

Whistle Stop Campaigning

In 1836, William Henry Harrison became the first presidential candidate to step aboard a train to take his political message to the people. For more than a century, all presidential candidates have taken to the railroads to reach communities across the nation.

The term "Whistle Stop Tour" has come to mean a style of political campaigning in which a politician makes brief appearances in numerous small towns along a railroad route. Generally, speeches were given from the platform of a private railroad car.

In many cases, enormous crowds gather at the train stations to catch a glimpse of the candidate. One of the best known tours was that of Harry S. Truman. During his 1948 campaign, he made a 30,000-mile whistle stop train tour around the United States.

Gwendolyn Loretta Abromowitz, the character represented by the 1930s trunk, is traveling to Chicago in 1932 to cover the political conventions. The Republicans met from June 14-June 16, 1932, re-nominating President Herbert Hoover and Vice President Charles Curtis.

After the convention, President Hoover campaigned by railroad. However, the Depression took its toll on his popularity. At some stops his train and motorcades were pelted with eggs. In his 1928 campaign, Hoover had promised prosperity for Americans with his slogan "chicken in every pot and a car in every garage."

Democrats met from June 27-July 2, eventually nominating Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt of New York for President and Speaker of the House John N. Garner from Texas for Vice President. In a break with tradition, Roosevelt came to the convention floor and spoke to delegates formally accepting the nomination. His speech offered a "new deal for the American people."

Roosevelt and his advisors selected "Happy Days Are Here Again" as his campaign theme song. Soon, Roosevelt was traveling by railroad across the country delivering his "New Deal" message. Roosevelt won with 57 percent of the popular vote.

In the trunk, Gwendolyn carries her journal, her pen, and her camera. All of these are tools of the journalist; she is ready to play significant

role in transforming the opinions of readers as she covers the candidates.