

ArMs 1991.043
2 document boxes, 1 cubic foot
A0615, A0616
7.2.E

G.B. Webb Collection of Political Cartoons
1898-1938 (Bulk 1898-1919)

Brooklyn Historical Society
Othmer Library
128 Pierrepont Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Tel. 718.222.4111 FAX 718.222.3794

library@brooklynhistory.org
www.brooklynhistory.org

Aaron Yarbrough
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Supervised by Leilani Dawson
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Abstract

This collection comprises original and photocopied political cartoons and some miscellaneous materials clipped from different United States newspapers. The cartoons portray, and often criticize, the Spanish American War, President Theodore Roosevelt, and New Deal politics. G.B. Webb (Gregory Burkitt) (1878-1948), a New York architect who specialized in designing cemeteries, assembled the collection. Mrs. G.B. Webb gifted the collection to the Brooklyn Historical Society in the 1950s.

Provenance

Mrs. G. B. Webb gifted the collection to the Brooklyn Historical Society in the 1950s. The Brooklyn Historical Society resurveyed the collection and assigned it an accession number 1991. At one time these political cartoons may have belonged to a greater collection that included G.B. Webb's architectural papers, but the political cartoons and architectural papers are currently separate collections.

Biographical and Historical Note

New York architect G.B. (Gregory Burkitt) Webb (1878-1948) specialized in building and landscaping cemeteries. He designed several abbeys and mausoleums throughout New York City, including additions to Holy Cross Cemetery in Brooklyn and Cypress Hill and Montefiore Cemeteries in Queens.¹ Outside of these professional accomplishments, G.B. Webb collected political cartoons that portrayed and often satirized the events of the Spanish American War (1898), President Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), and the New Deal politics (1933-1939).

Ostensibly instigated by Cuba's struggle for independence and the unexplained sinking of the USS Maine in Havana harbor, many argue that the Spanish American War truly originated with the United States recognizing a valuable opportunity to acquire overseas territories and interests.² Victory for the United States came easily, as Spain was ill prepared to fight a distant war. US Commander George Dewey lead a naval squadron which, in just one morning, destroyed the Pacific Spanish fleet in the Philippines. In Cuba, US General William Shafter forced the Caribbean Spanish fleet out of hiding in Santiago, after which US gunfire quickly immobilized the fleet and thereby ended the war only ten weeks after it had begun. The ensuing Treaty of Paris granted the United States sovereignty over Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.

Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, commanding the famous "Rough Riders" US Cavalry, emerged from the Spanish American War as a national hero. Riding on this sudden popularity and his charismatic energy, Roosevelt was nominated Vice President of the United States under President McKinley in 1900. When President McKinley was assassinated in 1901, Theodore Roosevelt became the 26th President of the United States. He was elected in his own right in 1904. With characteristic gusto, Roosevelt pursued an expansionist policy abroad and a reformist policy at home. His famous motto, "Walk softly but carry a big stick", epitomizes his strategy of agile international diplomacy backed by the threat of military force.³ At home, he attacked big businesses and corrupt industries, although his

¹ "G.B. Webb Architectural Papers," Brooklyn Historical Society.

² "Spanish-American War." Encyclopædia Britannica. 2008. Encyclopædia Britannica Online Library Edition. 20 Feb. 2008 <<http://library.eb.com/eb/article-9068989>>.

³ "Theodore Roosevelt." American Decades. Gale Research, 1998. Reproduced in Biography Resource Center. 20 Feb 2008. <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/BioRC>>.

actual, lukewarm reformist polices often fell short of his celebrated, fiery reformist speeches.⁴ Roosevelt's conservationist work stands as his strongest reform legacy. An avid naturalist and hunter all his life, Roosevelt became an instrumental creator of national parks in the American West. After his second term ended in 1908, Roosevelt hunted in Africa, toured Europe, and wrote several scholarly works. He ran for President once more in 1912. His own Republican party, never entirely comfortable with his reformist polices, nominated the more conservative incumbent President William Taft over Roosevelt.⁵ Roosevelt retailed by forming his own, "Bull Moose" Progressive Party, but only succeeded in splitting the Republican vote, thereby paving the way for the election of Democrat Woodrow Wilson.

A kin of President Theodore Roosevelt, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945), implemented his "New Deal" domestic program immediately upon his election in 1932. In the midst of the Great Depression, the New Deal sought to bring economic relief through legislated reforms in public assistance, industry, labor, and agriculture, thereby greatly increasing the scope of Federal Government's intervention and regulation of the economy.⁶

Scope and Content

The collection consists of 1 cubic foot of political cartoons and miscellaneous papers kept in two document boxes. The vast majority of the collection comprises political cartoons; the few miscellaneous materials include articles and satiric pieces. The political cartoons and miscellaneous materials have been clipped from newspapers and pasted onto cardboard, often bearing period advertisements on the verso. As newsprint and cardboard deteriorate rapidly with age, these original clippings are in fair to poor condition. Photocopies of the original clippings have been made and stored in distinct folders within the collection.

The subject of Theodore Roosevelt dominates the collection, and more often than not his expansionist initiatives, reformist rhetoric, and passions for hunting are treated in a sharply satirical light. We watch him tyrannize Latin America with his big stick while hypocritically professing the benefits of benign diplomacy⁷. We see him waffling on domestic reform issues, striking deals with the very big businesses and political caucuses he professes to fight.⁸ We witness innocent animals flee for their lives before his childish hunting gun and dance for joy when he is recalled to Washington.⁹ These cartoons depict the President as a duplicitous, childish, overconfident bully. Some cartoons turn the raking light on Roosevelt supporters, who against all reason prostrate themselves before his massive grin.¹⁰ In a similar fashion, we see the Spanish American War as an opportunistic vehicle for American expansionism overseas, all in the name of liberating peoples that the US really intends to rule.¹¹ The New Deal is depicted as an insane bureaucratic nightmare, with a hubristic President Franklin Delano Roosevelt legislating how many eggs a chicken may lay.¹²

⁴ Theodore Roosevelt." American Decades. Gale Research, 1998. Reproduced in Biography Resource Center. 20 Feb 2008. <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/BioRC>>.

⁵ Theodore Roosevelt." American Decades. Gale Research, 1998. Reproduced in Biography Resource Center. 20 Feb 2008. <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/BioRC>>.

⁶ "New Deal." Encyclopædia Britannica. 2008. Encyclopædia Britannica Online Library Edition. 20 Feb. 2008 <<http://library.eb.com/eb/article-9055453>>.

⁷ "G.B. Webb Collection of Political Cartoons, 1898-1938," The Brooklyn Historical Society. Folder 5.

⁸ "G.B. Webb Collection of Political Cartoons, 1898-1938," The Brooklyn Historical Society. Folder 5.

⁹ "G.B. Webb Collection of Political Cartoons, 1898-1938," The Brooklyn Historical Society. Folder 9.

¹⁰ "G.B. Webb Collection of Political Cartoons, 1898-1938," The Brooklyn Historical Society. Folder 4.

¹¹ "G.B. Webb Collection of Political Cartoons, 1898-1938," The Brooklyn Historical Society. Folder 1.

¹² "G.B. Webb Collection of Political Cartoons, 1898-1938," The Brooklyn Historical Society. Folder 11.

Most of the clippings are culled from newspapers published in G.B. Webb's native New York City, especially the Brooklyn Daily Eagle. However, the collection includes many clippings taken from newspapers across the United States, including the Washington Post, the Nashville Daily News, the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Salt Lake Herald, and Boston Post, and the Portland Oregonian.

System of Arrangement

The collection is organized into 17 numbered folders. The folders are arranged first by materials: originals, photocopies, and miscellaneous, then chronologically within each material.

In the original order, the folders were out of sequence and contained overlapping dates. In order to facilitate the researcher, the processor arranged the folders chronologically and refoldered some documents so that the folder dates did not overlap.

Conditions of Access and Use

The Brooklyn Historical Society archives and manuscripts must be examined on site. Appointments to examine archives and manuscript materials must be made in advance. As the collection's original clippings are fragile, researchers should use the photocopies whenever possible. Please contact the Brooklyn Historical Society to learn of any additional conditions of access and use.

Language of Materials

All materials are in English

Related Material

Brooklyn Historical Society Manuscripts and Archives

ArMs 1977.068: Gregory B. Webb Architectural Records. This collection contains G.B. Webb's blueprints, contracts, and other architectural materials.

ArMs 1977.142: Charles A. Ditmas Papers, 1911. The collection consists of a letter from Theodore Roosevelt, 1911, to Charles A. Ditmas, of the Kings County Historical Society, written on business stationery of The Outlook.

ArMs 1985.006: Theodore Roosevelt Cartoon Collection, 1900-1919. The collection contains newspaper cartoons and other ephemera related to Theodore Roosevelt.

Separated Material

The G.B. Webb Collection of Political Cartoons (ArMS 1991.043) and Gregory B. Webb Architectural Records (ArMs 1977.068) may have been gifted to the Brooklyn Historical Society as a single collection.

Access Points

Personal Names

Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919--Caricatures and cartoons

Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano), 1882-1945--Caricatures and cartoons

Webb, G.B. (Gregory Burkitt), 1878-1948

Corporate Names

Progressive Party (1912)--Caricatures and cartoons

Republican Party (U.S. : 1854-)--History--20th Century--Caricatures and cartoons

Topical Subjects

Big business—United States—History—20th century-- Caricatures and cartoons

Hunting—Caricatures and cartoons

New Deal, 1933-1939----Caricatures and cartoons

Presidents--United States—Election—1904--Caricatures and cartoons

Presidents--United States—Election—1912--Caricatures and cartoons

Spanish-American War, 1898--Caricatures and cartoons

Geographic Subjects

United States--Foreign relations--1901-1909--Caricatures and cartoons

United States--Foreign relations--1909-1913--Caricatures and cartoons

United States--Politics and government--1901-1909--Caricatures and cartoons

United States--Politics and government--1909-1913--Caricatures and cartoons

United States--Politics and government--1933-1945--Caricatures and cartoons

Formats/Genres

Clippings

Photocopies

Political cartoons

Satire (artistic device)

Container List

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	1	Originals	1898
	2	Originals	1901-1902
	3	Originals	1903
	4	Originals	1903
	5	Originals	1904-1905
	6	Originals	1907-1908
	7	Originals	1909
	8	Originals	1910
2	9	Originals	1912
	10	Originals	1913-1919
	11	Originals	1934-1938
	12	Photocopies	1898
	13	Photocopies	1901-1903
	14	Photocopies	1904-1909
	15	Photocopies	1910-1919
	16	Photocopies	1934-1938
	17	Miscellaneous Materials	circa 1900s