little later this afternoon he'll leave for Washington and getting, will get back there, perhaps at noon tomorrow. Just as soon as he's back in Washington, he's going to have conferences with members of his cabinet and other high government officials, and undoubtedly they will start the machinery which will put into effect some of the provisions expressed in the eight principles with which you are all so familiar at this time. The agreement on certain policies, national policies, for Great Britain and the United States, the agreement arrived at by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister while at sea.

Now they're tying the runway up here, getting her all secure, and in just a few minutes some of these gentlemen aboard are going to step off and try those sea legs up here on the dock. We still haven't seen the President. He's undoubtedly in his cabin where he has working space, you know, with his desk and everything that's necessary for him to carry on the work of the Presidency while he's at sea. He's been in constant communication with the Navy, although there were no releases, no reports, issued from the *Potomac* or coming through the Navy, we should say. For some four or five days which heightened greatly the mystery of where the President was and who he might be seeing. And then on Thursday came the announcement that the President had met with the Prime Minister and the release of the eight principles which they had agreed upon, released through the Navy at the White House in Washington simultaneously with their announcement in London. A secret service passing back and forth here making certain at all is secure. Quite a number of small boats hovering around on the other side of the *Potomac* here, all of them trying to get a glimpse of the President, many of them were their glasses up, hoping that they'll get a real good look. And now we see that the press conference is just about to start, or we believe it is, so I'll turn the microphone over to Ben Grauer, and we'll go down and see what the President has to say. Ben Grauer.

GAUER: While Carleton Smith goes down this little section of the dock here, Tilson's Wharf, to get onto the gangplank and go aboard the *USS Potomac*, there he goes. See you later, Carleton, we'll tell you just a few of the overtones of this exciting little visit up to the northeast tip of the United States for a glimpse of an, really an epoch-making event, the return to U.S. soil of the President after the longest

unreported absence of the nation's chief executive in modern times. This picturesque New England town shows subtle but unmistakable signs of being proud of the distinction accorded it. And now I see all of the press are going down a companionway to meet with the President. The conference may be of great significance, it may be of the passing of relatively inconsequential details of the President's trip. We have no way of telling you at this time. But over many of these NBC stations, we will bring you, as soon as we do know, a report of just what transpires at that conference. Meanwhile, speaking from Rockland, Maine, on Tilson's Wharf, we say till we call you in and again, au revoir for the combined networks of the National Broadcasting Company. [Three notes, NBC sign-off sound effect]

GRAUER: Radio friends, the National Broadcasting Company now greets you from Tilson's Wharf at Rockland, Maine. The *USS Potomac* carrying the President of the United States and his party has docked alongside of us about 35 minutes ago. A call was given to the press and radio correspondents to come aboard for a conference, the first word which the United States press has had directly from the nation's chief executive in the 13 days he has been absent from these shores. NBC's presidential announcer is just coming up the gangplank now, about ten feet from us here at dockside and here is Carleton Smith.

SMITH: We all filed into the President's cabinet a few moments ago and it got a little bit warm before we got out, because it was quite crowded, some 30 to 35 newspaper and radio men there to get the first words of the President after his thirteen days at sea. He was dressed in a heavy gray tweed suit, sitting back very comfortably at the large table which serves him both as a work table and as a dining table. Over in the corner was Mr. Harry Hopkins and on the sofa, Miss Grace Tully, and back in the corner were Admiral McIntire, General Watson and Captain Beardall, all of the President's staff. The President said he was awfully glad to have everybody see the cabin of the *Potomac* and then he started in to give us just a little bit of information about the historic meeting. The Prime Minister, as you know, was on the *Prince of Wales*. The President was on the *USS Augusta*. Nothing can be said of the location of those ships or of the dates of their meetings. Of this we're certain, that they did last for more than one day. He stated that impressions which stood out were the very remarkable religious service on the *Prince of Wales* last Sunday when some three or four hundred American sailors and Marines intermingled with the British, all aboard the *Prince of Wales*, with the services conducted by two chaplains, one British and one American. The lesson was read by the Captain of the British ship and there were three hymns in which everybody aboard ship joined. The ship's altar, he said, was decked out in American and British flags and the officers intermingled on the fantail. Everyone, he said, felt, he believed they had felt, the very historic importance of the occasion. He then mentioned who had been there. He stated that General Marshall, our chief of staff, and General Arnold, Deputy Chief of Staff in charge of Air, General Burns in charge with Mr. Hopkins, I believe, of the Lend-Lease plan, and Colonel Bundy of the United States Army War Planners Division. For the Navy, there were Admiral Stark, Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Ernest King, Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Fleet, Captain Sherman of the Navy, Naval Operations, and then he mentioned the General Watson, Admiral McIntire, Captain Beardall had been there, as well as Mr. Sumner Welles, Undersecretary of State and Mr. Averill Harriman, who has been in London supervising the British end of the American Lend-Lease plan. And he wound it up by saying that of course Mr. Hopkins and himself had attended, and someone asked about his two sons and he said yes that Eliot and Franklin Jr. had been there, but quite by accident. The British had opposite members, that

is, members of the British services corresponding, in general, to those who represented the United States. The conferences were held in groups and between opposites, as it were. The Prime Minister and the President held all of their conferences, except the one, on the United States ship *Augusta*. He was asked about the genesis of the conferences, that is, how it came about. And the word was that they'd been talked about since last February and would have been held earlier except for the campaigns in Greece and Crete. But that after all they'd been delayed some three months from the time of their first conception. He stated it was a joint idea of the two of them, that these conferences be held, and they were primarily for an interchange of views relating to present and future. That they'd been eminently successful. One subject overlooked, overlooked in reporting the conferences thus far, according to the Chief Executive, seemed to be the exchange of views of what is happening in the world as applied to other nations. In other words, the more you survey the horrible situation at the present time, you see the influences at work in occupied and other countries, the influences placed upon them by the Nazi regime and that this situation needs to be brought home to our people and to all of the peoples everywhere.

The purpose of the conference, and steps to be taken now to put the conference into effect, constitute merely an interchange of views, which will be continued. He indicated there was complete understanding in every phase of their discussion between the Prime Minister of Great Britain and himself and of course their various staffs. He said that every section of every continent had been discussed. One of the reporters asked him whether, it was, in his opinion, we were any closer to entering the war, and he indicated that we were not. Russia has not been asked to subscribe to the eight-point program, so far as he knows, and I guess he would know. The question of aid to Russia was discussed, and quite a few other things, including the fitting in of Russian needs to present supplies which might be available to him. And he pointed out that those the supplies might be divided into two different classifications, things which are available and which could be delivered now, in time to do some good, and other things which might be delivered perhaps after the winter is over, when it'll be simpler to get things in. And of course there would be other things made available at that time and the inference from that statement is that he would believe that the Russian campaign will not be over anytime soon, but will last on through the winter. I think that can be the assumption from that remark.

He has no plans at the present time to speak on the air. He was asked about that because there have been rumors that he might have a fireside chat reasonably soon. But as of the present time, there are no indications that he will. The question of Lend-Lease was again brought up, and he stated that perhaps we're nearing the point when we will probably have to ask for more money, that it's not all been spent, but most of the money which has been set up has now been allocated. He reiterated and re-emphasized we might say the fact that Soviet Russia is not getting any Lend-Lease money, that they are perfectly able and are paying for everything that they get. He had nothing to say at all on a question of France, or on a question of the Far East. And now, we have pretty well reported in brief the President's press conference and in just a couple of moments, he's going to come off the ship.

At the moment, Harry Hopkins is up now walking around on deck and he's walked over toward the after stock here and the President will soon be aboard deck. Lined up are Mr. Harry Hopkins, Captain Beardall, General Watson and Admiral McIntire. And back a little farther on the deck is Mr. William

Hassett to the President's Secretary, who's been very kindly taking care of us here at Rockland and seeing that all facilities were put at our disposal. All of the men standing at attention in just, just a few moments the President of the United States will be piped over the side, as it's called in the Navy. President leaving the yacht *Potomac*, the Presidential yacht *Potomac*, come aboard here at Tilson's Dock in Rockland, Maine. Beautiful Rockland Harbor, that it is, this afternoon with the sun shining brightly and a few fleecy clouds racing overhead. And now the President with his chief bodyguard, Thomas [?] and Captain Beardall, the Skipper of the ship Commander Leahy, all making their way across the deck here to the gangplank. Mr. Harry Hopkins dressed in a brown suit this afternoon and carrying his overcoat as indication of the fact that there's been some chilly weather out here on the water. [Applause.] And a few people which have been privileged to get in here on the dock give the President a little bit of applause and the photographers come forth with their usual cry, "Mr. President, Mr. President, look this way."

Everyone now, Mr. Harry Hopkins stepping up alongside the President to be photographed with him and immediately behind him, Admiral Rusty McIntire, General Watson and the skipper of the ship, Commander Leahy. The President, smiling, looking very healthy, indeed, tanned up, as we told. He's got a blue shirt and a blue tie and a heavy, gray tweed suit. Still more cries of "Mr. President look this way, please" as the photographers, the newsreel men, and the still photographers, train their cameras on the President for the first opportunity they've had now in 13 days. And that's most unusual because very seldom in the eight and a half years which Mr. Roosevelt has been President has he ever been completely out of touch with the shore as he has on this trip. As you know, there were no newspaper or radio men accompanied him on the trip and they're all here today of course to get these first words.

And we've reported to you in brief the gist of the President's press conference, his first in something over two weeks. Photographers are still having their field day, they're trying again, and now the sign is given and I got hit in the mouth of my own microphone as somebody tripped over the base of it. [Sound of whistle] There's the boatman's whistle as the President goes over the side. Can we get through there now, please? Sure, we all do. Watch it, Ben.

GRAUER: We're on the air here. Go ahead, Carl.

SMITH: Thank you. If we can just get through here, then we... Let's take it right out of here, Ben. Now we are free again, we can walk right through here. The President going along with Captain Beardall and the Secret Service's car right at the end of the gangplank here, and in just a moment, he'll be in it, with the top down for an open air ride through the city. And a little applause here in the background. There's some more now as he comes into view of the people who have been privileged to get inside the dock here and get a glimpse of the President as he came off the presidential yacht *Potomac*. It's only a short distance, some seven blocks in this little Maine city, to the place with the train is parked. He'll be aboard the train in a few minutes and just a little later will be pulling out on his way to Washington, due back in the nation's capital tomorrow about, well, sometime perhaps just before noon. President seems very happy to see quite a few the people here who come here to greet him today and he hasn't been in ... Now he's in the automobile and in just a few moments will pull off. This is Carlton Smith speaking for

Ben Grauer and myself. We've been privileged to... alright, Ben, take it. Thanks very much, and I'll run for the train.

GRAUER: Alright, Carleton, fine. NBC's presidential announcer, Carleton Smith, had just told you of his presence at the conference of the press and radio in which the nation's Chief Executive gave some details of his history-making Atlanta Conference with the Prime Minister of England and high officials of the Army and Navy of both democracies. We're speaking now from the, from Tillson's Wharf at Rockport, at Rockland, Maine. I've just chatted with one of the stevedores here and he told me this was the biggest moment in his life. He handled the [howitzer?] of *USS Potomac* when it was walked to the dockside and the President set foot once again on the American soil after his long absence. Goodbye, Carleton, I know you're going to make the train. And now we'll say good afternoon to you from Rockland, Maine, through the combined facilities of the Red and Blue Networks of the National Broadcasting Company. [Sound of three notes, NBC sign-off]

[Transcript ends]

For more information about this transcript, audio recording, or other materials in Special Collections at the University of Maine, contact:

Fogler Library Special Collections
5729 Raymond H. Fogler Library
Orono, ME 04469-5729
207.581.1686
um.library.spc @ maine.edu