



## At 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue

**By Jonathan Menon**

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THE PARSONS' HORSES clopped down the driveway at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue just before half past noon on Sunday, April 28, 1912. Through the trees to the left 'Abdu'l-Bahá could see the large pediment, supported by six white ionic columns, that sheltered the western entrance to the executive mansion. The carriage, which carried him, Dr. Fareed, and Mrs. Parsons, rolled forward in the direction of the executive offices in the West Wing.

President Taft had invited 'Abdu'l-Bahá to visit him at the White House at 12:30. On Friday morning 'Abdu'l-Bahá had spoken at the President's church, All Souls Unitarian on Harvard Street, and last night, Saturday, members of the President's family had attended a reception that Mrs. Parsons had held for 300 dignitaries in the capital.

Congressman William Sulzer (D-New York), had also come to the Parsons' for a private interview. He was the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and said afterwards that he felt he had talked with Elijah and Moses. Shortly afterward the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Champ Clark (D-Missouri), asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá to address Congress on his vision of world peace.

The carriage pulled in under the portico of the West Wing. But before 'Abdu'l-Bahá had a chance to dismount, a White House aide rushed out from the executive office entrance to make President Taft's apologies. He had been campaigning in Boston this week in advance of the Massachusetts Republican Primary, which was coming up on Tuesday. But he had only arrived back in Washington at 4 a.m. this morning and would have to leave again for New England on the 6:35 p.m. train. Politics was an unpredictable business, and the President had to postpone.

As for addressing Congress, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the one who had to decline. He had to be in Chicago. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People had invited him to give a major address to their Fourth Annual Conference on Tuesday, and he was scheduled to lay the cornerstone for a new Bahá'í temple in the village of Wilmette, Illinois, on Wednesday afternoon. He was leaving Washington by train tonight.

From the White House, the carriage drove south to the Ellipse, an oval-shaped park just beneath the White House's south lawn. Eleven years from now President Coolidge would start a new American tradition here by lighting the first National Christmas Tree. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Mrs. Parsons, and Dr. Fareed took a walk through the American elms that ringed the oval roadway, and then drove back to her home at 18th and R Streets for lunch. After several more interviews and a few last minute visits, the horses trotted down Massachusetts Avenue and back to Union Station, where 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his party departed on the 5:25 p.m. train to Chicago.

## How to Cite this Article

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### **FOOTNOTE / ENDNOTE:**

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