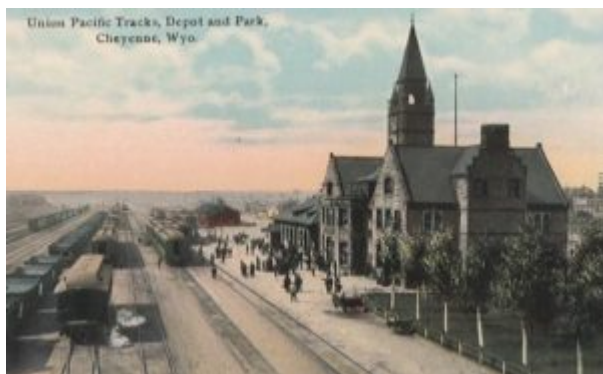
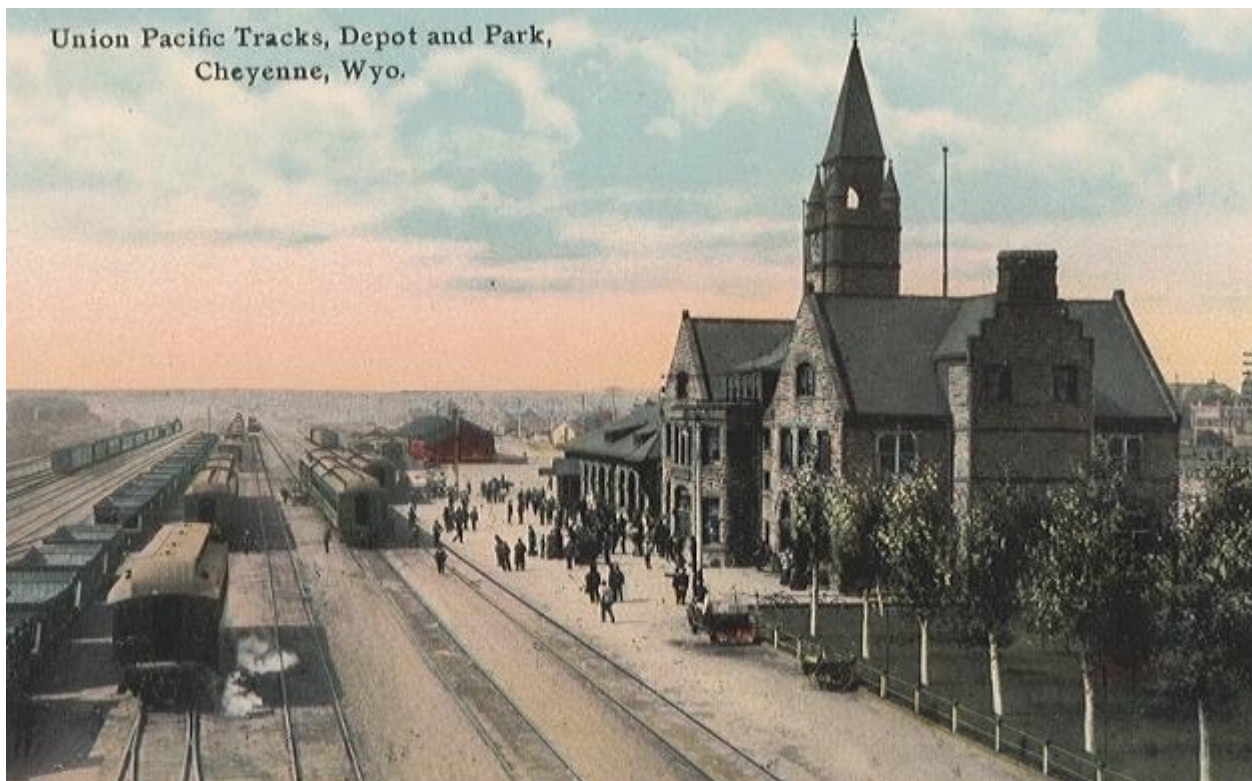


Wyoming Caucuses Primary Source Special: Gore '88





<<One of many glamorous moments of the 1988 Al Gore campaign that I did not see.

Scene of my big campaign moment. I was not there either. >>

In honor of [Obama's Wyoming caucus win](#), I am going to reveal the prominent role of the Wyoming caucuses in my own personal history. 20 years ago, I was working as the junior speechwriter on current national treasure, then premature centrist Al Gore's presidential campaign. I was in way over my head on several counts, and not doing the sort of glamorous, power-behind-the-throne work that people seem to associate with speechwriting. For the most part, I stayed in D.C. cranking out talking points and local situation reports and terrible, terrible jokes for momentary appearances Gore was making at places like the Council of Jewish Organizations of Borough Park and the Dalton, Georgia Rotary Club, never knowing whether anything I was writing was actually issuing from the candidate's mouth. The likely answer was probably not, at least not more than a line or two that might have made it in his standard stump speech. Other, more important people were writing the formal addresses that actually got read. I was not producing anything that was really worth saying out loud anyway.

That is, except for Wyoming. Gore's whole 1988 race was predicated on sweeping the original Super Tuesday primaries, which were concentrated in the South and set up to infuse more southern, centrist influence into the Democratic nominating process. In other words, it was supposed to help some white southern hawk-ish type win the nomination, and Al hoped to be that type. Funny story, Jesse Jackson won a bunch of those Super Tuesday primaries, I needed a new job by April, and then the Soviet Empire collapsed, taking much of Gore's *raison d'être* as a candidate with it. (The environmental thing was not much in evidence then, at least not in the campaign.) Long story short, Gore 1988 did not go down as one of the more world-historical presidential campaigns ever chronicled.

On to Wyoming. At some too-late date, the Gore braintrust realized that the whole Super Tuesday gamble might not work out exactly as they had planned and

decided to contest some states outside of the South and Northeast. (They had already Guiliani-ed Iowa.) As it turned out, Wyoming was one of two states outside the South that he actually won. This did Gore about as much good as today's win is likely to do Obama, though I hope otherwise. Wyoming was a big deal to me, however, because for whatever reason they let me write the big speech there, the one that actually got read apparently more or less verbatim. It was at the [historic Union Pacific Depot in downtown Cheyenne](#), and while I did not actually get to go there, I did know it got read (confirming hearsay) because some of my lines were quoted in a news story the next day.

That was a thrill, but it also helped make the decision I was ruminating over at the time about whether I was staying in D.C. politics and journalism after the campaign, or going on to grad school. Upon further review, it seemed sort of pathetic to be thrilled that I had written some words were said by someone else, with almost no one actually knowing about it besides myself and 2 or 3 others directly involved. I was not feeling the insider jollies that DC lifers seem to thrive on, and it dawned that relative obscurity in my own name (academia!) appealed more than getting my words on front page or TV news in someone else's. What's more, the speech that won Wyoming – if Hillary brought peace to Northern Ireland, then this is the least I can claim – had been more interesting than most of what I done for Gore because I got what then seemed very deep into the historical background for it. I had checked out some Wyoming books from the DC public library and written all this jazz about Democrats going west with the railroads, the western progressive tradition, etc. As a speechwriter, it seemed, I was a better and more enthusiastic historian than I had ever been with the boilerplate political verbiage.

At any rate, I dug out Al Gore's historic Union Pacific Depot address out of my files and scanned it for the amazement of the reading public and those sadly obsessed with past political minutiae. You can see the actual antique printer edition here, with a bonus speech written for Casper, Wyoming that I will bet he did not read – prostitutes were mentioned. Or, read on:

**Remarks of
Senator Albert Gore Jr.
Union Pacific Depot Speech
Cheyenne, Wyoming–January 28, 1988**

draft

I can't think of a better place to talk about revitalizing the Democratic party than the Union Pacific Depot in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Democrats built the Union Pacific and the state of Wyoming along with it. I'm not talking about the Republican barons who made their money in the West so they could live fabulously back East. I mean the hard-working, rough-hewn men who came West to lay down the tracks and then stayed here to live.

This was not an easy land to tame. Before the white man arrived, probably no

more than 10,000 Native Americans lived here. Even the buffalo found it difficult to survive. Many of the people who came with the railroad couldn't face the challenge of putting down roots. By the time the Union Pacific was finished in 1869, many of the workers vanished and Wyoming's population dropped to only half what it had been a year earlier. Even today, there is a square mile of land for every family in the state.

But hard winters and high winds make for strong and independent people, and maybe that accounts for Wyoming's great progressive tradition. Democrats settled the towns along the U.P. line in southern Wyoming. When Wyoming's first territorial legislature met in 1869, every member—all twenty-one—were Democrats. Now that's the way to get things done.

That remarkable assembly became the first government in the history of the world to give women the right to vote and hold public office. The Republican governor tried to stall, but a certain Mrs. Morton E. Post and her friends camped in the governor's living room and refused to leave until he had signed the bill.

That same all-Democratic legislature granted married women control of their own property and earnings, and equal treatment under the inheritance laws. It mandated equal pay for equally qualified female school teachers. Luckily for them, Ed Meese had not yet taken office in 1869.

At a time when it was said in some Western states that no one knew whether the state was being run out of the Capitol or the Union Pacific Building, that first legislature stood up to the railroad. It passed laws to force U.P. to stand by its obligations to the citizens and smaller competitors. That's the kind of tradition you have here in Wyoming, that continues today in the persons of progressive state officials like my friend Ed Herschler, current Governor Mike Sullivan, Secretary of State Kathy Karpan, and Superintendent of Public Instruction Lynn Simons.

It's a tradition I like to think I share. I grew up in Carthage, Tennessee, a few miles from the home of Andrew Jackson, the very first Western Democrat. Tennessee was the Wild West in Jackson's day. Old Hickory was swept into the White House on a tide of votes from the West and South. He took power away from a narrow minority and, for the first time in the history of our country, gave it to ordinary people in all parts of the young nation. Andrew Jackson made the United States once and for all a democracy—of and by the people as well as for them.

Where I come from and where you come from, that is what the Democratic party means. As Democrats, we are proud to be the party of the people, not the powerful—the party of national interests, not narrow interests.

But recent years have brought hard times for Democrats in the West. When was the last time a Democratic nominee carried Wyoming? 1964. There are 23 states that the Republicans have carried in the last five elections—including Wyoming

and all its neighbors. There isn't a single state that we Democrats have carried five times running. Democrats can't afford to write off those 23 states for another 24 years.

If we are going to win back the White House in 1988, we'll have to do things differently this time. We've got to reach out to ordinary voters, and bring back the young Americans and middle-class voters who were once the strength of the Democratic party.

I'm concerned about America's future. That's why I can't go along with my opponents in supporting ideas that are good politics in one place but bad policy for the country.

I'm not going to play that game. I don't think our party can afford to play that game. I'm running for President of the United States, not President of Iowa.

But the process will be different this time. The battle for our party's nomination won't be won or lost in the first week of the election season; the issue won't be decided before the West and South get a chance to be heard.

My home state has banded with a number of other states in every region to hold all our primaries on Super Tuesday—March 8—three days after your Wyoming caucuses. This is our chance to make a difference again and return to our party's roots. More than that, it is our chance to make the candidates address the problems faced by the regions that have been shut out of the nomination process up til now.

**** We need to talk about economic development policies that make sense for the West and South.

**** We need a national energy policy that puts Americans back to work and insures that domestic oil and gas producers will never take a back seat to countries like Libya and Iran. We also need a long-range policy to develop new ways to use our other resources, especially our coal reserves.

**** We need to make sure that people in the less populated regions of the country have access to basic services at reasonable prices. In my home town and yours, the Reagan-Bush administration's rush to deregulation has crippled transportation systems, with devastating effects on economic development. We must establish and promote a system of incentives for the development of safe and reliable air, bus and rail freight transportation for smaller communities. I have fought to link regulatory concessions to major transportation companies to their willingness to serve rural America. It's a shame no passengers can travel through this beautiful depot anymore.

Most of all, we need to elect a Democratic President in the fall. America's workers and ranchers and teachers need a friend in the White House, not another Republican landslide. When we go to the polls next March, we should look for the candidate who can win next November. We can compete in every part of this country. We can be a party for all regions. We have done it before. Andrew

Jackson carried every state in the South and the West. So did Franklin Roosevelt.

I am travelling the old Union Pacific route this week, through the Democratic heart of the west, starting here in Cheyenne today and going on to Laramie and Rock Springs tomorrow. I hope my course will lead your state and region back to my party. In October, I told you I would not forget Wyoming after the caucuses are over; I repeat that pledge now. I intend to retrace these steps to make sure that Wyoming sends a Democrat to the White House—and a Democrat to the Senate—in November.

—end—

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Jeffrey L. Pasley is associate professor of history at the University of Missouri and the author of *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (2001), along with numerous articles and book chapters, most recently the entry on Philip Freneau in Greil Marcus's forthcoming *New Literary History of America*. He is currently completing a book on the presidential election of 1796 for the University Press of Kansas and also writes the blog *Publick Occurrences 2.0* for some Website called *Common-place*.