

The Manhattan Train Depot, Teddy Roosevelt, and K-State

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Completed in 1901, the [Union Pacific](#) train depot in Manhattan remained open to passenger trains until 1971 and freight trains quit stopping in 1984. The station deteriorated until government officials, preservation and historical organizations, and individuals raised funds to have the structure



Manhattan Train Depot, 2006

restored. Now owned by the City of Manhattan, the depot was rededicated as a facility for community and private events on June 3.

Included in the depot's notable history is [Theodore Roosevelt's](#) visit on May 2, 1903 during a "whistle stop" tour of the United States while serving as the country's 26th president. As soon as the train came to a stop at the station, the K-State battalion formed a cordon around

the end of the train where TR was to speak from a platform on the rear of the last car. Included in

the large gathering were many K-State students and faculty, the college band, and battalion (photograph courtesy of the University Archives). Before he began his formal remarks it was reported in the Students' Herald that Roosevelt said, "stop that infernal band." If he did make the comment, "it was not said as a slur at our band but only as a request that he be allowed his fifteen minutes to talk..." before the train had to depart to its next destination.



Roosevelt's Whistle Stop Visit, 1903

Much of his speech was directed to the K-State students, including the following:

I want to say a word especially to the students. It is always a pleasure to be greeted by the student body. You go out into the great world with a peculiar weight of responsibility upon you, because it largely depends upon how you handle yourselves as to the esteem in which education will be held by the community at large. If you make the privileges you have serve as an excuse for not working as hard, not doing as good [at] work, not getting down to the ground and working up, you will merely discredit yourselves, but you will discredit those who have not had your advantages. If, however, instead you feel that they have made an added burden of responsibility, that they made it more incumbent

upon you to show that you profit by the advantages you have had, then you will reflect credit not merely upon yourself, but upon those who founded and keep up institutions of learning, such as this.

In closing he gave the following advice to all. "I believe in play and I believe in work. When you play, play hard, and when you work, do not play at all." A full transcript of Roosevelt's speech is available on the Kansas State Library website.

As TR was completing his remarks, the locomotive bell sounded to remind him of his precise schedule. He bowed and the train pulled out towards the west as the spectators cheered.