

JOHN W. DAVIS DAY

by Dorothy Davis

Suddenly in May 1920 John William Davis, Clarksburg native, was a contender to be nominated for President of the United States at the convention of the Democrat party to be held late in June in San Francisco. Enthusiasm for Davis started after the *New York Times* in an editorial stated, "John W. Davis is a great man, a great American, a great Democrat." To back up the statement the newspaper cited Davis' record as a U.S. Congressman when Davis "contended for justice for all parties, for right and reason...His personal qualities have won the friendship, confidence and admiration of everyone he touched."¹ The newspaper reported that Davis had been a great U.S. Solicitor General. At the time the boom developed, John W. Davis was 3000 miles away in London where he was U.S. Ambassador to the Court of St. James. With no encouragement from the Ambassador, West Virginia Governor Cornwell enthusiastically nominated Davis at the convention, a speech seconded by the scintillating Izetta Jewel Brown, also a member of the West Virginia delegation to the convention. At times during the convention it looked as if either Davis or William C. McAdoo, son-in-law of President Wilson, would win the required number of votes of the delegates to be the party's nominee. Then Ohio governor James M. Cox surged to the front to win. Seven weeks later Davis and his wife came home on leave. Davis refused all pleas by the Democrats to speak for their candidates James M. Cox for President and for Franklin D. Roosevelt for Vice-President because the Ambassador felt it was improper for him to campaign. Davis' friends were so insistent that he agreed to speak on the League of Nations in his home town about Oct. 20, eight days before he would sail from New York for London. A page advertisement with his picture in *The Sunday Telegram* on Oct. 17, 1920, stated that John W. Davis would speak at The Opera House in Clarksburg at 8:00 p.m. on October 18. The Opera House overflowed with a crowd that also filled Fourth Street outside the theater. Davis insisted that the United States must either join the League of Nations or be isolated.²

Clarksburgers loved John W. Davis as their own. His grandfather John had come from the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia with his younger brother Rezin in 1819, when the two established in Clarksburg a saddle and harness business. John married Eliza Steen, a school teacher in the town and a daughter of Scots-Irish immigrants. John Davis was a man of powerful physique, an elder in the Presbyterian Church and served one term as Harrison County sheriff. His son John J. had no interest in carrying on the saddler's trade. When the boy was seventeen years old he began to read law in the Clarksburg office of George H. Lee, former judge of the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia. In 1854 John J. Davis entered the Lexington Law School, forerunner of the Washington and Lee School of Law. Just before his twentieth birthday in 1855, John J. Davis opened a law office in Clarksburg. He was taller than six feet, weighed only 130 pounds, and tended toward morbidity and hypochondria. To routine inquiries about his health, he would reply, "Far from well, far from well."³ But he loved words and was unmatched in Harrison County for ease of delivery and flow of words. In 1862 John J. married Anna Kennedy, daughter of a Baltimore lumber merchant, who had just graduated from Baltimore Woman's College, the second institution in the United States to confer degrees on women. The train they rode to Clarksburg was the last train to get through before Stonewall Jackson's cavalry tore up the B&O lines. They moved in with his parents. After serving in the U.S. Congress John J. Davis in 1874 built his own house, later referred to as "the Davis Mansion," on a Lee Street lot overlooking the Harrison County courthouse and the Davis law office on the second floor of the building across Main Street from the courthouse. John J. and Anna Kennedy Davis had six children, all girls except the fourth one born April 13, 1873. He was named John William Davis. As a boy John W. Davis spent many hours observing his father wage epic battles in the courtroom and on the stump, but the boy was very much like his mother in temperament and style. Both disliked displays of affection, both wrote matter-of-fact letters, both disciplined themselves stringently and bottled up emotions.⁴ John studied at a local academy and at 14 entered Pantops Academy, a preparatory school near Charlottesville, VA. He enrolled as a sophomore at Washington and Lee in 1889. With money scarce at home, John W. in 1892 took a job of tutor to the nine children and six nephews and nieces of Major Edward H. McDonald of Charles Town, WV, for a salary of \$300 and board for nine months. By spring Davis had fallen in love with Major McDonald's second daughter Julia and had learned that he did not want to be a school teacher.

The financial panic of 1893 caused his father to have scarcely enough cash to run his household; so for 14 months young John served as apprentice in his father's law office. Even though he could have qualified for law by working with his father, the young John asked his father if he would go on his note for \$300 so that he could return to Washington and Lee School of Law and spend a year qualifying as a lawyer. Next spring he was elected law Class Orator and gave a ringing commencement oration on the rule of law. When he returned home his father placed a notice in the newspaper:

John J. Davis

John W. Davis

Davis and Davis
Attorneys at Law
Clarksburg, W. Va.⁵

After a year of practice John W. Davis returned to the Washington Lee School of Law as a teacher and then on June 20, 1899, married Julia McDonald on the spacious lawn of Media, the McDonald homeplace. The couple took a train to Washington and then returned to Clarksburg, where they moved in with the Davises. In the fall Julia became pregnant. A daughter was born to John and Julia Davis, a child named Anna Kennedy.⁶ Julia came down with puereral fever and after three weeks on August 17, 1900, she died. Inconsolable, John W. Davis buried himself in his work. He won a seat in the West Virginia Legislature and soon was floor leader and a member of the Judiciary Committee. In 1910 Davis overwhelmingly won the First Congressional seat in the U.S. Congress. He married Ellen Graham Bassell, daughter of a Clarksburg attorney, in the rectory of the Episcopal Church in Clarksburg on January 2, 1912. President Wilson named John W. Davis U.S. Solicitor General in 1913 and Ambassador to the Court of St. James in 1918. When his term as Ambassador ended, he accepted a position with a law firm in New York City.

West Virginia friends of John W. Davis formed an organization in October 1921 to persuade the powers that Davis was the only man who could unify the Democrat Party. When he was president of the American Bar Association in 1923 Davis expressed the opinion that the greatest duty of government was to encourage individual effort despite the growing opinion that government should supplant such effort. He extolled Anglo-American friendship and favored joining the League of Nations. In 1924 the great obstacles to his success as a nominee were the Irish question and the Court of St. James and the fact that he was a Wall street lawyer affiliated with the House of J. P. Morgan. Davis did not encourage efforts to further his candidacy, but by mid March 1924 he allowed Louis A. Johnson of Clarksburg to send campaign literature to Washington and Lee alumni.

Delegates to the convention and a heat wave descended on Madison Square Garden in New York City June 24, 1924. Temperature was in the mid-eighties; humidity and cigar smoke were stifling. William G. McAdoo and Alfred E. Smith were the favorite candidates for the nomination. Senator Oscar Underwood of Alabama, Carter Glass of Virginia, Samuel Ralston of Indiana were dark-horse candidates. John W. Davis was the leading compromise candidate. Divisions in the party were almost beyond repair with the Klu Klux Klan, the Prohibitionists, the Wets, the Progressives, the Conservatives all pulling in different directions. On the 60th ballot Davis had had enough. He drafted a letter of withdrawal from the race to the West Virginia delegation who ignored the letter. On the 69th ballot McAdoo came within 20 votes of the needed majority. Finally on July 9, 1924, the ninth day of balloting of the longest political convention in history, John W. Davis on the 103rd ballot was declared the nominee of the Democratic Party for President. Davis began immediately to try to bind the party's gaping wounds but three of Davis' choices for Vice President refused to enter the race. Finally Charles Bryan, progressive governor of Nebraska and younger brother of William Jennings Bryan, consented to run as Vice President causing Carter Glass to comment as to Bryan: "a cheap edition of the party's most pestiferous harlequin; his support is not worth a bauble; Eastern states won't vote for him." Davis continued to do all he could to silence the sectional and racial and religious antagonisms stirred up during the long fight in the convention.

The dissension in New York City meant nothing to Clarksburgers. Their favorite son had been nominated. The city went wild with citizens forming spontaneous parades and filling the air with the sound of firecrackers:

Clarksburg was running wild with joy Wednesday night as thousands of its inhabitants paraded the downtown streets in hilarious celebration of the nomination of a born and bred Clarksburger for the high office of president of the united States.

With the breaking of the long and weary deadlock in the ranks of the Democratic convention in New York Wednesday afternoon came the breaking of another deadlock here in Clarksburg. The deadlock here was a deadlock of suspense, of welled-up emotion. When that deadlock suddenly broke, it was as if a huge dam had given away and let go the massive floods it had held in check for so long behind its walls.

No sooner had the flash that darted through the ether and over the wires telling of the nomination of Davis arrived here than the city suddenly took on new life. It woke to find itself famous. It snapped out of its summer lethargy. The half-expected and half-unexpected had happened. That brief flash from the news bureaus "Davis nominated" was fraught with momentous significance for this town and this state.

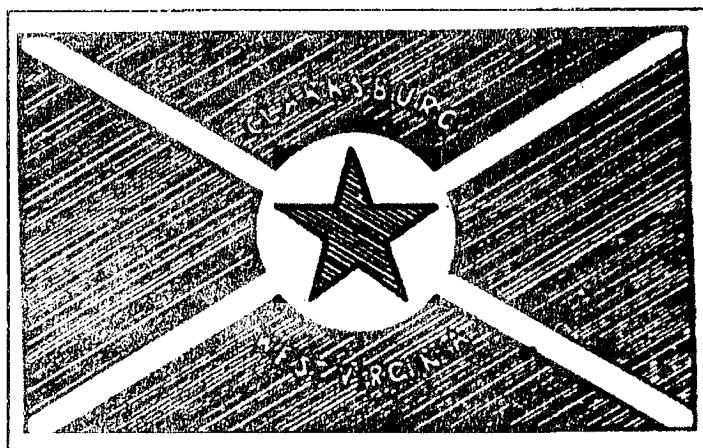
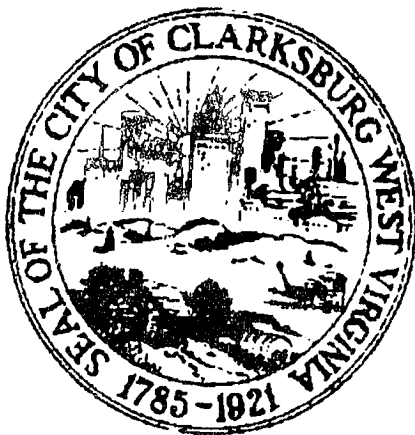
A president, a governor and a United States senator.

Never before in the history of the United States had it happened that one town or one city had furnished a candidate for governor and for president and for U. S. Senator all at the same time. The names of the men of this great triumvirate, Davis, Goff and Gore, were proudly grouped together in the minds and hearts of the people of the town and state; all three of them sons of illustrious families of Clarksburg; all three of them distinguished men of business and statecraft previous to their becoming candidates; one a former ambassador, another an assistant cabinet member and the other as assistant united States attorney-general.⁷

The nomination occurred at a time when Clarksburg hit a high in civic pride and citizen participation and when the economy of the city boomed. In 1917 the City of Clarksburg had requested the West Virginia Legislature for permission to revise its charter. The city wanted to bring into its borders the small incorporated towns of Adamston, North View, Stealey and Broad Oaks along with the land consisting of Point Comfort, Highland Park, Hazel Atlas section, Kelley Hill and Glen Elk which lay between the incorporated towns. The land mass would be known as Greater Clarksburg consisting of nine city wards. An enlightened city council in 1921 had hired Harrison G. Otis to be the first professional manager for the city. Otis developed a playground system until the percentage of attendance led the nation. He sparked a newspaper to be published by the city and mailed to every residence within the city limits. The council March 30, 1923, adopted an official seal designed by Virginia Wood and a city flag described in the following article:

"A bright red, five-pointed star, symbolizing the city of Clarksburg, composed of five former towns served by two intersecting highways, represented by white bars extending diagonally corner to corner, across a bright blue field, the bars radiating to the four corners of the flag being likewise symbolic of Clarksburg products distributed to the four corners of the earth, a further symbolism denoting the star of hope with the sky the limit. The star is bright red, the circle and bars white and the field bright blue suggestive of the national flag as allegiance to the City of Clarksburg implies a greater allegiance to the nation."

This is the description of the city flag as set forth in the resolution passed by the council on March 30. So far as known, Clarksburg is the first West Virginia city to adopt a municipal flag. Several other cities in different parts of the country have flags, including Pittsburgh, Birmingham and Dallas.⁸



Clarksburg Seal and Clarksburg Flag, both adopted on March 30, 1923.

Clarksburg citizens thought the city was just beginning to grow. At a time when freight-car loads of merchandise came to the large wholesale houses in Glen Elk to be distributed in small lots by train over all of Northcentral West Virginia, Sam Bentley, president of the Chamber of Commerce, stated in July 1924, "Freight rate cut means 100,000 population for the city."⁹ A large delegation had traveled from Clarksburg to be in New York City for the Democrat Convention among whom were Chester Ogden, Ray Garvin, Mr. and Mrs. Olandus West, Leo Caulfield, J. S. Rodney, Arlos J. Harbert, Louis Johnson, O. B. Lawman, John W. Bartlett.¹⁰ After wire services on July 9 carried word of the nomination, the three city luncheon clubs --- Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis---sent to New York telegrams of congratulations. When word came that the formal notification would be held in Clarksburg, Samuel R. Bentley immediately sent Dorsey Potter to New York to coordinate arrangements. Mr. Potter wired Clarksburg on July 11 that the date of the notification would be August 11. John W. Davis left for Maine where he would write his acceptance speech and Clarksburgers left New York for home to work on plans for John W. Davis Day.

On July 12, three days after the nomination, Samuel Bentley presided over a meeting of citizens anxious to help with arrangements. L. S. Whiteman of the Coal District Board of Education offered Victory High School Stadium for the celebration; Haze Morgan, Clarksburg attorney, offered his new palatial home at Edgewood for housing. Charles D. Johnson, chairman of housing, announced the telephone number of the Chamber of Commerce offices in the Prunty Building where citizens should call if they had rooms to rent. Bentley announced that a special train with Pullman and diner would run out of Charleston for Clarksburg on August 11.¹¹

By Thursday, July 17, committees met at the Waldo Hotel for lunch and decided first that they would gather for lunch every day until the celebration. George L. Duncan, chairman of finance, announced workers would canvass every residence in the city for funds that should total at least \$25,000 to meet needs. Ray Garvin, chairman of entertainment and care of the press, described press working quarters and the use of the golf course at the Clarksburg Country Club by newsmen. J. C. McManaway, chairman of transportation, told how the city could park 10,000 automobiles within the city limits, where passengers could use the street-car system to the festivities.¹²

On July 21 the committee knew the nomination notification ceremony would be held in Goff Plaza on the night of August 11. A lawyer from Marion, Ohio, who was visiting in Clarksburg, told how his city managed the festivities following the nomination of Warren G. Harding in 1920. That ceremony was in mid-afternoon after which most of the crowd could travel home. Having the affair at night meant attendees must be housed overnight. The B&O planned to run a special train with Pullman and diner from Washington, D.C., a train which would return after the notification but still thousands of the 60,000 expected must be housed. George Alexander, president of Monongahela Power, assured the committee that his company could supply lighting. All concessions would be handled by a committee with L. D. Richards, chairman, and members Dr. R. L. Osborn, F. G. Bland, Luther Haymond, E. B. Deison, Doliver Hamrick¹³ Following this spate of announcements, the Clarksburg newspapers turned to other news and Clarksburg citizens worked on preparations. The State of West Virginia and the City of Clarksburg hurried up road repair and the city built an elevated walkway with an ornate balustrade in front of the John W. Davis homeplace on Lee Ave.

By August 5 the seventy-five Boy Scouts who would act as messengers and guides met at the courthouse for instructions. The newspaper told those who had made financial pledges to the celebration to pay Hugh Jarvis before the end of the week. The committee announced that the parade on August 11 would start at 2:30 p.m. on Washington Avenue and proceed to Goff Plaza led by the Home Town club of Clarksburg. Wire services brought the news that John W. Davis had left New York City for Hyde Park, where he and his wife would be guests of Mr. and Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt and where Davis would address the Dutchess County Democratic picnic to be attended by New York Governor Alfred E. Smith.¹⁴

By August 9 Clarksburg was ready:

John W. Davis will probably be the most brilliantly illuminated man in the United States Monday night. . . Through the wizardry of modern lighting a total of 150,000 candle power of light will be concentrated on the speakers' stand in Goff Plaza and the grounds surrounding which will be made as bright as day. More than 100,000 square feet will be illuminated. Engineers of a Pittsburgh electrical firm have just completed installing seventy-five 1,000 watt lamps in standard flood light projectors, the job being completed in eight hours. The projectors mounted on the speakers' stand will throw a red, white, and blue "sunburst" making a bizarre though patriotic effect.¹⁵

The newspaper reported that thousands visited Goff Plaza on Friday night, August 8, to see the speakers' stand where radio apparatus had been tested and was ready to carry Davis's voice to several million in the nation. "The court of honor is completed and is a pretty site with its wooden pillars painted white and the festoons of green between."¹⁶ Headquarters for the press was the Elks Club, where twenty-five typewriters were in use by the big-city reporters many of whom were housed by the club. The Harrison County Medical Association had set up emergency medical stations at the B&O depot, the Arcade Building on West Main Street and in Goff Plaza. Professional decorators had adorned residences and businesses and the B&O Station with swags of bunting in patriotic colors and photographs of Nominee Davis. At the railroad station a walkway with white pillars led from where the special train carrying John W. Davis would be sided to the station door. Those arriving in automobiles via Fairmont would pass through an arch lighted with red, white and blue lights on Pike Street in Shinnston. Residences were overflowing with guests as attested to by a sidelight on the notification carried in the newspaper: "About 10 o'clock last night along Fourth Street this sight was seen: Eight men and one woman carrying cots home to put up in their homes."¹⁷

Early Saturday morning throngs had arrived at the railroad station either via streetcars or on shank's mare for city streets were closed to automobiles. People filled every foot of space in Baltimore Street and on the station platform. Exactly on time at 9:15 a.m. the candidate's special train pulled into the station as the Greater Clarksburg and the Adamston bands, both decked out in new uniforms, burst into patriotic tunes. Clarksburg City Manager Harrison B. Otis and Chamber of Commerce President Samuel R. Bentley greeted Candidate Davis as Louis A. Johnson of the homecoming committee "started leading Mr. Davis through the throng to an automobile outside but it was slow traveling. Mr. Davis bowed and smiled and spoke to the throng: 'Just as in every crisis in my life, I have come back [home] for sympathy, and for encouragement. I shall

leave you strengthened for the task ahead.'"¹⁸ Davis then entered the back seat of an automobile to join his old friend, venerable John C. Johnson of Bridgeport and former Governor Saunders of Louisville. The automobile moved toward the Waldo Hotel, where notables, the Democrat National Committee and alumni of Washington and Lee University plus newsmen filled the hostelry. A photograph of the period shows Fourth Street between the hotel and the fence of the Lowndes property packed solid with the crowd which had followed the entourage from the station. The bands stood on a grassy spot across from the Elks Club and played a concert.

In mid-afternoon just before the John W. Davis party boarded a special traction car for Fairmont, a group of women friends of Nell Bassell Davis, wife of the nominee, presented Mrs. Davis with "a regular old-time Virginia bouquet of flowers."

Mr. Davis arrived in Fairmont aboard a special, two-car traction train provided by the Monongahela West Penn Public Service Company and when the gaily decorated cars rolled into the city, it was met by another tremendous throng of people similar to that which earlier in the day had welcomed him to his home in Clarksburg. Mr. Davis was accompanied to Fairmont by his wife and his sister, Miss Emma K. Davis. Through the streets of the city the presidential candidate was the central figure of his second triumphal procession in less than five hours. Sputtering motorcycles ridden by state troopers served as an escort...The party reached "Yeardley," the home of Clem L. Shaver, Chairman of the National Democratic Committee, where 10,000 persons were awaiting and Davis and his party were with difficulty piloted through the people waiting to hear what he had to say.

After the reception in the Shaver home there was another outburst of enthusiasm before Candidate Davis stepped into his automobile to be whisked away to the special train which carried him back to Clarksburg about ten o'clock.¹⁹

Sunday was planned as a personal day for the Davises. They attended church services in "the little brick" Central Presbyterian Church "where Mr. Davis is a member and a trustee and a church where his sister is an active member"²⁰ Crowds and bands formed tiny parades at various times during the day to escort notables who arrived from the East among them Senator from Montana Thomas J. Walsh who was to deliver the formal notification speech at Goff Plaza the next night. He arrived at 6:08 p.m. and was escorted to the home of Mr. and Mrs. George L. Duncan, 141 East Main Street, where he was to be a houseguest. Mr. Duncan had been a lifelong friend of Mr. Davis. Continuous entertainment at the Carmichael Auditorium included a dance on Saturday night and a Greater Clarksburg Band concert on Sunday afternoon.

Monday, August 11, dawned a beautiful day. Special trains began arriving at the B&O Station, three from Morgantown, one from Parkersburg, one from the Charleston-Huntington area, one from the East. Newsmen set up a battery of movie cameras across from the Elks club where the nominee was to arrive at 11:00 o'clock to attend a meeting of the Democratic National Committee. Mr. Davis was over an hour late for people from the special trains went straight to the Davis residence on Lee Street:

The leader of Democracy was taken more or less unawares Monday morning by the large delegations that called on him and fairly demanded a hearing. They congregated in his lawn and soon were marching single file to the steps and into the cool colonial hallway of the Davis mansion on Lee Avenue. The population of Clarksburg increased by thousands Monday morning in the brief space of four hours. Every train arriving at the B&O Station was unloading its quota of delegates, sightseers, politicians, Democratic sympathizers and the public from most every state in the union.

From early morning until noon the streets of the city echoed the crash of martial music and as the Greater Clarksburg and the Adamston bands, Huntington and Charleston bands marched and countermarched. The Huntington band spent most of the morning at the Davis' home where while waiting for a chance to greet the nominee, it played numerous pieces. There was a huge crowd at the old home all morning. Folk from far and near, men high in politics of their own localities; men who were unknown; professional business and laboring men mingled with beautiful gowned women in the press of folk clustered at the foot of the steps up which a line moved at a snail's pace to shake hands with Mr. Davis. At the rear of the house were other folk and the lawn provided locations for numerous "pep" meetings where Democratic leaders assured each other that "Davis is a great man."

For a solid hour preceding the arrival of John W. Davis at the Elks' Club the Greater Clarksburg band, each man clad in smart white trousers and blue coats, stood in the lawn opposite the club and played the campaign songs such as "Sidewalks of New York". Al Smith's song; "California, Here

I Come", McAdoo's song; and the Davis parodies made up by local songsters. Meyer Siegel, one of the Elks minstrel comedians and Richard Dolan, of the same organization, led the singing of these songs through megaphones. The band and these singers also entertained several hundred persons on Fourth Street in front of the Waldo Hotel a short time before.²¹

The crowd at the Davis residence must have overrun the mansion. The author of this sketch, aged ten in 1924, has just one vignette in her memory of the day: that of standing in the kitchen of the Davis mansion appalled at the little boys chasing one another around the room and out the back door and wondering why some adult did not stop the boys.

The parade went off flawlessly under the bright August sun with everything pointing to a perfect evening for the acceptance speech, the climax of the day.

Never will the evening be repeated. A switch was turned and the flood lights routed the approaching darkness for blocks around Goff Plaza. Before the "zero hour" for the official notification program to commence, it seemed that endless avenues of men, women and children started pouring into the region of Goff Plaza from the downtown and other sections of the city. Police and special officers were kept busy handling the mammoth crowd that came surging on to hear John W. Davis speak. A buzzing of conversation not unlike the sound from a great swarm of bees filled the air. Greetings were shouted as friends called out to one another in the throng. Over in the section reserved for the members of the press, veterans of such gatherings settled themselves early and were ready to catch the color of the vast assemblage and send the impressions to their papers. People who were to occupy the court of honor seats arrived in little groups and then came on in one line. Distinguished men and women from almost every state in the union came filing in and in some cases were greeted with cheering as they sat down in their seats. The program was carried out as scheduled and opened with the Clarksburg bands playing the "Star Spangled Banner" and the thousands of people that were as far from the stand as Harrison Street heard plainly as the strains of the grand old song of the nation floated out on the evening breeze. Invocation was given by the Rev. Carroll Anderson Engle, pastor of the Central Presbyterian Church.²²

Maud Lee Duncan Jarvis, a child in her tenth year in 1924, remembers in 1996 "the endless avenues of men, women and children" who shortly after the end of the parade began steaming toward Goff Plaza. She recalls that several benches stood on the lawn of her home and that people would come to the benches to rest before resuming the trudge eastward. Although she stayed home with her mother in the evening, Mrs. Jarvis remembers that the young people in her neighborhood including her sister Elizabeth in her early twenties, Mortimer Lewis; Reason, Horner and Robert Davis; Martha Jarvis; Mary Eleanor Dennison; Mary Virginia Rapp; Martha Maxwell and Alexander Osborn dressed to the nines and in a group joined the walking throngs.²³ The August 12 *Daily Telegram* described what happened as the program began:

When Clem Shaver tapped on his bell and the mellow clang echoed over the vast assemblage, it appeared as though the storm was to break at once for increasingly loud mutterings of thunder punctuated the strains of "The Star Spangled Banner" as the bands opened the program. But the minutes sped past while Thomas J. Walsh delivered his lengthy official notification and though a few scattering drops of rain splashed on the composition board desk of this newspaper man, there was hope that the storm would hold off until Davis had spoken. This was not to be however.

Davis arose and began to speak:

You will understand, with little explanation on my part, the feelings which have led me to fix our meeting at this spot in the hills of West Virginia. These are the hills that cradled me and to which as a boy and man I lifted up my eyes for help. In this soil rest four generations of my people---artisans, tradesmen, farmers and a sprinkling of the professions, laborers all who played in simple fashion their appointed parts in the life of the community. Among them now lie those who gave me life and to whose high precept and example I owe all that I have ever been and all that I can hope to be. These witnesses who surround me are the companions of my youth and manhood. With them most of my days have been spent, and when circumstances have called me elsewhere, they have followed me with a regard and affection that has laid on me a debt of gratitude greater than I can repay...It is in the presence of these hills, these graves, these witnesses that I wish to hear your message and give you my reply.²⁴

The representative of the Cincinnati concern hired to display fireworks from atop Pinnickinnick Hill at the close of the evening program decided to meet the terms of the contract before he was rained out and began firing his loud, colorful array into the sky. James Rodney, chairman of the fireworks committee, jumped into an official automobile, drove to the foot of Pinnickinnick and ran to the top of the hill to stop the ill-timed fireworks. The rain fell in torrents. The speaker hesitated but the crowd urged him on with cries of "Go on, John." Louis A. Johnson raised an umbrella over the speaker's head and someone wrapped a piece of cloth around the shoulders of Mr. Davis. Newsmen worked steadily under upraised boards held over their heads. At the end of the speech the rain stopped as suddenly as it had begun. "Though wet and uncomfortable and fatigued by his effort, Davis moved off the platform ready to shake hands with those who surrounded him; someone called out 'Don't try to make him shake hands now; let him get home' and the scores of people stood back while Davis departed."²⁵

The notification ceremony was held on the block of land between the south side of East Main Street and the north side of Buckhannon Avenue, the last portion of Goff Plaza to be sold off in building lots. Developers had graded the land for division into lots; the rain made the ground a sea of mud. The crowd slogged through the mud and some of the few vehicles parked on the ground, such as the truck which was to whisk the radio equipment across the mountains so that President Coolidge could use the same for his acceptance speech the next week, were stuck for hours. People in the soaked crowd made their way to waiting special trians, their automobiles and Clarksburg homes.

Maud Lee Jarvis was so young in 1924 that she does not remember in 1996 the state of her father and Senator Walsh when they reached her home, but she has a vivid picture of the group of East Main Street young people who went in a body to Goff Plaza and all of whom came back wet, cold, bedraggled to the Duncan residence. She recalls that her mother started making cocoa, a hot drink, to give the sodden youths. Her sister's dress, a black brightly embroidered silk chiffon fashioned along tunic lines with an accordion-pleated skirt clung to her sister's body making her look very much like a sea-nymph.²⁶

At the time he was nominated in New York on July 9, Davis replied to a person congratulating him, "Thanks, but you know what it's worth." He knew the Democrat party was split on every issue of the day. Davis before the 1924 election delivered more than seventy formal speeches and covered 12,000 miles including two trips to the Midwest and one to Denver and Cheyenne and then concentrated on the Middle Atlantic states. But everything he did offended one or another of the party's dissident elements. McAdoo sulked in Europe and then entered John Hopkins Hospital for minor surgery; Al Smith stood on the sidelines. A party faithful complained, "Davis is being unfairly treated and universally neglected"; party workers in Connecticut were doing nothing but going through the motions.

John W. Davis' record was flawless causing Chief Justice Taft to remark, "The truth is that John Davis is too good a candidate for the Democracy to succeed with." The consensus of viewers of the campaign was that Davis was a conservative at the head of the wrong party. After it was over Davis was asked if he ever had said anything he didn't believe. "Oh yes", replied Davis. "I went around the country telling people I was going to be elected...I knew I hadn't any more chance than a snowball in Hell!" He carried a plurality of votes only in the Old South, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas. He lost West Virginia.²⁷

Footnotes

1. *The New York Times*, May 23, 1920.
2. *The Daily Telegram*, Oct. 10, 14, 14, 19, 1920. *The Sunday Telegram*, Oct. 18, 1920.
3. William H. Harbaugh, *Lawyer's Lawyer*, p. 6.
4. *Ibid.* p. 14.
5. *Ibid.* p. 25
6. John W. Davis' mother insisted on the change of the name to Julia.
7. Howard M. Gore was Republican candidate for Governor of West Virginia; Guy Goff was Republican candidate for U. S. Senator from Wisconsin. Goff had run in Wisconsin because his father Nathan Goff, Jr., was U. S. Senator from West Virginia at the time Guy Goff first wanted to run for the U.S. Senate. *The Daily Telegram*, July 10, 1924.
8. *The Clarksburg Town Crier*, Vol. No. 4, April, 1923.
9. *The Daily Telegram*, July 7, 1924.
10. *Ibid.*, June 24, 1924
11. *Ibid.*, July 13, 1924
12. *Ibid.*, July 18, 1924.
13. *Ibid.*, July 21, 1924.
14. *Sunday Telegram*, Aug. 3, 1924.
15. *Ibid.*, Aug. 10, 1924.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *The Daily Telegram*, Aug. 9, 1924.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Sunday Telegram*, Aug. 10, 1924.
20. The church building, West Pike and Fifth Streets, in 1997 houses the Tree of Life Synagogue.
21. *The Daily Telegram*, Aug. 11, 1924.
22. *Ibid.*, Aug. 12, 1924.
23. Maud Lee Duncan Jarvis interview, Oct. 14, 1996.
24. *Clarksburg Exponent*, Aug. 12, 1924.
25. *The Daily Telegram*, Aug. 12, 1924.
26. Maud Lee Duncan Jarvis interview.
27. Harbaugh, pp. 221-250.

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Interview

Maud Lee Duncan Jarvis, Oct. 14, 1996.