President Taft And the 1910 Commencement
The 1910 commencement was honored by the presence of Pres. William Howard Taft.

It is likely that the Rev. John Wesley Hill, Jr. played a central role persuading Taft to visit Ada. By that time in his career, Hill was a well-known public figure and known by Taft. He most certainly would have been familiar with Northern as an 1886 graduate, and his father John Wesley Hill, Sr., also a Methodist minister, had both preached and retired in Ada.

As for Taft, his stop in Ada was part of a swing through the Midwest, possibly to shore up the GOP’s prospects in the upcoming mid-term elections. The Republicans lost the Ohio governorship that Fall along with 8 seats in the U.S. House.

Whatever the reasons, arrangements were made for President Taft to stop in Ada on June 3rd.
From President Taft
To President Smith

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT TAFT

PRESIDENT SMITH

MY DEAR SIR:

I HAVE YOUR LETTER OF FEBRURARY 23RD AND SHALL BE GLAD TO BE PRESENT AT ADA ON FRIDAY, JUNE 3RD, AT THE FORTIETH ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT OF YOUR UNIVERSITY. IT WILL GIVE ME GREAT PLEASURE TO LUNCH WITH YOU AT HALF PAST TWELVE ON THAT DAY.

PRESIDENT ALBERT EDWIN SMITH,
OHIO NORTHERN UNIVERSITY,
ADA, OHIO

FEBRUARY 25, 1910.

SINCERELY YOURS,
WM. H. TAFT.
Commencement has always been an important event in Ada, but the arrival of a U.S. President made the occasion all the more special.

Decorations were hung, crowds gathered and an anonymous Northern student wrote.....
The sun was bright, the air was clear,  
The breezes sang when Taft was here.  
It was a day that long will stand  
A memory sacred o’er the land.
From far and near the people came
To swell the chorus, shout the name
Of Northern and her glorious fame –
When Taft was here.

1911 yearbook
North Main Street
Waiting for the President – Railroad Tracks on S. Johnson Street
Onlookers in Railroad Park
Arrival at Johnson Street Tracks

Heterick Memorial Library - University Archives
After leaving train – on N. Johnson St.
On the Way to Campus – ONU President Smith, Right
Parade on North Main Street
ONU Military Band and Escort
Audience on Campus – Normal School Building in Center
Speakers Platform as Seen From Dukes – Building to Left is Brown Hall, Demolished 1976
Happy presidents – Taft and Smith

Heterick Memorial Library - University Archives
Still There
Pres. Taft (rear right) Pres. Lehr (foreground right)