



DON'T LET A GOOD CRISIS GO TO WASTE: PRESIDENTS AND POLITICAL CHANGE

By **KENNETH D. DURR**

In the interim between election and inauguration, op-ed writers and fomenters of television froth will surely puzzle mightily over what is in store for this President's "100 Days." As the comparisons run dry, one will inevitably announce that the storied New Deal did not end the Great Depression anyway. Zoom out, segment over. In the rush to the commercial break, however, an important point will be neglected: Franklin Roosevelt made history just the same. But he did it by transforming the nation in ways only tangentially related to the economic emergency: he knew not to let a good crisis go to waste.

We Americans are not a politically innovative bunch. As nations lurch between left- and right-wing regimes and parliaments come and go with the calendar, we make do with two stable parties that differ more over means than ends—then we usually hedge our bets against



Courtesy of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum

President Lyndon Baines Johnson signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

change by choosing legislators from one and Presidents from another. This national commitment to the "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" homily can be a blessing, but it also keeps us clinging too long to obsolete institutions and assumptions. In American history it has taken crisis to make fundamental change possible, and only a few first-term Presidents—backed by a friendly Congress—have made it happen.

nor compared to the biggest opportunity that came Lincoln's way—the chance to end slavery.

The architect of the original "100 Days" tried hard to right the economy, restructuring it wholesale with the ill-fated National Industrial Recovery Act. But to the "Second New Deal," economics was mostly window dressing: the Works Progress Administration lifted

(Continued on page 3)

LINCOLN MEMORIALS—PLACES IN TIME

By **BRIAN W. MARTIN**

As we inaugurate a second President from Illinois and celebrate the bicentennial of the first, talk of Abraham Lincoln is in the air.¹ But Lincoln can also be found on the ground. When Barack Obama kicked off his campaign, he did so in Lincoln's shadow at the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Illinois. It is

just one of many places—monuments, memorials, and historic sites—where people go to connect with the historical significance of our 16th President. For historians, these places not only tell us something about Lincoln but also about the perspective of those who erected the monuments as well as those who have interpreted the sites over time.

Take, for example, Lincoln's tomb, which lies just a few miles away from the Old State Capitol. Here a statue of the Great Emancipator greets visitors. Lincoln stands above the entrance with his left hand grasping and extending a scroll that symbolizes his famous proclamation. Dedicated in 1874, even as

(Continued on page 2)



OUR FAVORITE BOOKS ON U.S. PRESIDENTS

Jason Gart: *The Warrior and the Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt*, by John Milton Cooper, Jr. (1984)

A fast-paced and delightful book on the Progressive Era, this dual biography examines the interrelated lives of Wilson and Roosevelt. In alternating chapters, Cooper contrasts the political and personal lives of the 26th and 28th Presidents.

Mike Reiss: *In the Days of McKinley*, by Margaret Leech (1959)

An enduring portrait not just of “Bill” McKinley—Antietam veteran, front porch candidate, and somewhat-smarter-than-generally-given-credit-for President—but also of First Lady Ida, battling epilepsy even as she served as a key adviser.

Jamie Rife: *Theodore Rex*, by Edmund Morris (2001)

This second volume of an anticipated three-volume Theodore Roosevelt biography is often considered the most definitive work on his presidency. Morris successfully captures Roosevelt’s youthful energy and personality, as well as the domestic and foreign problems he tackled.

Carol Schulman: *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Homefront in WW II*, by Doris Kearns Goodwin (1995)

A Pulitzer Prize winner for History, this well-researched and -written book includes a fascinating cast of characters, including Franklin D. Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Stalin.

LINCOLN MEMORIALS

(Continued from page 1)

Reconstruction was giving way to Jim Crow, this monument reflects the commitment Lincoln’s Republican successors made to the idea of freedom enunciated in the emancipation proclamation.

By the time the Lincoln centennial celebration brought forth renewed interest in the fallen leader, the freedom of African-Americans generations removed from slavery was no longer a pressing concern for a segregated society. Rather, to those who erected a centennial memorial at Lincoln’s birthplace in the border state of Kentucky, he became a symbol of unity for a once-divided nation. The classical memorial building enshrines a rustic replica log cabin evoking Lincoln’s common origins. The dedication inscription, “Here over the log cabin where Abraham Lincoln was born, destined to preserve the



Courtesy of the National Park Service

The symbolic, early nineteenth-century Kentucky cabin enshrined in the Lincoln Birthplace Memorial Building.

Union and free the slave, a grateful people have dedicated this memorial to unity, peace, and brotherhood among the states,” expresses their allegiance to a restored union.

Next month, the National Park Service will rededicate another site with famous ties to Lincoln. The Wills House in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where Lincoln refined the speech that came to define America, reopens with a new exhibit that tells the story of the community, the battle and its aftermath, Lincoln’s visit, and his Gettysburg Address. Visitors will come away with a deeper sense of the man, his address, and the people who first heard it. But they may also learn something about those who developed the exhibit and the times they live in. History Associates scripted the Wills House exhibit and selected the photographs. If you go, we would be curious to know what you learned about us.



Courtesy of the Adams County Historical Society

The soon-to-open Wills House Museum is just the latest of many attractions that have occupied the building. Here, the Lincoln Room Museum occupies the second floor in the 1950s.

¹ Although neither Lincoln nor Obama were born in Illinois, they are the only two Presidents who resided in Illinois at the time of their election.



POLITICAL CHANGE

(Continued from page 1)

some burdens of the Great Depression, but other measures hardly addressed it at all.¹ The National Labor Relations Act was ostensibly to raise purchasing power, but Americans knew only that the President had ended decades of conflict between labor and capital. The Social Security Act did nothing for the unemployed of the 1930s, but it did end a long national argument about whether the government owed it to its citizens to stretch out a safety net.²

Lyndon Johnson took office due to an assassin's bullet, but he hardly made the safety of the executive a priority. Instead, he used the outpouring of public support to pass legislation hopelessly stuck in Congress while Kennedy was alive. In signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Johnson crawled through a window of opportunity opened by Kennedy's death and slammed shut by urban riots and "black power."³

So should you be drawn into the swelling crescendo of speculation about "Obama's 100 Days," consider those comfortable crises that we Americans have lived with for so long and don't be afraid to think big.⁴ The incoming administration appears likely to, for as chief of staff Rahm Emmanuel is fond of saying, "You don't ever want a crisis to go to waste, it's an opportunity to do important things you would otherwise avoid."⁵

¹ The "First New Deal," with the National Industrial Recovery Act as the centerpiece, was based on the idea that government should promote cooperation between different economic sectors and between capital and labor. When that effort failed, Roosevelt changed course. The "Second New Deal" was premised on making government strong enough to act as a countervailing power, protecting people from the worst excesses of an unrestrained free market.

² The first Social Security check was not mailed out until early 1940. It was for \$41.30.

³ On the precipitous drop in white support for civil rights legislation in 1965 and 1966, see, for example, Earl Black, *Politics and Society in the South* (Cambridge, 1987), 128.

⁴ Such long-term problems might include the energy crisis, which first appeared in the 1970s, or the call for national health insurance, first heard in the 1940s.

⁵ *New York Times*, November 16, 2008.

STAFF HIGHLIGHTS: ANU KASARABADA

Archivist Anu Kasarabada has worked on several important projects at History Associates, including processing archival materials at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and cataloging rare books for Petersburg National Battlefield. This summer she had the opportunity to learn more about the early life and times of George Washington. Working for the George Washington Birthplace National Monument, Anu was part of a team responsible for rehousing, arranging, and describing a collection of National Park Service photographs relating to the historic site. According to Anu, "All of us on the project saw George Washington in an entirely new light—not as commander in chief of the Continental army and the first President of the United States, but as a young boy."



HAI AROUND THE WORLD

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY:

continued to provide archival services to the Office of History under the fourth option of our contract.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE:

began work under the first option of our contract by cataloging 125,000 negatives from the Harpers Ferry Center historical photographs collection.

POINTE DU HOC MEMORIAL, NORMANDY, FRANCE:

began work on an outdoor walking tour at the site of the famous U.S. Army Ranger assault during the D-day landings.

NATIONAL CENTER FOR COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE:

developing filing procedures and providing records management training for administrative officers.

LABORATORY OF MOLECULAR BIOLOGY, NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE, NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH:

conducted a series of oral history interviews with prominent researchers and scientists associated with the laboratory.

CALIFORNIA RURAL INDIAN HEALTH BOARD:

began research and interviews at CRIHB headquarters in Sacramento, California, for a new history project celebrating the organization's 40th anniversary.

LITIGATION RESEARCH DIVISION:

continued to research and analyze documents in federal, state, and local records repositories in Alabama, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nevada, New York, and West Virginia.



One of the oldest and largest historical services firms in the United States. Now in its 28th year, HAI provides:

Historical research and writing

- historical studies and illustrated commemoratives
- oral histories
- museum services
- web-based histories and exhibits

Archival and records management services

- databases and digital archives exhibits
- inventories and disposition schedules
- appraisal, selection, and processing for archival programs
- archival storage

Historical research for litigation

- document collection
- site and subject studies
- expert testimony

International historical and archival services

- preservation and utilization of historical assets worldwide
- multimedia documentary projects
- expertise in multilingual historical research

HAI serves business and industry, government agencies, the professions, and non-profit associations.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Can you name the U.S. President associated with each of these famous pets?

A. This Scottish Terrier, Fala, was so popular that the White House appointed a secretary to answer his numerous letters. In 1942, a movie was made about his life. When he died, he was buried in the Rose Garden.



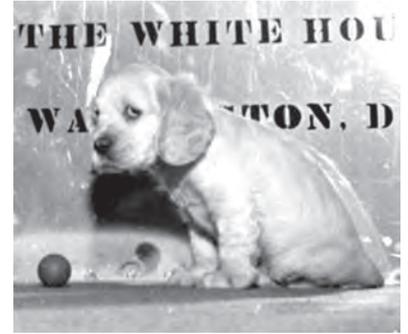
Courtesy of the National Archives

B. A fixture at cabinet meetings, Laddie Boy, an Airdale Terrier, received dog biscuit cakes on his birthday. A sculpture of Laddie Boy, produced from melted pennies, was later donated to the Smithsonian Institution.



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

C. An unsolicited Christmas gift, Feller, a blond Cocker Spaniel, lived for years at Camp David after his stint at the White House. He later died of old age after living on a farm in Ohio.



Courtesy of the National Archives

E-mail your answers to Jason Gart: jgart@history-associates.com. Correct responses will be entered into a drawing for a \$50 amazon.com gift card!

Congratulations to Mr. Virgil Chambers of the National Safe Boating Council, winner of the last Test Your Knowledge quiz. He correctly answered that George S. Patton participated in the 1912 Summer Olympics.

HISTORY ASSOCIATES INC.
300 N. STONESTREET AVE.
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850
T 301.279.9697
F 301.279.9224
WWW.HISTORYASSOCIATES.COM

THE BEST COMPANY IN HISTORY®
History Associates INC.

