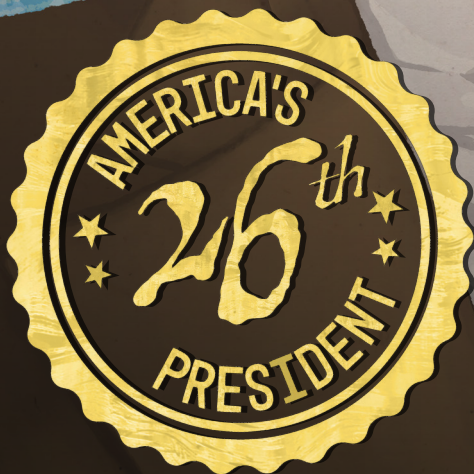


presidents of the *United States of America*

"I was a rancher, historian, reformer, war hero, Nobel Prize winner, and safari hunter. Oh, and I was also the 26th President of the United States."



Theodore Roosevelt



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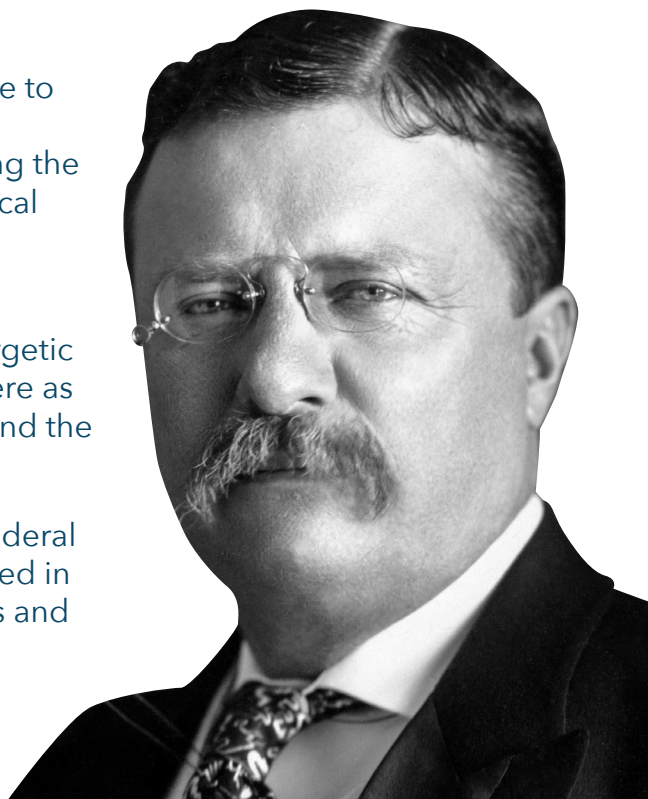
Meet Theodore Roosevelt

Have you ever wanted to go on an adventure? So did Theodore Roosevelt. He loved learning about animals, so he traveled to South America in 1913 to go hunting and to observe wildlife. He and his team braved rainstorms and mosquitos throughout their voyage. Roosevelt even caught malaria, but survived.

This trip was just one of many examples of Roosevelt living life to the fullest. In many ways, Roosevelt's whole life was an adventure—one of great triumphs and terrible tragedies. Along the way, he became an author, a cowboy, a war hero, and a political leader. In 1901 he became the youngest man to become president—at age 42.

Roosevelt was one of the most brilliant, charismatic, and energetic presidents in American history. In addition, few presidents were as colorful as Roosevelt. He and his family owned tons of pets, and the White House during Roosevelt's presidency was like a zoo.

Roosevelt forever changed the United States. He made the federal government more powerful, and he got America more involved in world affairs. Some have criticized Roosevelt for these actions and believe that they resulted in many of America's current problems. Still, Roosevelt was a man of incredible achievement, and his life continues to inspire people today.



Young Theodore

Theodore Roosevelt was born on October 27, 1858 to a wealthy family in New York City. His father, also Theodore, was a prominent businessman and his mother Martha was a Southerner from Georgia. Young Theodore was the second of four children. He spent much of his childhood sick in bed and suffered from asthma. These challenges, however, only fueled his desire to overcome them. As a teenager, he began lifting weights and performing gymnastics. Eventually, he would take up rowing, wrestling, and even boxing. He eventually developed a strong and healthy physique and became a believer in the "**Strenuous Life**." He strongly believed in the virtues of **masculinity** and hard work.

Young Theodore wasn't just physically strong—he was highly intelligent and loved to learn about the world. He became fascinated with animals and took up **taxidermy** as a hobby. He eventually collected enough animals to open up a "Roosevelt Museum of Natural History" in his own home. He also loved studying history. He and his family traveled around the world, giving Theodore a greater understanding of other peoples and cultures.

In 1876, Theodore began attending Harvard University. Unfortunately, tragedy struck when, in 1878, his father passed away from a stomach ailment. This left Theodore devastated. He later said that his father was "the best man I ever knew."



Interesting Facts

- He was, at 42 years old, the youngest president to take office (as of 2023).
- He was a member of the Republican Party.
- He was famously nicknamed "Teddy" Roosevelt and often referred to as "TR."
- His favorite motto was, "Speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far."
- He was the first president to win the Nobel Prize.
- He is the only president (as of 2023) to win the Medal of Honor.
- He was the first president to ride in an airplane.
- He was the first president who, after taking office after the death of his predecessor, was elected to his own term.
- He drank about a gallon of coffee every day.
- He was fifth cousins with President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Early Career

The year 1878, however, wasn't all bad for Roosevelt. He also met a lovely young woman named Alice Hathaway Lee, the daughter of a prominent banker. They fell in love and got married in 1880.

While at Harvard, he also began writing a book on the War of 1812, with a focus on the U.S. Navy's actions during that war. The book was published in 1882 under the title *The Naval War of 1812*. Roosevelt was now a respected historian at the age of just 24.

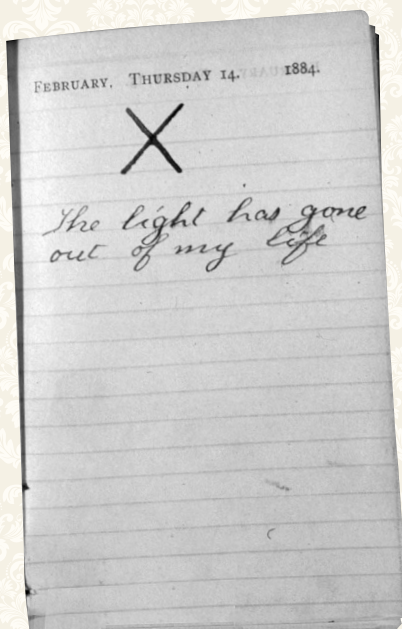
During this time, the Gilded Age, the country was very prosperous. At the same time, however, many people were using positions of power and influence in government and business for selfish gain. Roosevelt wanted to do something about it, so he ran for New York State Assembly as a Republican. He won the election and served from 1882 to 1884. As an assemblyman, he fought hard against corruption.



Alice Hathaway

Quote

"Success... counts for nothing compared to the success of the man in winning the one woman who is all the world to him."
- May 1906



The Worst Day of His Life

The future looked bright for Roosevelt. Things got even better when Alice became pregnant with their first child. Their daughter was born on February 12, 1884, and they named her Alice Lee Roosevelt. Unfortunately, the pregnancy was hard on Roosevelt's wife. She began suffering from kidney failure. To make matters worse, Roosevelt's mother Martha was also suffering from typhoid fever.

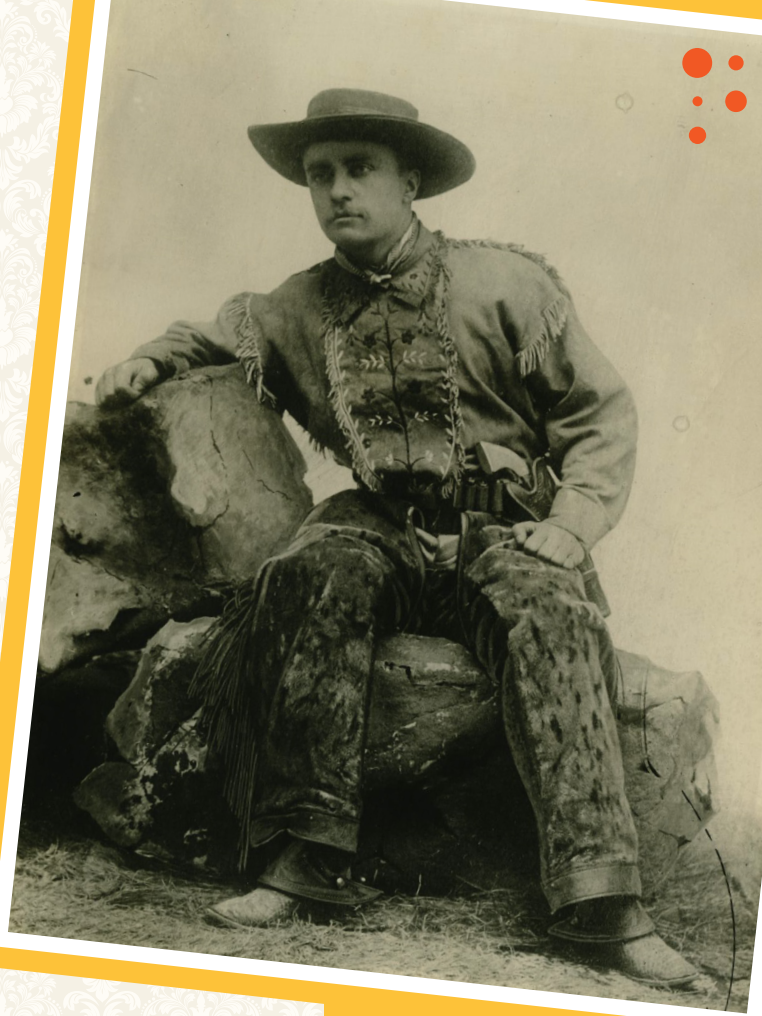
Two days later, on February 14—Valentine's Day—Martha died. Several hours later, his wife Alice died in his arms. Roosevelt had lost his mother and wife on the same day. He wrote a giant "X" in his diary for that day, with the words, "The light has gone out of my life."

Rancher

Roosevelt was crushed and heartbroken. He was a widower at the age of 25. Grief-stricken, Roosevelt needed a change of scenery. He asked his sister to take care of his daughter for a while so he could leave New York. He traveled far out west, to the **Dakota Territory**.

While he was there, Roosevelt transformed himself from a New York aristocrat to a cowboy. He bought two ranches and spent the next couple of years riding out on the range, herding cattle, and hunting grizzly bears. He even became a deputy sheriff. When a group of thieves stole his boat, Roosevelt chased them down and arrested them.

Roosevelt loved being outdoors. When the severe winter of 1886-87 wiped out most of his cattle, however, he knew it was time to return home.



Reformer

Roosevelt reconnected with a childhood friend of his—a woman named Edith Kermit Carow. They got married in December of 1886 and would eventually have five children together.

It didn't take long for Roosevelt to get back into the swing of things. He continued his writing career, eventually publishing several biographies and a successful series titled *The Winning of the West*.

He also jumped back into public office. President Benjamin Harrison appointed him to the **Civil Service Commission**, an opportunity Roosevelt used to fight corruption in the federal government.

In 1895, Roosevelt was put in charge of the New York City Police Board. Again, he fought corruption and incompetence. He spent many nights walking around New York City, surprising police officers and making sure that they were on duty and not fooling around. Roosevelt's work cleaning up the civil service and the New York police earned him a reputation as one of the country's most famous **reformers**.

Quote

"It is not the critic who counts... The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena... who spends himself in a worthy cause."
- April 1910

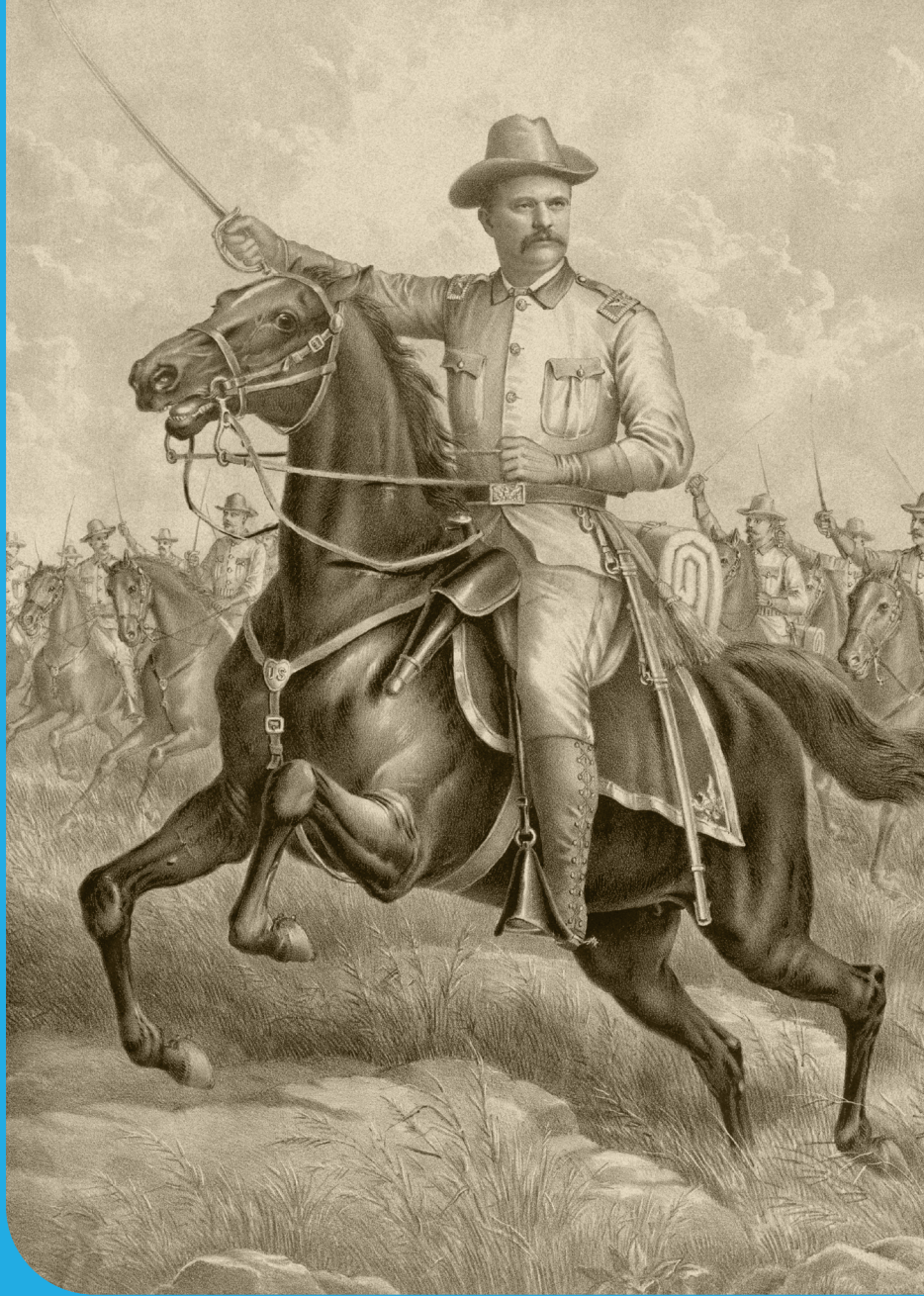
War Hero

Roosevelt's career occurred right when the United States was becoming a world power. It already had the strongest economy on the planet. In the 1890s, he read the book *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* by Alfred Mahan, which convinced Roosevelt that America needed a powerful **navy** to take its rightful place in the world.

Roosevelt got his chance to turn his ideas into reality when the new Republican president William McKinley appointed him as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy in 1897. When the **Spanish-American War** broke out in 1898, the patriotic Roosevelt saw it as an opportunity for America to grab some colonies and earn the respect of the world.

Roosevelt, however, didn't want to spend the war sitting around at a desk in Washington, D.C. Instead, he traded in his suit for a uniform, raised a regiment of soldiers, and headed down to Cuba to fight. Roosevelt was given the **rank** of colonel and his regiment would become known as the "**Rough Riders**."

On July 1, 1898, he led his men at the Battle of San Juan Hill where they braved enemy fire and defeated the Spanish. Roosevelt loved combat so much that, during the battle, he yelled, "Holy Godfrey, what fun!" Two bullets grazed him in the elbow and on the hand, and Roosevelt later showed off his scars with pride.



Quote

"A soft, easy life is not worth living... We must dare to be great; and we must realize that greatness is the fruit of toil and sacrifice and high courage."
- October 1898



Rise to Power

Roosevelt returned to America a war hero, which made him a strong candidate for public office. The Republicans chose him as their candidate for Governor of New York. At the time, the Republicans were divided into two groups: the **progressives** and the conservatives. Since Roosevelt was a reformer, he was considered a progressive. He won the election in the fall of 1898 and became Governor the following year.

As Governor, Roosevelt implemented many progressive policies, such as taxing publicly-owned companies, especially those that provided gas, water, and electricity.

The conservatives in New York were unhappy with Roosevelt's actions, so in the 1900 election, they figured out a way to get rid of him. They got Roosevelt chosen as President McKinley's running mate in the 1900 presidential election. The vice presidency, after all, was a position with little power. In the fall of 1900, McKinley and Roosevelt easily won the election.

Roosevelt was now the Vice President of the United States, but his tenure wouldn't last long. On September 6, 1901, President McKinley was shot by an anarchist named Leon Czolgosz. McKinley died on September 14. Roosevelt was now the 26th President of the United States.

President

Theodore Roosevelt is often called the first “modern” president. He brought an energy and vigor to the presidency that no one had ever seen before. He also believed that, since America was now a strong world power, it needed a strong government to address certain issues. He used the federal government to break up massive corporations, also known as **trusts**, because he felt they were making it hard for smaller businesses to compete. These actions earned him the reputation as a “trust buster.” He signed several laws that allowed the government to regulate businesses, such as how much railroad companies could charge for shipping or how clean food needed to be when it was packaged. Roosevelt called his program the “Square Deal,”—which he believed was making the economy more fair for everyone.



Roosevelt loved the outdoors and wanted to preserve as much land in America from development as possible. He issued executive orders creating 150 new national forests and protecting 230 million acres of land.

Even though many people felt Roosevelt was too aggressive and had expanded government too much, most Americans loved him. He was elected to his own term in 1904.

Roosevelt was also one of the earliest presidents to believe America had to become more involved in world affairs. Even though most Americans believed that their nation should stay out of international issues, Roosevelt got involved in several crises, including ones in Venezuela, Japan, and Morocco. He helped negotiate the end of the Russo-Japanese War, which earned him a **Nobel Peace Prize**. He strengthened America’s Navy so it could act decisively in the world, building the **Great White Fleet**. He also worked hard to get the **Panama Canal** built, which reduced the amount of time needed for ships to travel in the Western Hemisphere.

Roosevelt at the Canal





A Zoo in the White House

Roosevelt and his family loved animals. In fact, when he was president, they kept all sorts of animals: a lizard, a bear, a macaw, a hen, a rooster, a hyena, an owl, a rabbit, a pony, a badger, dogs, horses, pigs, and snakes. In fact, his son Quentin once terrified a group of senators when he accidentally dropped several snakes during an important meeting.



The Teddy Bear

Teddy bears are one of the most famous stuffed toys of all time. Did you know that it was all thanks to Theodore Roosevelt? On November 14, 1902, President Roosevelt was hunting near Onward, Mississippi when his assistant got the idea to tie a bear to a tree so that Roosevelt could shoot it and count it as a "kill." The president, however, believed this was unsportsmanlike and refused to shoot it.

When the story spread across the country, Americans praised Roosevelt for not shooting the bear. A store owner from Brooklyn, Morris Michtom, soon began selling toy stuffed bears commemorating the incident and named it "Teddy's Bear." They were a hit and soon became known as the "Teddy Bear."





Quote

"I stand for straight Americanism unconditioned and unqualified, and I stand against every form of hyphenated Americanism... All I ask of the immigrant is that he shall be physically and intellectually fit, of sound character, and eager in good faith to become an American citizen."

- May 1916



Assassination Attempt

On October 14, 1912, Roosevelt was delivering a speech in Milwaukee, Wisconsin as part of his 1912 presidential campaign. A man named John Schrank approached him and shot him with a revolver. The bullet went through his chest, narrowly avoiding his lung. Chaos broke out and bystanders wrestled Schrank to the ground. Roosevelt exclaimed, "I have just been shot, but it takes more than that to kill a Bull Moose!" Despite having an open bullet wound, Roosevelt refused to seek medical care until finishing the speech 90 minutes later. He ended up recovering from the assassination attempt.







Retirement

Roosevelt promised to not run again for president in 1908. That year, his hand-picked successor William Howard Taft was elected to succeed him. Immediately after leaving office, Roosevelt went on a huge safari in Africa where he and his team killed thousands of animals. Many of them were sent to the Smithsonian Institution. He later also explored South America.

Roosevelt was unhappy with President Taft's policies, so he ran against him in the 1912 presidential election as a member of the Progressive Party. It was also nicknamed the "Bull Moose Party." During this time, Roosevelt supported many radical progressive policies, such as universal healthcare. His campaign split the Republican vote, handing the election to Democrat Woodrow Wilson. Many Republicans blamed Roosevelt for the loss.

When America entered World War I in 1917, Roosevelt volunteered to fight personally, but President Wilson refused. Roosevelt was angered at Wilson's decision. Even worse, Roosevelt's son Quentin died in 1918 while serving in World War I.

Exhausted after a lifetime of strenuous activity and devastated by his son's death, Roosevelt's health began to decline. He died on January 5, 1919 at the age of 60. When the news of his death reached his son Archibald, he wrote, "The old lion is dead."

Quote

"Every man holds his property subject to the general right of the community to regulate its use to whatever degree the public welfare may require it."
- August 1910





Legacy

Theodore Roosevelt's life story continues to amaze people. Indeed, it is hard not to marvel at his great accomplishments. Americans were so impressed by him that they included him with legendary Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln on Mount Rushmore.

Roosevelt's life is the stuff of legend, and his impact on America is undeniable. He took office at a time when America was becoming a stronger player on the world stage. Roosevelt felt that this required a stronger government. He succeeded in making the presidency and

the government more powerful. Some, however, believe that this allowed future presidents to make government so powerful that it took away freedom from the American people. When Roosevelt ran for president in 1912, he supported radical policies that would have raised taxes very high on everyday Americans.

While there is fair criticism about some of Roosevelt's policies, his life story will continue to inspire his fellow countrymen. We still have much to learn from his belief in masculinity, patriotism, and hard work.

Glossary

Strenuous Life: Theodore Roosevelt's life philosophy, in which he argued that Americans individually and as a country should embrace hard work, masculinity, and rugged living. He believed that this would allow Americans to achieve greatness and keep them from getting lazy.

Masculinity: Characteristics that describe what it means to be a man, such as strength, courage, independence, leadership, and assertiveness.

Taxidermy: The art of preparing and preserving the skins of animals and of stuffing and mounting them in lifelike form.

Dakota Territory: A territory of the United States (from 1861 to 1889) that composed much of what is now North and South Dakota.

Civil Service Commission: A federal government agency created in the 1870s that was created to reduce corruption and ensure government employees were chosen by their qualifications and not their connections.

Reformer: Someone who plans or supports changes to a system, law, or organization to make it, as they see it, more modern or effective.

Navy: The part of a country's military that is trained to operate at sea. Navies usually have warships and other supporting vessels.

Spanish-American War: A conflict between the United States and Spain that took place in 1898. The United States won the conflict overwhelmingly and acquired several of Spain's territories.

Rough Riders: The nickname of Theodore Roosevelt's volunteer cavalry regiment during the Spanish-American War. The regiment fought in the battles of Las Guasimas and San Juan Hill and the Siege of Santiago.

Progressive: A person who believes in replacing the Founding Fathers' principles with new ideas and a more powerful government.

Trust: A combination of powerful business interests or companies with significant influence over the market.

Nobel Peace Prize: One of five Nobel prizes established by inventor Alfred Nobel. The Prize is awarded annually (starting in 1901) for those who have "done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations..." It is one of the most well-known awards in the world.

Great White Fleet: A group of U.S. Navy battleships which President Roosevelt ordered to travel around the world from 1907 to 1909. The fleet was, at the time, the most powerful fleet that ever circled the globe.

Panama Canal: An artificial 51-mile-long waterway in Panama that connects the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Construction on the canal began in 1904 and was completed in 1914. It significantly reduced the time needed to travel between the two oceans.

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