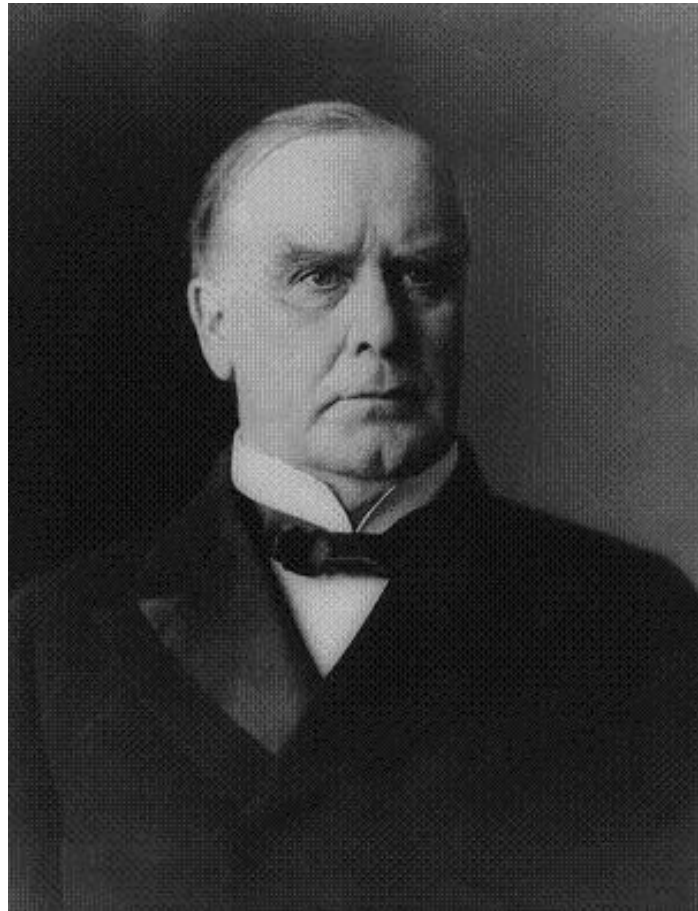


William McKinley

Cross of Gold

Twenty-Fifth, 1897-1901



Nicknames: "The Idol of Ohio", "The Napoleon of Protection", "The Stocking-Footed Orator", "The Liberator of Cuba", "Wobbly Willie"

Birth: January 29th, 1843, Niles, Ohio

Death: September 14th, 1901, Buffalo, New York

Significant Events During McKinley's Term: Spanish-American War ... Casey Jones ... Carry Nation ... Galveston Hurricane ... McKinley Assassinated ... Number of States remains at forty-five

Quotes: *"McKinley has no more backbone than a chocolate eclair."*

-- Theodore Roosevelt (#26), McKinley's Vice President

"Isolation is no longer possible or desirable." -- William McKinley

"My wife – be careful, Cortelyou, how you tell her."

-- William McKinley to his (male) secretary, on being shot

"Don't let them hurt him!"

-- William McKinley, speaking of assassin Leon Czolgosz, after being shot by him

"There have been people who suggest my ideas would take us back to the days of McKinley. Well, what's wrong with that? Under McKinley, we freed Cuba." -- Ronald Reagan (#40), 1976

"We earnestly condemn the policy of the present National Administration in the Philippines. It seeks to extinguish the spirit of 1776 in those islands. We deplore the sacrifice of our soldiers and sailors, whose bravery deserves admiration even in an unjust war. We denounce the slaughter of the Filipinos as a needless horror. We protest against this extension of American sovereignty by Spanish methods."

-- American Anti-Imperialist League, 1899 (among its members were Mark Twain and Andrew Carnegie)

"We have pacified some thousands of the islanders and buried them; destroyed their fields; burned their villages, and turned their widows and orphans out-of-doors; furnished heartbreak by exile to some dozens of disagreeable patriots; subjugated the remaining ten millions by Benevolent Assimilation, which is the pious new name of the musket; we have acquired property in the three hundred concubines and other slaves of our business partner, the Sultan of Sulu, and hoisted our protecting flag over that swag...And so, by these Providences of God – and the phrase is the government's, not mine – we are a World Power." -- Mark Twain, practically scorching a hole in the page with his "pen warmed up in hell" while denouncing the aggressions carried out against the Philippines by the U.S.

"This struggle on the islands has been naught but a gigantic scheme of robbery and oppression."

-- William Fulbright, a U.S. Infantryman who saw "action" in the Philippines

How his term ended: Assassinated

Other Professions: Teacher, Postal Worker, Soldier, Lawyer

Worst Mistake: McKinley's imperialistic takeover of the Philippines was wrong in and of itself, and set a bad precedent to boot. Ostensibly, the Spanish War was fought partly to liberate the Philippines from domination by Spain, but after assisting the Filipinos to attain their independence, McKinley decided to subjugate them himself.

Saving Graces: McKinley was a good son and husband: He had a sort of "hot line" installed between his ailing mother's home and the White House, so that he could rush to her side when and if necessary (which he did shortly before her death).

Also, McKinley's wife became an invalid and an epileptic after she and William's children had died. He always treated her with tender care, doting on her to such an extent that other politicians complained that he was making them look bad by way of comparison.

McKinley, as noted in the quote above, was not vindictive toward his assassin, but rather spoke for leniency in dealing with him.

Notes: Every Republican President elected (recall that Andrew Johnson was not elected) from the time of Lincoln's assassination up to the Turn of the Century had been a Union Officer in the Civil War and had been born in Ohio (Grant, Hayes, Garfield, Harrison, and finally McKinley).

McKinley had been in the same Civil War regiment as fellow future President Rutherford B. Hayes (#19).

McKinley's grandfather fought under William Henry Harrison (#9) in the War of 1812.

In pursuing his imperialistic designs against the Philippines, McKinley gave the lie to the Monroe doctrine, which says, in part: "With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power we have not interfered, and shall not interfere." The argument could be made that helping them get free from Spanish domination was a noble gesture, but following up the ousting of Spain by colonizing the archipelago himself was a turnabout of very unfair play, to say the least.

From 1865 to 1901, being President was a very dangerous job: Three were assassinated: first, Lincoln (#16) in 1865, then Garfield (#20) in 1881, and finally McKinley in 1901. As there were nine Presidents in that span of time, holders of that office stood a one in three chance of being murdered for their trouble.

Both McKinley's children died in infancy; thus, he has no descendants.