

President	Herbert C. Hoover
Chronological Order	31
Life Span	1874-1964
Home State	California
Elected	1928



Political Party	Republican
Vice President	Charles Curtis
First Lady	Lou Henry Hoover
Children	2 sons
Physical Attributes	5' 11.5" tall, brown hair, hazel eyes
Undergraduate Education	Stanford University (Geology)

Military Service	None
Profession	Mining Engineer
Other Political Offices	Secretary of Commerce
Nickname	The Chief

Family Lineage:	Swiss-German, German, English, Irish
Religious Affiliation	Quaker

**Biographical Notes**

1. Herbert Hoover was a great mining engineer. He discovered huge gold deposits in Western Australia and astonishingly rich silver and lead deposits in Burma, making him fabulously wealthy before the age of forty. Hoover wrote a mining engineering textbook that became the standard at universities. He was a great secretary of commerce for Harding and Coolidge, promoting American businesses overseas and guiding the nascent radio and aviation industries to prosperity.

However, he was one of the least successful presidents in American history because of his inability to deal with the Great Depression. He was too rigid about what a president could and should do in the face of such a crisis. In particular, he refused to expand the federal government's role to confront the economic crisis, insisting instead that volunteerism would solve things. Hoping that the Great Depression was no more than a particularly ugly turn in the business cycle, he kept assuring Americans that prosperity was just around the corner.

He did two things that made the Great Depression worse. In 1930, he signed the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act, which raised the tariff rates to the second-highest levels in American history. Foreign countries retaliated with high tariffs of their own, causing exports of American goods to drop dramatically, which exacerbated the Depression. He signed the Revenue Act of 1932, which contained the largest peacetime tax increase to date in order to balance the federal budget. The Act stymied the recovery by undermining investment and draining consumer purchasing power.

2. Herbert (Bert) Clark Hoover was born in West Branch, Iowa, in 1874. West Branch was a farming community of 350 people, mostly Quakers like the Hoovers. The Hoovers were pioneer folk, and like most members of the Religious Society of Friends, as the Quakers were formally known, they lived independent of clergy and civil authority. They did not practice baptism and gave scant notice to Christmas, Easter, and birthdays. They were austere in almost every aspect of their lives, from conversation to diet to clothing. West Branch was remarkably tight-knit, self-sufficient, and homogeneous. It had no bankers or lawyers, no African Americans or Native Americans, and few Catholics or Democrats. It had no fairground, no sports field, no theater, or library. A saloon was out of the question, and a jail unnecessary.

In West Branch, traditional pioneer virtues of enterprise, fortitude, and self-reliance were preached in equal measure with collective responsibility. The families knew each other intimately, taking care of one another in times of sickness and hardship, raising each other's barns, building roads and collecting harvests

together. The ethic of service was enhanced in West Branch by the self-sufficiency of the Quaker citizenry. Their desire to be independent of external institutions, whether governmental, judicial, financial, or clerical, could only be sustained by an unusual dedication to communal welfare. Faith, too, reinforced their collective orientation. Quakers believed that each individual, from the greatest to the least, has an “inner light” within, a direct experience of God that gives guidance and strength, diminishing the need for external authority.

The Quakers left indelible imprints on Hoover’s character and temperament – his self-reliance, his disdain for show, and his capacity for hard work – and on his view of the world: his dutiful commitment to good works, his trust in a community of neighbors to sustain the needy, and his pursuit of peace. Later in life, he was not a practicing Quaker, but his Quaker roots were deep in West Branch and later in Oregon.

3. Jesse Hoover, Bert’s father, was a blacksmith and farm implement maker. He died suddenly of heart disease when Bert was six years old. After Jesse’s death, Bert’s mother, Hulda Minhorn Hoover, became very active religiously. A council of ministers and elders conferred on her the “gift of ministry” in 1883. She was selected as a delegate to quarterly and annual meetings of Quakers throughout Iowa and into Kansas. Hulda caught pneumonia walking through the snow to the nearby town of Springfield and died when Bert was nine.

A council of relatives decided what to do with the three Hoover children. His younger sister May stayed with their grandmother; older brother Theodore went to live with an uncle in Harding County; Bert went to live with his uncle Allen Hoover, who had a farm just north of West Branch. While Bert was not unhappy in Uncle Allen’s care, the arrangement did not last. Hulda’s brother, Dr. Henry John Minhorn, had since settled in Newberg, Oregon, a town twenty-five miles south of Portland. Easily the most accomplished of the Hoover-Minhorn clan, he was a physician and educator, married and the father of two girls. He had recently lost his son and now wrote his West Branch relatives asking that Bert be sent to live with him, offering a free education for the boy at the Friends Pacific Academy in Newberg, of which he was superintendent.

The family agreed, so Bert boarded a train bound for Oregon two months after his eleventh birthday. He traveled in the care of a family named Hammell. His aunt had provided a bedroll for the spare wooden bunks of the second-class car and enough food to feed him and the Hammells for a week. He had one small bag with his clothes in it and two dimes in his pocket. In Oregon, Bert never felt like part of the Minhorn family. They had their own daughters, required Bert do tedious chores, and Dr. Minhorn, in particular, was a strict disciplinarian.

4. In 1888, Dr. Minhorn resigned from the Friends Pacific Academy and took a new position as partner and president of the Oregon Land Company (OLC) in Salem, the state’s capital. The family moved to Salem, and Bert quit school to work at the OLC. A chance meeting with a Quaker mining engineer got him interested in the field, and he decided to attend college.

Bert chose brand-new, tuition-free Stanford University in Palo Alto, California. He took his entrance exams in Portland from a Stanford mathematics professor but did not do well. However, he impressed the professor with his problem-solving tenacity and was admitted on the condition that he bone up on geometry. Bert enrolled as a geology major in 1891.

5. At Stanford, Hoover’s typing skills got him a job as an assistant to John Casper Branner, the head of the Geology Department. At the end of his sophomore year, he assisted Branner in creating a huge topographical relief map of Arkansas, which won a prize at the Chicago World’s Fair. On the strength of Branner’s recommendation, Hoover was hired as a summer assistant to the renowned geologist Waldemar Lindgren of the United States Geological Survey. Lindgren’s specialty was economic geology, i.e., the study of exploitable metals and minerals, a field in which he was a pioneer. He led Hoover from mine to mine in the West, lecturing him on mining engineering and practical geology. The seminars continued around the campfires in the evening. Hoover wrote a friend, “I have a fine man to work for and a favorite business to work in, and moreover a grand country to work over.”

Lindgren said, “Never have I had a more satisfactory assistant.” He admired Hoover’s ability to get at the heart of a matter and solve problems in the simplest way possible. Hoover was honored when Lindgren included his name in the credits of his published surveys.

6. When Hoover graduated from Stanford University in 1895, the United States was in the midst of the Panic of 1893, and he initially struggled to find a job. He worked in various low-level mining jobs in the Sierra Nevada Mountain range until he convinced prominent mining engineer Louis Janin to hire him. After working as a mine scout for a year, Hoover was hired by Bewick, Moreing & Co., a London-based company that operated gold mines in Western Australia.

In the next eighteen months, Hoover traveled over five thousand miles across the rugged Australian

Outback – sometimes on camels across the Great Victorian Desert – looking for veins of gold. His greatest coup was the Sons of Gwalia gold mine. It was already producing some gold, but only Hoover saw its true potential. He strongly suggested that Bewick, Moreing purchase the mine, which they did for \$1 million. The mine eventually produced gold worth \$65 million. The firm chose Hoover to manage Sons of Gwalia and seven other mines, with a boost in salary and responsibility for scores of employees.

Hoover was a tough boss. In the fall of 1897, he extended the workweek from forty-four to forty-eight hours. In the spring, he fired one crew of workers who struck for higher wages and then part of another when they struck after Hoover decreased their Sunday wages. He imported Italian immigrants who worked cheaper than Australian workers. During his time in Australia, Hoover became opposed to measures such as a minimum wage and workers' compensation, feeling that they were unfair to owners.

Hoover's work impressed his employers, and in 1898 he was promoted to junior partner. An open feud developed between Hoover and his boss in Australia, Ernest Williams, but company leaders defused the situation by offering Hoover an influential position in China.

7. Upon arriving in China, Hoover developed gold mines near Tianjin for Bewick, Moreing, and the Chinese-owned Chinese Engineering and Mining Company. The Boxer Rebellion broke out shortly after Hoover arrived in China, trapping the Hoovers and numerous other foreign nationals until a multinational military force defeated Boxer forces in the Battle of Tientsin. Fearing the imminent collapse of the Chinese government, the director of the Chinese Engineering and Mining Company agreed to establish a new Sino-British venture with Bewick, Moreing. After Hoover and Bewick, Moreing established effective control over the new Chinese mining company, Hoover became the operating partner of Bewick, Moreing in late 1901.

As operating partner, Hoover continually traveled the world on behalf of Bewick, Moreing, visiting mines operated by the company on various continents. In December 1902, the company faced mounting legal and financial issues after one of the partners admitted to having fraudulently sold stock in a mine. More problems arose in 1904 after the British government formed two separate royal commissions to investigate Bewick, Moreing's labor practices and financial dealings in Western Australia. After the company lost a suit, Hoover began looking for a way to get out of the partnership, and he sold his shares in mid-1908.

8. Lou Henry was the daughter of Charles Henry, a wealthy California banker. Her father had hoped for a son – hence the gender-neutral first name with no middle name. Charles took Lou into the hills on camping trips, her favorite activity in her early teens. Lou became a fine horsewoman. She also hunted and preserved specimens with the skill of a taxidermist. The trips into the hills helped her develop an enthusiasm for rocks and minerals. Lou was the only female student in the Stanford geology department, where she met Hoover. She graduated with a B.A. in geology in 1898.

Bert and Lou were married after his work in Australia, and she accompanied him to Tientsin, China. While there, they lived in an enclave with the other foreigners. When the Boxer Rebellion broke out, Tientsin was hit hard, and tens of thousands of Boxer rebels surrounded the enclave. When this happened, Lou refused to be evacuated with the women and children because she was a better shot with a rifle than most of the men. Eventually, foreign troops, including American Marines, came to the rescue.

During their marriage, Lou often traveled with Bert. She extensively studied languages, including Latin, Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, German, Italian, and French. She collaborated with Bert in translating Georgius Agricola's *De Re Metallica*, a 16th-century Latin treatise on mining and metallurgy. The Hoover translation was published in 1912 and remains in print today as the standard English translation. Bert and Lou were awarded a special gold medal for distinguished service from the Mining and Metallurgical Society of America.

Bert and Lou had two children, Herbert Jr. and Allan. Lou Hoover died of a heart attack in New York City in 1944. She was found dead in her bedroom by Bert, who came to kiss her good night. He was devastated by her death and never considered remarrying.

9. Hoover first learned of the mine that would produce his biggest payoff from ancient Chinese manuscripts that told of fabulous silver deposits in Burma on the road to Mandalay, the capital. On his way home from Malaysia in 1904, still in the employ of Bewick, Moreing, he met a railway contractor who knew Burma and spoke of gigantic abandoned works deep in the jungle. A year later, Hoover went to Burma, traveled by rail and horseback over green jungle mountains to the lost mines. They were vast, extending over a three-mile area, with pits thousands of feet long and hundreds of feet deep. The Chinese had worked the site from 1400 to 1850, taking the most accessible silver; Hoover saw an opportunity to extract much more.

His Burma trip was filled with adventure. At one point, Hoover was crawling through one of the low, narrow, Chinese tunnels with a candle in his hand so he could see where he was going. Then, in a shallow puddle, he saw huge, fresh, tiger paw prints. Hoover quickly and quietly exited the tunnel, glad that the tiger "was not of an inquisitive turn of mind and did not come out to greet us." He also caught malaria on

the trip but recovered.

The Burma Mines, Railway, and Smelting Company was registered in 1906, with Bewick, Moreing as a leading shareholder. Within two years, Hoover was the managing director of the company, and, for a change, he invested his own money, acquiring 18 percent of the mine. He worked the ore from different directions and at various depths until they opened a two-mile-long tunnel seven hundred feet below the old mines, which exposed the most bountiful seams. (Hoover called it the Tiger Tunnel.) The mine was astonishingly rich. Over thirty years, it would produce 135 million ounces of silver and over a million tons of lead.

10. After leaving Bewick, Moreing, Hoover worked as a London-based independent mining consultant and financier. Though he had risen to prominence as a geologist and mine operator, Hoover focused much of his attention on raising money, restructuring corporate organizations, and financing new ventures. He specialized in rejuvenating troubled mining operations, taking a share of the profits in exchange for his technical and financial expertise. Hoover thought of himself and his associates as "engineering doctors to sick concerns", and he earned a reputation as a "doctor of sick mines." He made investments on every continent and had offices in San Francisco, London, New York, Paris, Petrograd, and Mandalay. By 1914, Hoover was a very wealthy man, with an estimated personal fortune of \$4 million (equivalent to \$103.35 million in 2020), and he felt that he had done as much as he could in the field of mining engineering. He was now interested in entering what he called "the big game," public service.

11. Hoover was a great mining engineer, arguably the best of his era. In 1909, he published *Principles of Mining*, a technical book covering everything from excavation and machine drilling to valuation and risk management. It was based on a series of lectures he gave at Stanford and Columbia. The book became the standard textbook on mining at engineering schools, and it remained in print throughout Hoover's life. The book fulfilled Hoover's ambition to have an intellectual life as well as a practical career, much like his mentors Lindgren and Branner.

12. When World War I broke out in the summer of 1914, the lives of Americans visiting Europe were thrown into chaos, and many hurried to London to gain passage back home. But banks were closed. Lines of credit, travelers checks, and foreign currencies were worthless. Telegraph services were unavailable. Hotels were incapacitated as their employees rushed to enlist. Trains and ships were appropriated for troop carriage, and the few rail and steamship services still operating were overwhelmed.

Hoover voluntarily organized the Committee of American Residents in London for the Assistance of American Travelers. The core of the committee was a group of London businessmen, including Hoover, who loaned their British currency to stranded American travelers at no interest. The committee also helped the travelers get hotel accommodations and passage back home. More than forty-two thousand travelers registered with Hoover's Residents' Committee.

13. When the Germans invaded Belgium at the beginning of World War I (August 1914), they confiscated the Belgian harvest. The confiscation, coupled with the British naval blockade of Belgium and Germany, set off a food crisis in Belgium because the Germans refused to take responsibility for feeding the 7.5 million Belgians. Hoover established the Committee for the Relief of Belgium (CRB) to address the crisis. He convinced the British government to allow the CRB to transport food to Belgium and worked with the CSNA, a Belgian relief organization, to distribute the food and helped ensure that the German army did not appropriate it. Private donations and government grants supplied its \$11-million-a-month budget, and the CRB became a veritable independent republic of relief with its own flag, navy, factories, and railroads. A British official described the CRB as a "piratical state organized for benevolence."

Hoover worked 14-hour days from London, administering the distribution of over two million tons of food to nine million war victims. In an early form of shuttle diplomacy, he crossed the North Sea multiple times to meet with German authorities and persuade them to allow food shipments. He also convinced the British Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George to allow individuals to send money to the people of Belgium, thereby lessening the workload of the CRB. At the request of the French government, the CRB began delivering supplies to the people of Northern France in 1915. Hoover stepped down as head of the CRB when the United States entered the war in 1917.

14. When the United States entered the war, President Wilson appointed Hoover head of the U.S. Food Administration. The war had created a global food crisis that dramatically increased food prices and caused food riots and starvation in the countries at war. Hoover's chief goal as food czar was to provide supplies to the Allied Powers, but he also sought to stabilize domestic prices and to prevent domestic shortages. Under the broad powers granted by the Food and Fuel Control Act, the Food Administration supervised food

production throughout the United States, and the administration made use of its authority to buy, import, store, and sell food. Determined to avoid rationing, Hoover established set days for people to avoid eating specified foods and save them for soldiers' rations: meatless Mondays, wheatless Wednesdays, and "when in doubt, eat potatoes." These policies were dubbed "Hooverizing" by government publicists, in spite of Hoover's continual orders that publicity should not mention him by name. The Food Administration shipped 23 million metric tons of food to the Allied Powers, preventing their collapse and earning Hoover great acclaim. As head of the Food Administration, Hoover gained a following in the United States, especially among progressives who saw in Hoover an expert administrator and symbol of efficiency. After the war, Hoover led the American Relief Association, which provided food to the inhabitants of Central and Eastern Europe.

15. When Warren Harding was elected president in 1920, he wanted to nominate Hoover for secretary of commerce, but there was a problem. Senate Republicans, whose votes were needed for confirmation, disapproved of Hoover's support of the League of Nations and his past association with the Wilson administration. At the same time, those Republicans ardently wanted Harding to appoint the fabulously wealthy Andrew W. Mellon secretary of the treasury. Harding gave the senators an ultimatum: Hoover and Mellon or no Mellon. The senators acquiesced, and Hoover served as secretary of commerce for eight years under Harding and Coolidge.

16. Hoover was a great secretary of commerce. The New Era economics of the 1920s, in which the federal government played an unprecedented role in supporting American business, put Hoover at the center of the executive branch – where, as one journalist put it, he was "secretary of commerce and undersecretary of everything else." Contemporaries described Hoover's approach as a "third alternative" between "unrestrained capitalism" and socialism, which was becoming increasingly popular in Europe.

Hoover was a champion of standardization, and he used his Bureau of Standards to pursue it. He believed, for example, in having standard-sized screws, bricks, etc., to make them interchangeable amongst manufacturers. The Commerce Department did not decree the elimination of nonstandard items; it only recommended it. However, Hoover let businessmen know that they had better meet federal specifications if they bid on government contracts. He also worked with the American Institute of Architects to produce plans for standardized houses made of standard building materials to reduce building costs. He created model zoning ordinances and municipal building codes to support best practices among developers, literally shaping the houses and neighborhoods of the twentieth century. His goal was for families to have "a standard automobile, a standard telephone, a standard bathtub, a standard electric light, a standard radio."

Hoover became the administration's point man on modern problems. When millions of new cars led to a disturbing increase in car accidents, Hoover produced a plan to coordinate national safety standards. When the nascent airline industry suffered from a lack of confidence in air travel safety, he asserted broad federal authority to improve navigation systems and runways, inspect planes, and license pilots. His Aeronautics Branch helped produce dependable air travel in the late 1920s and evolved into the current-day Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). When a significant increase in the number of new radio stations created anarchy in the airwaves, he championed the Radio Act, which declared the airwaves to be public property and subject to government control by the new Federal Radio Commission. In particular, the commission assigned a different broadcast frequency to each radio station. The Federal Radio Commission evolved into the current-day Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

Hoover also helped develop foreign markets for American products by sending commerce department "emissaries" to countries all over the globe to scout out opportunities.

17. The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 was one of the worst natural disasters in American history. Days of relentless rain caused Mississippi River levees to be breached at 140 points, creating an island sea hundreds of miles long and fifty miles wide. At some points, the flood water was thirty feet deep. Over 630,000 people were directly affected, most (94%) in Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana, especially in the Mississippi Delta. Families were left homeless, their occupations gone, and with no way to feed themselves. Finding sustenance and shelter for these Americans was a tremendous challenge, and President Coolidge put Hoover in charge.

Hoover spent the next three months traversing the Mississippi Valley in a private Pullman car, constantly traveling from Cairo, IL, to New Orleans and back again. In each of the ninety-one communities he stopped at, he said the same thing:

A couple of thousand refugees are coming. They've got to have accommodations. Huts. Water mains. Sewers. Streets. Dining halls. Meals. Doctors. Everything. And you haven't got months to do it. You haven't got weeks. You've got hours.

Hoover performed magnificently. He sparked a fund-raising drive that brought in \$17 million; gathered an armada of six hundred vessels; and put together 150 tent cities for evacuees.

However, in a manner that had now become characteristic, Hoover distorted the nation's response to the calamity and what it signified. The country had come through the ordeal, he asserted, almost entirely because of community improvisation. "I suppose that I could have called in the whole Army," he remarked later. "But ... all I had to do was call in Main Street." He refused to acknowledge that two out of every three dollars came from the government or that he had depended on federal agencies for essentials of his operations: sixty planes, hundreds of ships, field equipment, and tents to quarter the victims.

18. At the 1928 Republican National Convention, Hoover's rivals for the presidential nomination were Governor Frank Lowden of Illinois and Senator Charles Curtis of Kansas. When Hoover's critics in the party could not coalesce behind a single candidate, he won the nomination on the first ballot. The tally was Hoover 837; Lowden, 72; Curtis 64; and a smattering for other candidates. Curtis won the nomination for vice president. In his acceptance speech, Hoover declared: "We in America today are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of any land. ... We shall soon, with the help of God, be in sight of the day when poverty will be banished from the nation."

19. In the 1928 general election, the Republican platform rejected farm subsidies, supported Prohibition, and promised more of the same prosperity Americans had experienced under Coolidge. Hoover's opponent was the Democrat Al Smith, four-term governor of New York and a Catholic who opposed Prohibition. Smith's religion and anti-Prohibition position alienated many southern Democrats, a key constituency in the party. Hoover campaigned as a technocrat who could effectively handle the economy, one who would, according to his campaign slogan, put "a chicken in every pot and two cars in every garage." Hoover defeated Smith in one of the largest landslides in presidential history, 444 to 87 electoral votes. Hoover had long coattails; the GOP won a seventeen-seat majority in the Senate and a one hundred three-seat majority in the House.

20. The Great Depression started with the Wall Street Crash of 1929. On Thursday, October 24, the volume of trading on the New York Stock Exchange was heavy, and soon prices began to plunge at such a pace that the ticker could not keep up with it. Economist John Kenneth Galbraith wrote later, "By eleven o'clock, the market had degenerated into a wild, mad scramble to sell. By eleven-thirty, the market had surrendered to blind, relentless fear." October 29, "Black Thursday," was far worse: \$30 billion in securities self-destructed. By mid-November, industrials were worth only one-half of what they commanded ten weeks before. By the time Hoover left office, U.S. Steel had dropped from 262 to 21. General Motors from 92 to 8, and Montgomery Ward from 138 to 4.

By December, a million Americans were out of work, and over the next three years, that number ballooned to thirteen million, or about one-fourth of the nation's workforce. The jump in unemployment paralleled a severe downturn in business. By the winter of 1932, Hoover's last year in office, the steel industry, widely considered the bellwether of American industry, was operating at thirteen percent of capacity.

Meanwhile, bank failures and small-business bankruptcies rose dramatically, as foreclosures on home mortgages and family farms, homelessness, and hunger reached unprecedented levels. For example, six hundred banks failed in the last two months of 1930. The shutdown of the Bank of the United States on December 11, 1930, wiped out the life savings of 400,000 depositors, people who had placed their trust in an institution whose name suggested that it was an arm of the government. It was the worst collapse in American history.

21. Hoover's initiatives to combat these problems were insufficient to restore economic growth and end the suffering. He was too rigid about what a president could and should do in the face of such a crisis. In particular, he opposed directly involving the federal government in relief efforts because he feared "government handouts" would weaken traditional American individualism (and the nation's moral fiber) by making citizens government-dependent. Hoping that the Great Depression was no more than a particularly ugly turn in the business cycle, he kept assuring Americans that prosperity was just around the corner, believing that a change in the national psychology would bring about a dramatic alteration in the economy.

22. In 1930, the Republicans in Congress passed the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act, which raised the tariff rates to the second-highest levels in American history; it was surpassed only by the 1828 "Tariff of Abominations." Rates were raised on over 887 imported goods.

More than a thousand economists asked Hoover not to sign the bill, which was also disapproved by much of the Republican press and the American Bankers Association. One prominent banker said, "I almost went down on my knees to beg Herbert Hoover to veto the asinine Smoot-Hawley Tariff. That Act intensified nationalism all over the world." Secretary of State Stimson warned that the legislation would disrupt the international financial community.

But Hoover signed it into law using six gold pens. In retaliation, America's trading partners raised their tariff rates on American goods. As a result, American imports and exports were reduced by 67 percent during the Great Depression. Most economic historians believe that the Smoot-Hawley Tariff worsened the effects of the Great Depression.

23. Hoover believed that the recovery could not proceed without a balanced budget, and in 1932 Congress enacted the Revenue Act of 1932, the largest peacetime tax increase to date. Tax rates increased across the board, with the rates of the top incomes rising from twenty-five percent to sixty-two percent. The estate tax was doubled, and corporate rates increased by fifteen percent. The Act stymied recovery by undermining investment and draining consumer purchasing power.

24. In July 1932, unemployed veterans from World War I, suffering from the hardships of the Depression, marched along with their families to Washington to demand immediate full payment of their bonuses, which was not due yet. Hoover joined Congress in rejecting the demands of the "Bonus Army" marchers, though he did support their right to demonstrate and quietly made shelter and supplies available to them. After Congress refused to grant the Bonus Army's demands, most protestors left. But some remained in abandoned buildings and in camps and hovels on the shores of the Anacostia River.

The administration decided to remove the members of the Bonus Army occupying the abandoned buildings, and Hoover gave precise instructions to the military to peacefully escort the protestors to nearby camps. The secretary of war, who feared that the Bonus Army might riot, exceeded Hoover orders and ordered General Douglas MacArthur to relocate the marchers to the Anacostia River flats. MacArthur exceeded these orders and decided to drive the protestors out of Washington. Mounted cavalymen – with sabers drawn – led six tanks and a detachment of infantrymen with fixed bayonets against the veterans, tear gassing them and burning the camps in Anacostia. Americans from around the nation saw horrific images of the attack in newspapers, which deepened their antagonism toward the president and made him seem even more heartless. Instead of rebuking MacArthur for his actions, Hoover joined him in claiming, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that there was an "extraordinary proportion of criminal, communist, and non-veteran elements among the marchers." Upon seeing the newspaper reports of the attack, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who had just been nominated for president by the Democrats, commented, "Well, this elects me."

25. Hoover's restrained approach to the Depression and his harsh response to the 1932 Bonus March destroyed his hold on the public, which had been so strong only three years before. Shantytowns became known as "Hoovervilles," and empty pockets turned inside out were referred to as "Hoover flags."

26. In 1928, Japan and the U.S. were two of the signatories to the Nine-Power Treaty, which guaranteed the territorial integrity of China and an "open door" policy to trade and investment there. In September 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria, a Chinese province, and by February 1932, they had seized control of it and set up the puppet state of Manchukuo. Hoover was unwilling to approve either military or economic sanctions against Japan in response. His reply, a declaration that the U.S. would not recognize Manchukuo, was seen as a weak rhetorical response to an assault on U.S. national security interests in the Pacific.

Many historians believe that Hoover's failure to draw a red line in Manchuria gave aggressors in Berlin, Rome, and Tokyo a green light. When he came into office, the international scene was calm, but when he departed, Adolf Hitler was in power, and the Japanese were careening unhindered down the road to Pearl Harbor. In a 2007 poll of more than 1,000 international relations faculty in North America, Hoover was ranked the worst U.S. president of the twentieth century on foreign affairs.

27. At the 1932 Republican National Convention, Hoover ran virtually unopposed, receiving 98 percent of the vote on the first ballot. Despite the horrible economic situation, the convention praised Hoover and pledged itself to maintain a balanced budget. Hoover's managers at the convention ran a tight ship; they did not allow expressions of concern for the direction of the nation. The party's unqualified support of Hoover was out of touch with the way most Americans felt about the president.

28. In the 1932 general election, the main issue was that most people blamed Hoover for the severity of the Great Depression because his economic policies had made things worse, not better. The Democratic candidate for president, New York Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt, had earned a reputation for promoting

government help for the impoverished, providing a welcome contrast for many who saw Hoover as a do-nothing president. Roosevelt emphasized working collectively through an expanded federal government to confront the economic crisis, in contrast to Hoover's emphasis on individualism. During the campaign, Roosevelt ran on many of the programs that would later become part of the New Deal during his presidency. The New Yorker exuded optimism, and his catchy campaign song, "Happy Days Are Here Again," became one of the most popular in American political history. Roosevelt won in a landslide, 472 to 59 electoral votes.

29. Still a relatively youthful man upon his defeat in 1932, the fifty-eight-year-old former President lived another thirty-two years before his death from colon cancer on October 20, 1964. Immediately after the inauguration of Franklin Roosevelt, Hoover retreated to his home in Palo Alto, California. For much of the 1930s—and, indeed, for decades to come—the public blamed Hoover for the Great Depression. Likewise, few Republicans in the 1930s wanted Hoover involved in party politics because of his negative standing in the popular mind. Wealthy and generous, Hoover did not need to work, but even the fishing that he loved could consume only so many hours of the week. So, Hoover launched a series of bitter attacks on the New Deal in letters and essays, condemning many of its programs as "fascistic." Roosevelt's decisions to abandon the gold standard, recognize the Soviet Union, and support federal government intervention in the economy angered and worried Hoover. In the 1936 presidential campaign, he actively supported Kansas Republican candidate Alfred M. Landon, who lost to Roosevelt by a wide margin.

While on a tour of Europe in 1938—Hoover traveled extensively in his post-presidential years—he met with Adolf Hitler. The former U.S. President dressed down the German dictator, irritated at Hitler's shouting in their private audience. Still, Hoover, recalling what he regarded as the needless bloodshed of World War I, opposed U.S. entry into the European conflict that broke out in 1939 after Germany attacked Poland. Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, however, changed his mind.

30. In May of 1945, President Harry Truman had a significant problem – 100 million people in Europe were facing starvation due to the collapse of the European agricultural system caused by World War II. The man best equipped to solve this problem was the person who had dealt with the same problem during and following World War I: Herbert Hoover. No one on the face of the earth knew more about how to generate and collect American agricultural surpluses and then deliver them quickly and efficiently to the European populace.

But how could Truman possibly ask for and receive Hoover's help? Most Democrats felt that involving Hoover in a humanitarian aid project would rehabilitate the most useful scapegoat the party had ever had. Earlier, when Bernard Baruch suggested soliciting Hoover's help on a project, FDR said, "I'm not Jesus Christ. I'm not raising him from the dead." Moreover, Truman and Hoover were completely different, both temperamentally and politically. Truman was amiable, had a good sense of humor, and generally open to other people's ideas; Hoover was reserved, humorless, and supremely confident in his own opinions. Truman was a liberal Democrat who believed in the role of a benevolent federal government in people's lives; Hoover was a conservative Republican who thought that private enterprise, free from federal regulation, did the most to benefit people's lives.

Despite these differences, Truman invited Hoover to the White House, asked him to lead the food relief program for Europe, and Hoover accepted the job. Hoover performed superbly in this role. He flew over fifty thousand miles and obtained tremendous supplies of stored food, even food from the European black market. The food relief program saved tens of millions of lives.

Upon completion of the food program, Truman asked Hoover to head a commission to reorganize the federal government to make it more efficient. The commission – later referred to as the Hoover Commission – suggested sweeping changes in how the federal bureaucracy functioned. In particular, it suggested giving the President the power to make certain decisions quickly, without prior Congressional approval. Truman lobbied the Democrats to support the Hoover Commission's reorganization bill, and Hoover lobbied the Republicans. Even though Congress was relinquishing some power to the executive branch, the bill passed the House by a vote of 356 to 9 and the Senate by a voice vote.

31. After his presidency, Hoover remained active in party politics, becoming increasingly conservative as he aged. He supported the candidacies of Robert Taft in 1948 and 1952, and of Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956. He was less enthusiastic about Vice President Richard Nixon's run for the presidency in 1960. In 1964, shortly before his death, Hoover endorsed Senator Barry Goldwater for president, telling his associates that the conservative Arizona Republican closely mirrored his own views on the need for limiting federal authority over everyday life and the American economy.

See the next page for a list of references.



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