

President	William H. Taft
Chronological Order	27
Life Span	1857-1930
Home State	Ohio
Elected	1908



Political Party	Republican
Vice President	James R. Sherman
First Lady	Helen (Nellie) Herron Taft
Children	2 sons, 1 daughter
Physical Attributes	6' tall, weighed over 300 pounds, mustache, brown hair, blue eyes
Undergraduate Education	Yale University. He also graduated from the University of Cincinnati Law School.
Military Service	None
Profession	Attorney, Judge
Other Political Offices	Secretary of War, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court
Nickname	Big Bill
Family Lineage:	English
Religious Affiliation	Unitarian

#### Biographical Notes

1. With unusual unanimity, friends and critics alike have described William ("Will") Howard Taft as "good-natured." His joviality sometimes masked his intelligence – he finished second in his class at Yale and was admitted to the Ohio bar before he finished law school. He was overweight his whole life but had a good sense of humor about it.

He loved the law and began his career in public service as a judge in Cincinnati. He loved being a judge – his lifelong ambition was to become chief justice of the Supreme Court, not the president. It was his wife's lifelong ambition to be the first lady, and Taft entered politics, in part, to please her.

2. Taft was raised in a large, close, and stimulating family in Cincinnati, Ohio. His father, Alphonso, was a lawyer and a judge. Alphonso served as secretary of war and attorney general for President Grant, and as Minister to Austria-Hungary and Minister to Imperial Russia for President Arthur. Taft's mother was highly educated and traveled widely with her husband on his diplomatic missions. Will's brother Charley became the publisher of the *Cincinnati Times-Star* newspaper, a Taft family holding for the next seven decades. Charley provided financial support at various times during Will's public service career.

3. After graduating from Yale, Taft returned home to attend the University of Cincinnati Law School. The school's curriculum was not very demanding, so most students clerked at a law firm at the same time. But Taft, with an eye towards being a judge, took a different route. He became the court reporter for a local newspaper, the *Cincinnati Commercial*. Once his morning law school classes were over, Taft made his rounds to the police court, the probate court, the district court, and the superior court. At each venue, he watched the proceedings, took notes, and wrote up short accounts of the most compelling cases for the paper. After law school, he practiced law in Cincinnati.

4. Taft married Nellie Herron in 1886. Nellie loved politics – her father was, at one time, a law partner of Rutherford B. Hayes. When Nellie was sixteen, she and her parents spent the weekend at the White House visiting President Hayes. Nellie was so captivated that she vowed to be the first lady someday.

Once Taft entered politics, Nellie served as a trusted political advisor. Taft said she was a "merciless but loving critic" and sought her advice at every critical juncture. They often worked on his speeches together, and they enjoyed discussing political strategy. Their partnership helped give Taft the confidence to take on

the daunting task of being president.

But this political camaraderie was shattered ten weeks after Taft's inauguration when Nellie suffered a devastating stroke that left her temporarily paralyzed on her right side and unable to speak. Taft spent several hours each day looking after her and teaching her to speak, which took a year. Eventually, she was able to walk, but she struggled with speech for the rest of her life. Nellie was only forty-eight years old when she had the stroke.

Nellie's stroke had a strong negative effect on Taft's presidency. Taft had many friends, but few people other than his wife whom he truly trusted for their advice and insight. For example, he had no one to play the advisory roles he and Elihu Root did for Theodore Roosevelt.

Nellie Taft was the first First Lady to publish her memoirs; the first First Lady to own and drive a car; the first First Lady to support woman's suffrage; and the first First Lady to successfully lobby for safety standards in federal workplaces. Nellie outlived Taft. She died in 1943 at age eighty-one.

5. In 1887, at the age of twenty-nine, Taft received a temporary appointment from Governor Foraker to replace a retiring judge on the Superior Court of Ohio. The appointment was quite unusual – Taft's colleagues would all be at least fifteen years older than him – but Foraker had been impressed by Taft's performance as a lawyer in two high profile Cincinnati cases. The next year Taft was elected to a five-year term on the court.

6. Taft was appointed U.S. Solicitor General by President Harrison in 1890. He won fifteen of the first seventeen cases that he argued before the Supreme Court on behalf of the administration. The house he rented in Washington was very close to that of Theodore Roosevelt, who was serving on the Civil Service Commission. The two men often walked to work together and became close friends. Taft later petitioned his fellow Ohioan, President William McKinley, to help obtain Roosevelt's appointment as assistant secretary of the Navy.

7. In December 1891, President Harrison nominated Taft for the U.S. Circuit Court, Sixth District (Cincinnati, Cleveland, Toledo, Memphis, Nashville, Detroit, and St. Louis). He served on this court for eight years, and no one on the court was more respected. "He is absolutely the fairest judge I've ever seen on the bench," said one attorney. His opinions earned the respect of lawyers across the country.

8. In 1900, the Philippine Islands were an American protectorate, and President McKinley asked Taft to go to the islands to set up a civilian government. Taft was reticent to do so because he loved his job on the circuit court, but McKinley implied that he would nominate Taft for the U.S. Supreme Court afterward if things went well.

Taft knew that he was stepping into a political storm in going to the Philippines. Seventy thousand U.S. soldiers were fighting in the islands to put down a rebellion of Filipino nationalists led by Emilio Aguinaldo. America's attempt to squash the uprising was bloody and often horribly brutal. It left a black mark on the nation's honor, and the "yellow press" had a field day attacking U.S. conduct against the Filipinos. Additionally, political opposition was growing to what critics charged were McKinley's imperialist policies. But Nellie, surprised and delighted, urged Taft to take the job. The two traveled with their three children to the islands, where they lived like royalty for several years.

Upon arriving in the islands, Taft immediately clashed with the military governor, General Arthur MacArthur (the father of General Douglas MacArthur of World War II and Korean War fame). Taft viewed the military control of the islands as too brutal and unsympathetic to the islanders. Obtaining MacArthur's removal after the capture of Aguinaldo, Taft quickly set to work drafting the Island's constitution. It included a Bill of Rights nearly identical to the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution, with the notable absence of the right to trial by jury. Central to the new governance structure was the role of civil governor, a post to which Taft was appointed in 1901. He established a civil service system, a judicial system, English-language public schools, a transportation network, and health care facilities. He also negotiated with the Vatican (the Roman Catholic papal headquarters in Rome) to purchase 390,000 acres of church property in the Philippines for \$7.5 million. Taft distributed this land through low-cost mortgages to tens of thousands of Filipino peasants.

While in the Philippines, Taft turned down President Roosevelt's offer of a Supreme Court appointment to finish his work in the Islands. Taft was loved and supported by many Filipino residents for his evenhanded governance. In Taft's view, the Filipinos were not yet capable of governing themselves, and he believed that it would take years before self-rule would work. Taft was right; the Philippines did not achieve self-rule and independence until 1946.

9. President Theodore Roosevelt chose him for secretary of war in 1904. He soon became Roosevelt's close

confidant and right-hand man for foreign affairs. The president selected him to supervise the Isthmian Canal Commission, which was in charge of constructing the Panama Canal. Taft also remained deeply engaged in the progress of the Philippines.

While visiting the Philippines, Taft made a stop in Japan and met secretly with Japan's prime minister, Taro Katsura. Japan and Russia were engaged in a bloody war that President Roosevelt had been following closely. Katsura told Taft that Japan would welcome Roosevelt as a mediator, and Taft relayed the message to TR, who immediately accepted the role. Roosevelt's successful mediation earned him the 1906 Nobel Peace Prize.

10. Roosevelt relied heavily on Taft for speeches and advice during the 1904 presidential campaign. Taft was the "acting president" in the spring of 1905 when TR was on a two-month vacation through the Southwest and Rocky Mountain regions, and Secretary of State John Hay was gravely ill. When asked how things would be managed in his absence, TR cheerfully replied, "Oh, things will be alright, I have left Taft sitting on the lid." With Roosevelt incommunicado most of the time (due to extended hunting trips), Taft deftly handled tricky situations that arose in Panama and Santo Domingo.

11. A spot opened up on the Supreme Court in 1906, and Roosevelt wanted to nominate Taft. TR felt very strongly that Taft should accept the nomination, because Taft, at age forty-eight, would have "the opportunity for a quarter century to do great work as Justice in the greatest Court in Christendom." In particular, Taft could protect the progressive laws that Roosevelt was getting passed. Roosevelt's offer included the stipulation that Taft would become chief justice when that slot opened up. Taft was unsure about what to do, but felt that if the president determined that he would be most beneficial on the bench, he would "of course yield."

But Nellie Taft was adamantly opposed to Will accepting the offer – she wanted him to become president. Upon hearing this, Roosevelt, who was used to getting what he wanted, had a private meeting with Nellie, so that he could "explain the situation" to her. No one knows what was said in that meeting, but afterward, Roosevelt stopped lobbying Taft to accept the nomination – he left the decision entirely up to Will, who declined the offer.

12. When Roosevelt decided not to run in 1908, he made it clear that he wanted Taft to be his successor. There was no man in the country, he believed, that was better suited to be president, no man better to continue his progressive policies.

Several Republican politicians, such as Treasury Secretary George Cortelyou and New York Governor Charles Evans Hughes, considered running. However, at the 1908 Republican National Convention, Taft was overwhelmingly nominated on the first ballot. However, Taft did not have things entirely his own way. He had hoped his running mate would be a Midwestern progressive like Iowa Senator Johnathan Dolliver, but the convention chose conservative Congressman James S. Sherman of New York instead.

13. In the general election, the Democratic nominee was William Jennings Bryan, who had lost to William McKinley in 1896 and 1900. With the Free Silver issue no longer dominant, Bryan campaigned on a progressive platform attacking "government by privilege." His campaign slogan, "Shall the People Rule?", was featured on numerous posters and campaign memorabilia. However, Taft undercut Bryan's liberal support by accepting some of his reformist ideas, and Roosevelt's progressive policies blurred the distinctions between the parties. Republicans also used the slogan "Vote for Taft now, you can vote for Bryan anytime," a sarcastic reference to Bryan's two failed previous presidential campaigns. Businessmen continued to support the Republican Party, and Bryan failed to secure the support of labor. Taft trounced Bryan, 321 to 162 electoral votes. Republicans won the House 219 to 172 and the Senate 60 to 32.

14. The decision for Taft to run was unfortunate. He was an excellent administrator, but at his core, he was a judge, not a politician. He was not trained for and did not enjoy the kinds of political battles that a president must wage and win. He did not enjoy the spotlight and was sensitive to criticism. He was more cautious and more willing to compromise with GOP conservatives than TR, and this caused friction with the progressives in the party. To a large degree, he ran for president because Nellie and TR wanted him to. And, of course, it was inevitable that Roosevelt would eventually want the job back.

15. Taft entered the White House intending to implement and continue Roosevelt's policies, but the two men had different philosophies about what a president could or could not do. Roosevelt felt that the president could do anything that the Constitution did not prohibit. Taft felt that the president could do only what the Constitution specifies that he can. Consequently, Taft's more conservative approach led to a series of actions that alienated him from TR and the Republican Party's progressive wing.

16. The first misstep concerned the selection of his cabinet. Initially, Taft indicated that he would keep all the members of Roosevelt's cabinet, which would be consistent with the idea that he wanted to continue implementing TR's policies. In the end, he retained only two, and he informed the others that they were not being retained in an awkward, impersonal letter shortly before inauguration day.

His rejection of Luke Wright was unexpected. When Taft resigned his post as secretary of war after receiving the Republican nomination, Roosevelt wanted Wright to replace him. Worried that Wright would decline a term of only nine months, TR asked Taft if he could offer the inducement of a longer tenure should Taft win the election, and Taft agreed. However, Taft reneged on this agreement because he felt that Wright was not decisive enough.

His rejection of James Garfield, secretary of the interior, was surprising and had severe consequences later. Garfield had been one of Roosevelt's favorite cabinet members. He, TR, and Gifford Pinchot, Chief Forester of the U.S., had worked together closely to conserve America's natural resources. Moreover, Garfield and Taft were close personal friends – their families had vacationed together – and Garfield had worked hard for Taft's nomination and election by giving scores of speeches for him. But Taft felt that Garfield was unduly influenced by Pinchot, whose conservation policies he considered overzealous. Also, Taft wanted to appoint someone from the West Coast to give the cabinet geographical balance.

17. The second misstep occurred when Taft called a special session of Congress in 1909 to lower the tariff rates on imported goods. The House, led by Representative Henry C. Payne, produced a bill with reasonable reductions. But conservative Republicans in the Senate, led by multimillionaire Nelson Aldrich, gutted the bill with 847 amendments, 600 of which were revisions upward. Aldrich assured Taft that things would get straightened out when the two chambers had their conference to reconcile their versions of the bill, but no significant improvement occurred. The resulting Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act lowered the overall tariff rate a little, but not on items that mattered to most people. Taft, who had threatened to veto the bill if it had insufficient reductions, decided to take what he could get and did not veto it. He then compounded his error by praising it as "the best tariff bill that the Republican Party ever passed."

The Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act and Taft's comment alienated the party's progressive wing and a large segment of the general public because it increased the cost of living. The Act and comment both contributed to the stunning defeat the Republican Party suffered in the 1910 midterm elections, in which the Democrats won control of the House by gaining 58 seats, reduced the Republican majority in the Senate by 10, and gained control of 26 of the 48 governorships.

18. The third misstep was Taft's handling of the Pinchot-Ballinger Affair. Theodore Roosevelt had made great strides in conservation, working with his Secretary of the Interior, James Garfield, and Chief Forester, Gifford Pinchot. Taft did not approve of many of Roosevelt's conservation policies because they had been accomplished by executive orders instead of through legislation. Also, Taft did not like Pinchot, who he felt had strongly influenced Roosevelt's conservation policies. Despite having told Roosevelt that he would retain TR's cabinet members, Taft chose Seattle businessman Richard Ballinger for secretary of the interior instead of Garfield because he felt Pinchot unduly influenced Garfield.

Roosevelt had withdrawn a significant amount of land from the public domain, including some in Alaska thought rich in coal. In 1902, Clarence Cunningham, an Idaho entrepreneur, had found coal deposits in Alaska and made mining claims, and the government investigated their legality. The investigation dragged on for the remainder of the Roosevelt administration, including during the year (1907–1908) when Ballinger served as head of the General Land Office. A special agent for the Land Office, Louis Glavis, investigated the Cunningham claims. When Secretary Ballinger in 1909 approved them, Glavis objected because Ballinger had previously done legal work for Cunningham, creating a conflict of interest.

Glavis forwarded his objection to Pinchot, who set up a meeting between Glavis and Taft. After the Glavis-Taft meeting, the president met with Secretary Ballinger and Ballinger's ally Oscar Lawler, assistant attorney general assigned to the Department of the Interior. Taft asked Lawler to draft a letter, to be issued in Taft's name, defending Ballinger. Taft also met with Attorney General Wickersham and asked him to write a report supporting Ballinger and *backdate* it to look like Taft received it before meeting with Ballinger and Lawler. Taft then fired Glavis.

Pinchot was livid and forwarded information on the affair to a congressman. This was a serious breach of protocol – Pinchot should have given the information to his superior, the secretary of agriculture instead – and Taft fired Pinchot for it. All this came out during a congressional investigation and made Taft look bad – especially the backdating of a public document. And, of course, the whole affair made Theodore Roosevelt furious.

19. The fourth misstep involved U.S. Steel. During the Panic of 1907, with the stock market about to crash,

Roosevelt made a deal with Wall Street financiers to avert a national financial disaster. As part of that deal, U.S. Steel was allowed to purchase the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company, with Roosevelt agreeing not to file an antitrust suit against U.S. Steel. When Taft became president, he reneged on this agreement. In particular, Taft's attorney general filed an antitrust suit against U.S. Steel in 1911 that claimed that the company had fooled Roosevelt into allowing them to acquire a crucial potential competitor.

Roosevelt was infuriated by what he perceived to be Taft's hypocrisy. TR said, "Taft was a member of my cabinet when I took that action. We went over it in full and in detail, not at one, but at two or three meetings. He was enthusiastic in praise of what was done." This disloyalty ended the Roosevelt-Taft friendship for the time being. Roosevelt told his sister Corinne that he could "never forgive" Taft for this insult.

20. More trust prosecutions (99 in all) occurred under Taft than under Roosevelt. In addition to U.S. Steel, Taft prosecuted Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, the American Tobacco Company, and the American Sugar Refining Company (the so-called "sugar trust" that rigged prices). By 1911, however, Taft began to back away from his antitrust efforts, stung by the criticism of his conservative business supporters and unsure about the long-range effect of trust-busting on the national economy.

21. Among the significant pieces of legislation passed by Congress during Taft's presidency was the Mann-Elkins Act of 1910, empowering the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) to suspend railroad rate hikes and set rates. The act also expanded the ICC's jurisdiction to cover telephones, telegraphs, and radio. Taft also placed 35,000 postmasters and 20,000 skilled workers in the Navy under civil service protection. In addition, the Department of Commerce and Labor was divided into two cabinet departments with Taft's approval. Arizona and New Mexico became states in 1912. He pushed for the passage of the Sixteenth Amendment (federal income tax), which was ratified by the states in February 1913. Among his most controversial actions, Taft promoted an administrative innovation whereby the president, rather than the disparate government agencies, would submit a budget to Congress. Congress prohibited that action, but Taft's effort foreshadowed the creation of the executive budget in the Budget and Accounting Act of 1921, which gave the president new capacities for efficiency and control in the executive branch.

22. Five Supreme Court vacancies (four deaths and one resignation) allowed Taft to reshape the Court for a generation. He used his appointments to steer the Court in a conservative direction that endured until the second term of Franklin D. Roosevelt. In addition, since one of the deaths was the chief justice, Taft chose whom to elevate to that position. Surprisingly, given Taft's judicial background, his Supreme Court appointees did not distinguish themselves, except for Charles Evans Hughes.

For lower court appointments, Taft served as a one-man search committee who sought out judges sympathetic to his conservative point of view. In particular, he chose judges who shared his suspicions about progressive principles and an activist judiciary.

23. Taft announced in his inaugural address that he would not appoint African Americans to federal jobs, such as postmaster, in places where this would cause racial friction. This approach differed from Roosevelt, who would not remove or replace black officeholders with whom local whites would not deal. Termed Taft's "Southern Policy", this stance effectively invited white protests against black appointees. Subsequently, Taft removed a large number of black officeholders in the South. He also made few appointments of African Americans in the North.

When Taft was inaugurated, the way forward for African Americans was being debated by their leaders. Booker T. Washington felt that most blacks should be trained for industrial work, with only a few seeking higher education; W.E.B. Dubois took a more militant stand for equality. Taft tended towards Washington's approach. According to historian P.E. Coletta, Taft let the African-American "be 'kept in his place' ... He thus failed to see or follow the humanitarian mission historically associated with the Republican Party, with the result that Negroes both North and South began to drift toward the Democratic Party."

In contrast to his lack of concern for the civil rights of African Americans, Taft defended the civil rights of Jewish Americans. During a discussion on immigration restrictions in 1910, he praised their patriotism to argue against the exclusion of Jews. In 1911, speaking to the B'nai B'rith in Washington, he criticized the blackballing of Jews from the prestigious Metropolitan Club. Subsequently, several administration officials resigned their membership to protest the club's exclusionary policies. That same year, when Fred Bloom was denied the opportunity to take the Army lieutenant's exam because his commanding officer did not want to socialize with a Jew, Taft interceded. Bloom was allowed to take the exam, which he passed.

Taft's empathy for Jewish Americans came from his upbringing in Cincinnati: he attended a Unitarian church across the street from a synagogue. According to Taft, the two institutions sometimes "exchanged ministers" and "I came to feel that Jews were a very important part, as they were, of the citizenship of

Cincinnati." (N.B. Unitarians do not believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ.)

24. The emphasis of Taft's foreign policy was to minimize the threat or use of military force and instead further its diplomatic aims in Latin America and East Asia through the use of American economic power. This policy is often referred to as "Dollar Diplomacy." The policy was a failure in both locales. The Taft administration negotiated the Knox-Castrillo Treaty in which Nicaragua accepted loans from U.S. banks to pay off its foreign debts. In return, Nicaragua would repay the U.S. loans from its customs revenues, a process that U.S. officials in Nicaragua would supervise. Nicaragua ratified the treaty almost immediately, but the U.S. Senate rejected it. The Nicaraguan government became unstable, and U.S. troops were sent to provide stability in 1912. This occupation lasted until 1933. The Taft administration negotiated a similar treaty with Honduras, and the Senate rejected it too. The administration also tried to gain influence in China by providing a loan for a railroad there, but Japan and Russia would not cooperate because there was no U.S. military presence to threaten them. Consequently, this attempt at dollar diplomacy was unsuccessful as well.

In addition, Mexico's government became unstable during Taft's term, and he ordered two thousand troops to the Mexican border to stand ready to intervene to protect U.S. investments. However, Congress offered stiff opposition. Taft then backed off, leaving the situation in Mexico for his successor to handle.

25. By late 1911, Roosevelt felt that Taft had betrayed his promise to advance a progressive agenda and attacked him as a traitor to reform. Roosevelt decided to run for president, and Taft also chose to run, primarily to defend himself from Roosevelt's attacks. The former friends and allies now became bitter opponents.

In 1912, thirteen states held Republican primaries; the rest did not. Roosevelt won nine primaries, Taft two, and Senator Robert LaFollette two. Taft had a distinct advantage in the nonprimary states because, as a sitting president, he controlled patronage and the party apparatus.

At the Republican National Convention, 254 seats were disputed: both Taft and Roosevelt delegates claimed them. The Republican National Committee, which Taft men dominated, settled the disputed seats by awarding 235 to Taft and 19 to Roosevelt. In some cases, Taft was awarded delegates that Roosevelt had won in primaries by huge margins. Following the seating of the anti-Roosevelt delegations, California Governor Hiram Johnson proclaimed that progressives would form a new party to nominate Roosevelt. Though many of Roosevelt's delegates remained at the convention, most refused to participate in the presidential ballot in protest of the contested delegates. Taft won the nomination on the first ballot.

Roosevelt felt cheated, formed the Progressive Party (a.k.a. the Bull Moose Party), and ran as its nominee for president. Taft (8 electoral votes) and Roosevelt (88 electoral votes) split the Republican vote and lost the election to the Democrat Woodrow Wilson (435 electoral votes). The fact that Wilson was progressive hurt Roosevelt. Roosevelt might have won if the Democrats had nominated a conservative.

26. Taft and Roosevelt remained estranged for six years. In February 1918, Roosevelt became gravely ill, underwent surgery, and was in the hospital for almost a month. Taft, who had undergone a similar surgery years before, sent TR a sympathetic telegram, which was greatly appreciated. Roosevelt's first communication after the operation was a telegram to Taft. "Am rather rocky, but worth several dear men," joked TR. "Greatly touched and pleased by your message."

The two men fully reconciled in May 1918. They were both staying at Chicago's Blackstone Hotel, and when Taft heard that TR was eating alone in the dining room, he went down, walked up to TR's table, and exclaimed, "Theodore! I'm glad to see you!" Roosevelt rose from his seat, grasped Taft's shoulders and said, "Well, I am indeed delighted to see you. Won't you sit down?" All across the crowded dining room, people looked up from their dinners, and most immediately understood the significance of the moment. And suddenly the room burst out with applause. Roosevelt later told a colleague: "I never felt happier over anything in my life. It was splendid of Taft."

When Roosevelt died in 1919, he was buried in a private ceremony on Long Island. Taft drove to the cemetery and trudged up the hill to the gravesite. Perhaps feeling a little bit out of place amongst Roosevelt's large extended family, he stood alone, apart from the main group of mourners. But not so far away that they could not hear him join in when the Lord's Prayer was said. And as his friend's body was lowered into the grave, Taft wept. They could hear that too.

27. President Warren Harding appointed Taft chief justice of the Supreme Court in 1921. Under Taft's able leadership, antiquated procedures were streamlined, and this greatly improved the delivery of justice throughout the federal court system. He also convinced Congress to build a separate building to house the Supreme Court, the building it occupies today. As he long suspected, he was much happier as chief justice than he had been as president. He retired from the court in 1930 and died one month later. Taft is the only man to have served as president and chief justice of the Supreme Court.

28. Taft loved baseball, and in 1910 he began a presidential tradition by throwing out the first pitch on the opening day of the major league baseball season. Every president has done this at least once, except for Jimmy Carter and Donald Trump.

Taft also inspired another baseball tradition. At a game, he grew uncomfortable in his chair in the middle of the seventh inning and stood up to stretch his legs – whereupon everyone else in the stadium, thinking that he was about to leave, rose to show their respect. After a minute or so, he sat down, the crowd followed suit, and the "seventh-inning stretch" was born.

29. Taft had a good sense of humor about his weight. While in the Philippines, he took a trip into the mountains, which he described in a cable to Secretary of State Elihu Root; "Stood trip well. Rode horseback twenty-five miles to five thousand feet elevation." Root, knowing that Taft weighed over 300 pounds, cabled back: "How is the horse?" Taft replied, "A magnificent animal, gentle and intelligent and of great power. He stood the trip without difficulty."

30. One of the most significant consequences of Taft's presidency is that he moved the Republican Party to the right. The ascendancy of conservatives in the party owed much to Taft's intense commitment to defeating Roosevelt and purging progressivism from the party. The three Republican presidents that followed Democrat Woodrow Wilson (Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover) were all conservative. Taft's oldest son, U.S. Senator Robert A. Taft, was even more conservative than his father. Robert A. served in the Senate from 1938 to 1953 and became the leader of the Republican Party's conservative wing in the 1940s. His nickname was "Mr. Republican." Robert A. was a candidate for president in 1952 but lost the nomination to Dwight D. Eisenhower.

31. Taft's grandson, Robert A. Taft Jr., was a three-term Congressman and a U.S. senator from Ohio from 1971 to 1976. His great-grandson, Robert A. Taft III, was governor of Ohio from 1999 to 2007.

See the next page for a list of references.

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