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Teddy Roosevelt and the Panama Canal

Introduction

There is a wonderful scene in the film *Lincoln* by Steven Spielberg where Lincoln asks the telegraph operator, "Do we choose to be born?" The telegraph operator responds, "No." Lincoln then asks, "Are we fitted into the times we are born into?" After a pause, the telegrapher responds, "I do not know for myself, but you may be."¹ As some may wonder whether it is providence, hard work, or both, certain people in history undoubtedly stand out as "fitted into the times." In American history, Abraham Lincoln was one such person, and Theodore Roosevelt was another. Roosevelt's personality, previous positions in government, and military experience shaped his presidency as uniquely fit for his tenure as president. Theodore Roosevelt (also known as Teddy or T. R.) was born to "fit his times," as we shall see throughout this paper. His presidency coincided with significant advances in technology, medicine, and thought during the changing of the guards across many older empires. Some advances, mainly in technology, along with a push for economic globalization, contributed to the building of the Panama Canal. This paper seeks to illustrate the cult of President Theodore Roosevelt as a visionary that connected historical economic, political, and technological forces to facilitate the flow of goods, people, and ideas between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans.

Theodore Roosevelt

Although born to a wealthy family, Roosevelt suffered from chronic illness as a child. Through the encouragement of his family, although without being pampered, he was able to fight through the sicknesses and become a strong young man. However, his struggle and the need to overcome obstacles would be part of T. R.'s life and ultimately forge his personality. Three years into his marriage, he lost his wife hours after giving birth to a little girl and his mother from typhoid on the same day.² He would remind himself of his father's words about the brevity of life. He masked his sadness and depression

1 *Lincoln*, directed by Stephen Spielberg (Dream Works Production, 2012), 2 hr., 30 min.

2 David McCullough, *Mornings on Horseback* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 282-284.

by throwing himself into work, jobs, and purposes.³ To him, there was no greater purpose than to serve the people, but first, he would need to recover from his losses.



Figure 1. Official 1904 Presidential Portrait of Theodore Roosevelt.⁴

After a period living as a cowboy in the Badlands of North Dakota, he returned to public life in several high-profile positions. As New York City's police commissioner, T. R. boldly dealt with Tammany Hall,⁵ which was rife with corruption and had an unorthodox manner of management. As Governor of New York, he became acquainted with international trade, canal operations, and national politics. As the Secretary of the Navy, he was determined to make America the most extraordinary sea power on earth. Resigning his politically appointed position to volunteer for the Spanish-American War (1898), T. R. led men in combat. He received a valorous award upgraded years later to the Medal of Honor for his heroism on San Juan Hill, Cuba. T. R. climbed the political ladder and, coupled with his fame, was chosen as McKinley's vice president. He had done all of this by the time he was forty.

While attending the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, N. Y., the steelworker and anarchist Leon Czolgosz shot President McKinley on September 6, 1901; McKinley died a week later. He was in the first six months of his second term as president. However, an accidental President,

3 H.W. Brands, "Part Two – Engagement: Eight – The Light That Failed: 1883-86," in *T.R.: The Last Romantic* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 162.

4 Parch Brothers, Official 1904 Presidential Portrait of Theodore Roosevelt. Accessed June 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodore_Roosevelt.

5 Doris Kearns Goodwin, "Toppling Old Bosses," in *The Bully Pulpit* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 68-69.

President Roosevelt's uniqueness as a person set him apart from all of his contemporaries. His leadership, vision, and "can-do" attitude led to many great successes. These included "trust-busting" the large corporations, advocating to protect the environment, and creating the first national park. He also became known for being the first president to publicly invite a black man to dine with him at the White House. Although he was known for being a man of action, Roosevelt had many layers. For instance, he received the Noble Peace Prize for his help ending the Russo-Sino War in 1905; additionally, he worked tirelessly toward the most remarkable infrastructure project of that era—the Panama Canal.

In building the Panama Canal, T. R. fostered an environment of collaboration. In turn, the completion of the Panama Canal led to the etiology and treatments of tropical medical diseases such as Yellow Fever. Yellow fever killed 20,000 individuals during the failed French attempts to build a canal in Central America.⁶ If ever a man was fitted for his times, it was Theodore Roosevelt. T. R. was immensely popular among Americans, and his appointment as McKinley's vice president aimed at removing T. R. from influencing state and national politics. As Vice-President, he would have no power or influence in those days, leading indeed to political death. On hearing McKinley's death, Senator Mark Hanna exclaimed, "Now that damn cowboy is President."⁷ T. R. embodied the curious adventurer in all Americans of that era, and his political direction and choices would prove this.

As a historian, Roosevelt recognized the desire and need for a transatlantic crossing point in Central America. Rumors among sailors postulated about a western route to China for years as far back as the Phoenicians and Vikings. Spain hired Columbus to survey a new route to Asia. Columbus' courageous journey discovered something unexpected for the Europeans—another continent between Europe and Asia. Cortez, Balboa, and Magellan surveyed and explored the Americas, trying to find a quicker route to Asia. This exploration began a nearly 400-year attempt to find and build a crossing through Central America to shorten the distance to Asia. Roosevelt, a historian and author of forty-seven books was intimately aware of this history. He was raised near the water, learned to sail as a child, and grew up with stories of naval heroics achieved by both sides during the Civil War. His childhood included stories from his maternal uncles. They were Confederate Naval Officers who filled T. R.'s mind with stories of adventure and daring. While an undergraduate at Harvard, he wrote his first book, *The*

6 "Yellow Fever and Malaria in the Canal," PBS, October 2014. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/panama-fever/>.

7 David McCullough, *The Path Between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal: 1870-1914* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977), 247.

Naval War of 1812.⁸ Still, today his book is a compelling study of the causes, outcomes, and significance of a modern standing Navy. T. R. understood the power of sailing vessels and a strong navy, the need for them to be fast, and quick access to be used as instruments of war.

Additionally, he was influenced by the work of A.T. Mahan, especially his book, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*. T. R. would have remembered the U. S. fleet barely arriving on time from the Pacific Ocean in support of the Spanish American War. The naval fleet's long journey around the South American trip added days to the voyage and put the Americas at a tactical deficit. As Secretary of the Navy, T. R. tried to influence American foreign policy; as the president of the United States, he controlled it and fixed this isthmus crossing problem.

U.S. Canal History

The use of canals dates back to ancient civilizations such as the Egyptian and Roman empires. They continued to be used throughout history and became more sophisticated as knowledge and technology developed. Normally, canals were sea-level structures with no option to negotiate elevations and used in simple transportation as in Great Britain or Suez. Irrigation canals and water movement canals operate using angles and gravity to move water. Not until the advent of complex metallurgy would the technology be available to negotiate higher elevations to lift ships over mountains using lock systems.

There was a vacillating interest and commitment to building a canal across the Panamanian Isthmus through most of the 1800s. The French, German, and English governments had significant interests in undertaking the operation based on aggressive foreign policy desires. Two events rekindled American interests in such ventures, the Gold Rush of the 1840s and, as stated above, the Spanish American War. When the U.S. sought to take a shot at building the Panama Canal, American engineers had master canal-building knowledge and practices. For politicians, there was a dual purpose for a Central American canal. First, for economic reasons, shipping could be cut in half for domestic trade to the west coast. International trade to Asia and the southern States would be the main ports to be used in such an endeavor.⁹ Second, the U.S. was the up-and-coming country for defense purposes, and naval vessels were the primary military technology through the late 1800s and 1900s.

8 Theodore Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812* (New York: Putnam, 1882).

9 McCullough, *The Path Between the Seas*, 259-265.



Figure 2. John William Hill, View of the Erie Canal (1830-1832).¹⁰

As governor of New York, Roosevelt was familiar with modern canal operations, their importance, and their early use. Canals were an important economic and transportation asset.¹¹ Although replaced by trains for routine commerce and public transportation, they were still part of the fabric of the state. They required routine maintenance and care during Roosevelt's time. As the 33rd Governor of New York, Roosevelt played an essential role in the survival of the New York State canal system. Concerned about the power of railroad companies, a contentious relationship that would continue into his presidency, Roosevelt had the canal system re-surveyed and enlarged many of the canals. Roosevelt believed it would be folly not to use the topographical advantages of New York State. That is the presence of the best water route for shipping as a supplement for the growing influence of railroads. T.R. thought New York would lose this shipping advantage if it depended solely on the railroads.¹² This canal experience paid significant dividends when he was president during the building of the Panama Canal.

The History of U.S. Involvement

T.R.'s time in Cuba partially shaped his thoughts about Spain, its possessions, and America's future and responsibility. Countries and Empires came and went like a sine wave through time, rising and falling, and it is

- 10 CBS News. Accessed June 2022, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/all-hail-the-erie-canal-200th-anniversary>.
- 11 Carol Sheriff, *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress, 1817-1862* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), 4.
- 12 Ashley Maready, "Erie Canal Museum's Curator Talks: TR and His Canals," YouTube Video, 30:05, June 9, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6RojN2I8DLA>.

important what they did with their power and influence. T.R. felt that it was America's time, and that America should lead as other great nations led in the past.

By the mid-1800s, the Spanish empire was in decline, and its former colonies across the Western Hemisphere claimed independence. At first, some of these new republics formed confederations in the 1820s. That experiment was short-lived as they quickly became independent countries by the 1840s, but not without internal rebellion, corruption, and political instability.¹³ Eventually, Spain lost political influence and control of its assets in the Americas due to mounting debt, the Spanish American War and these independence movements. By the end of the 1800s, the Spanish Empire collapsed, a pattern in the decline of the age of empires which, would be followed by the Ottomans and then the British. Spain's demise was similar to the Ottoman decline. It was a slow loss of control and influence. Although not the only U.S. president to consider a transatlantic crossing point, T.R. would be the one to get it done in a neighborhood of unstable but friendly governments.¹⁴ Guided by the Monroe Doctrine, Roosevelt safeguarded U.S. interests by creating a foreign policy keeping European interests and colonialism away from the Americas. The Roosevelt Corollary justified American action, foreign policy interests, and the building of the Panama Canal.

American presidents have talked about a passageway across Central America since the times of Thomas Jefferson in the early 1800s. During this period, the idea of building a canal in Central America was aggressively pursued from Washington, D.C. to upstate New York even before the explosion of the U.S. railroad industry. Jefferson met with the famous German author, adventurer, and explorer Alexander von Humboldt who trekked and surveyed Central America.¹⁵ Spain had commissioned Humboldt to explore "New Spain" to include a passageway between the oceans. At the end of his five-year adventure, he visited the United States. There President Jefferson welcomed him. In 1804 Jefferson, intrigued with discovery and science, having sent out Lewis and Clark to survey the West, and having purchased the Louisiana Territory from Spain, invited Humboldt to stay with him for two weeks at the White

13 Moisés Prieto, "Corrupt and Rapacious: Colonial Spanish-American Past Through the Eyes of Early Nineteenth-Century Contemporaries. A Contribution from the History of Emotions," in Ronald Kroeze, Pol Dalmau, and Frédéric Monier, eds., *Corruption, Empire and Colonialism in the Modern Era* (Singapore: Palgrave MacMillan, 2021).

14 Ralph Emmett Avery, "The French Failure," in *America's Triumph at Panama* (Chicago, IL: L.W. Walter Company, 1913), 45-68.

15 John L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan*, vol 1 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1841).

House.¹⁶ President Grant also took a serious interest in a passageway through Central America. In fact, he ordered five surveys between 1870-1875 to find the best geographical site for a passageway to the Pacific from the Atlantic. From then on, most experts agreed that three sites would be the best terrain to build an infrastructure crossing through Central America. Those sites were: (1) Tehuantepec in Mexico, (2) Nicaragua at Lake Nicaragua, and (3) the Panama Isthmus. The United States, throughout the 1800s, believed that the Nicaraguan site was the best place for a canal. Thus, American interest and effort were directed toward building a canal in Nicaragua. Even Roosevelt believed Nicaragua was the best spot for a canal; after all, the Panamanian location was the site of French efforts to build a canal potentially; however, in 1903, Roosevelt changed his mind when an opportune moment arrived.¹⁷

Influencers

In the late 1800s, national/imperial economic interests fueled competition between the great European powers transforming liberal economic practices into aggressive foreign policies. The new foreign policies, economic interests, and technological progress in multiple areas, such as canal-building and lock, assisted expansionism and neo-colonization. Elsewhere, political stagnation, mismanagement, and war took a toll on the Ottoman Empire, incrementally unraveling it. Political instability led some areas of the empire to succumb to European influence. In the province of Egypt, former diplomat Ferdinand de Lesseps befriended the Egyptian Pasha and secured the rights to build a canal through the Suez Isthmus. By linking the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea, de Lesseps opened a direct trade line to India and Asia. In the mid to late 1800s, the French were famous for their engineering skills and technology. The Suez Canal was engineered as a sea-level canal due to the small changes in altitude between both sides. A lock system was not needed. From 1859 until its completion of the Suez Canal in 1869, de Lesseps led and managed the construction of one of the most significant engineering accomplishments since antiquity. The British viewed a French-controlled canal at Suez as threatening their trade monopoly in India and were generally still suspicious of French political and economic intentions. Thus, the British supported an overthrow of the Egyptian Pasha. Britain was prosperous and stayed in Egypt through both World Wars. IN 1956, the British left Egypt when President Gamal Abdel nationalized the canal.

16 McCullough, *The Path Between the Seas*, 29.

17 Theodore Roosevelt, ed., "How the United States Acquired the Right to Dig the Panama Canal," *The Outlook* 99, no. 6 (October 1911): 314-319.

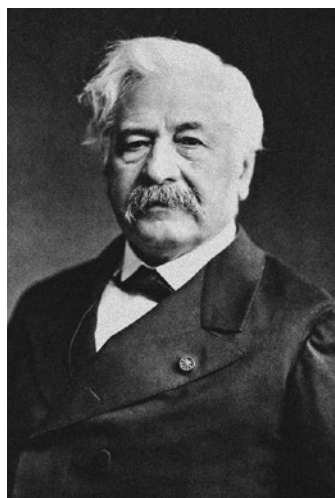


Figure 3. Stefano Bianchetti, Photograph of Ferdinand de Lesseps (1805-1894).¹⁸

After completing the Suez Canal, de Lesseps was welcomed back to Paris and honored by France and globally for his accomplishments. Additionally, De Lesseps was celebrated by the best science fiction writer of the day, Jules Verne; and was honored by Giuseppe Verdi, who wrote the famous opera *Aida* in honor of de Lesseps and the canal. In 1871, the new Cairo Opera House ran *Aida* for de Lesseps and guests. Coincidentally, Teddy Roosevelt and his family were in Paris while de Lesseps returned to be honored.¹⁹ This moment marked Roosevelt. He experienced great art, literature, and engineering at the height of the industrial revolution; he bore witness to construction technological advances while celebrating de Lesseps's accomplishment—all simultaneously! T. R.'s curiosity and the belief that all things could be accomplished with effort were reinforced. Like T. R., de Lesseps suffered from personal loss. De Lesseps lost his wife and child, and he, too, threw himself into his work, which led to the creation of the Suez Canal.

Ten years after his triumph of Suez, deLesseps, now one of the most famous people in the world, was asked to build the Panama Canal. He formed a committee, took advice, and began the work. Most of the advisors were insistent on a sea-level canal, the most common canal type at the time. However, most of his advisors had never been to Panama. The French government refused to fund or allocate any resources for the project; therefore, the Panama Canal had to be privately funded.

18 Photography of Dragon, Bridgeman Images. Accessed June 2022, <https://images-cdn.bridgemanimages.com/api/1.0/image/600wm.XEE.23371440.7055475/4414153.jpg>.

19 McCullough, *The Path Between the Seas*, 294.

The Mindset of the Times

As enlightened liberal ideas continued to evolve, they spread from politics to the natural sciences. Darwinism and later Social Darwinism affected many people's perceptions of the world. Enlightened ideas of science and discovery did not dismiss the belief in God, but it proposed that people could take fate into their own hands. This emerging worldview and continued scientific discoveries led people to believe that all things were possible through their actions. A new paradigm of conquering nature through science and progress led to the construction of the Trans-Continental Railroad, The Suez Canal and was encouraged by Jules Verne and his writings. This school of thought matched Roosevelt's beliefs: a "can do" attitude and hard work could accomplish anything. Roosevelt's political maturity coincided with a rise in the U. S.'s geopolitical status in sharp contrast to the falling "old-world" empires. This American era encompassed the height of innovative technological advances such as the automobile, the assembly line, the airplane, and the building of the Brooklyn Bridge. Theodore Roosevelt was at the helm of what came to be known as "The American Century." Before becoming president, Theodore Roosevelt frequented the upscale Cosmo Club in Manhattan. There, listening to Roosevelt in casual conversations with other patrons, Rudyard Kipling wrote, "I curled up on the seat opposite of Roosevelt and listened and wondered, until the universe seemed to be spinning around and Theodore was the spinner."²⁰ Teddy Roosevelt was a man of persuasive words, but more importantly, a man of action that motivated and affected all Americans of his time.

French Failure

The Panama project was becoming untenable for the French. The canal was privately funded through stocks and bonds with a predicted return tenfold on the initial investment;²¹ however, it was getting incrementally impossible to complete the French project over the years. French engineers were committed to a sea-level canal, but they were still unsure how to get through the high mountains of the Culebra Pass and how to decant the water from the tropical rains. Furthermore, the endeavor was costing more than expected, yet dividends were being dispersed to investors at the same time. This financial strategy meant more money was needed for the project. Reports of corruption circulated widely. De Lesseps managed the Panamanian construction site from Paris, which proved disastrous. For President Roosevelt, however, this became a point of interest. He understood this French failure as

20 McCullough, *The Path Between the Seas*, 253.

21 Ferdinand De Lesseps, *Recollections of Forty Years* vol 2, trans. C. B. Pitman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1887), 178.

a future opportunity for the U. S. As the French failure continued to unfold, De Lesseps looked for a way out. After ten years of work and 22,000 deaths due to tropical diseases, corruption, and graft, the French approached the U. S. to sell the canal zone's rights.²²



Figure 4. Everett Collection, Inc. Alamy, Canal Construction 1909.²³

The Opportunity to Build the Panama Canal

The construction of the Panama Canal became an American enterprise. The French approached the Roosevelt Administration and sold the canal zone's rights and all of its equipment on site for 40 million dollars.²⁴ The U. S. was committed to a Nicaraguan canal for over forty years. Under Roosevelt, the U.S. abandoned its congressionally approved Nicaragua Canal plan and struck a deal with the French. Initially, it went poorly for the U. S. The Congressional Canal Board, based in Washington, D.C., was remotely making decisions *a la* de Lesseps. The first lead engineer quit after one year. The second engineer hired was John Stevens. He was a distinguished engineer in the railroad industry and responsible for the plan used to construct the Panama

22 "Yellow Fever and Malaria in the Canal," PBS, October 2014. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/panama-fever/>.

23 Photographs. Accessed June 2022, <https://c8.alamy.com/comp/C13M5P/panamanian-laborers-at-work-with-shovels-during-panama-canal-construction-C13M5P.jpg>.

24 McCullough, *The Path Between the Seas*, 293.

Canal. However, he left after his second year. Roosevelt refused to replicate the French failure pattern on his watch. By executive order, T.R. shunted the overall responsibility of the Panama Canal to the new lead engineer and curtailed the involvement of the Washington, D.C.-based Isthmian Canal Board.²⁵ T.R. ordered L.T.C. Goethals, an army engineer, to lead the canal-building project. As a military man, it would be impossible for Goethals to quit while ensuring that all canal-building decisions were made on-site and not by bureaucrats in D.C. Goethals stayed on the project for the next seven years until the canal's completion.

Geography and Disease

The most limiting factor to success in Panama was diseases. Roosevelt knew the effects and destruction of malaria and yellow fever on canal workers. While commanding the Rough Riders in Cuba during the Spanish American War, Roosevelt, like other commanders, lost more soldiers to disease than they did in combat.²⁶ Fevers were a scientific enigma. Fevers were one of the ancient biblical mysteries that humans had not deciphered. Germ theory, the theory that microscopic organisms cause disease, was still in its infancy, and many scientists frankly did not believe that invisible to the eye organisms could live inside other small organisms and spread disease. In fact, that is precisely how malaria and yellow fever operates and spreads.²⁷ While Roosevelt was fighting in Cuba, a little-known frontier army physician, working under Walter Reed using findings from Dr. Ross of Europe and a Spanish-Cuban physician Dr. Finlay in Havana, was fighting his war to eradicate yellow fever in Havana, becoming the world expert on the topic. Dr. William Gorgas did the same in Panama. For some, Dr. Gorgas was responsible for completing the Panama Canal.

Nevertheless, Roosevelt had the courage and insight to support Gorgas's work at a crucial time in building the canal. Early in the American takeover of canal operations at Colon, Panama, a disease epidemic wrought havoc on the workers and townspeople. The chief engineer at the time was under pressure to "get the dirt flying" and was less concerned with health and preventive medicine measures that would improve his chances of success.²⁸ Gorgas demanded strict preventive medicine techniques and equipment such as

25 *Executive Orders Relating to the Isthmian Canal Commission: March, 1904, to June 12, 1911, Inclusive* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1911).

26 Emil C. Gotschlich, "Bullets and Bacilli: The Spanish-American War and Military Medicine," *The Journal of Clinical Investigation* 15, no. 1 (January 2005): 3-3, 10.1172/JCI24100.

27 Chris Jeffs, "Mosquitoes and the Panama Canal," *Insect Week (Royal Entomological Society)*, 2021, <https://www.insectweek.co.uk/news/mosquitoes-and-panama-canal>

28 McCullough, *The Path Between the Seas*, 408.

screen windows and doors. The chief engineer did not want to spend any effort or money on items such as window screens, paving roads, or removing and disinfecting all standing water. The chief engineer tried to fire and replace Gorgas with the help of the Canal Board based in Washington. In response, T. R. reorganized the Canal Board by executive order and threw his support completely behind Dr. Gorgas. Gorgas ordered the construction of elevated housing, removed stagnant water, and paved the roads in the U. S. canal zone and the adjacent Panamanian cities.²⁹

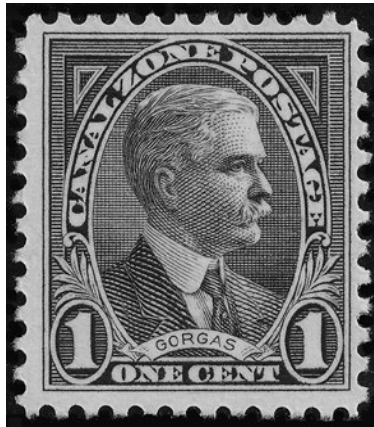


Figure 5. Gorgas Postage Stamp.³⁰

His efforts effectively brought yellow fever deaths to zero and minimized all other infectious diseases. T. R.'s first-hand experience of the ravages of diseases, his previous and continued interest in the natural sciences, and his leadership acumen, allowed for an open-mindedness in decision-making that was unusual for the times. T. R. made the right choice despite any pushback. Gorgas stayed in Panama until the canal's completion and became one of the most famous tropical medicine physicians in history. Because of his work in Tropical Diseases, the King of England knighted him. Gorgas retired as the Surgeon General of the U. S. Army. In the U. S. he was honored by appearing in a postal stamp.

29 "Panama Canal," CDC: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed April 30, 2022, https://www.cdc.gov/malaria/about/history/panama_canal.html.

30 U. S. Postal Service. Accessed June 2022, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/9/93/Canal_Zone_1c_Gorgas%2C_1928_Issue.jpg/400px-Canal_Zone_1c_Gorgas%2C_1928_Issue.jpg.



Figure 6. Roosevelt Family Portrait (1902-1904).³¹

Conclusion

Theodore Roosevelt seemed uniquely suited for every domestic and international event of his times. We see a man with the skill and experience to manage and lead against any challenge. He allowed others to do their job without micromanaging them as he demanded success. T. R. died in 1919 at the age of 60. His only visit to the Panama Canal was in 1906; he never saw it again. The outbreak of World War I overshadowed the opening of the canal. The dream of connecting the Pacific and the Atlantic to facilitate the circulation of goods, ideas, and people had a solemn reality. The ceremony occurred with less of a “fan fair” of excitement than one would expect for one of the most significant modern human accomplishments. The death of T. R.’s youngest son Kermit, a fighter pilot in WWI, rekindled the pain and hurt he had repressed with work since that infamous day in 1885 when his wife and mother died. It may appear as if all his accomplishments were mere placeholders to avoid the depression and despair of his private life, deep in sadness and hurt. He was complex, assertive, efficient, and single-minded on topics. His drive yielded a vision others followed and the type of leadership that inspired the nation. His profile resembles that of other historical figures who achieved enormous success with great personal defeats and losses.

31 Digital Horizons. Accessed June 2022, <http://www.digitalhorizonsonline.org/digital/api/singleitem/image/uw-ndshs/3284/default.jpg>.

If we return to the telegraph operator's question in Spielberg's film mentioned in the introduction, the question remains; is someone's position in history pre-destination or an act of will? Perhaps both are true in the case of T. R. He remained consistent in his personality, always looking forward and trying to use scientific knowledge for the progress of the U.S. He was able to move beyond personal setbacks and believe in the ability of the individual as part as a collective serving progress. Either with his personal defeats or as a leader in public office, he always had a vision for the right course of action to take, he chartered it, and perhaps, piloted the U.S. during its greatest expanse. Benjamin Franklin once said, "Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing."³² Teddy Roosevelt did both. T. R. was a man fitted for his times.

32 See introduction, Laura Ross, ed., *A Passion to Lead: Theodore Roosevelt in His Own Words: How One Extraordinary Man Led from the Front and Changed America Forever* (New York: Sterling Publishing, 2012), xi.