

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

(1858–1919, P. 1901–1909)

There was never a president quite like Theodore Roosevelt. To most Americans, he was a human tornado, always picking things up and never dropping them in the same place. They liked his energy, his devotion to public service, and his desire to bring the United States to its just place as a leader among the nations. To his enemies, he was a source of irritation who did not know when to stop. The press loved him, and he used the press to get his message across. For the first time, reporters were assigned to the White House to gather news.

Roosevelt's life was a constant struggle to prove himself. His parents were wealthy and prominent. He was descended from Dutch aristocrats on his father's side and distinguished Georgians on his mother's side. Theodore suffered from poor eyesight and asthma; to help him breathe on muggy summer nights, his father took him on long carriage rides. After he was beaten up by some bullies, Theodore took up boxing and proudly showed his black eye to an aunt. He loved to read history and natural science; he was especially fond of birds.

Roosevelt graduated from Harvard in 1880 and married Alice Lee. He tried studying law, but did not like it, so he became a writer. His first book was published in 1882, *The Naval War of 1812*. He loved history but did not want to teach it. He was elected to the New York legislature where he served from 1882 to 1884. He often held press interviews where he talked about misconduct of legislators, the needs of workers, and better government for New York City. In 1883, he bought a ranch in the Dakota Territory. It was not financially profitable, but his asthma improved, he mixed with cowboys, and proved himself capable of hardy living. He once chased outlaws through a blizzard.

In 1884, Roosevelt's wife died in childbirth on the same day his mother died. He retreated for a time to Dakota Territory, pulled himself together, and campaigned for James G. Blaine in the fall. He did not like Blaine, but he disliked the "mugwumps," who had deserted the party more. After the election, he returned to writing, and between 1885 and 1889, he wrote seven books. In 1886, he came in third in the mayor's race in New York City. He then went to London where he married Edith Carow. In 1888, he supported Harrison, and was given a job as civil service commissioner in 1889. While in that position, he fought political influence in granting jobs and made civil service tests more practical.

The reform mayor of New York City made Roosevelt police commissioner in 1895. Roosevelt put in a merit system for promotions, fought graft, and fired policemen who were not doing their job. Since many policemen had been given their jobs by political leaders, the leaders were not happy with Roosevelt's interference. They suggested to President McKinley that he find a good job for Roosevelt in Washington.

In 1897, McKinley appointed him assistant secretary of the navy. Roosevelt was one of those most anxious to declare war on Spain. One day, while his boss was out, he sent a mes-



sage to Admiral Dewey that in case of war with Spain he was to sail immediately and attack Manila Bay. When war came, Roosevelt resigned to organize the Rough Riders. At first, he was second in command under Colonel Leonard Wood; when Wood was promoted, Roosevelt was raised to colonel. The Rough Riders were made up of cowboys, some Indians, wealthy college graduates, and other eager young men.

The Rough Riders were in two battles: Kettle Hill and San Juan Hill. Roosevelt never forgot the men who had served with him. They were friends for life; even when he was president, he helped keep some of them out of jail and found jobs for them. When he returned from the war, "Teddy" Roosevelt received great attention from the public, as well as from politicians.

Tom Platt, leader of New York's Republicans, set aside his own plans and let Roosevelt run for governor. He won and began making changes that made him unpopular with party leaders. They wanted him moved out and suggested that McKinley make Roosevelt his running mate in 1900. At the Republican Convention, Roosevelt was chosen as nominee for vice president by enthusiastic delegates.

There was little for Roosevelt to do as vice president. When someone suggested that he go on a speaking tour, he thought it was a "bully" idea. He did not finish his tour; President McKinley was shot and killed. Now, as one of his critics said: "That cowboy is in the White House." He pledged to carry out McKinley's policies, knowing that almost everything McKinley had pledged to do had already been done.

ROOSEVELT AS PRESIDENT. Unlike Harrison, Cleveland, and McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt left much of the work to his cabinet. He enjoyed playing with his six children. He pushed physical exercise, and those around him learned to play tennis, hike, and ride horses. Army officers complained about having to do so much exercising; he shamed them by riding a horse 100 miles. White House dinners included a wide variety of guests, from boxers to royalty; all were greeted with equal hospitality. Decisions were made quickly. The public identified with him, and he enjoyed getting headlines. One writer said that "if Roosevelt went to a wedding, he thought he was the bride; if he went to a funeral, he thought he was the corpse."

Foreign policy was an area where Roosevelt was more free to do things his way than in domestic policy. He wanted the world to take notice of the United States and to see it as a major power to be treated with respect. The Navy had grown stronger since Arthur had been president, but it had two oceans to patrol. The idea of a canal across the isthmus between North and South America had been discussed for years, and some efforts had begun to build it. A company had tried without success to build one in Nicaragua, but the best location was Panama. The New Panama Canal Company had started work there, but it had run short on money, equipment, and workers.

Colombia owned Panama at the beginning of 1903, and the United States tried to bargain with Colombia on a price tag for rights to build the canal. When they did not agree on an amount, the people of Panama revolted against Colombia on November 3, 1903. The United States said Panama was independent on November 6 and quickly signed a treaty with Panama for a canal zone. Roosevelt later bragged: "I took the canal zone and let Congress debate, and while the debate goes on the canal does also." The United States bought the New Panama Canal Company and took over construction. In 1906, Roosevelt went to Panama to see the progress on the canal and by doing that, became the first American president to leave the nation while in office. It was not until 1914 that the Canal opened for commercial shipping.

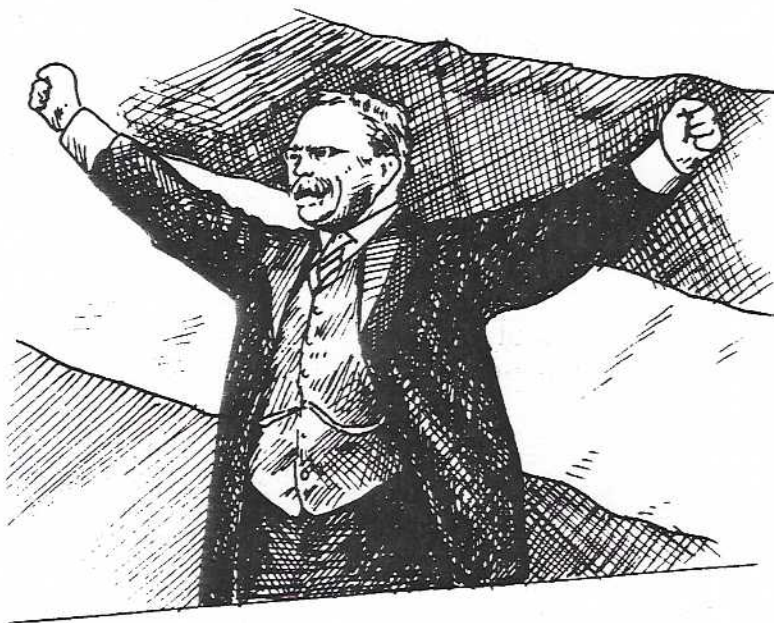
The British faced a new problem in the early 1900s. Germany was becoming more powerful, and the British wanted to keep the United States very friendly. One sign of this was in regard to the boundary between Alaska and Canada. To settle the boundary, the United States and Great Britain each appointed three members to a commission. By a four to two vote, the boundary was set very close to where the United States had always argued it was.

In 1904, war broke out between Russia and Japan. Most Americans sided with Japan even though the Japanese began the war with a sneak attack on the Russian fleet. The reason for disliking Russia was the cruel way its leaders were sending political prisoners to Siberia and mistreating Jews. By 1905, both sides were anxious for the war to end. Japan asked Roosevelt to work out an agreement between the two sides. He did such a good job that neither side was happy with the results.

Domestic affairs. In Congress and in his party, Roosevelt faced many who disagreed with him. They wanted to move forward at a slow, steady pace, but Roosevelt was a man of action who wanted things done right away. In this, he was in line with the thinking of Progressives. They believed that the United States was the best nation in the world, but that it could be better. They wanted a variety of things: clean government, protection of forests, an end to child labor, limits on the hours women worked, limits on alcohol consumption, and improvements in public education. Roosevelt wanted most of the same things and worked well with them.

Roosevelt loved the outdoors and traveled with his friend, Gifford Pinchot, into the woods, often taking his children along. Roosevelt set aside 150 million acres of forest lands for national use. He began to control big business. The Pure Food and Drug Act began control of food and drug sales. He enforced the Sherman Antitrust Act, and the Supreme Court broke up a big railroad combination in the Northern Securities Case in 1904.

After leaving office, Roosevelt went to Africa on safari and then to Europe. Upon returning, he clashed with President Taft, and in 1912 he ran for president on the Progressive ticket. He later clashed with President Wilson, who would not let him fight in World War I. He died in 1919.



WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT

(1857–1930, P. 1909–1913)

As Theodore Roosevelt prepared for his African safari in 1909, he exchanged pleasant words with Taft, who presented him a folding ruler to measure his kills. By 1912, the two men had become bitter enemies and ran against each other in the national election.

Taft was born in 1857, and he was so large as a child that ordinary baby clothes did not fit him. His father had been secretary of war, attorney general, and an ambassador. Much was expected of William, who was an excellent student in school and an above average baseball player. He graduated second in his class at Yale in 1878, and received a law degree from Cincinnati Law School in 1880. In 1886, he married Helen Herron, who was a determined woman intent on his climbing to the top. When he was 29, Taft was appointed as a judge of the Ohio superior court. Three years later, he was named United States solicitor general, the lawyer who argues cases before the United States Supreme Court. In 1892, he was appointed to the U.S. Circuit Court.



President McKinley chose Taft as head of the Philippine Commission, which set up civil government for the Filipinos. The Tafts greatly enjoyed this opportunity to travel, and when he was finished, everyone seemed pleased with his work. When Theodore Roosevelt wanted to appoint him to the Supreme Court, he declined after the Filipinos begged him to stay. In 1904, he was appointed secretary of war, and he became very close to the president. Mrs. Taft wanted him to be president, but Taft said politics made him sick; he preferred a seat on the Supreme Court. It took great effort on the part of Roosevelt and Mrs. Taft to convince him to run for president in 1908.

When Roosevelt announced he wanted Taft to be his replacement, no other candidates had a chance. The Democrats chose William Jennings Bryan for the third time. Bryan had run in 1896, 1900, and now in 1908. He believed his chances were better this time, but they were not. Taft beat him by 1.2 million popular votes and 321–162 in electoral votes. Bryan was finished as a presidential candidate, but he remained powerful in the Democratic Party.

Roosevelt decided it was best if he got out of Taft's way for a while, so he went on safari in Africa. Newspapers were kept informed on how many animals had been killed each day. After that, he went to Europe where he met many of the heads of state. Roosevelt grew suspicious that Germany had plans to expand. In Great Britain, he represented Taft at the funeral of King Edward VII.

TAFT AS PRESIDENT. The new president was far different from the energetic, excitable Roosevelt. Taft had always been too heavy, and he began his term weighing 250 pounds. At one point, his weight was up to 320 pounds. He was often tired and many times had fallen asleep during cabinet meetings and once during a funeral in which he was sitting in the front row. An oversized bathtub was installed in the White House to accommodate him. His doctors and wife kept after him to cut down on his eating, but he sneaked into the kitchen and grabbed snacks between meals.

Taft's main exercise was golf, which many thought was a rich man's sport. He also enjoyed dancing, and in the evening, he and Mrs. Taft danced to phonograph records. He sneaked off to baseball games, and in 1910, he threw the first ball of the season, a tradition other presidents have continued. At one game, he stood during the seventh inning, and that began the tradition of the "seventh-inning stretch." The people of Tokyo sent him 3,000 Japanese cherry trees, which were planted along the Potomac River.

Taft was not good at politics. He did not greet people with the enthusiasm Roosevelt had; in fact, he often did not know their names. He had ideas about improvements that were needed but failed to get the public support he needed to accomplish them.

Speaker of the House Joe Cannon was an old conservative who did not want changes, so he stopped bills he did not like from being considered. An effort was made by a group of reformers to take away some of Cannon's powers. When Taft did not help them, the reformers were angry with him.

A bitter argument broke out between the secretary of interior and Gifford Pinchot, the chief forester of the United States. Taft settled the argument by firing Pinchot, Roosevelt's good friend. When Roosevelt returned from his trip to Africa and Europe, Pinchot was one of the first men he met with. The firing of Pinchot was one of the reasons Roosevelt believed that Taft had perhaps been a bad choice for his successor.

Taft had said he wanted a lower tariff, but a new tariff was passed that was higher than the old one. This satisfied some Republicans, but it made many of the wealthiest party members angry. Taft defended the new tariff, which made low tariff Republicans angry with him.

Taft used the Sherman Antitrust Act to break up many large trusts (big businesses controlled by a small number of board members). His efforts made even more wealthy people angry with him.

The 1912 election. By 1912, Taft was tired of being president. He might not have run at all except for his desire to keep Roosevelt from getting the nomination. By the time of the Republican Convention, Taft had all the delegate votes he needed, but Roosevelt stirred up his supporters by claiming that Taft had rigged the convention. The Roosevelt delegates left the convention and organized the Progressive Party ticket. Roosevelt called his program the "New Nationalism." Their gathering was often called the Bull Moose Convention.

The Democrats chose Woodrow Wilson, the governor of New Jersey, as their candidate. He called his program the "New Freedom," and he wanted to regulate big business. In October, Roosevelt was shot by an insane man in Milwaukee. Even though blood poured down his shirt, he stood and gave his full speech before going to the hospital; all of the candidates then stopped campaigning. Wilson easily defeated Roosevelt and Taft, who had come in third.

After he left office, Taft became a law school professor and president of the American Bar Association. During World War I, Wilson made him chairman of the War Labor Board. In 1921, President Harding gave him the prize he had always wanted: he was made chief justice of the Supreme Court. He made the Court much more efficient. Each day, he walked the three miles from his home to the Court and kept his weight down to under 300 pounds. He retired from the Court because of bad health in February 1930 and died that March.

WOODROW WILSON

(1856–1924, P. 1913–1921)

Nearly every writer describes Wilson as an idealist who wanted to achieve great goals or as a man of vision who warned what would happen if those goals were not met. Wilson was not a “practical” politician willing to compromise, and he was harsh with any who objected to his plans for the future.



Wilson was born in Virginia, the son of a Presbyterian minister. His family experienced the South's suffering during and after the Civil War. In 1879, he graduated from Princeton University and then went to the University of Virginia for his law degree. He practiced law for a few years but found it dull and not very profitable. Wilson then became a history and political science student at Johns Hopkins University where he earned a Ph.D. While there, he wrote *Congressional Government*, a book critical of the way Congress made decisions through the committee process.

Wilson became a college professor at Bryn Mawr and Wesleyan, and then he returned to teach at Princeton University in 1890. He was one of the most popular teachers at the university and was known for his brilliant lectures. In 1902, he was named the university's president. He pushed for changes that would make the students more scholarly and the school more democratic. He clashed with the dean of the graduate school; when a friend reminded Wilson there were two sides to every question, he replied: “Yes, the right and the wrong.” By 1910, it appeared Wilson was losing the fight and might be dismissed by the trustees.

At the same time, the New Jersey Democrats were looking for a candidate for governor. Wilson resigned as Princeton's president and campaigned hard. He was elected and pushed a number of bills through the legislature to improve local government and regulate politics and public utilities. His proposals for direct election of senators, party primaries, and election reform were made law over the objections of leaders of both political parties. Many reformers from around the country took notice. One who visited him was Franklin D. Roosevelt, a New York state senator. Another visitor was Colonel E.M. House from Texas, who began a drive in the South to support Wilson for the Democratic Party's nomination for president.

At the Democratic Convention of 1912, Wilson's main opponent was Speaker of the House Champ Clark. Wilson was nominated on the forty-sixth ballot. In the campaign, Wilson criticized Taft for being too close to “privileged big business.” He called for idealism and the “rule of justice and right.” He did not think a revolution was needed, but the nation needed a “new point of view and a new method...” His main advantage in the campaign was the wide-open split between Taft and Roosevelt, who spent more effort attacking each other than working against him. In the election, Wilson received 435 electoral votes, Roosevelt 88, and Taft 8. In popular votes, his two opponents had over 1 million more popular votes than he had.

WILSON AS PRESIDENT (first term). Wilson was determined to get his program through Congress, and he began using an office in the Capitol building to meet with leaders. He called Congress into special session. Breaking with a tradition that went back to Jefferson, he appeared before a joint session and persuaded them to lower the tariff. Part of the new tariff included an income tax, now constitutional under the Sixteenth Amendment. The tax was only one percent on incomes over \$3000, and it went as high as six percent on incomes over \$500,000.

Wilson next addressed the complex problem of the banking system, and in time, Congress created the Federal Reserve System. The Federal Reserve is the bank from which local banks can borrow money. It controls the rate of interest on loans; by doing that, it can raise or lower interest rates for people who borrow from banks.

The Clayton Antitrust Act made control over big business stronger. It prohibited unfair business practices. It said that labor unions were not combinations in restraint of trade and that peaceful strikes were legal. The Federal Trade Commission was created to keep an eye on business.

Foreign problems. Neither Wilson nor Secretary of State Bryan were experts in international affairs. They had no idea that the United States was going to be involved in issues around the world and would soon face the largest war the world had yet seen.

During a time of revolution in Mexico, Wilson began sending help to Venustiano Carranza, an opponent of General Victoriano Huerta, the corrupt leader of Mexico. Eventually, Carranza succeeded in overthrowing Huerta and became president. Then, Francisco Villa, who had supported Carranza, began raiding Mexico and killed 18 Americans at a mining camp. In 1916, Villa captured Columbus, New Mexico, killing 16 Americans. With Carranza's reluctant permission, Wilson sent General John J. Pershing into Mexico to capture Villa. It was like a search for a needle in a haystack, and Pershing's men finally returned home in February 1917. The failure of Pershing's effort gave Germany the impression the U.S. Army was weak, and during World War I, Germany sent secret agents into Mexico to stir up anger among the Mexican people.

World War I broke out in Europe in 1914, and one nation after another was drawn in. Many Americans were either born in Europe or had close family ties there, so they were very one-sided in their opinions of the war. However, few Americans wanted to fight in the war; while our navy was the third largest in the world, our army was one of the smallest. Wilson and Bryan favored neutrality as the proper policy to follow. In his heart, Wilson leaned toward Great Britain from the beginning.

Neither the Germans nor the British were interested in "playing fair," and they made up their own rules as the war progressed. The British started inspecting ships bound for Germany to make sure there were no war supplies on board. The United States protested, but after the British paid for goods taken from ships, most Americans were satisfied. Ships bound for European ports other than Germany were also stopped and searched.

The Germans were not as strong in surface ships as the Allies, Britain and France, so they built up a large submarine fleet to attack ships taking supplies across the Atlantic. In 1915, they warned other nations that a submarine war zone had been declared around the British Isles. Any ship flying any flag would be sunk. Ads were placed in U.S. newspapers, warning Americans of the danger of traveling on Allied ships through the war zone. In May 1915, the British-owned passenger liner *Lusitania* was sunk off the Irish coast; 1,198 people were killed, which included 128 Americans. Even though the ship was carrying war supplies and had orders to ram submarines, the attack seemed cruel.

Americans were still not ready to fight, but Wilson wrote a letter to Germany. The letter was written so strongly that Secretary Bryan feared it might bring war, and he resigned. After

another ship was sunk, the Germans realized sinking ships might cause the United States to enter the war against them, so they backed off.

In 1916, the Republicans chose Charles Evans Hughes of the Supreme Court as their presidential candidate, rather than the anti-German Theodore Roosevelt. The Democrats chose Wilson again and used the slogan: "He kept us out of the war." Wilson barely won the election. If Hughes had received 3,900 more votes in California, he would have won.

WILSON AS PRESIDENT (second term). After the election, Germany began "unrestricted submarine warfare"; they would sink any ship coming close to the British Isles. Germany was gambling that Great Britain would be defeated before the United States could raise and send an army to help them. In April 1917, the United States declared war on Germany. Wilson said that it was "a war to end all wars" and was "to make the world safe for democracy."

World War I. By the time the United States entered the war, Europe had been fighting for three years. The war was not going well when the United States entered it. Great Britain had only six weeks supplies of food on hand in the spring of 1917. The French army faced mutinies by soldiers who refused to fight any more. Czarist Russia had experienced a revolution, and then its government was overthrown by the Communists, led by Lenin.

The first priority was to stop the German submarines. The Allies started sending convoys across the Atlantic protected by fast destroyers. The system worked well, and by the end of the war, submarines were far less dangerous for ships than before.

The United States began a quick increase in the number of soldiers. By the end of the war, two million had volunteered and two million others had been drafted. Large camps were built to train them quickly, and the government had to supply them with food, clothing, and rifles in enormous numbers. The nation's factories were running at full speed, with the War Labor Board under former President Taft making sure labor strikes did not slow production. Railroads were temporarily taken over by the government to make sure trains got the supplies where they were needed. American civilians were encouraged to help in the war effort as well. Children worked in "liberty gardens" to grow vegetables, and adults bought "liberty bonds" to help pay for the war. Speakers were sent to explain why the United States was in the war.

The U.S. Army sent to fight the war was called the A.E.F. (American Expeditionary Force), and it was led by General John J. Pershing. The first 80,000 American troops arrived in March 1918, and another 663,000 arrived by the end of June. By the fall of 1918, Germans wanted to end the war, but Wilson told them that he would never make peace as long as their ruler, Kaiser Wilhelm II, ruled. After some major battles, the Germans realized they could not win, the Kaiser resigned, and Germany signed an armistice (a temporary agreement to stop fighting) on November 11, 1918.

The peace conference. In January 1918, Wilson announced the Fourteen Points, his goals for the war. The Fourteenth Point was the creation of a "general association of nations" to protect the peace in the future. Instead of sending someone to represent him, Wilson went to the peace conference at Versailles (the royal estate near Paris) himself. There he met with other world leaders; while he worked out details for a "League of Nations" to debate issues rather than fight, other leaders decided other matters. Germany complained about some parts of the treaty, but they were forced to sign or face Allied armies invading their country.

When Wilson brought the League covenant (constitution) home with him, it met strong opposition from Senate leaders. After long hearings and debates, they turned down the treaty and the League. Wilson tried to fight for his League; however, he suffered a stroke and became paralyzed. His dream failed for the time being, but it came back to life later in the United Nations Charter.