

The History of the Twentieth Century

Episode 43

“Carry a Big Stick”

Transcript

[music: fanfare]

1906 had been a busy year on the domestic front for Theodore Roosevelt. But the President had plenty else on his plate that year. Foreign crises, military crises, and a natural disaster.

In September 1905, the fledging Republic of Cuba had held an election. When the incumbent president, Tomás Estrada Palma, and his Moderate Party, defeated the Liberal Party, the Liberals cried foul, and by August 1906, were in armed revolt against Estrada Palma. By September, the Liberal rebels controlled most of the country, and Estrada Palma was appealing to the US government to intervene militarily in support of his government.

An irritated Theodore Roosevelt remarked, “All that we wanted from them was that they would behave themselves and be prosperous and happy so that we would not have to interfere.”

Welcome to the History of the Twentieth Century.

[music: opening theme]

Episode 43. Carry a Big Stick.

US military intervention in Central America was becoming routine. Responding to instability in the Dominican Republic, US marines had landed in 1903 and 1904. The introduction of the banana into the United States in the late nineteenth century led to a booming demand, and the American corporations United Fruit and Standard Fruit had substantial investment in Central America, particularly in the nation of Honduras, where dependence on the banana trade became a source of government instability and provoked foreign intervention. In 1904, the American writer William Sydney Porter, who wrote under the pen name “O. Henry,” would coin the term “banana republic” to describe a fictional Central American nation modeled on Honduras.

And then there was Cuba. As you may recall from episode 21, the United States had imposed upon Cuba a treaty provision that gave the US permission to intervene militarily in Cuba, if Cuba proved unable to maintain an adequate government. The embattled Cuban president was now asking the United States to invoke that provision to keep him in power.

But Roosevelt smelled a rat, and wasn't convinced that sending troops was desirable, or that Estrada Palma was the victim. He chose instead to send his Secretary of War, William Howard Taft, and an assistant Secretary of State to Havana in an effort to broker an agreement between the Liberals and the Moderates.

Before leaving the country, Secretary Taft consulted with the Judge Advocate General of the War Department on the question of whether the Administration had the authority to order US troops into Cuba on his own, or if such a move would require Congressional authorization. The Judge Advocate General said he thought Roosevelt had the authority to move on his own, but Taft wasn't satisfied. He suggested to Roosevelt that the President request an opinion from the Attorney General. Roosevelt refused. "I should not dream of asking the permission of Congress," said Roosevelt. "It is for the enormous interest of this Government to strengthen and give independence to the Executive in dealing with foreign powers...the important thing is to...establish precedents which [my] successors may follow." And follow them they most certainly did, but let's save that story for a future episode.

Taft went to Cuba and met with representatives of both sides. He concluded that there were good reasons to believe the 1905 election was fraudulent, and proposed a solution: that the rebels lay down their arms while a temporary government was established, followed by new and fairer elections. The Liberals agreed to this at once, but Estrada Palma would not cooperate. After further negotiations, it was agreed that the US would take temporary control of the government, including landing American troops to keep the peace. US marines soon landed, under the command of an old friend of this podcast, Colonel Littleton Waller.

Taft himself would become Governor General of Cuba briefly, soon turning that seat over to Charles Edward Magoon, a War Department official who had already served as governor of the Panama Canal Zone. Magoon's administration of Cuba would continue until 1909, when the Cuban Liberals would win a new election and take power.

On a side note, I can recall being told in my youth that Charles Edward Magoon was the inspiration for the cartoon character, Mr. Magoo. I can't remember anymore where I heard this. It was back in the days when Mr. Magoo was a much bigger cartoon character than he is today. But I checked with my good friend the Internet, and the Internet doesn't seem to know anything about this, not even as a myth to be debunked. Since the Internet is usually all over stuff like this, I guess it's not even a widespread myth, but I'm pretty sure it is a myth, because I can't find any evidence that the real life Charles Edward Magoon either a) had a vision impairment or b) was a complete idiot. So there it is.

And speaking of Taft, now that the prospect of the Presidency was dangling in front of him, his longtime dream of sitting on the Supreme Court was now less appealing. Roosevelt offered him a seat on the Supreme Court again in 1906, and again he turned it down. But there was also the position of Chief Justice of the United States, the head of the Supreme Court and the highest jurist in the land. That position might be worth passing up the presidency for.

In 1906, the Chief Justice of the United States was the 73-year old Melville Fuller, who had been chief justice since 1888. It seemed likely, to Taft and to many other observers at the time that Fuller's tenure on the Court would soon come to a close. There are reports of Taft inquiring after Fuller's health and speculating, sometimes tactlessly, about the odds of Fuller outlasting Roosevelt's presidency. As it turned out, Fuller would indeed remain Chief Justice long enough to see Roosevelt depart the White House and would swear in his successor, William Howard Taft.

And before we leave Cuba, I need to correct an oversight. Back in episode 21, I covered Cuba's independence, but I neglected to play the Cuban national anthem. So let me fix that right now. The Cuban national anthem is "El Himno de Bayamo," "The Bayamo Anthem," and it was composed in 1867, during an uprising against the Spanish. The composer, Perucho Figueredo, was himself captured by the Spanish and executed by firing squad two years later. It is said that just before the squad fired, Figueredo cried out, "to die for the homeland is to live," which is a line from his song.

When Cuba became independent in 1902, "The Bayamo Anthem" was designated as the national anthem of Cuba, and it has remained so ever since.

[music: "The Bayamo Anthem"]

At 5:12 AM on the morning of April 18, 1906, a powerful earthquake struck the city of San Francisco, with an estimated magnitude of 7.8, although that's just an estimate, since earthquake monitoring is something still decades in the future.

At the time the earthquake struck, San Francisco was the largest city on the west coast of North America. It styled itself "the gateway to the Pacific," as it was America's largest and busiest Pacific port. The quake changed everything. The death and damage caused by the forty seconds of violent tremors was bad enough, but afterward there were the fires. Gas mains had broken all over the city, and the fires burned for days, destroying tens of thousands of buildings and leaving hundreds of thousands of San Franciscans homeless. Efforts to fight the fires were hampered by earthquake damage. And it didn't help that the city's fire chief had died from injuries sustained during the quake.

Most insurance policies of the time covered fire damage but not quake damage, and it appears some property owners may also have deliberately set fire to their quake-damaged buildings for insurance reasons.

The number of deaths reported at the time was 375, although this figure is clearly too low. Many deaths of ethnic Chinese and Japanese living in the city appear to have gone uncounted, and there was probably a desire among city leaders to minimize the impact of the earthquake. Modern sources estimate the death toll at over 3,000, making the San Francisco earthquake the second deadliest natural disaster in US history, exceeded only by the Galveston hurricane of 1900. The San Francisco earthquake may have been the worst natural disaster in terms of property damage, with the losses estimated at \$400,000,000 dollars, equivalent to something around ten billion dollars in today's money.

Among those in San Francisco at the time of the earthquake was operatic tenor Enrico Caruso, who was in town for a series of performances with the Metropolitan Opera Company. The quake woke him in his hotel room that morning, and although he was not injured, he fled the city at once, taking with him his most prized possession, an autographed picture of Theodore Roosevelt, and vowing never to return to San Francisco ever again. And he never did.

The city was eventually rebuilt, but the quake had long-term consequences. It was probably a factor in the city of Los Angeles overtaking San Francisco in population and trade. Some historians point to the quake as a factor contributing to the economic downturn the US experienced in 1907. And some blame the quake for a rise in hostility against Asian Americans.

Chinese people began immigrating to the United States, mostly to California, at the time of the gold rush. San Francisco in particular had, and still has, a large Chinese-American community. By the 1870s, there was a great deal of hostility toward Asians among white Californians. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, which basically barred Chinese immigrants from American soil, and barred Chinese already resident in the US from becoming citizens. The Act was renewed in 1892 and made permanent in 1902. Under this law, not only were Chinese singled out as the only racial or ethnic group entirely prohibited from entering the United States, but even Chinese already legally resident in the US, even citizens, found it difficult to leave the US temporarily, say to visit relatives in China, because they ran a risk of not being permitted to re-enter the United States upon their return.

San Francisco City Hall was destroyed in the 1906 earthquake, and many records lost. After the quake, many Chinese residents of San Francisco stepped up and claimed US citizenship based on birth or familial relationships that could no longer be verified, since the records were gone. No one knows how many Chinese residents in San Francisco managed to finagle US citizenship because of the earthquake.

There were also lots of Japanese immigrants coming into California at this time, and because of the rising power of Japan, the US government strove to maintain cordial relations with that country, and so no comparable exclusions had been enacted against the Japanese. San Francisco thus was also developing a Japanese, and a Japanese-American, community.

Perhaps the earthquake and the fires and the struggles San Francisco had in the aftermath had something to do with increased hostility toward the Japanese community. The San Francisco Board of Education already had segregated schools for the ethnic Chinese students, and in October 1906, the Board decided that its 93 ethnic Japanese students should be moved from the white schools to the Chinese school, as the Board put it, “to save white children being affected by association with pupils of the Mongolian race.”

Newspapers in Japan quickly picked up on this story, condemning the move as an insult to their country. The Japanese, as we have already seen, are very keen on being accepted as one of the Great Powers, on an equal footing with the major powers of Europe and with the United States. The Japanese government, therefore, stridently opposed any form of racial discrimination against ethnic Japanese. The Roosevelt administration, which wanted friendly relations with Japan—recall that Theodore Roosevelt has only recently negotiated a peace treaty between Japan and Russia—was forced to intervene.

Unfortunately, the Federal government’s legal position was complicated. Segregated public schools were legal and constitutional under the Supreme Court’s 1896 decision, *Plessy v. Ferguson*. On the other hand, the United States and Japan had signed a most favored nation treaty in 1894. One of the provisions of that treaty was that citizens of each nation should have full legal rights in the other nation. That would imply that at least the children of Japanese citizens living in San Francisco had the right to be treated the same as white children. In his 1906 state of the union message, Theodore Roosevelt wrote,

“We have as much to learn from Japan as Japan has to learn from us; and no nation is fit to teach unless it is also willing to learn. Throughout Japan Americans are well treated, and any failure on the part of Americans at home to treat the Japanese with a like courtesy and consideration is by just so much a confession of inferiority in our civilization.”

After delicate negotiations, a careful compromise was reached. Since white Californians were primarily concerned about Japanese immigration, the Board of Education agreed to admit Japanese students into the regular schools, in return for an informal commitment from Japan no longer to permit the emigration of unskilled Japanese laborers to the United States, an arrangement that history knows as the Gentleman’s Agreement.

Local racial tensions in Brownsville, Texas also boiled over that year, into another incident that would demand Theodore Roosevelt’s personal attention. The 25th infantry regiment of the United States Army was an African-American unit that had fought in Cuba during the Spanish-

American War, and later was transferred to the Philippines, where they had fought against the guerillas there until 1902. More recently, the unit had been stationed in Nebraska, but in 1906, it was transferred to Fort Brown, outside Brownsville, Texas. That is to say, from a place where there were no official restrictions on African-Americans to a place where there were many legal limits on the rights and privileges of African-Americans.

The decision to move the unit to Brownsville was unpopular with white Americans there even before the first soldiers arrived. The unit's officers instructed the soldiers to observe the laws, but, as we have seen, there were both official and unofficial limits on African-Americans in the South.

Racial friction began as soon as the first battalion arrived at Fort Brown. African-American soldiers reported being struck, being forced off the sidewalk, being denied entrance to local businesses. There was allegedly a fight between a soldier and a local man that ended with the local man shot dead, and a white mob chased a number of African-American soldiers out of the town. When a rumor of a local white woman being attacked by a black soldier began to circulate—always a touchy subject, as we have seen—the white officers at Fort Brown ordered a curfew. On August 13, 1906, an incident at a bar in the town left a white bartender shot dead and the town's chief of police seriously wounded. Residents blamed this attack on African-American soldiers from the fort, in spite of the officers at Fort Brown reporting that all the soldiers were at the fort and accounted for at the time of the shootings.

After that incident, the unit was moved to Fort Reno, in the Indian Territory, and the Army investigated. Normally, the administration's point man on a matter like this would have been the Secretary of War, but William Howard Taft was away, dealing with the situation in Cuba.

The Army conducted an investigation that largely accepted the word of the citizens of Brownsville. On October 18, the Army Inspector General appeared before the battalion at the parade ground at Fort Reno, and read them an ultimatum from President Roosevelt: either the guilty soldiers come forward and admit their guilt, or the Army would give dishonorable discharges to every soldier in the battalion.

No one came forward. The soldiers claimed that no member of the unit had been involved. And so, Roosevelt ordered the discharge of all 167 soldiers of the battalion in question, even as he acknowledged that many of them were in fact innocent and had no information about the incident in Brownsville. Still, the discharges would deprive all 167 soldiers of pension and retirement benefits. It would also amount to a lifetime ban on employment with the US Federal government, a serious impediment in an era when the Federal government was one of the few places African-Americans could go to find a reasonably good job.

News of the President's decision was held back until after the 1906 mid-term elections, in which, by the way, the Republicans did pretty well. They lost a few seats in the House of Representatives, but gained a few in the Senate, and maintained control of both houses.

After the mid-term elections, the President and Mrs. Roosevelt embarked on a visit to the Panama Canal Zone, aboard the recently commissioned American battleship *USS Louisiana*, to inspect the mammoth construction project. This would be the first time in US history that a sitting American President would leave US territory while still in office, and believe it or not, this caused a small uproar. Some Americans questioned whether it was legal or constitutional—or wise—for a sitting President to leave the country. But there were no legal obstacles, and the White House Press Office assured the public that, thanks to modern communications, the President could keep abreast of the nation's business, even from Panama.

The engineering of the Panama Canal was much more complicated than the Suez Canal had been. The Suez Canal is a sea-level canal, essentially a long ditch across the isthmus. Panama, in contrast, had a mountainous interior, and it had been decided that a sea-level canal just wasn't feasible. So the design here was to build a large man-made lake in the middle of the isthmus, with canals connecting it to the Atlantic on one side and the Pacific on the other, with a system of locks to raise ships entering from one side gradually to the level of the lake, and then gradually lowering them to sea level again on the other side. Roosevelt displayed his usual enthusiasm, insisting on riding in one of those newfangled steam shovels, watching the drilling machines and the dynamite blasting, and peppering the workers with questions. He had meetings with the workers, listened to their complaints, even had dinner in the workers' mess hall, to gauge what kind of food they were being served. It was pure Roosevelt.

But while Roosevelt was on his tour, another, the news of his mass discharge of the soldiers in the Brownsville Affair had come out, and with Roosevelt out of the country, the man on the hot seat was his Secretary of War, William Howard Taft. Taft, remember, had been in Cuba when Roosevelt had dealt with the case. He had had doubts about the wisdom of the President's decision, and felt that if he had been in Washington at the time, he might have been able to convince Roosevelt to go easier on the soldiers. Now he was taking the heat for it.

Letters and telegrams poured into the White House, protesting the decision. Ohio Senator Joseph Foraker—who keeps popping up in these podcasts, doesn't he?—introduced a Senate resolution calling for a congressional investigation. Roosevelt's former dinner guest, Booker T. Washington, called for reconsideration of the case.

Most African-Americans were staunch Republicans at this time, because, you know, the whole Abraham Lincoln, Civil War, freeing the slaves thing, and Roosevelt personally had won a lot of respect and affection among African-Americans because of that dinner with Booker T. Washington, and a good record of hiring African-Americans in his administration. But now, his support was melting away.

In light of the public reaction, Taft stayed the President's order on the Brownsville Affair until Roosevelt returned to Washington. But the President was adamant that he had made the right decision, and, publicly at least, would not back down in the slightest. W.E.B. DuBois called for African-American voters to rethink their loyalty to the Republican Party in 1908.

Although Roosevelt would not concede anything publicly, in private he struck a deal with Foraker and his other congressional critics to soften his decision a little bit. He agreed to drop the ban on the soldiers' eligibility for civilian employment with the Federal government, and allowed individual soldiers to apply for reinstatement with the Army, provided they could show they were not personally involved in the violence in Brownsville. 14 out of the 167 soldiers took advantage of this offer and were reinstated.

[music: "Jacob's Ladder"]

The United States economy had recovered from the Long Depression at the end of the nineteenth century, and during the McKinley and Roosevelt presidencies, economic growth had been brisk, which was surely a major factor in the political success of Roosevelt and the Republican Party. But by 1907, this economic boom was getting long in the tooth.

The United States did not have a central bank at this time, and no one controlled the money supply. New York City was then, as now, a center of investment, but the supply of money available to invest ebbed and flowed with the seasons, as you would expect in an economy in which agriculture was still a major sector. The New York Stock Exchange's Dow Jones Industrial Average peaked at 103 in January 1906.

The San Francisco earthquake reduced productivity, as we have seen, and the massive insurance payouts drained funds from the financial centers of New York and London, forcing interest rate increases on both sides of the Atlantic. By the summer of 1906, when the Hepburn Act regulating railroad rates took effect, railroad stocks fell, moving E.H. Harriman, the president of the Union Pacific railroad and staunch Republican, to remark that he would rather have seen William Jennings Bryan in the White House than Theodore Roosevelt.

As 1906 gave way to 1907, stock prices continued to fall and as the economy slowed, commodity prices followed. As far as Wall Street was concerned, the man responsible was Theodore Roosevelt. *The New York Sun* editorialized that Roosevelt's trust-busting had "upset the public confidence, arrayed class against class, and fomented mistrust and hatred." In response, Roosevelt spoke out against what he called "the malefactors of great wealth," who, the President said, were willing to create financial distress to discredit his administration, and would welcome hard times if they would help to install a friendlier administration in Washington.

In October 1907, F. Augustus Heinze, one of the so-called copper kings, whose United Copper Company had made a great fortune mining copper in the region around Butte, Montana—at that

time the most productive copper mines in the world—decided to try to corner the market on copper. Heinze had noted the decline in copper prices, which was driving down the price of his company's stock. Heinze and his relatives owned about 25% of the company, so the price decline was hitting them hard. Heinze believed that speculators were selling his stock short, and then driving down the price of copper, thus making money at his expense. He conceived a plan to turn the tables on these supposed speculators.

“Selling short” means selling a stock you don't actually have, on the promise you will deliver the shares later. It amounts to making a bet that the price will go down. If it goes down, you can buy the stock for less than you already sold it for, and make money from the difference. But if it goes up, you lose money. Heinze's plan was to secure lines of credit, then use them to buy up his own company's stock. The idea is that when the speculators who were selling short had to come up with the shares to meet their obligations, they would find the Heinze family to be the only source of shares, and would be forced to pay top dollar for them, and Heinze would have his revenge.

But he miscalculated badly. His share purchases drove up the stock price from \$40 to \$60 a share, but the short sellers had no trouble finding willing sellers to cover their sales. Once Heinze ran out of credit and had to stop buying shares, the price collapsed. Then Montana banks that held United Copper shares as collateral collapsed. Runs began on New York banks associated with Heinze and suspected of having lost money along with him. One of these banks, the Knickerbocker Trust Company, one of the most respected investment banks in New York, was known to have participated in Heinze's scheme, and the bank president shot and killed himself. With the demand for cash soaring, interest rates rose as high as 70% and stock prices collapsed. Panic broke out, and runs struck bank after bank.

The panic was quashed by the most famous financier in America, the now 70-year old JP Morgan. Morgan's brownstone home on Madison Avenue became the bank of last resort for an economy on the verge of collapse. Morgan raised a large pool of money from other bankers and wealthy individuals, like John D. Rockefeller. The funds were used to keep the stock exchange operating. Morgan studied the banks, determined which ones he believed to be the most sound, and loaned them money from this emergency fund to keep them open as a sort of firewall against the spreading panic. The Secretary of the Treasury, George Cortelyou, collected \$25 million of US government money, virtually all the liquid assets of the United States government, and added those funds into the pool, giving JP Morgan at that moment more economic clout than any one man has ever had in US history, before or since.

The panic began to abate, but one final crisis loomed, over the weekend of November second. One of New York's largest brokerage firms, Moore and Schley, was in danger. During the panic, the firm had borrowed heavily, using shares of the Tennessee Coal, Iron, and Railroad Company as collateral. With stock prices falling, and news of the firm's troubles leaking, those loans were

likely to be called on Monday morning, which would collapse the firm and likely spark another round of panic.

Morgan convened an emergency meeting at his house on Saturday morning, and devised a plan. The Tennessee Coal, Iron, and Railroad Company—which I'm going to call TC&I from now on, for the sake of my own sanity—TC&I would be bought out by that corporate leviathan, United States Steel. The brokerage company's TC&I stock would miraculously be converted to much more solid and credible US Steel stock, and the crisis would be averted.

Oh, but there's just one little problem with this plan. Do you remember how much of a fuss the muckrakers had made about US Steel, the company that already controls most of the steel production in the US? Do you remember how the Roosevelt Administration is all about trust busting? And in particular, do you remember that White House meeting between Theodore Roosevelt and JP Morgan that I described back in episode 17, when Morgan had asked Roosevelt about US Steel, and Roosevelt had said that US Steel was safe, as long as it behaved itself?

The deal would not work if the Roosevelt administration opposed it. So Elbert Gary, the president of the company, took the overnight train to Washington and met with the President on Sunday morning. Gary told Roosevelt that the price US Steel was willing to pay for TC&I was somewhat in excess of the company's actual value, but was willing to proceed anyway, to prevent an economic collapse. Roosevelt approved the deal.

The acquisition of TC&I by US Steel saved the brokerage firm and prevented another panic, but when the details of the deal came out, it smelled pretty bad. US Steel had paid \$45 million for TC&I, while the value of the company's coal and iron ore deposits alone was a billion dollars, according to the financial analyst John Moody—yeah, Moody as in Moody's Investment Service—who also called the deal “the best bargain ever made in the purchase of a piece of property.” It looked to a lot of people like Roosevelt had been conned into approving the expansion of US Steel, when the company was already way too big. This will have consequences.

But for now, the panic is over, though the economic downturn is not, and the New York financial world would continue to blame the weak economy on Theodore Roosevelt.

There had now been three major and three minor panics in the financial sector since the Civil War, about one every seven years. The news that everyone, including the US government, had put all their resources and trust into one man, now 70 years old, to save the economy was a little disturbing. Even if you thought of JP Morgan as a hero, and not as a manipulative villain, there was no assurance there would be a JP Morgan available the next time some stock speculator crashed the economy.

In 1908, Congress would create the National Monetary Commission to investigate the panic and make recommendations for legislative reforms. The commission would study the banking industry in Europe and conclude that what the United States needed was a national reserve bank to protect and preserve credit by acting as a lender of last resort.

Theodore Roosevelt would find his way into yet one more controversy in 1907, when the United States Mint issued a redesigned \$20 gold coin that omitted the country's unofficial motto, "In God We Trust."

Now, the phrase "In God We Trust" began appearing on some US coins during the Civil War, apparently a claim of divine support for the United States, not unlike the motto "Gott Mit Uns," "God is with us" that Imperial Germany was putting on some of its coins at this same time. The motto "In God We Trust" apparently derives from a line of Francis Scott Key's poem, "The Star Spangled Banner"—"And this be our motto, in God is our trust."

Anyway, in 1907, some, but not all US coins, and no US paper currency, bore this motto. The \$20 coin was one of the coins that *did* have the motto, but when a redesigned coin was issued, the motto was dropped. Many Americans protested, and Roosevelt defended the decision by noting there was no legal requirement to include the motto, and expressed his own opinion that to put these words on coins was something close to sacrilege, more likely to inspire jokes than reverence. "In all my life," Roosevelt wrote, "I have never heard any human being speak reverently of this motto on the coins or show any signs of it having appealed to any high emotion in him, but I have literally, hundreds of times, heard it used as an occasion of and incitement to sneering ridicule." I guess he saw one too many of those signs that say "In God we trust, all others pay cash."

In response to the outcry, Congress passed legislation requiring that the motto remain on any denomination of coin where it had appeared in the past. And so it came back to the \$20 coin. In 1909, "In God We Trust" arrived on the newly-designed penny. Then the dime in 1916, and the last coin, the nickel, in 1938. In 1956, Congress designated "In God We Trust" the *official* motto of the United States and mandated that it appear on US paper currency, and it began to show up on folding money in 1957.

And In December 1907, Roosevelt sent a squadron of sixteen battleships from the United States Navy's Atlantic Fleet on a goodwill tour around the world. Because US ships were painted white in peacetime during this era, for the sake of visibility, this collection of ships came to be called the Great White Fleet.

We've already seen that it is a serious logistical challenge to dispatch coal-powered battleships over intercontinental distances. For the United States to send such a powerful force around the world sent an unmistakable message: America is now a global power. It also gave the Navy valuable experience in solving the logistic and navigation problems inherent in such a huge

undertaking. Roosevelt was determined that if the US Navy were ever called upon to dispatch ships to a remote corner of the world, as the Russian Navy had been called upon to do during the war with Japan, that the Americans would be ready.

Because there was no, you know, canal across Central America yet, the Great White Fleet, beginning from Virginia, visited Trinidad and Rio de Janeiro, then sailed through the Strait of Magellan and around South America, stopping at Chile, Peru, and Mexico, then on to the US West Coast, then to Honolulu, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Japan, Ceylon, the Suez Canal, Sicily, where the fleet stopped to provide earthquake relief, Naples, Gibraltar, and then back to Virginia.

The voyage was 43,000 nautical miles over fourteen months, and the Great White Fleet visited every continent except Antarctica. Upon the fleet's return to Virginia, on February 22, 1909, it was greeted by Roosevelt himself, now in the final weeks of his Presidency. He would leave office on March 4th.

How fitting it was that Roosevelt, who had once been an assistant naval secretary, would end his career in Washington by receiving the Great White Fleet, which had made a powerful demonstration that America was now a world naval power. Roosevelt, during his presidency, had also made a powerful demonstration, a demonstration of how much a committed and activist US President can accomplish, in an era of rising American military power, with or without the cooperation of the US Congress. Future generations would speak of an "imperial presidency." But note that the imperial presidency began during the imperial era, with Theodore Roosevelt. Love him or hate him, you can't deny he was one of the most influential men ever to hold the office, and everyone in the world is still feeling the impact of Theodore Roosevelt's presidency to this day.

I feel like now would be a good time to stop and do some kind of longer assessment of Theodore Roosevelt, but his story doesn't end here. Though he will never hold elected office again, he will continue to be an influential figure in US politics for years to come. So, not so much goodbye, as *au revoir*, Theodore Roosevelt.

We'll have to stop there for today, but I hope you'll join me next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as we turn our attention back to Russia, to examine what's going on there in the worlds of arts and culture in the early twentieth century. No, really! That's next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. The Brownsville Affair would be remembered as one of the biggest blots on Theodore Roosevelt's presidential record. It was the first and only time in the history of the United States Army of the collective punishment of an entire unit for alleged actions of individual soldiers.

In 1971, an African-American Congressman from California, Augustus Hawkins, introduced a resolution into the House of Representatives, calling for the dishonorable discharges to be rescinded. In 1972, the Secretary of the Army retroactively granted the 167 soldiers honorable discharges. By then, however, only two survivors among them could be located, and one of those turned out to be one of the 14 soldiers who had later been reinstated. The other, the now 86-year old Dorsie Willis, was paid \$25,000 in compensation by the United States government in 1974. He died the following year.

[music: closing theme]