

PART ELEVEN

World Conflicts Involve the United States

Chapter 29: The Spanish American War

Chapter 30: The Nation Joins World Wars

Chapter 31: World War II Encircles the Globe

TWENTIETH CENTURY WARS

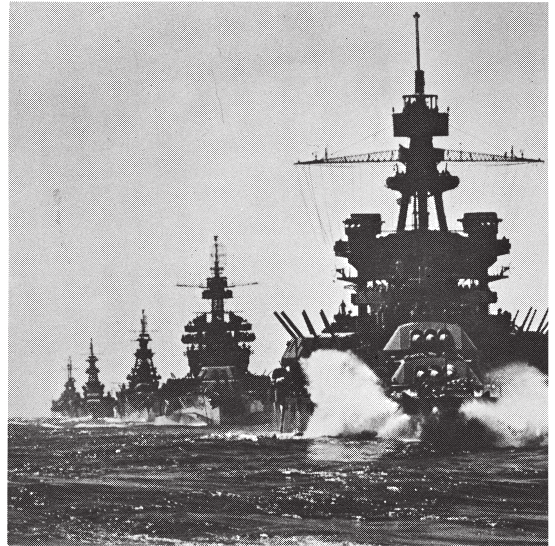
World War I (Declared)



U.S. Army Photograph

**General John J. Pershing
leading American troops
Arch of Triumph, 1918**

World War II (Declared)



United States Navy

**USS Pennsylvania leading warships
into Lingayen Gulf,
Philippine Islands, 1945**

War in Korea (Undeclared)



United States Marines

**United States Marines
rest in the snow during move
south from Koto-ri, Korea, 1950**

War in Vietnam (Undeclared)



United States Air Force

**Flying F-4C Phantom jets
being refueled from KC-135
Strato tankers over Vietnam, 1967**

TWENTIETH CENTURY PRESIDENTS



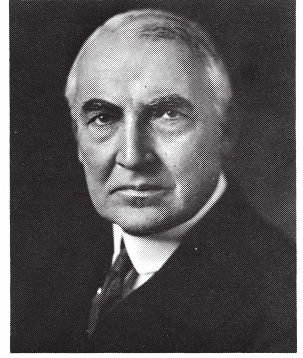
Theodore Roosevelt
1901-1909



William Howard Taft
1909-1913



Woodrow Wilson
1913-1921
World War I



Warren G. Harding
1921-1923



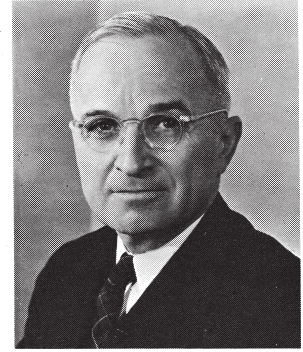
Calvin Coolidge
1923-1929



Herbert C. Hoover
1929-1933



Franklin D. Roosevelt
1933-1945
World War II



Harry S. Truman
1945-1953
World War II
War in Korea



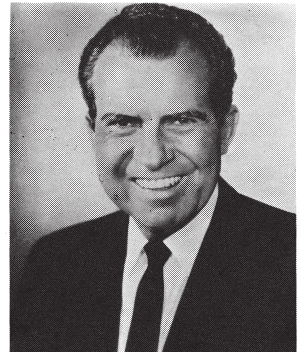
Dwight D. Eisenhower
1953-1961
World War II – General
War in Korea



John F. Kennedy
1961-1963
War in Vietnam



Lyndon B. Johnson
1963-1969
War in Vietnam



Richard M. Nixon
1969-
War in Vietnam

All photographs, Library of Congress

Chapter 29

The Spanish American War

CUBA'S ADVENTUROUS PAST

SINCE THE DAYS of John Quincy Adams and Simon Bolivar, statesmen throughout the Americas had been slowly developing a policy to make the Western Hemisphere a bulwark of freedom. Therefore, a threat from a foreign power became a matter of concern to all, especially to the nations situated near the disturbance. Cuba had belonged to Spain since the island was discovered by Columbus in 1492. His son, Diego, founded the first permanent settlement in 1511. Cuban soil felt the tread of conquistadores – Cortes, Balboa, de Soto, and many more. The island was used as a supply base for Spanish exploration in the New World.

Cuba suffered from piracy. Havana, founded in 1519 the year that Cortes launched his conquest of Mexico, was looted and burned by pirates in 1538.

In 1762 a British fleet captured Havana and all of Cuba. So many soldiers died of yellow fever while occupying the island that Great Britain was quite willing to return it to Spain the next year.

When the cultivation of tobacco and sugar cane began late in the sixteenth

century, Negroes were imported from Africa to work in the fields. Native labor had almost vanished in the vain search for gold and silver. By the middle of the nineteenth century about half a million Negroes had been admitted to the island.

Toussaint L'Ouverture had organized a rebellion in Haiti and stirred slaves on Cuban sugar plantations to revolt for freedom. The riots were quickly suppressed by Spanish authorities. During the revolutions in the Spanish colonies Cubans formed secret societies to fight for independence from Spain. The members received sympathetic help from citizens in Mexico, Colombia, and the United States. However, when most of the Spanish colonies won independence during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Cuba and Puerto Rico were left to Spain as a remnant of empire in the Western Hemisphere.

In 1868, three years after the end of the War Between the States, rebellion broke out in Cuba and lasted for ten years. Plantations were burned and commerce was halted. The Cubans demanded a constitutional government – the right of Cubans to hold office, permission to assemble, and local self-

government. The ten-year war ended in a deadlock rather than a victory. The Spanish Government promised to carry out the desired reforms, including the abolition of slavery, but insisted that the governor-general still hold supreme power. Spain had lost about 80,000 troops in the long struggle. More men were lost from yellow fever than from bullets.

The Cubans who wanted independence and not reforms gained enough strength with outside help to launch another revolt in 1895. President Cleveland adopted a "hands-off" policy, but newspapers in this country inflamed public opinion with blood-curdling stories of Spanish atrocities. Sometimes these harrowing tales were printed before the reports were checked to separate truth from fiction.

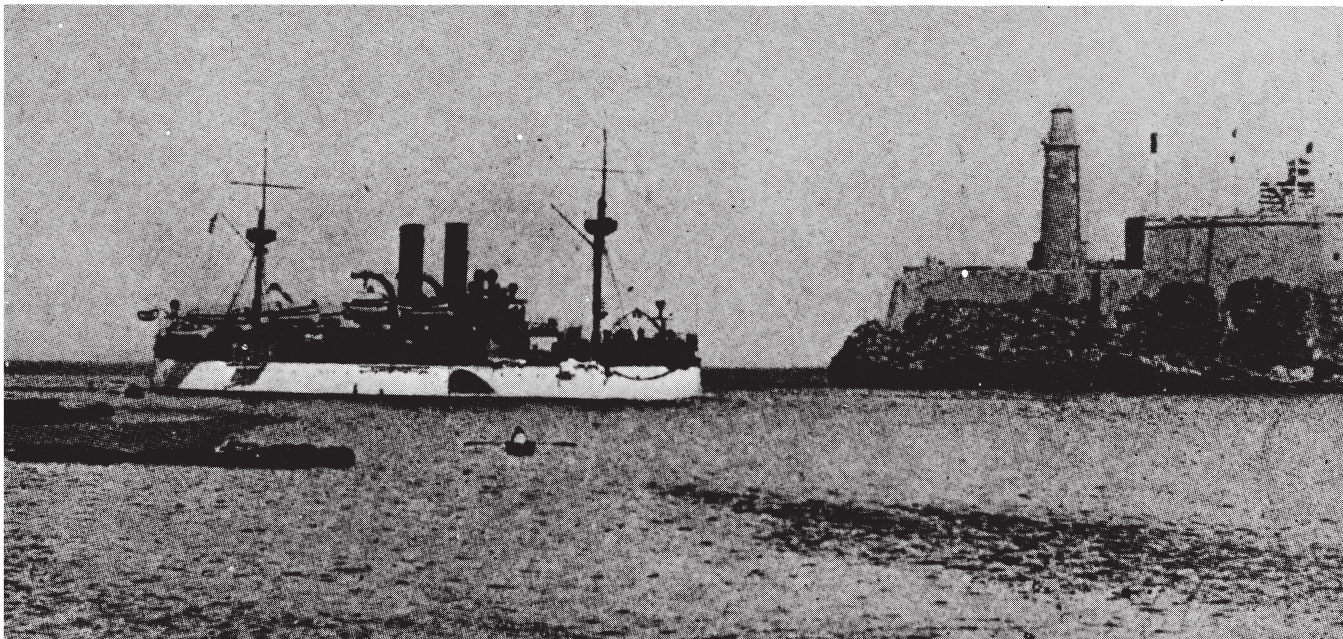
During President McKinley's term sympathy for the Cuban revolutionists increased to fever heat. To protect the property of United States citizens in Cuba, the battleship *Maine* was dispatched to Havana. A few weeks later, on February 15, 1898, the *Maine* was blown

up in the harbor of Havana with a loss of 266 lives. Newspaper headlines, "Remember the Maine" stirred the anger of United States citizens to the point of intervention. A board of inquiry was not able to find what had caused the explosion. War hysteria swept over the United States. The easterners were inclined to consider war only as a last resort; the westerners, as in the time of Jefferson, wanted to extend the area of freedom in the hemisphere. Senator William V. Allen from Nebraska expressed this policy in a speech, "Cuba Must Be Free," in the Senate of the United States in March, 1898:

I believe it to be the true policy and the true doctrine of our country that whenever a people show themselves desirous of establishing a republican form of government upon any territory adjacent to us they should receive our encouragement and support. If our form of government is the correct one — and of that I have no doubt — then its recognition or establishment in other lands should be encouraged, and when an opportunity shall present itself to us to lend this encouragement, it should be promptly and effectually given.

BATTLESHIP MAINE PASSING MORRO CASTLE TO ENTER HAVANA HARBOR

United States Navy



President McKinley did not want war with Spain. The pressure of public opinion, however, forced him to ask Congress for authority to use the Army and Navy to establish peace in Cuba. War began soon after a joint resolution of Congress stated "that the people of the island of Cuba are and of right ought to be independent." However, the first major battle of the Spanish American War was in the Philippines in another hemisphere, not in Cuba.

IT WAS A BRIEF WAR

ON THE 25TH OF APRIL Commodore Dewey, commanding a squadron of warships anchored in the Bay of Hong Kong, received the following cablegram from the Secretary of the Navy in Washington:

War has commenced between the United States and Spain. Proceed at once to Philippine Islands. Commence operations at once, particularly against the Spanish fleet. You must capture vessels or destroy. Use utmost endeavors.

After a voyage of 600 miles, Dewey's six warships slipped into the Bay of Manila under cover of darkness. They lined up for battle at dawn on the first day of May. The American vessels had heavier armaments than the Spanish ships. During three hours of fighting the enemy fleet was practically destroyed. The naval victory electrified the public and made Dewey a national hero. He was promoted to the rank of admiral.

The *U.S.S. Oregon* was leaving drydock at Bremerton, Washington, when news arrived that the *Maine* had been sunk in Havana harbor. Orders came to proceed to San Francisco immediately and prepare for a long cruise. On the nineteenth of

March, the *Oregon* steamed out of the Bay of San Francisco for a voyage of over 13,000 miles through the Strait of Magellan and up the eastern coast of South America. After a voyage of sixty-eight days at top speed the crew received a rousing welcome on that Sunday morning when the warship from the Pacific joined vessels of the Atlantic fleet patrolling the northern shore of Cuba. Each ship in turn saluted the *Oregon*. Bands played "There'll Be A Hot Time In The Old Town Tonight." The next morning Admiral Sampson arrived on the *New York*. The *New York* and the *Oregon* joined the vessels lying off Santiago on the southern coast where a Spanish fleet was bottled up in the harbor. Five weeks later in the Battle of Santiago Bay, eleven warships under Admiral Sampson destroyed the Spanish fleet which was attempting to run the American blockade. The long voyage of the *Oregon* through the Strait of Magellan awakened the American public as no other event had done to the need of a canal across the Isthmus of Panama.

Two weeks after the naval victory in Santiago Bay, Major General William R. Shafter was negotiating for the surrender of Spanish land forces in the country surrounding the city of Santiago. United States troops were landed to battle Spanish troops wherever they could be found and to occupy the islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico. Convinced, after three months of fighting, that further resistance was useless, the Spanish Government sued for peace. An armistice was arranged whereby Spanish troops would be sent home as soon as transports came for them. The war ended so quickly that the United States scarcely knew what to do with the victory. It took a longer time to

sign the peace than to win the war.

Peace negotiations in Paris were drawn out because even the American commissioners could not agree among themselves. George Gray argued against retaining the Philippines and many citizens agreed with him. He thought it proper to govern Cuba and Puerto Rico because these islands were so near the coast of the United States and their occupancy by another country might endanger the national safety. Gray objected to holding the Philippines so far away in another hemisphere. His reasons accurately foretold the happenings of the next fifty years. He declared:

Policy proposed introduces us into European politics and the entangling alliances against which Washington and all American statesmen have protested. It will make necessary a navy equal to the largest of powers; a greatly increased military establishment; immense sums for fortifications and harbors; multiply occasions for dangerous complications with foreign nations; and increase burdens of taxation.

The anti-expansionists argued that it was imperialism for the United States to demand the cession of the Philippines. The expansionists claimed it was "our duty to the world as one of its civilizing powers" to extend the area of freedom. President McKinley pondered what action to take. If the United States withdrew, France or Germany might annex the islands. McKinley was forced by circumstances of war to agree to annexation, in this statement:

The Philippines are ours, not to exploit but to develop, to civilize, to educate, to train in the science of self-government.

On the tenth of December, 1898, the Treaty of Peace was signed in Paris whereby Spain ceded to the United

States, Cuba and Puerto Rico in the West Indies, Guam in the Mariannas, and the Philippine Islands for the sum of \$20,000,000. The United States guaranteed the inhabitants of these territories the free exercise of their religion.

By this treaty the United States gained 120,000 square miles of territory and responsibility for about 8,500,000 persons in two hemispheres. Unexpectedly and unintentionally, as far as the average citizen was concerned, the nation emerged from the conflict as a rising world power with a colonial empire. The Spanish American War tossed the United States into the seething cauldron of world affairs.

WAR HASTENS THE ANNEXATION OF THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

VERY SOON AFTER the Anglo Americans settled on the Pacific Coast and started trading with the Hawaiians, the little island monarchy began to gravitate toward the United States. As commerce increased with the Orient, American vessels called enroute at the "Crossroads of the Pacific" for coal and other supplies. Among these ships was *Old Ironsides*, sailing in the island waters about the year 1846. An alert young naval officer on board recommended Pearl Harbor as a future naval base for this country in a report he wrote on the voyage.

In 1876, during the term of President Grant, the United States and Hawaii signed a trade agreement permitting raw sugar from Hawaii to enter this country free of duty. This favorable treaty brought an era of prosperity to the Islands. In exchange for this privilege, the King ceded Pearl

Harbor to the United States to be used as a coaling base for ships bound for the Orient.

Since business depended largely upon trade with the United States, agitation began in the Islands for annexation. However, revolts against the monarchy were not serious until the 1890's when the new ruler, Queen Liliuokalani, revoked the constitution in order to submit a new one. Revolutionaries took advantage of this incident to proclaim a republic. The newly-formed government sought annexation to the United States. This was granted by President Benjamin Harrison after an act of Congress. The annexation became a political issue with the Republicans favoring it and the Democrats voting against it. When Grover Cleveland, a Democrat, succeeded Harrison, a Republican, the treaty for annexation was withdrawn from the Senate, on the grounds that the Queen had been deposed because the landing of United States troops to protect American property had encouraged the revolutionary party.

Then, while the expansionists and the anti-expansionists were debating for and against annexation of Hawaii, the United States went to war with Spain. Troops enroute to the Philippines were entertained in Honolulu. Soldiers from the first three transports were guests at a banquet on the capitol grounds where bushels of potato salad, 10,000 ham sandwiches, 300 gallons of milk, 800 pineapples, and 500 oranges were included in the menu. All were free to men in uniform. Business prospered when American troop transports arrived enroute to the Philippines.

Hawaiian business men wanted annexation. The United States needed the Islands for a supply base and a coaling station for

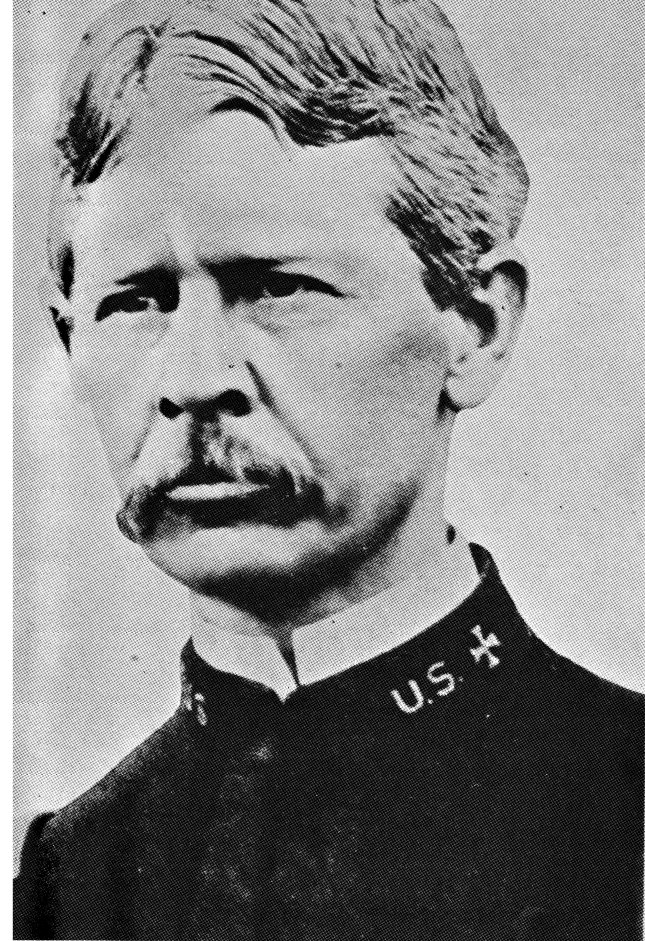
naval vessels operating in the Pacific. The fact that Japan was a rising nation in need of colonies convinced some Congressmen that Hawaii should be annexed by the United States for national safety.

About a month after Dewey's victory in Manila Bay, President McKinley remarked, "We need Hawaii just as much and a good deal more than we did California. It is Manifest Destiny."

Sixteen months after President McKinley was inaugurated, Hawaii was annexed by a joint resolution of Congress. On August 12, 1898, the Stars and Stripes was raised in Hawaii, and our nation "plunged into the sea." The Hawaiian Islands, with Pearl Harbor, became a bulwark of defense for the protection of the Pacific Coast of the continental United States and the Philippines in Asia.

TERRITORIAL EXPANSION PROVES EMBARRASSING AND EXPENSIVE

HERETOFORE THE NATION had expanded westward into territory practically unoccupied. The settlers, being citizens from other states, adapted old and familiar patterns of living to the new country. Not until the Spanish American War did the United States gain territory with large populations whose backgrounds were rooted in different civilizations. Although Cubans and Filipinos were fighting for independence, they lacked training in self-government. Spanish colonials had been ruled almost entirely by officials from Spain. Therefore, to maintain order the United States was placed in the embarrassing position of forcing a military regime upon foreign peoples, most of whom showed little interest in



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WALTER REED

Major Walter Reed of the Army Medical School was sent to Cuba during the Spanish American War when yellow fever was causing the death of many soldiers. With the aid of physicians, nurses, and persons who accepted mosquito bites in experiments, Dr. Reed, a surgeon, proved the theory that the bite of a certain mosquito spread the disease.

The United States Army General Hospital in Washington, D.C. was named for Walter Reed.

exchanging one master for another master.

Routine army reports told of the problems faced by American forces in restoring order where plantations were in ruin, business was disrupted, people were homeless and starving, sanitation was lacking, and laws were not enforced. As

fast as possible the Army turned over to native Cubans all functions of government – courts, mails, customs, schools, sanitation, and health.

Cubans were grateful for the American army's program to improve the health of the people. For every American soldier killed in battle or dying of wounds, at least three had perished from tropical diseases such as malaria, dysentery, and yellow fever. After the Treaty of Paris was signed, the army of occupation under Major General Leonard Wood inaugurated a program of sanitation and health. Walter Reed, an army doctor, launched a campaign against yellow fever with Major William C. Gorgas, Department Surgeon of Havana, as one of his assistants. Dr. Carlos Finlay, a Cuban of Scotch and French ancestry, had read a paper before the Royal Academy of Havana in 1881 in which he stated his belief that yellow fever was carried by mosquitoes. He had not been able to prove his claim. Through experiments with soldiers, doctors, nurses, and civilians who allowed themselves to be bitten by inoculated mosquitoes, Walter Reed proved Finlay's theory to be true. Then Gorgas took over the task of ridding Havana of the dangerous insects. Since Gorgas had recovered from yellow fever years before, he was immune to the disease. He visited patients and studied yellow fever until he became an authority on it. In less than a year there was not a single case in Havana, a city scourged by the dreaded ailment for over 150 years.

The United States had promised to free Cuba and recognize the island as an independent nation as soon as the country was pacified and Cubans were ready to take over the reins of government. The pledge was kept on May 20, 1902. Many

Cubans regretted the early evacuation, feeling the need of more time for all segments of the population to learn self-government. Theodore Roosevelt was determined to avoid the taint of imperialism in the political campaign of 1902. Cuba was free! The densely populated island of Puerto Rico became a territory of the United States like Hawaii and Guam.

Although no promise of independence had been made to the Filipinos, they rather expected it. Under the leadership of Emilio Aguinaldo, they had been fighting for independence from Spain since war broke out between them and the mother country in August of 1896. The revolutionary government had framed a constitution patterned after the Constitution of the United States. When war suddenly began between the United States and Spain, Aguinaldo was at Singapore seeking foreign aid for his cause. Dewey invited him to return to Manila with the American squadron but Aguinaldo did not reach Hong Kong until Dewey had gone to sea. He was transported there later on an American ship. This attention led the Filipino leader to think that the Government of the United States intended to declare the Philippines an independent nation and to support him for the presidency. On June 12, 1898 Aguinaldo was chosen president of the revolutionary government. On December 21 of the same year, President McKinley declared that the United States was sovereign in the Philippines.

To Americans it seemed logical to restore order in the islands first and then decide what to do. The task proved to be difficult. On February 4, 1899, from his headquarters Aguinaldo issued this general order to his Filipino army:

Peace and friendly relations between the Philippine forces and the American forces of occupation are broken, and the latter will be treated as enemies, with the limits prescribed by the laws of war.

Guerrilla warfare followed this proclamation. The casualty lists from the Philippine war dimmed the clamor of expansionists. The conflict became a major issue in Congress. In 1900 the Democrats nominated William Jennings Bryan for President and made the Philippine question the main issue of the campaign. Bryan poked fun at the "manifest destiny" of Americans waging war with alien people who wanted independence. Republicans defended their policy of restoring order in the Islands as humanitarian and reelected McKinley to the high office. Fighting did not stop when Aguinaldo surrendered in April, 1901. A month later Major General Arthur MacArthur cabled Washington for 40,000 troops.

For the difficult task of establishing courts and civil government while the Army maintained order, McKinley appointed William Howard Taft as chairman of the Philippine Commission. Taft encouraged the residents to prepare themselves for independence, assuring them that "the Philippines are for the Filipinos, and the government of the United States is here for the purpose of preserving the Philippines for the Filipinos." Meanwhile the army of occupation at times became impatient with civil authorities who hesitated to take over certain districts and tried to govern them without military aid. The following reply to a request for a garrison to remain in a town explains the policy of the Army to evacuate troops as soon as a region was fairly peaceful:

Pangasinan is a pacified province and has been for some months under a provincial governor. It is believed that if the civil authorities are ever going to protect the people from themselves, now is a good time to begin. It is respectfully submitted that the United States troops cannot be expected to serve these people as policemen indefinitely.

It took real war – over 2000 combats in three years – to pacify the archipelago acquired from Spain. Then the problem was not solved. From the brief Spanish American War, the United States inherited commitments in Asia which cost billions of dollars to the taxpayers and took the lives of thousands of the nation's fighting forces.

TURN OF THE CENTURY MARKS A TURN IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MOST CITIZENS OF THIS COUNTRY were not prepared to grasp the real meaning of the expansion into the Pacific. They had long taken for granted that the two great oceans were permanent barriers that would protect the Western Hemisphere with little effort on the part of the United States. Few Americans realized that the Atlantic Ocean was a barrier only as long as no European nation had a navy large and powerful enough to challenge Great Britain's supremacy of the seas. Soon Germany began to build a fleet. Did that nation intend to contest Great Britain's title as Queen of the Seas?

Alaska was a far-flung outpost that needed little or no protection because Asia had long been dormant. By the turn of the century Japan was rising as a naval power in the Pacific. Japan was only a few hundred miles from the Aleutian Islands. On July 8, 1853 Commodore Perry had steamed into Yedo Bay, Japan, with a squadron of four warships. He intended to

make a treaty with the emperor. He delivered a letter from President Fillmore to the ruler of Japan. He also presented gifts such as a telegraph set and a miniature locomotive with a string of cars and rails. He was not received in a friendly way. Perry left, stating that he would return in the spring to learn the emperor's decision after that ruler had read the letter from the President of the United States. On the last day of March in 1854 Perry returned. He secured a treaty of friendship and trade that opened up commerce between the two nations. Japan signed similar treaties with many nations and developed industry capable of supporting a program for military might. Perry's treaty opened up a new epoch in Asia.

Before the end of the nineteenth century Great Britain and the United States agreed upon the "open door" policy for China. This meant that all nations have a right to trade with that country. Since the peoples of the East were generally suspicious of foreigners, a patriotic society, called Boxers, was formed in China to drive out the foreigners. Along with other nations the United States sent troops to China to put down the Boxer Rebellion.

For several centuries the little "hermit kingdom" of Korea had been coveted by neighboring states. In self defense Koreans had shut themselves off from the world. They, too, in the latter part of the nineteenth century had opened their ports to trade. The little peninsula became an object of rivalry among three Pacific powers – China, Japan, and Russia. In 1883 the United States had ratified a trade treaty with Korea which recognized the little kingdom as an independent country. However, these agreements did not mean much to the average citizen of

this country until the United States took possession of the Philippines.

In fact, acquiring the Philippines placed the United States at the geographical center of Eastern Asia. A circle with Manila as a center and a radius of 1700 miles would include the area containing most of the rich resources of the East Indies, Burma, Malaya, Indochina, China proper, the industrial area of Japan, and southern Korea. The eastern powers were not too pleased to have a western nation with western ideas in their midst. Since Japan had defeated China in a war in 1895, and had taken the island of Formosa from China by treaty, that nation did not want the United States for a neighbor in the Philippines. For this reason Japan strongly protested the annexation of Hawaii until the United States Government assured the Emperor's Government that the 25,000 Japanese living in Hawaii would be fully protected in their rights.

While under military occupation, many Filipinos continued to argue for independence. A petition from Manila, dated July 15, 1900, and signed by 2000 Filipinos, was submitted by Senator Teller of Colorado. It was read in the United States Senate where the Philippine problem was bitterly debated. It began thus:

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES: . . .

The Filipinos steadfastly believe that their independence is their only salvation. Should they obtain it, they would be forever grateful to whomsoever shall have helped them in their undertaking America, consistent with her tradition, is the only one which could play that great role in the present and future of the Philippines

Such pleas carried great weight with citizens of this country whose forefathers had objected to being colonials and had fought for independence. Public opinion

swung toward independence – but when? If the Philippines were granted independence immediately, would Japan gain control of the Islands before the people were able to defend themselves against aggression? Although both political parties came to agree, after a time, that the Philippines should become an independent nation, they disagreed on the date. The Republicans preferred to wait, as William Howard Taft explained, “long enough to give to the poor, the weak, and the humble a consciousness of their rights, and a certainty that they would be preserved under any government to which we might transfer sovereign power.”

The United States Government maintained order; established courts; built schoolhouses and promoted education of the people; launched an extensive program for sanitation and health; and encouraged the erection of factories to provide employment and to increase commerce. While the Filipinos were learning how to govern themselves and were adapting to new ways, they continued the agitation for independence. In August, 1916, Congress passed a law establishing an all-Filipino legislature. In 1934, the independence law was passed, providing for a ten-year period as a commonwealth before becoming a free republic. During this time, the Filipinos could depend upon the United States for help if needed, while operating their own government. They wrote a constitution which was approved by a vote of the people and was accepted by the President of the United States.

It was necessary for the Filipinos to develop an army for defense before being cut loose as a free nation. To help in organizing and training this native army,

the United States Government sent units of this nation's military forces under the command of General Douglas MacArthur, the son of General Arthur MacArthur who had served in the Philippines during the American occupation. The Filipinos had gone more than halfway toward final independence when war broke out in the Pacific in 1941.

THE PANAMA CANAL LINKS THE OCEANS

THEODORE ROOSEVELT, who became President in September, 1901, inherited the foreign commitments resulting from the Spanish American War in which he himself had fought. He was aware of the responsibilities which expansion had thrust upon the nation. Having been Assistant Secretary of the Navy during McKinley's first term, Roosevelt realized the need for a two-ocean Navy. He began at once to ask Congress for large appropriations to build new and modern ships for the United States Navy, and to provide for two fleets, one in the Atlantic and one in the Pacific. To concentrate both fleets in one ocean in an emergency, a canal was needed across the Isthmus of Panama. Noting the rise of Germany to world power, Roosevelt was determined to build that canal as soon as possible. Although such a canal had been talked about for centuries, action could no longer be delayed when the nation had expanded in both hemispheres. The building of this canal also proved to be embarrassing and expensive.

The Isthmus of Panama was discovered by Bastidas who sailed from Cadiz, Spain, in October of the year 1500. With him on

this voyage was a young man destined to fame as the discoverer of the Pacific Ocean. His name was Vasco Nunez de Balboa.

Balboa's discovery of the South Sea in 1513 intensified the search for a natural water route linking the two large bodies of water separated by a narrow strip of land. However, the Spaniards did not wait for the doubtful strait to be found. They began building a road across the isthmus in 1521. Although it was scarcely more than a track through swamps and jungles, the Spaniards proudly named it Camino Real (royal road). Over this winding trail went the pack trains laden with silver and gold from the fabulous mines of Peru.

While explorers were still looking for a natural waterway, Charles V, King of Spain, had surveyors hacking their way through the jungle and paddling on the streams to discover the best route for a canal. The Chagres River way was considered. The King ordered the stream cleared of logs and obstructions. Later, this course was followed during the rainy season when heavy shipments were hauled overland to the Chagres, and loaded on to boats for the completion of the journey from the Pacific to the Atlantic. However, the main thoroughfare across the isthmus continued to be the Camino Real, threading a path through the tangled vegetation from Panama City to Nombre de Dios.

Philip II inherited the throne of his father, Charles V, but not his enthusiasm for a canal which he feared would open up the country to the enemies of Spain. During his reign, pirates spread terror throughout the area. For several years, Sir Francis Drake and his followers joined with French corsairs in plundering barges on the Chagres River, waylaying the pack trains on

the Camino Real, and raiding the ports where bars of gold and silver were stored awaiting shipment to Spain. Philip II did not want a canal to encourage more raids by these bold buccaneers. He forbade mention of such a waterway.

However, the idea of a canal persisted in the Spanish mind and found its way into the thinking of Frenchmen and Americans. Both Franklin and Jefferson had been interested in the project. Early in the nineteenth century, when Napoleon invaded Spain and the colonies in the New World flared into rebellion, the last chance was gone for Spain to build a waterway across the isthmus connecting the two continents.

Who would dig the canal? Where would it be? Across Tehuantepec, Nicaragua, Panama? Simon Bolivar, when president of Gran Colombia, was besieged with offers from European countries, but his Congress accepted none as practical. In 1825, when Henry Clay was Secretary of State in the Cabinet of John Quincy Adams, he asked a diplomatic official in Central America to investigate a proposed canal route through Nicaragua, but warned him not to give the idea "that the United States will contribute . . . to the work, because it is not yet known what views Congress might take of it." After the discovery of gold in California, new settlements rose on the Pacific Coast, increasing the need for the canal.

The triumphal opening of the Suez Canal, twenty years after the California gold rush, made Ferdinand de Lesseps the hero of the hour. If this Frenchman could divide the continents of Africa and Asia, why couldn't he separate North and South America? He had provided a shorter route to India by linking the Mediterranean and

the Red Sea. De Lesseps was the man selected to build the Panama Canal and connect the Atlantic and the Pacific. President Grant, in his first message to Congress, recommended that this waterway be constructed by the United States, and Congress appropriated the funds to investigate the possible routes. This decision stirred the French to action. Many thrifty French peasants as well as rich citizens and bankers, invested money in the Panama Canal project directed by the hero of Suez. A concession was secured from Colombia. In 1881, the contract was signed by the French company for work on the canal.

Panama was not Suez. The French had failed to reckon with the humid climate and yellow fever, the deadly scourge of the tropics. Although the French company sent excellent doctors and equipped fine hospitals, malaria and yellow fever actually broke out in clean, well-kept wards. To prevent ants from crawling into the beds of patients, the four posts of each cot were placed in small pans of water. Vases of flowers were in the rooms and on the porches to cheer the sick. At that time, it was not yet known that mosquitoes carried both yellow fever and malaria. Not knowing that stagnant pools in pans and flower pots were breeding places of the unsuspected enemy, the French doctors were unable to prevent epidemics of yellow fever and malaria. From 1881 to 1888, the death rate among employees averaged 63 per thousand. Nearly half of this number died from the two diseases carried by mosquitoes.

The French company had financial troubles, too. Although expert engineers advised a lock canal, de Lesseps insisted upon a sea level waterway. By the time he

finally consented to locks, the company was practically bankrupt. After securing permission from Colombia to transfer its concession and property, the French company set the price at \$109,000,000, hoping to sell. Congress authorized the President to pay \$40,000,000 for the assets of the French company.

In 1903, during the term of Theodore Roosevelt, the Hay-Herran Treaty was proposed to Colombia, giving the United States the right to dig a canal across the Isthmus of Panama and perpetual control of a strip of territory on each side of the waterway. For these concessions, Colombia was to be paid \$10,000,000. At the time, the President of Colombia was serving without a legal election and there was a danger of a military revolt occurring at any moment. To ratify the treaty, the Colombian Congress had to be convened and that body had not been called into session for five years. Thus the canal project became involved in Colombian politics. The Colombian Congress rejected the Hay-Herran Treaty after the United States Senate had approved it.

After the Congress of Colombia had rejected the treaty and blocked the canal, the province of Panama seceded from Colombia and declared its independence again as it had done several times before. This declaration of independence led to the formation of the Republic of Panama. President Theodore Roosevelt's hasty recognition of the new republic caused criticism in both Colombia and this country. The Republic of Panama accepted the offer rejected by Colombia for canal rights and received \$10,000,000. Work began on completing the Panama Canal at a cost of \$375,000,000.

Doctors and engineers were both

necessary to make a success of the immense project of the Panama Canal. The officer in charge of sanitation was Colonel William Crawford Gorgas who had served in Cuba where he had been associated with Walter Reed in the study of yellow fever and malaria. Fresh from his triumph of ridding Havana of these dread diseases after the Spanish American War, Gorgas came to Panama. Often working against great odds, he succeeded in making the tropical region a reasonably healthy place for people to live and work. Engineering science could dig the canal and the United States Government could furnish the money if medical science could keep men on the job. Health was the responsibility of Gorgas, whose success is a dramatic human story even in the routine reports printed in the *Canal Record*, published weekly by the Isthmian Canal Commission:

September 11, 1907 – The Sanitary Department used about 160,000 gallons of oil during the last fiscal year . . . All larva must come to the surface for air on an average of every two minutes . . . This is where the Sanitary Department catches the mosquito. During the twelve days of their larval life before developing into adult mosquitoes, these babies are at the mercy of the man with the oil sprinkler.

January 15, 1908 – We had just one fourth as much malaria in December of 1907 as in the same month of 1906 . . . It has been two years since yellow fever disappeared from the Isthmus.

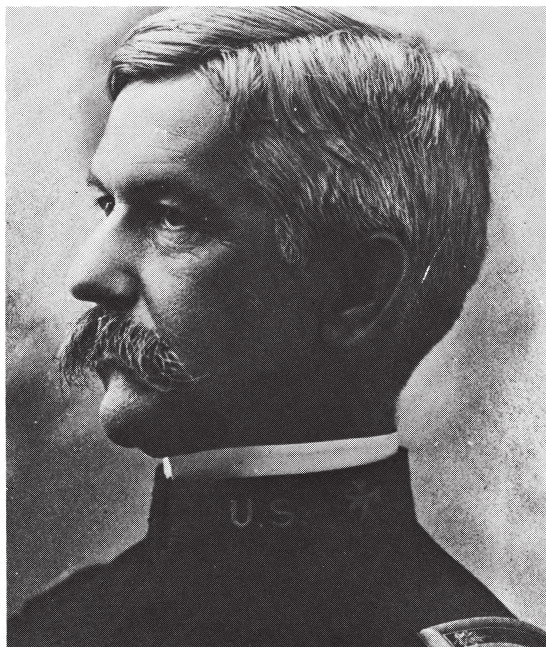
Gorgas posted notices in all camps warning people to screen the windows and doors of their houses and always to use a mosquito bar at night; not to go out at night as mosquitoes bite principally after dark; and to drink boiled water and protect food from flies to avoid typhoid fever. With health carefully guarded, United States citizens working on the

canal lived much as they did at home. There were churches, schools, libraries, gymnasiums, and hospitals. For recreation, there were band concerts, club meetings, lodge socials, bowling contests, rifle matches, tennis games, and a baseball league.

On March 30, 1910, the combined Canal and Panama Railroad employees totaled 38,676 – the largest labor force since work began on the waterway. The man in charge of the entire project was Colonel George W. Goethals, Corps of Engineers, U.S.A. He and his staff successfully met engineering and construction problems which involved changing the course of rivers,

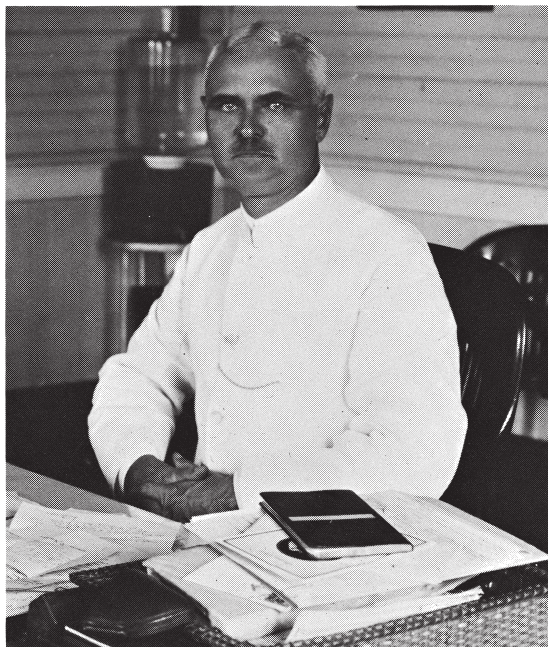
excavating troughs through low mountain ranges, and dredging sand from harbors. Lakes were filled, dams were built, and locks were constructed. Many difficulties beset the path of progress. A freshet on the Chagres River poured over the dam, flooding the valley and inundating the railroad line. Culebra Cut, that had defied the French, was a source of trouble to the Americans. At Cucaracha, the hillside began to slide as early as 1884 when the French company was working. It continued slipping after the Americans began excavating in 1905. These slides all along Culebra Cut sometimes buried steam shovels and tracks, filled up drainage

BUILDERS OF THE PANAMA CANAL



U.S. Army Photograph

William C. Gorgas (The Doctor)
Health and sanitation



Panama Canal Company

George W. Goethals (The Colonel)
Engineering and Administration

Both men attained rank of Major General in the United States Army.



Panama Canal Company

CULEBRA CUT, RENAMED GAILLARD CUT

Massive slides in this area proved disastrous to the French Company. Under direction of the United States, Culebra was known as Gaillard Cut, after the engineer in charge. This section of the Panama Canal was dug through solid rock for eight to nine miles to take the waterway through the Continental Divide. To solve this problem, American engineers discarded the plan for a sea level canal and built a lock canal.

ditches, and blocked the canal itself. All these problems were finally solved, and the big ditch was completed.

On August 15, 1914, the Panama Canal was officially opened for commerce. On that day, the *Ancon*, a cement-carrying steamer, left Cristobal on the Atlantic at 7:10 A.M. Nine hours and forty minutes later, the ship steamed into the Pacific. A dream of four centuries had been fulfilled. A waterway linked the two great oceans. The voyage from New York to San Francisco was 5262 miles, less than half the distance by the old route through the Strait of Magellan. The great event was celebrated

in 1915 with the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. The Panama Canal, open to the commerce of nations, was a gift to the world. None too soon was the strategic waterway put into service. When the *Ancon* was steaming through the canal on opening day, war was stalking over Europe. In a few years, the United States became involved in the conflict that swept over the world.

MAP:

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Atlas of American History by Edgar B. Wesley