

This Day in History... January 30, 1882

Birth of President Franklin Roosevelt

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was born on January 30, 1882, in Hyde Park, New York. As president during two of the most serious events of the twentieth century – the Great Depression and World War II – FDR implemented sweeping reforms and negotiated powerful coalitions with world leaders that led to an Allied victory.

Roosevelt was the only child of James Roosevelt and his second wife, Sara Delano, who came from two of New York's oldest, wealthiest, and most prominent families. This allowed Roosevelt a privileged upbringing. His childhood in the Hudson Valley fostered a lifelong love of farming, forestry, and rural life. These interests would later influence Roosevelt's New Deal policies.



Stamp issued on FDR's 100th birthday at his birthplace in Hyde Park, NY.



FDR contracted polio in 1921 and was paralyzed from the waist down. He helped found the organization that later became the March of Dimes.

As a child, Roosevelt enjoyed sailing and model shipbuilding. He was also a dedicated stamp collector, a hobby he began at the age of eight. In his lifetime, FDR amassed a collection of over 1,200,000 stamps. Roosevelt credited the hobby with helping him learn geography, partial recovery from polio, and managing the stress of being commander in chief. Even as war raged, he managed to spend some time with his collection every day.

Roosevelt graduated from Harvard in 1903 but dropped out of Columbia Law School in 1907 after passing the New York State Bar exam. Roosevelt's legal career was cut short by his foray into politics, beginning with his election to the New York State Senate in 1910. His attacks on the Tammany machine earned Roosevelt national recognition, leading to his reelection in 1912. During that election cycle, he also supported Woodrow Wilson's bid for the presidency. In return, Wilson appointed Roosevelt to serve as assistant secretary of the Navy during his administration, a position he held for over seven years. In that position, Roosevelt worked to expand the Navy, established the US Navy Reserve, and won approval to lease arms during World War I, which set a precedent for his policy during the next big war. After being defeated in a 1920 bid for the vice presidency, Roosevelt returned to New York to practice law.

Roosevelt was elected governor of New York in 1928. However, the stock market crash the following year and the Great Depression that followed consumed most of his term in office, and FDR became a strong advocate of government intervention to deal with the crisis. With a nation in the grips of the Great Depression, which many blamed on incumbent President Herbert Hoover, Roosevelt's contagious optimism and promise of a "new deal" helped sweep him into the White House in the election of 1932.

On FDR's inauguration day, 25% of the work force was unemployed, farm prices and industrial production had dropped by more than half, and two million people were homeless. The nation was in the midst of a bank panic, fueled largely by speculation, which led FDR to proclaim, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." Roosevelt moved quickly, implementing several drastic policies in his first hundred days in office. Under his leadership, Congress passed a series of landmark bills that expanded the role of the federal government and placed it in both the economy and people's lives. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) was created to give Americans confidence in banks. Work programs were established based on Roosevelt's belief that employment was better than pure government relief. FDR began a series of



Prominent Americans stamp issued a day before Roosevelt's 84th birthday.

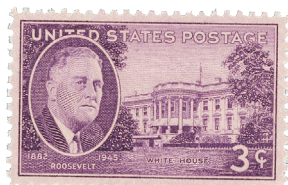


Roosevelt married Eleanor, his distant cousin (and niece of Theodore Roosevelt) in 1905.



"The Stamp Collecting President," FDR personally approved the designs of more than 200 stamps and often provided his own sketches for their designs.

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Roosevelt came to power the same year as Adolf Hitler, and opposed him from the start. But many Americans, weary from the Depression and mindful of the atrocities of World War I, favored isolationism. Roosevelt worked behind the scenes to build up the nation's defenses, provide arms to Allies through the Lend-Lease program, and prepare for the war he felt was inevitable. The United States, he argued, should be the world's "great arsenal of democracy" without involving itself in the war in Europe.

In 1939, Roosevelt hosted England's King George VI and Queen Elizabeth – the first sitting British monarchs to visit the United States. The trip was staged to raise sympathy for Great Britain, which stood virtually alone against Hitler after Germany overran Poland, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The mounting threat of world war convinced FDR to run for an unprecedented third term in office. Roosevelt campaigned on his leadership and his promise to keep the US out of war. FDR was reelected, but Congress also established the nation's first peacetime draft.

In July 1941, Roosevelt stopped the sale of oil to Japan in response to that nation's occupation of Indo-China, reducing its oil supply by 95%. The December 7, 1941, attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor catapulted the US into World War II. Public opinion quickly reversed, rejecting isolationism in favor of war with Japan. Roosevelt asked Congress for a declaration of war and was granted it. In turn, Germany declared war on the US.

In 1943, Roosevelt met with other leaders to plan for a post-war world monitored by an organization that would be called the United Nations. However, fighting raged on until 1945. Stress and ill health began taking its toll on FDR, who suffered from high blood pressure and atherosclerosis. Coronary artery disease also caused angina and congestive heart failure. Roosevelt was ordered to rest, but ran for a fourth term in office to see the war to its end. In February 1945, he attended the Yalta Conference, where Winston Churchill's doctor referred to Roosevelt as a dying man. Upon his return to the US, FDR shocked many by appearing in front of Congress looking thin and frail. Roosevelt went to his resort in Warm Springs in March to rest ahead of the upcoming United Nations conference. On March 29, he suffered a massive stroke and passed away on April 12, 1945.

One of FDR's first goals after taking office was pushing for the passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act.



In the presidential election of 1932, Democratic nominee Franklin D. Roosevelt promised a "new deal" for the "forgotten man."



Stamp personally approved by FDR to capture the significance of his Four Freedoms.

Harry S. Truman, who had been vice president for less than 90 days, was sworn in as president and saw America to the end of the war. US service personnel returned to a grateful nation, a thriving economy, and a government whose role had swollen dramatically due to FDR's slate of social and economic policies. Today, Roosevelt is consistently ranked as one of the greatest presidents in US history, usually with only Lincoln and Washington placed in higher esteem.

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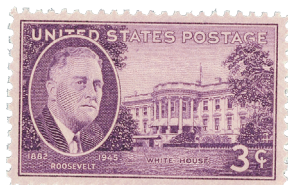
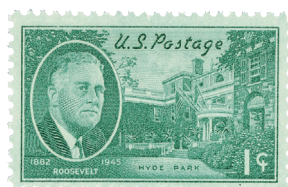


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