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President John F. Kennedy’s Visits to Cleveland Depicted by Photograph Collection in WRHS Research Library

Images donated by Ray T. Miller, head of Cuyahoga County Democratic Party for over 20 years, capture multiple Cleveland appearances by JFK in the years preceding his assassination

CLEVELAND, OH – The odds of interacting with the President of the United States today are slim. Security is endless, making it difficult to even catch a glimpse of the country’s Commander-In-Chief. Take one look at the images in the Ray T. Miller collection at Western Reserve Historical Society, and it will become obvious that times were much different during a presidential campaign in the late 1950s.

The images in the collection document John F. Kennedy’s multiple visits to the Cleveland area during the years preceding and during his presidency. In many of the photos, Mrs. Kennedy is seen accompanying the President as he is surrounded by hundreds of Cleveland residents. Crowds can be seen anxiously awaiting President Kennedy’s arrival at multiple locations across town; the airport, a podium in Public Square, or a steer roast at Euclid Beach Park. The images are available to be viewed by visitors in the Research Library at the WRHS History Center in University Circle.

The photos from the Miller Collection prove to be even more interesting to visitors this year, the year marking the 50th anniversary of Kennedy’s assassination. Kennedy campaigned throughout Ohio and while doing so, he congregated with prominent Clevelanders such as Carl B. Stokes, Congressman Charles Vanik, and Cleveland Mayor Anthony Celebrezze. Celebrezze would eventually be appointed Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare by President Kennedy.

Case Western Reserve University’s Kelvin Smith Library, working in cooperation with WRHS, has also digitized a film taken by former Cleveland City Council President, Jack P. Russell, showing President Kennedy speaking on Public Square during a visit on October 19, 1962, about a year prior to his death. During that appearance, Kennedy explained the importance of
re-electing Ohio’s Democratic representatives so that the nation could continue its progress in labor, housing, and urban renewal. He also praised the work done by Senator Frank Lausche and Ohio Governor Michael DiSalle. The video recording of President Kennedy’s speech can be found online in Case Western Reserve University’s Kelvin Smith Library Digital Case.

The Western Reserve Historical Society History Center is located in Cleveland’s University Circle at 10825 East Boulevard. Museum hours are Tuesday - Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm; Sunday, Noon to 5 pm. Admission is $10/adult and $5/child age 3-12. Western Reserve Historical Society members and children two years and under are admitted free of charge. Group rates are available. The Research Library is open to the public at the same admission rate on Thursdays through Saturdays from 10 am to 5 pm.

Founded in 1867, Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS) is Northeast Ohio’s premier storyteller based on its vast collection of the tangible history of Northeast Ohio—such as: automobiles, airplanes, archives, books, carousel horses, ceramics, decorative arts, diaries, furniture, gardens, garments, genealogical resources, historic buildings, letters, maps, paintings, photographs, shoes, toys, uniforms, and weapons. It is one of the oldest and largest nonprofit regional historical societies in the nation. It presents the lives and activities of 19th-century settlers through historic Hale Farm & Village in Bath, Ohio, and it presents the glitter and industry of the Gilded Age through the history of Cleveland’s millionaires and entrepreneurs. WRHS offers a wealth of resources to research your family heritage at the History Center in University Circle, Cleveland. For more information on the Western Reserve Historical Society, 10825 East Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44106 visit: http://www.wrhs.org/ or contact Jane M. Mason, Vice President of Communications and Marketing jmason@wrhs.org, 216-721-5722, x 1501.

WRHS is supported in part by the residents of Cuyahoga county through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. Sponsorships, bequests, grants, admissions, and other funding are used by WRHS to preserve and enrich the region’s artistic and cultural heritage. If you are interested in a funding opportunity for the Western Reserve Historical Society, please contact Amy Shorey, Vice President of Development, ashorey@wrhs.org

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