

# BULLY!



THE LIFE AND  
TIMES OF  
**THEODORE  
ROOSEVELT**

*Illustrated with*  
**MORE THAN 250 VINTAGE  
POLITICAL CARTOONS**

**RICK MARSCHALL**

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REGNERY  
HISTORY

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For my son  
Ted Marshall  
*Qui plantavit curabit*

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A decorative black scrollwork element with the word "FOREWORD" written in white capital letters inside it.

**FOREWORD**

**"AGGRESSIVE FIGHTING FOR  
THE RIGHT IS THE NOBLEST SPORT  
THE WORLD AFFORDS."**

**-THEODORE ROOSEVELT**



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# FOREWORD



The life of Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919) coincided with the most colorful period of American journalism. Between the Gilded Age of illustrated magazines and the advent of the hard-boiled city rooms of *The Front Page* was the era of colored political-cartoon magazines, yellow journalism, and the muckrakers. The cartoons in *BULLY!* are collected from those vibrant but now scarce and nearly forgotten pages. Cartoonists and reporters had no better subject during those years than Theodore Roosevelt—not even frontier expansion wars, and innovations such as railroads, telephones, motion pictures, automobiles, and flying machines would compete.

America came of age during this era, with a growing leisure class that was able to indulge an appetite for politics, current affairs, and the arts in periodicals. Technology freed cartoonists from old-fashioned chalk-plates and wood-engravings, allowing them to reproduce pen drawings with all the glorious detail they could invest. Cartoonists captured the issues of the day—war and peace, economic crises, the growing divide between rich and poor—bringing them more poignantly to the attention of readers to whom the editorial cartoon was truly worth a thousand words.

Theodore Roosevelt was the perfect subject for the cartoonists' art. One is tempted to say that if TR, in all his distinctive glory, had not come along, American culture would have had to invent him. Presidents were boring before Theodore Roosevelt, and boring after him; life, as many said after he died, seemed emptier without him.

Cartoonists did not create Theodore Roosevelt, however—not by any means. His life was a series of memorable phases: writing dozens of books and hundreds of magazine articles; living the life of a cowboy; fighting heroically on the battlefield; devoting himself to innumerable interests and physical pastimes; enjoying a vaunted circle of friends. All of this would make up TR's biography, even without the cartoonists.

Still, cartoonists of his day best conveyed his traits, keeping them alive for posterity. Pre-photography was still coming into its own during the period in which cartoonists drew the likeness we know today. Movies and newsreels were new, but cartoonists told us how Roosevelt walked and ran and rode and gestured and laughed.

Theodore Roosevelt was perhaps the most caricatured president—if not the most caricatured American—in history. Here is the raw material cartoonists had to work with: TR was of average height, between 5'8" and 5'10". People noticed that he had rather small ears. He had sandy hair and was often "brown as a nut" from outdoor activities. An obsessive exerciser, Roosevelt was barrel-chested with a thick, muscular neck. He was comfortable, as a patrician, in silk vests, top hats, and *pince-nez* spectacles with a cord. But he fit just as well into riding clothes, boots, and wire-rimmed glasses. It is probable that he frequently displayed an assortment of cuts, blisters, and bruises; such was the occupational hazard of an inveterate hunter, hiker, sportsman, boxer, not to mention someone who romped crazily with his children for an hour every afternoon.





He spoke with great animation, chopping off his words as if each were a separate bite of meat. He clicked his teeth between words or sentences and elongated his “s” sounds. He spoke in a rich baritone flavored with an East Coast aristocrat's affected “Harvard accent.” But when emphasizing a point, aiming for humor, he lapsed into a comical falsetto. TR laughed frequently, and likely had the best sense of humor of any president other than Lincoln. His military aide, Major Archie Butt, once confided in a letter to a relative that at a pompous funeral, he could scarcely keep a straight face through Roosevelt's whispered stream of sarcasms and humorous commentary. TR also relished humor at his own expense, one of many refutations against those who say he possessed a large ego.

He did not dislike many people, but he surely disliked things some people did, or things they stood for. When he was someone's opponent, they knew it. He could be withering in print to such folks, and no less to their faces.

He was a proponent of many “new” things in a new age; but in terms of morality, manners, and traditions, he was a Victorian—almost a prude, and blue-nosed. He favored women's suffrage before most politicians (and before his wife did), but maintained, as a traditionalist, that “equality of rights should not be confused with equality of function” in society. He hated to be called “Teddy,” and said that anyone who used the nickname did not know him and did not respect his wishes. We respect his wishes in this biography.

For other descriptions of the physical Roosevelt—more of what the cartoonists had to work with—present some passages from William Bayard Hale's series of articles for *The New York Times* in 1908. For “A Week in the White House,” the writer was allowed an unfettered presence in all meetings and activities, and his observations provide a thorough description of the man.

*Imagine [him] at the desk sometimes, on the divan sometimes, sometimes in a chair in the farthest corner of the Cabinet room, more often on his feet—it may be anywhere within the four walls—the muscular, massive figure of Mr. Roosevelt. You know his features—the close-clipped brachycephalous head, close-clipped mustache, pince-nez, square and terribly rigid jaw.*

*Hair and moustache indeterminate in color; eyes a clear blue; cheeks and neck ruddy. He is in a frock-coat, a low collar with a four-in-hand, a light waistcoat, and grey striped trousers—not that you would ever notice all that unless you pulled yourself away from his face and looked with deliberate purpose. Remember that he is almost constantly in action,*

speaking earnestly and with great animation; that he gestures freely, and that his whole face is always in play. For he talks with his whole being—mouth, eyes, forehead, cheeks, and neck all taking their mobile parts.

The President is in the pink of condition today.... Look at him as he stands and you will see that he is rigid as a soldier on parade. His chin is in, his chest out. The line from the back of his head falls straight as a plumb-line to his heels. Never for a moment, while he is on his feet, does that line so much as waver, that neck unbend. It is a pillar of steel. Remember that steel pillar. Remember it when he laughs, as he will do a hundred times a day—heartily, freely, like an irresponsible school-boy on a lark, his face flushing ruddier, his eyes nearly closed, his utterance choked with mirth, and speech abandoned or become a weird falsetto. For the President is a joker, and (what many jokers are not) a humorist. He is always looking for fun—and always finding it. He likes it rather more than he does a fight—but that's fun too. You have to remember, then, two things to see the picture: a room filled with constant good humor, breaking literally every five minutes into a roar of laughter—and a neck of steel.

Not that the President always stands at attention. He doubles up when he laughs, sometimes. Sometimes—though only when a visitor whom he knows well is alone with him—he puts his foot on a chair. When he sits, however, he is very much at ease—half the time with one leg curled up on the divan or maybe on the Cabinet table top. And, curiously, when the President sits on one foot, his visitor is likely to do the same, even if, like Mr. Justice Harlan or Mr. J. J. Hill, he has to take hold of the foot and pull it up....

Remember that Mr. Roosevelt never speaks a word in the ordinary conversational tone.... His face energized from the base of the neck to the roots of the hair, his arms usually gesticulating, his words bursting forth like projectiles, his whole being radiating force. He does not speak fast, always pausing before an emphatic word, and letting it out with the spring of accumulated energy behind it. The President doesn't allow his witticisms to pass without enjoying them. He always stops—indeed, he has to stop till the convulsion of merriment is over and he can regain his voice.

The President enters into a subject which arouses him. He bursts out against his detractors. His arms begin to pump. His finger rises in the air. He beats one palm with the other fist. "They have no conception of what I'm driving at, absolutely None. It Passes Belief—the capacity of the human mind to resist intelligence. Some people Won't learn, Won't think, Won't know. The amount of—stupid Perversity that lingers in the heads of some men is a miracle."

The President's good-humor and candor have not been sufficiently appreciated. It is good to have a President with a laugh like Mr. Roosevelt's. That laugh is working a good deal too; hardly does half an hour, seldom do five minutes go by without a joyful cachinnation from the Presidential throat.... The fun engulfs his whole face; his eyes close, and speech expires in a silent gasp of joy.

He is, first of all, a physical marvel. He radiates energy as the sun radiates light and heat.... It is not merely remarkable, it is a simple miracle, that this man can keep up day after day—it is a sufficient miracle that he can exhibit for one day—the power which emanates from him like energy from a dynamo.... He radiates from morning until night, and he is nevertheless always radiant.

Never does the President appear to meet a personality than which he is not the stronger; an idea to which he is a stranger; a situation which disconcerts him. He is always master. He takes what he pleases, gives what he likes, and does his will upon all alike. Mr. Roosevelt never tires; the flow of his power does not fluctuate. There is never weariness on his brow nor, apparently, languor in his heart.... The President ends the day as fresh as he began it. He is a man of really phenomenal physical power, a fountain of perennial energy, a dynamic marvel.

The President is able to concentrate his entire attention on the subject in hand, whether it be for an hour or for thirty seconds, and then instantly to transfer it, still entirely concentrated, to another subject.... He flies from an affair of state to a hunting reminiscence; from that to an abstract ethical question; then to a literary or a historical subject; he settles a point in an army reorganization plan; the next second he is talking earnestly to a visitor on the Lake Superior whitefish, the taste of its flesh and the articulation of its skeleton as compared with the shad; in another second or two he is urging the necessity of arming for the preservation of peace, and quoting Erasmus; then he takes up the case of a suspected violation of the Sherman law, and is at the heart of it in a minute; then he listens to the tale of a Southern politician and gives him rapid instruction; turns to the intricacies of the Venezuela imbroglio, with the mass of details of a long story which everybody else has forgotten at his finger tips; stops a moment to tell a naval aide the depth and capacity of the harbor of Auckland; is instantly intent on the matter of his great and good friend of the Caribbean; takes up a few candidacies for appointments, one by one; recalls with great gusto the story of an adventure on horseback; greets a delegation; discusses with a Cabinet secretary a recommendation he is thinking of sending to Congress. All this within half an hour. Each subject gets full attention when it is up; there is never any hurrying away from it, but there is no loitering over it.

These assessments came, by the way, from someone who was not a hero-worshiper. Hale was Democrat, writing for a Democrat newspaper; he confessed to be out of sympathy with Roosevelt's policies, and within four years he would be writing Woodrow Wilson's campaign biography.

You will see in this book that countless cartoonists tried to capture the coruscating nature of the man Roosevelt. As cartoonists with multiple panels to fill, they perhaps had an easier job than Hale. In any event, it was more fun. "Slow news days" were solved in the city rooms of American newspaper

cartoonists could draw what TR did, or would do, or might do. He was the cartoonists' best friend.

~~Cartoons and comic strips—~~not just editorial and political cartoons—~~tell us about more than public~~ affairs of the day. They describe manners and morals, fads and fancies. Cartoons tell us how people dressed, what they liked or avoided, what angered them, and what made them laugh. They truly are snapshots in a beloved American family album.

You will meet here the great cartoonists: from Nast and the Kepplers (father and son) and the Gillam brothers, in the magazines; to Opper and Davenport and McCutcheon, in the newspapers; from forgotten geniuses like Charles Green Bush and Joseph Donahey, to Winsor McCay of *Little Nemo* fame, and Pulitzer Prize-winners like Ding Darling. The cartoons herein were culled from famous magazines *Puck*, *Judge*, and *Life*, and from major newspapers of the turn of the last century, including New York's *Journal*, *World*, and *Herald*. Printed in the millions, they are almost impossible to find today. You will discover forgotten cartoonists from obscure publications...and, I hope, you will revel as I have in the discovery of prescient commentary cleverly drawn and presented in great numbers and variety. With such a rich lode to mine (for I have been fortunate to assemble what is arguably the nation's largest archive of such source-material), I endeavor in *BULLY!* to bring out the work of more obscure artists over the familiar. Thus, if textbooks have given us a Keppler or a Davenport on a certain topic, and if a “forgotten” cartoonist has made an equally trenchant observation on the same event, I introduce that cartoonist to posterity.

Through the cartoons reproduced in this book, you will experience what America was like 100 years ago. Mostly, though, I want you to meet Theodore Roosevelt in a new way. These illustrations are not just cartoons—they unveil for us the caricatured Roosevelt, revealing an aspect of the man's character that has been little explored. There has not yet been a biography of TR's entire life relying on colorful cartoons as guides. In so crafting *BULLY!*, I have aimed for a comprehensive but not exhaustive biography. The greatest value to all readers, whether you are a devotee of American history in general or a member of the large, loyal, and increasing corps of TR fans specifically, will be the wealth of pictorial commentary and satire herein. Cartoonists had their own “bully pulpits,” right at their ink-stained drawing tables, and we are all the richer from their legacy.

CHAPTER I

**1858~1877**



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# TR: AN AMERICAN PATRICIAN... OF SORTS

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America has distinguished itself from other cultures throughout its history. Most notably, the first generations of Americans possessed an inherent democratic spirit, a fierce individualism. From the beginning, America had no aristocracy. Early settlers and pioneers did not arrive with pedigrees or escutcheons. In fact, America in its earliest days was largely populated by lower classes, some indentured to work, some slaves, and countless others simply desperate for land and opportunity. Many people of middle class also arrived on the continent without pretension or provision—tradesmen and farmers, entrepreneurs as we would call them today. They arrived in the New World humble but hopeful. While European courts deeded tracts of land and created a gentry class, the average early American was not defined in terms of his geographical or even mercantile empire. The average American, then as now, was just that: average.

The Roosevelt family arrived on American shores around 1640, as ordinary as many of their fellow immigrants. They were from the Netherlands and planted themselves in New Amsterdam, right where they disembarked. “Roosevelt” means “field of roses,” and was spelled in various ways before “Roosevelt” became standard in the family's third American generation. The Roosevelts were like thousands of other immigrants to the American continent: fairly comfortable, very industrious, and extremely determined. Unlike many others, they had not fled religious oppression or racial discrimination in the Netherlands. They simply wanted to experience opportunity in this beautiful, abundant, welcoming land. Klaes Maartenszen van Rosevelt, the head of the family, possessed a pioneer spirit—a spirit that would be inherited by his descendent Theodore Roosevelt, who would be born in Manhattan two centuries after the family arrived in America.

The Roosevelts involved themselves in many businesses, first farming (Klaes bought a 50-acre farm in what is now Midtown Manhattan, right where the Empire State Building stands today), and then the importation of glass. Later they expanded their activities to include banking and real-estate investment. They were a prosperous family, “patrician” in the sense of the admirable elite, those worthy by distinction, responsible leaders who rise by merit. The Roosevelts became a very wealthy family, though they never reached the heights of the famous Astor and Vanderbilt fortunes. They were also immensely generous.

The Roosevelts concerned themselves with charity work and social betterment. Klaes's son Nicholas was the first of the clan to enter politics, around 1700, elected as a city alderman. Beyond public service, the Roosevelts also recognized first of all a personal responsibility toward others, to better the conditions of people and their situations.

Many of the institutions in and around New York today bearing the Roosevelt name are assumed to have been named in honor of President Theodore Roosevelt. On the contrary, many of them were established by, or named for, other members of this patrician family, before TR made his own mark.



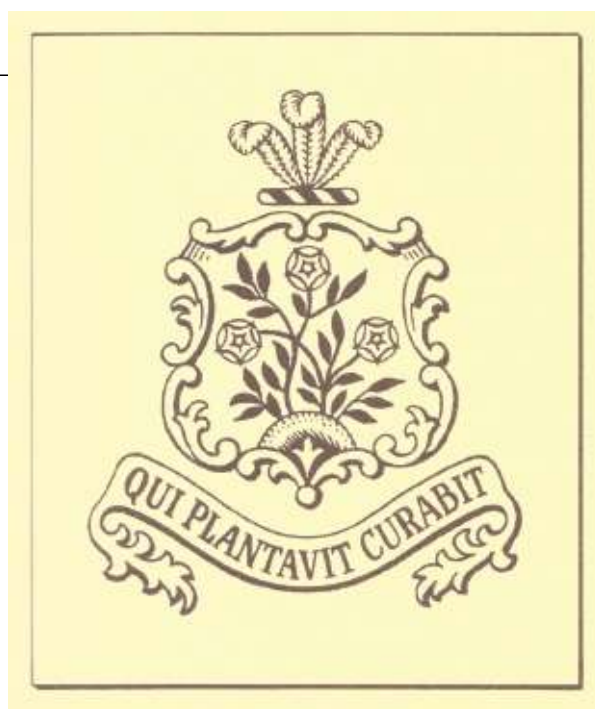
Roosevelt Hospital was founded and funded by a distant relative, James Roosevelt. The Roosevelt Building, the distinctive New York landmark designed by Mead and White, was named for Cornelius Roosevelt, Theodore's philanthropic grandfather. Although the American Museum of Natural History boasts the Roosevelt Rotunda—named for Theodore, and located behind an equestrian statue of him—his father was actually a founder of the institution.

In fact, when TR—as we will call the subject of this biography—was born on October 27, 1858, it would have seemed impossible that he could ever surpass the fame and universal respect of his father Theodore (whom we shall call “the elder,” or his nickname Thee; he was not actually a Senior, as his son was not formally Theodore Roosevelt Junior). By that point in the family's history and fortune, TR's father concerned himself mainly with philanthropy. He supported big projects like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which is said to have had its genesis in the Roosevelts' living room. Thee also had smaller—sometimes virtually anonymous—pursuits. For instance, he not only endowed the Newsboys Lodging-House for orphaned street children, but he paid weekly visits there, principally to encourage the youngsters and teach Bible classes. Thee did not enlist in the Union Army during the Civil War, because his wife, Martha Bulloch, was a southern belle from Roswell, Georgia. (Her brothers were prominent in the Confederate Navy.) Roosevelt compensated for this lack of active military service during the war by fervent charity work among Union soldiers, encouraging them, and, after consulting with President Lincoln, establishing the Allotment Bureau. He ceaselessly traveled to military camps, explaining and facilitating subscriptions to the Allotment System, whereby soldiers could send part of their pay to families back home.

He came to be known so widely as an advocate and worker for private causes and public charities that friends would joke that anyone who saw him coming down the street would greet him with the words, “How much this time, Theodore?” Although he petitioned local and national governments to institute compassionate policies, it was the hallmark of the Roosevelt family to practice and encourage personal responsibility among citizens for uplift and reform.

Roosevelt was remembered by his son TR as “the best man I ever knew.” His marriage to “Mittie” Bulloch was the talk of Manhattan, as well as antebellum Georgia, where they married. Her family home, Bulloch Hall, which still stands in Roswell, is widely assumed to be the model for Tara in *Gone with the Wind*, and Mittie herself was said by friends of author Margaret Mitchell to be the inspiration for Scarlett O'Hara. After moving to New York City, Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt was generally regarded as an incredible white-skinned beauty, fragile yet determined, the essence of charm, an eccentric but gracious hostess and member of Society.

The Roosevelt children worshiped their father and adored their mother. Theirs was a notably happy childhood (except for health challenges), nurtured by servants and nannies, and punctuated by two lengthy trips to Europe, one extending to a cruise on the Nile. There were four Roosevelt children: Anna, the eldest, nicknamed Bamie (a corruption of “Bambina,” little girl) or Bye; Theodore; Ellicott (father of Eleanor Roosevelt, who would later marry her distant cousin Franklin from another branch of the family); and Corinne.



Roosevelt family crest. Roughly translated from the Latin: "He Who Plants, Cultivates."

The two eldest children had severe health problems. Bamie suffered from the painful spinal affliction known as Pott's Disease and spent a decade of her childhood in cumbersome braces. Her father cared for her in countless tender ways, and became interested in the affliction to the extent that he helped found and endow what became the New York Orthopedic Hospital. Its primary purpose included research and care, but also to be a dispensary of assistance and equipment to poor children. Thee's son Theodore, nicknamed "Teedie" in his youth, suffered from a variety of ailments, principally asthma and cholera morbus. Naturally slight and weak, the boy's frequent asthmatic episodes frightened him and his parents alike; he would find it nearly impossible to breathe and his strength would leave him. TR's earliest memories were of his father walking him around the house hour after hour at night, soothing him to induce calmer respiration. Teedie's frailty extended to his eyesight, which evidently approached legal blindness.

TR later wrote about realizing his poor eyesight during his thirteenth year:

*It was this summer that I got my first gun, and it puzzled me to find that my companions seemed to see things to shoot at which I could not see at all. One day they read aloud an advertisement in huge letters on a distant billboard, and I then realized that something was the matter, for not only was I unable to read the sign but I could not even see the letters. I spoke of this to my father, and soon afterwards got my first pair of spectacles, which literally opened an entirely new world to me. I had no idea how beautiful the world was until I got those spectacles. I had been a clumsy and awkward little boy, and while much of my clumsiness and awkwardness was doubtless due to general characteristics, a good deal of it was due to the fact that I could not see and yet was wholly ignorant that I was not seeing.*

Teedie once endured a crisis of self-esteem, when he was helpless against two bullies who cornered him. He had suffered a bout of asthma and was sent to a rural location for recuperation. "On the stagecoach ride thither I encountered a couple of other boys who were about my own age, but very much more competent and also much more mischievous. I have no doubt they were good-hearted boys, but they were boys! They found that I was a foreordained and predestined victim, and industriously proceeded to make life miserable for me. The worst feature was that when I finally tried to fight them I discovered that either one singly could not only handle me with easy contempt, but handle me so as not to hurt me much and yet to prevent my doing any damage whatever in return."

All these factors, plus the advice of physicians, convinced the elder Roosevelt to *work* his son's physical challenges out of him. TR was twelve. He remembered the speech: "You have the mind but

not the body.... You must *make* your body.” The upstairs back piazza of the family town house at 2 East 20th Street in Manhattan was converted to a gymnasium. Teedie began to exercise, working on gymnastic equipment, lifting weights, boxing, and doing calisthenics. In the country, especially at the family's estate in Oyster Bay, Long Island, Teedie rode horses and rowed boats; he hiked and ran and played sports. Although it was years before he shed all symptoms of asthma, he never stopped exercising, all the way until the time of his death. He became known as a physical fitness addict. TR would title one of his books *The Strenuous Life*—his prescription for physical, moral, and civic standards. He boxed in college; he became an avid hunter, relishing the harshest conditions and most trying challenges; he rode to hounds for a period, frequently shocking society friends with his bloodied face and broken bones, a reckless enthusiast. Later, during his time in the White House, in place of other presidents—“kitchen cabinets” of friends and advisors, TR was to establish a Tennis Cabinet that played almost every day weather permitted.

Teedie's active, aggressive lifestyle was closely tied to his later famous philosophy of the strenuous life. But his regimen was not solely physical; it merely reflected other aspects of the boy's emerging personality. Family and friends noted in young Teedie a voracious interest in everything around him. He could recall virtually every detail of books read to him. Later, when he could read to himself, he often consumed a book a day, sometimes more.

His love of reading continued into his adult years, even the busiest days of his presidency. Once a friend gave him a dense volume, with several pages marked, for Roosevelt to read when he could make the time. TR immediately opened the book, seeming to glance at page after page, lingering on slightly at each one. Finally, he closed the book and began discussing its points. His friend was incredulous that Roosevelt could have read, much less retained, any information in that manner. “Ask me anything about that material,” TR challenged his friend. He did. Roosevelt passed the quiz.

As a boy, Teedie started a journal and made remarkable observations, particularly during travels—some comments very funny, and some quite sagacious about history (one of the subjects he particularly enjoyed). Likewise, Teedie took an interest in natural history, and before long he was measuring fish in street markets, drawing detailed studies of rodents, and stuffing specimens in every place at every opportunity. He established a boyhood “Roosevelt Natural History Museum” that prefigured his scientific essays and explorations in Africa and Brazil. Whatever spare places were left in the family's home after the construction of the gymnasium were littered with examination-table specimens in jars, bloody pelts, and the malodorous omnipresence of taxidermists' chemicals.

Some described the boy as precocious. Certainly people knew that there was more to Teedie than mere hyperactivity. He held his own with adults in discussions, but he maintained a tight-knit circle among his peers, including his siblings, always close, and neighborhood children like Bamie's friend Edith Carow from the other side of Union Square. He could be headstrong, but he was sensitive too, to the point of tenderness. He seemed to take an interest in everything, and he mastered whatever interested him. Many marked him for greatness.

Because of his frailty and poor eyesight, TR never attended school. He had tutors—one wondered whether they could keep up with their pupil at times—and entered Harvard after passing examinations. He intended to secure a degree in natural history. His later natural history work in the field and in print, and his discoveries and theories, would have made TR a prominent American in the discipline alone. Yet his “landscape” was wider than that covered in typical college courses. When he began his studies, he was dismayed that the prospects of a professional naturalist might shackle him in laboratories, rather than allowing him to roam the outdoors. TR dropped this major and pursued general studies. Nonetheless, he would still make great contributions to the field. Few laymen have done more to preserve and protect the natural environment than TR would do during the rest of his life. Some critics today criticize TR's love of hunting. But it should be recalled that he set aside

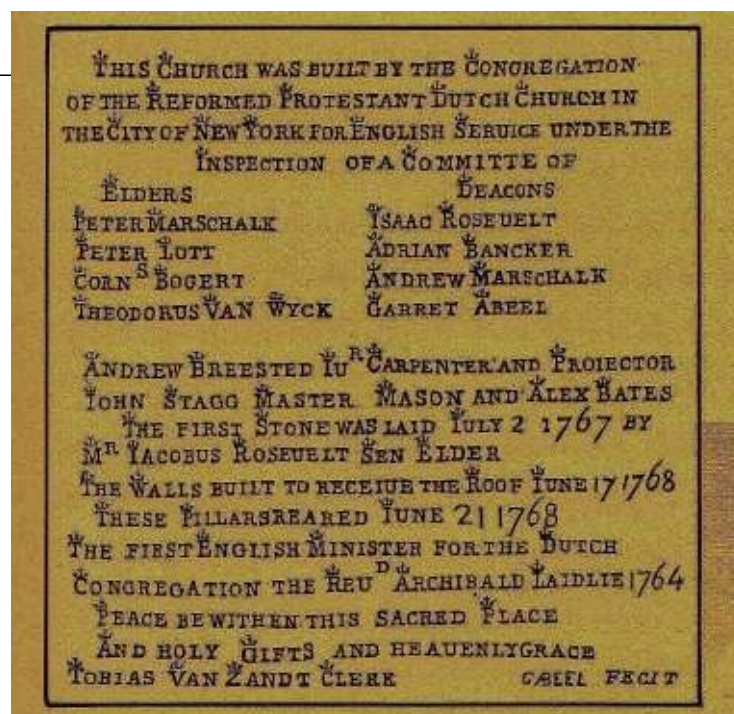
230,000,000 acres of American land as national forests and parks, game preserves, and bird reservations during his presidency, making countless animals, as well as future generations of the American public, beneficiaries of his passion for natural history and God's creation.

Theodore grew up in a very devout Christian family. Thee's Dutch Reformed tradition merged with Mittie's Presbyterian faith, both in the Calvinist tradition, and the family worshiped faithfully and read the Bible at home. When TR went to Harvard, he carried his spiritual habits with him, studying the Bible daily, attending chapel, and teaching weekly Sunday school classes in Cambridge. He might have been considered a prig. Indeed, his attire, sideburns, and affected Harvard accent were all in the style of a dandy; he even had a dog cart. Yet he maintained many friendships and enjoyed a convivial lifestyle. As a student, Roosevelt's intensity asserted itself. A classmate recalled an exasperated professor in one class saying, "Now look here, Roosevelt. Let me talk! I'm running this course!" TR was invited to join the Dickey and Hasty Pudding clubs, and the most exclusive Porcellian. He was staff member of the *Advocate*. When he graduated in 1880, he was both magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa.

Withal, the greatest impact on TR during his four college years was not Harvard-related. In the course of the social whirl of dances and dinners, he met the cousin of a classmate and fell in love. The pretty and fragile Alice Hathaway Lee, related to several Boston Brahmin families, was seventeen when Roosevelt fell under her spell. Roosevelt, boisterous and headstrong (sometimes redolent of taxidermy fluids), the New Yorker of Dutch lineage, was initially a strong cup of tea for dainty Alice. But TR was, predictably, determined. "Do you see that girl over there?" Roosevelt once asked a friend about Alice; "She won't have me, but I'm going to have *her!*" A long and tempestuous courtship followed, marked by florid Victorian emotionalism, one of Roosevelt's hallmarks at the time. TR was rapturous when Alice finally accepted his proposal of marriage.

While at school, he continued to build his body. TR was an active boxer on campus, although ultimately unsuccessful at the sport. Still, legends grew up on campus about his sportsmanship; more than once he suffered late hits, but defended his opponents to the spectators, insisting they had not heard the bell.

Also during this time, TR went on his first extended hunting trip, an expedition to the Maine woods. He reveled not only in the chase, the kills, the new flora and fauna, but also in the brutal cold, the long treks, and the daunting challenges. He befriended the guides William Sewall and Wilmot Dow. Skeptical at first of this willowy "dude," Sewall and Dow were soon convinced of his prowess in the field. TR proceeded to wear them out, rising earlier, staying awake longer, sacrificing comfort by dismissing freezing rain, snow, and ice, and constantly talking. He loved every minute of the experience. (A few years later, TR hired Sewall and Dow to move to the Dakota Territory to manage one of his cattle ranches.) TR became an habitu  of the Maine woods, the first of many happy hunting grounds in his life.



North Dutch Church inscription, 1769. Two “Rosevelts” are listed: Senior Elder Jacobus and Deacon Isaac. The spelling of the name varied during the family's first generations in Manhattan.

The establishment patrician found himself quite at home in rough sleeping bags and crude hunting lodges. He was still “Mr. Roosevelt” to his guides; he still woke up early and left camp to read the Bible at dawn every morning; but his blue-blood inheritance was mixing well with the red-bloodedness of the outdoor life.

Another important game-changer occurred in TR's life during his college years, when his father entered politics. Politics—the dirty, sordid politics of the Gilded Age—traditionally was a pursuit that “proper” men disdained. Yet that admirable icon of New York society, Theodore Roosevelt the elder, surprised family and friends alike by accepting a federal appointment from President Rutherford B. Hayes. The position was an important one, but it was also one infamous for graft and corruption: Collector of the Port of New York. Its very reputation is what persuaded the elder Roosevelt to accept the appointment: he resolved to champion Reform.

TR's father was doomed to failure and even disgrace, none of his own doing or culpability. The forces that would attack him would steel his son to redeem the Reformist vision.



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New York,

1875.

Letterhead of the original Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 1875. TR's father was listed as a vice president—t SPCC was one of the many charities and missions he supported. He was in the company of “old money,” established families represented by Elbridge Gerry and Peter Cooper. “New money” was represented by August Belmont and Cornelius Vanderbilt. Henry Bergh established the original Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, a novel cause, much ridiculed at first.

CHAPTER 2

**1877~1878**



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# “THE BEST MAN I EVER KNEW”



**T**R was a world away from New York City at Harvard, and he was busy. His courses seemed comparatively easy to him, and, having decided against training to be a naturalist, he chose courses already within the orbit of his interests. Still, campus activities, his clubs, budding romance, weekend balls and dinners, and hunting trips in Maine all commanded his attention.

Amidst his activities, TR maintained close contact with his family. His father's involvement in national politics would begin suddenly and end quickly, so Theodore, safe at Harvard, scarcely experienced it. Nonetheless, the difficulties his father suffered in his political career were momentous and traumatic, and they left their mark on his son. The episode surely inspired the crusading spirit in TR that lasted a lifetime: a zeal for political reform.

The Reconstruction era, at least in the North, brought prosperity, expansion, and innovation, but had a dark substratum. Political corruption, while not new in the United States, suddenly spread like an aggressive, noxious weed. Its handmaidens were decadence, exploitation, and a rapid, troubling division between social classes. Periodic press exposures and efforts by reformers ultimately were ineffective in the face of the corruption and collusion of the power elites. Mark Twain criticized the era in his aptly titled *The Gilded Age*. Henry Adams (writing as the long-secret “Anonymous”) wrote *Democracy*, a popular satire that certainly created a buzz, though it ignited no reforms.

In New York City, the Democrat “Tweed Ring” of Tammany Hall, engineers of spectacular civic thievery, had been thrown out of power in the municipal elections of 1871, largely due to the powerful cartoons of Thomas Nast in *Harper's Weekly*. But within a few years, Tammany was back in control of the New York City government.

On the national field, Democrat Samuel J. Tilden outpolled Republican Rutherford B. Hayes for the presidency in popular votes in 1876. He seemed to have won the electoral vote, too, but questions arose about the counts in two southern states (where the Republican national administration had maintained a virtual military occupation since the Civil War's end). After weeks of uncertainty, disputed vote-counts in various jurisdictions, and action by the House of Representatives, Hayes was finally certified. Democrats rightfully felt their victory had been stolen, but Tilden discouraged protests (perhaps due to charges that he had attempted subterfuge himself, through cipher telegrams). As part of a silent “deal” between political bosses of the two national parties, federal troops were soon withdrawn from the South, which remained solidly Democrat, while the GOP retained the White House. Unbelievably, the protracted, sordid spectacle of the bazaar-haggling presidential election did not spark major flames of reform throughout the land, either. Politicos just kept rolling along.

The recently inaugurated President Hayes (widely referred to as “His Fraudulency” and “Rutherfraud” B. Hayes) was chastened by the manner of his election, which had been totally managed by GOP bosses. As his wife Lucy reformed the White House social regime (banning wine and liquor from state functions), the new president advocated for civil-service reforms. This obliged him to look horns with some of his own party's dirtiest scoundrels. Not particularly clever or forceful, Hayes

attempts at reform were doomed to failure. Some of his allies, like Senator James G. Blaine, the focus of many corruption allegations, were hardly spotless themselves. Hayes planned to challenge the boss of the U.S. Senate, New York Republican Roscoe Conkling, and proceed from there to reform the Republican party and the country in general. But Conkling was a formidable foe. The American political landscape was littered with the corpses of many who had tried to take him down.

Senatorial courtesy—respecting the prerogatives of matters, even federal offices, in a senator's home state—was sacrosanct within the upper chamber, so Hayes's frontal assault on Conkling was a dubious enterprise from the start. The president requested the resignation of a Conkling henchman, Chester Alan Arthur, from his post as Collector of the New York Customs House. The Collector was paid \$50,000 a year, a salary equal to the president's, the equivalent of \$1 million in today's dollars. The Collector was also in a position to receive many kickbacks from arriving imports as well as from a bloated staff—kickbacks for himself, and for the party in power.

In late 1877, Hayes nominated a man of spotless reputation and national respect to replace Arthur as Collector: the philanthropist Theodore Roosevelt. No one could say anything ill of the man, except that he was not subservient to Conkling or his party faction, known as “Stalwarts.” Roosevelt himself, surprised and flattered by the nomination, was willing to assume the Custom House duties and its challenges, not for the salary but for the opportunity to make a major contribution to his nation, purify his party, and to help lead the reform movement.

Roosevelt had no idea what he would be up against. Arthur refused to resign; the president would not back down, and the stand-off attracted national attention. Democrats and anti-administrative Republicans were happy to defend Arthur and to vilify Roosevelt. Rumors were invented, innuendoes spread, and all sorts of criticism was aimed at the noble nominee. Roosevelt frankly was bewildered and hurt by the whole affair. It was all begun and ended in the space of a few short weeks. Chester Alan Arthur remained in office. Theodore Roosevelt, the spotless paragon of civic virtue and reform, remained on the playing field, a tattered political leftover.

TR, beginning his sophomore year at Harvard, was aware of the firestorm, but he did not immediately suffer the full force of the blow to his family. He congratulated his father upon the nomination, proud that the man was willing to sacrifice so much to become a crusader for civil service reform. When he became aware of the campaign of vilification against his father, TR wrote letters of encouragement and sympathy to him—but often only one line. It was certainly not that he didn't care; but apparently he assumed the imbroglio was not as horrible as it, in fact, was. The family in New York was wounded because their honorable paterfamilias had been dishonored. Even at best, the elder Roosevelt found himself talked about as a man who had allowed himself to be a naïve pawn in tawdry political wars.

Shortly after this traumatic episode, the family was blindsided by a calamity worse than the first. Thee's health began to unravel; he suffered acutely, was unable to eat or sleep, and lost weight. Naturally the family attributed the malaise to the strain of the political humiliation. Soon, however, as the pain became excruciating, doctors discovered that he had virulent and inoperable stomach cancer. The cancer advanced rapidly. Theodore's faculties slowly disappeared. He became fevered and delirious, and evinced such pain that doctors could scarcely medicate with effect.

The family decided, at first, not to alarm TR at Harvard beyond general reports of his father's indisposition. But the sickroom situation deteriorated so rapidly that when the son was at last advised to rush home to see his father one last time, he arrived hours after his father's death on February 9, 1878. Theodore Roosevelt Senior was just forty-six years old.

The “best friend I ever had,” as TR considered his father, was gone, and TR was stunned beyond consolation, filling his diaries with descriptions of his sorrow, and a gloomy conviction that he could not ever rise to the level of his father as a member of society, as a reformer, or as a man. T

acknowledged the comfort of knowing that his father was in the arms of God, but the comfort belonged more to the elder Roosevelt (released from the ravages of his disease) than to TR himself, bereft of his father and friend. He would feel the loss of his father's advice and guidance bitterly, and he repeatedly swore to live up to his father's ideals, to do what his father would have him do. "But I shall always live my life as he would want...that anything I do would make him proud of me," TR declared to family and friends.

TR literally owed his life to his father, who had carried the asthmatic boy in his arms at night, and walked and sleighed through the New York snows, hoping that cold, clear air would open the boy's lungs. He had built his son a state-of-the-art gymnasium and helped him exercise, hired boxing coaches, and taken him on hiking and hunting trips to the Adirondacks. Through it all, he imparted advice and counsel, extolling heroes from the Bible and world history, and providing a real-life example of compassion towards his fellow men. For the rest of his life, TR would meet people who had been helped by his father, in secret episodes never publicized. For instance, when TR was governor, he met John Green Brady, governor of the Alaska Territory, who told him how the elder Roosevelt had given him money when he was a homeless child in New York City, and sent him West to be reared. This was just one of many such stories about his father's generosity shared with TR throughout his adult life.

But in that 1878 winter, the heartbroken young man confided to his diary: "I feel that if it were not for the certainty that he is not dead but gone before, I should almost perish." He went on, "How little use I am or ever shall be."

But life went on; it had to go on—and pressing ahead with the Great Adventure, of which life and death are both parts, is what TR's father himself would have counseled.

## 1877–1878: CARTOON PORTFOLIO



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