

*Grace
Dee May*
MUSEUM &
LIBRARY

ILLUMINATIONS

MARCH / APRIL 2026



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ILLUMINATING THE LEGACY OF THE WEST

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In 2004, Audrey Marie Stein established the Grace Dee May Museum. Audrey believed that she had been richly blessed by the **Grace** of God. Audrey's nickname was **Dee** and she had been born in the month of **May**. So, as Director of the Foundation, she named the Museum the **Grace Dee May**.



"If a man does not have an ideal and try to live up to it, then he becomes a mean, base and sordid creature, no matter how successful."

– Theodore Roosevelt, Freemason and 26th U.S. President

A Legendary Life

In his 1981 biography of America's 26th President, *Mornings on Horseback*, author and historian David McCullough shines a light not on the full life of

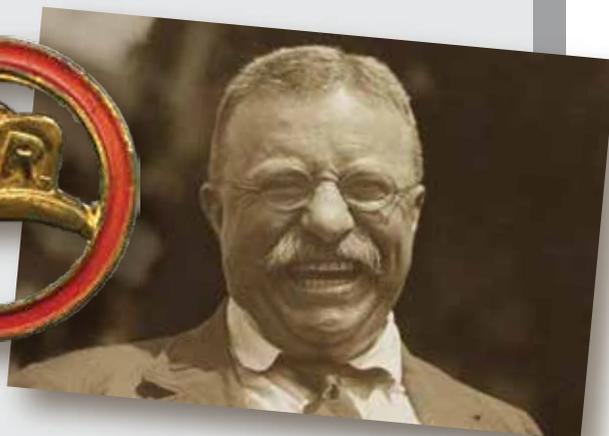
Theodore Roosevelt but unfolds the blueprint for the pillars in Roosevelt's childhood and early adult years that enabled a sickly and decidedly eccentric boy to evolve into an acclaimed naturalist, conservationist, political reformer and world leader.

In this issue of *Illuminations*, we are proud to present some of the highlights of the life and times of our Masonic Brother Theodore Roosevelt. Uniquely American, "TR" as he was commonly called, lived intensely in both his personal and professional lives. His sheer determination allowed him to succeed and accomplish an impressive number of goals in his life as if nothing could stop him. Famously, in 1912 while giving a speech in Milwaukee, TR was shot in the chest by a would-be assassin but continued his speech to its conclusion 90 minutes later!

His multitude of accomplishments included political reforms including ensuring food safety, breaking up corporate monopolies, protecting the environment and expanding the National Parks. Roosevelt was the first American (and first President) to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for mediating the end of the Russo-Japanese War, and he was the instrumental force behind the construction of the Panama Canal.

Larger than life, Theodore Roosevelt's accomplishments are legendary. We hope you enjoy learning about Roosevelt the man – and the Mason.

Sean Foran
Curator and Board President



An American Success Story

Perhaps, there could not have been two more different parents than the strait-laced New York businessman and philanthropist, Theodore Roosevelt, Sr., and his wife, Martha "Mittie" Bulloch, a Southern belle who many believe was the inspiration for the heroine of Margaret Mitchell's *Scarlet O'Hara* in *Gone With the Wind*. Yet, despite their differences, including her support for the Confederacy and his loyal support of the Union during the Civil War, they adored each other and, together, were not only the parents of a future president, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., but the grandparents of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt.



Theodore Jr. visiting "dependent" children

Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., was born on October 27, 1858, into a world of wealth and privilege but throughout his youth, "TR", as he was called, and his 3 siblings were led by the example of their father to understand that it was a moral duty to care for the less fortunate. Roosevelt, Sr., was a founder of many charitable organizations including the New York Children's Aide Society where he not only donated money but each Sunday he would visit with the orphans as a mentor. He also was a founder of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Natural History Museum.

In a rare event in history, young TR and his younger brother, Elliott, were captured peering out of a second story window at the home of their grandfather Cornelius V.S. Roosevelt's New York mansion at the corner of Broadway and Union Square watching mourners march in the funeral procession for the slain American President Abraham Lincoln – making for an extraordinary moment in time when a future President witnessed the funeral of another President who would later both be immortalized in stone on Mount Rushmore.



Elliott & Teddy Roosevelt watching Lincoln's Funeral Procession

All four of the Roosevelt children were educated in their home at 28 East 20th Street in part due to young TR's frequently suffering with extreme asthma attacks and his older sister, Anna, (Bamie) who was afflicted by a spinal ailment that left her for many years unable to walk on her own.

Despite the fact that Teddy's scholastic achievements were spotty, he was admitted to Harvard where he participated in boxing and other sports as he was determined to build up stamina and strength. In 1878, he rushed back to NYC when he learned his father, whom the children called "Great Heart" had died from intestinal cancer at the age of just 46.

Teddy returned to Harvard and then spent a year at Columbia studying law before setting his sights on a career in politics. His life was to change in other ways as he married the beautiful socialite Alice Hathaway Lee in 1890. Following an extended honeymoon in Europe, TR felt assured that his future success was unstoppable.

"There are two things that I want you to make up your minds to: first, that you are going to have a good time as long as you live - I have no use for the sour-faced man - and next, that you are going to do something worthwhile, that you are going to work hard and do the things you set out to do."

(Talk to schoolchildren in Oyster Bay, Christmastime 1898)



T.R. age 11 years



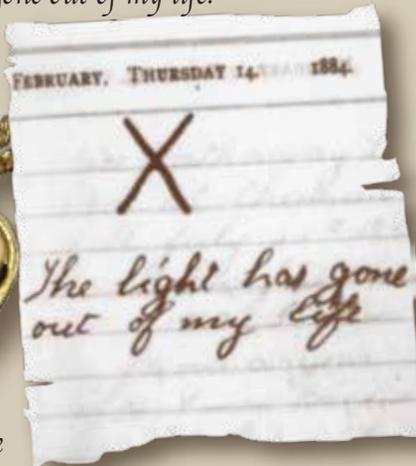
Tragedy & Triumph

On Valentine's Day, 1884, Theodore Roosevelt wrote in his diary, "The light has gone out of my life."



Mother
"Mittie"

Wife Alice



Two days earlier, Roosevelt was in the State Legislature in Albany when he received a telegram that his beautiful 22-year old wife, Alice Hathaway Lee Roosevelt, had given birth to their baby daughter. TR boarded a train back to his home on West 57th Street in Manhattan. His joy at the birth of his baby daughter, Alice Lee Roosevelt, quickly was erased with the double tragedy of holding his wife in his arms as she died of complications of childbirth and kidney failure, while his beloved mother had died just two hours earlier in his home from typhoid fever.

Shaken to his core, Roosevelt was overwhelmed with inconsolable grief. He asked his older sister, Anna (Bamie) to care for his infant daughter before he fled from New York for the Badlands of the Dakota Territory.

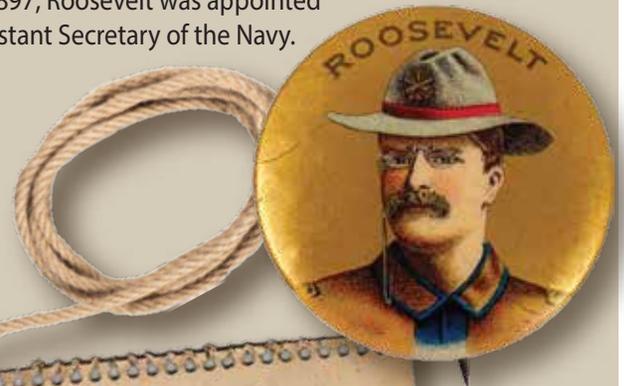
*"When you're at the end of your rope,
tie a knot and hold on." - Theodore Roosevelt*

Roosevelt's time in the wilderness was transformational as he pitted himself against the forces of nature in an attempt to heal deep emotional wounds. He purchased two cattle ranches – Chimney Butte and the Elkhorn. The solitude and harshness of the environment brought Teddy face to face with his grief and fears. While enduring crippling physical challenges, Roosevelt honed his endurance during two harsh years in the rugged West.

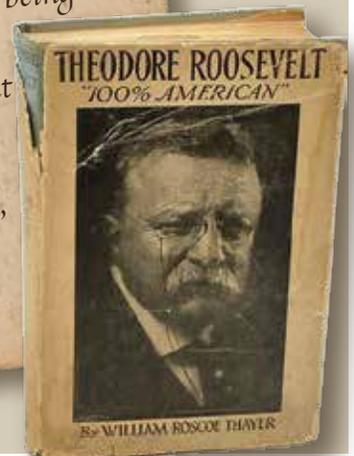
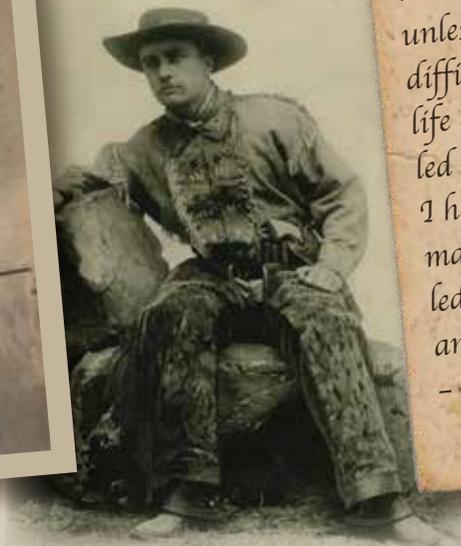
Renewed in spirit, Roosevelt returned to New York in 1886 and married a childhood friend, Edith Kermit Carow. Together, they would have five children and she would stand proudly by his side in later years as his First Lady.

TR ignited his return to politics by campaigning to become Mayor of New York. While his bid was unsuccessful, nothing could stop his drive and ambition. He served on the U.S. Civil Service Commission championing reforms which boosted his popularity and led to his elevation to national political leadership.

In 1897, Roosevelt was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Navy.



*"Nothing in the world
is worth having or worth doing
unless it means effort, pain,
difficulty... I have never in my
life envied a human being who
led an easy life.
I have envied a great
many people who
led difficult lives
and led them well."
- Theodore
Roosevelt*

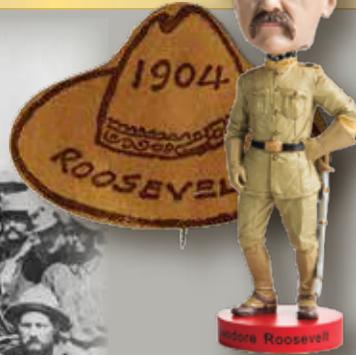


The Rough Riders / 26th U.S. President



The Rough Riders

Roosevelt, along with an unlikely and diverse band of brothers including Ivy League athletes, frontier sharpshooters, Native Americans, lawmen, and adventurers joined Roosevelt in forming the first all-volunteer Cavalry regiment. After training in Texas, Roosevelt and his Rough Riders sailed to Cuba to free Cubans from Spanish rule. Fighting through Spanish resistance, Roosevelt stormed both Kettle Hill and San Juan Hill. Returning to public acclaim, "Colonel" Roosevelt built his fame as a military hero to help vault him into the Governorship of New York in 1898.



"I have always been fond of the West African proverb: 'Speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far.'"
- Theodore Roosevelt Jr.
(Letter to Henry L. Sprague, Jan. 26, 1900)

26th President of the United States

TR was selected to join the Republican ticket as William McKinley's Vice Presidential nominee.

A little over six months later at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, NY, McKinley was assassinated by an anarchist.

On September 13, 1901, Roosevelt was sworn in as the 26th President and youngest man (at 42) to serve as America's Commander in Chief.



Roosevelt's term was marked by his indefatigable energy and his penchant for taking action. Defying the Southern Democrat segregationists, Roosevelt invited famed Black educator and Prince Hall Freemason, Booker T. Washington to dinner at the White House. Roosevelt was also considered a "trust-buster" breaking up monopolies like Standard Oil. He created the U.S. Department of Labor, overseeing labor reform for better pay for workers, and prosecuted Indian agents for corruption on the Native reservations.

"In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing. The worst thing you can do is nothing."
- Theodore Roosevelt

Presidential Accomplishments

Among Roosevelt's accomplishments during his time as President included:

- Preserved over 230 million acres as public land including five bird preserves, four game preserves, and 18 National Monuments
- Created five National Parks
- Acquired the land and began construction of the Panama Canal

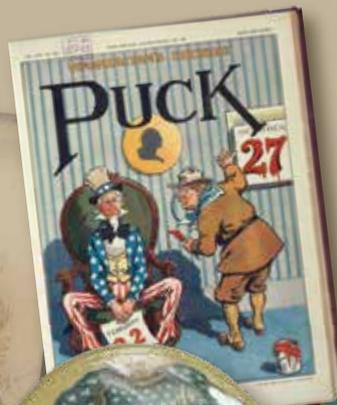


- Enhanced the powers under the Monroe Doctrine
- Strengthened the might of the U.S. Navy
- Became the first President to act as a mediator between union and management leaders
- Expanded the role of the Presidency in both domestic and international policy

"Whenever you are asked if you can do a job, tell 'em, 'Certainly I can!' Then get busy and find out how to do it."
 - Theodore Roosevelt

After leaving office, Roosevelt continued to champion government reforms and influenced public opinion. Disillusioned with the first term of President William Taft, Roosevelt took the helm of the National Progressive Party aka the Bull Moose Party. When a would-be assassin shot Roosevelt while the former President was on the campaign trail, Teddy refused to be seen by a doctor despite a bullet in his chest and quipped, "It takes more than that to kill a bull moose" before continuing his speech. While Woodrow Wilson won the election of 1912 with 42% of the popular vote, Roosevelt came in second with 27% of the votes, pushing Taft into third place.

Following the election, Roosevelt explored the Amazon region of Brazil where he was stricken with malaria. During his recovery in America, he was alarmed at the emerging crisis in Europe and urged President Wilson to increase military preparedness. His warnings were ignored by Wilson who vainly hoped for neutrality. When America was forced to enter the "Great War" in 1917, all four of Roosevelt's sons served in the Armed Forces, and his youngest son, Quentin, was shot down over Germany and died.



"Do what you can, with what you have, where you are."
 - Theodore Roosevelt

Heritage of Freemasonry

Theodore Roosevelt was raised to the Degree of Master Mason on April 24, 1901, at Matinecock Lodge No. 806, Oyster Bay, New York. Through the years, he visited Lodges in all corners of the globe from the wilds of Africa and South America to elegant cities in Europe. During his travels, Roosevelt also took part in cornerstone ceremonies around America. It is widely speculated that because of his love of the West, he was most proud that he had the honor of laying a cornerstone at the gateway to Yellowstone National Park on April 24, 1903.

Roosevelt was famous for his agenda to ensure that Americans deserved "A square deal for every man, big or small, rich or poor". His program aimed to provide consumer protections, corporate regulations, and conservation of the country's natural resources.

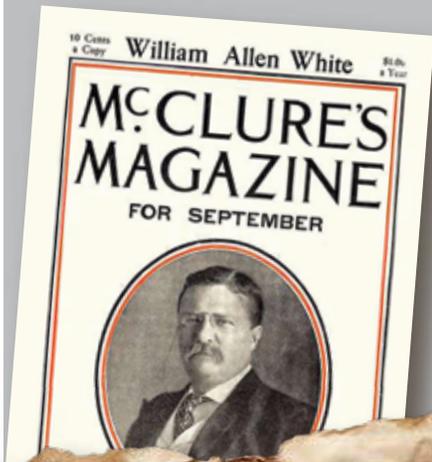
With these core values and his belief in fairness and equality, it is not surprising that the Masonic virtues of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth drew Theodore Roosevelt to Freemasonry.



Theodore and Booker T. Washington



T.R., Boy Scout, and Masonic Bro. Dan Beard

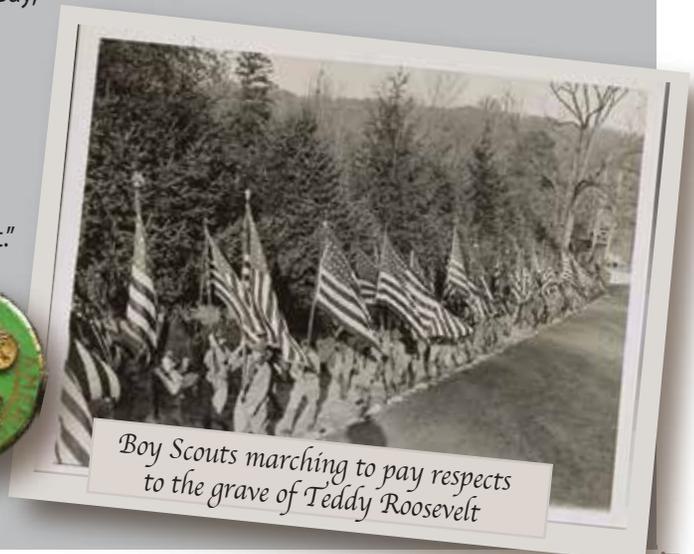


"One of the things which attracted me so greatly to Masonry that I hailed the chance of becoming a Mason, was that it really did act up to what we, as a government and as a people, are pledged to - namely, to treat each man on his merits as a man. The practice of Masonry teaches ...the qualities that make a man fit to stand by himself...
- Theodore Roosevelt
(to McClure's Magazine)

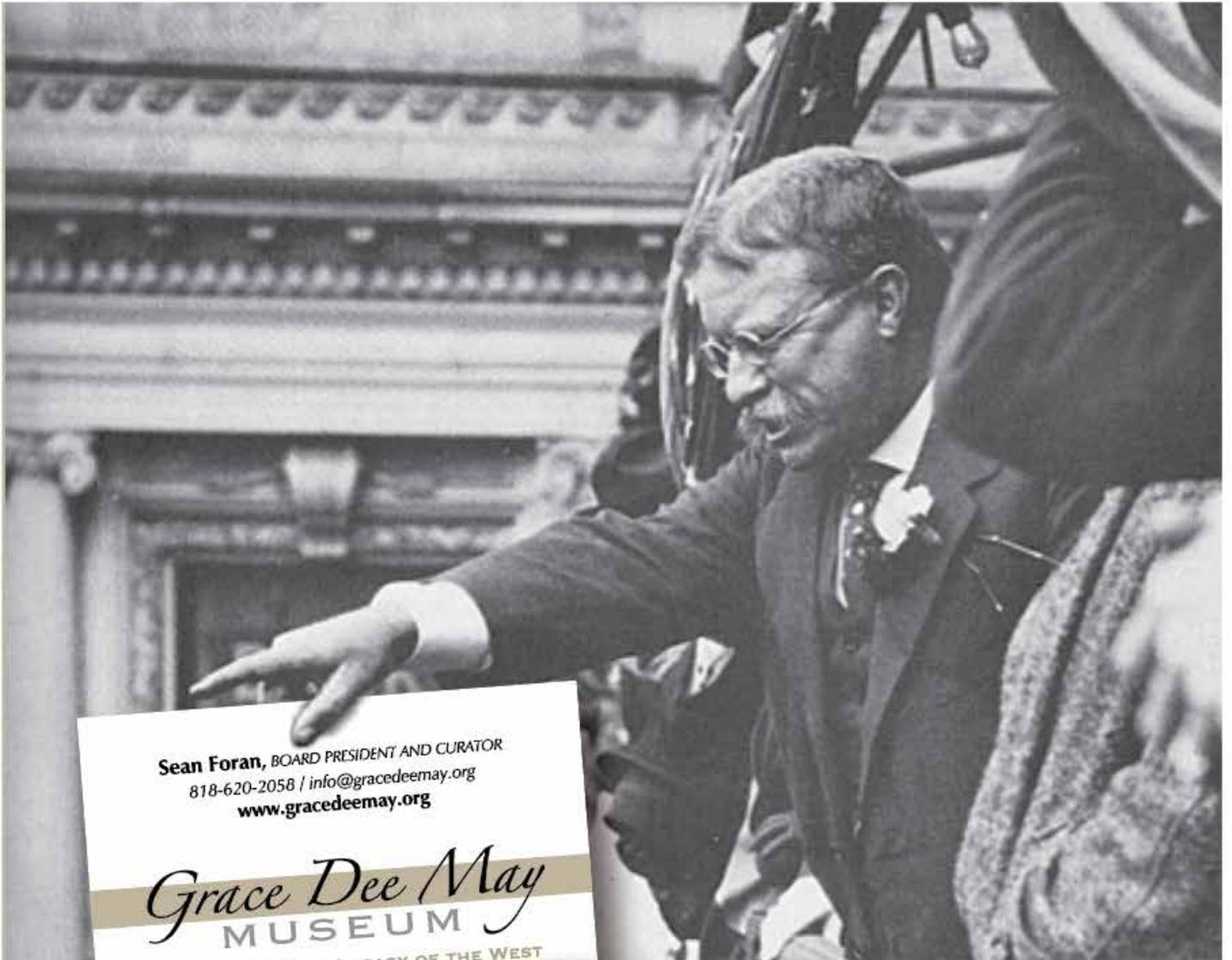
A Fond Farewell

Roosevelt passed away in his sleep at the age of 60 on January 5, 1919. His funeral was held at Christ Episcopal Church in Oyster Bay. Several political leaders who were also Freemasons attended the funeral service including Thomas R. Marshall, Warren G. Harding, William Howard Taft, and Henry Cabot Lodge.

Reflecting on the fact that Theodore Roosevelt died in his sleep at his home, Sagamore Hill in Oyster Bay, Vice President under Woodrow Wilson, Thomas R. Marshall, remarked, "Death had to take him in his sleep, for if he was awake there'd have been a fight."



Boy Scouts marching to pay respects to the grave of Teddy Roosevelt



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Grace Dee May MUSEUM

ILLUMINATING THE LEGACY OF THE WEST

*with the fraternal
regards of
Theodore Roosevelt*



Our Vision:

The Grace Dee May Museum will seek to present a thematic look at the American West by utilizing its extensive collection of Western Art, and incorporate California history to broaden and deepen the public knowledge and appreciation of the men and women that settled the western part of the United States.

Our Mission:

The Grace Dee May Museum is committed to advancing the public knowledge and understanding of the American West and the contributions that Freemasonry has played in its development.

Grace Dee May MUSEUM & LIBRARY

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