

Vice Presidents of the United States Calvin Coolidge (1921-1923)

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Introduction by Mark O. Hatfield.



If the Vice-President is a man of discretion and character so that he can be relied upon to act as a subordinate in that position, he should be invited to sit with the Cabinet, although some of the Senators, wishing to be the only advisers of the President, do not look on that proposal with favor.

—Calvin Coolidge

Calvin Coolidge came to the vice-presidency from the governorship of Massachusetts, but he was at heart a Vermonter. Born in Vermont on the Fourth of July 1872, he died in Vermont sixty-one years later, on January 5, 1933. During the years between, he lived most of his adult life in Massachusetts and worked out of the statehouse in Boston but never identified with Back Bay society. "I come from Boston," a lady once identified herself to him when he was president. "Yes, and you'll never get over it," Coolidge replied dryly. One of Coolidge's first biographers, Claude Fues, identified him as the archetypical Yankee, "with his wiry, nervous body, his laconic speech, his thrift, his industry, his conservative distrust of foreigners and innovations, and his native dignity." This dour, taciturn man served eight years as vice president and president during the "Roaring Twenties," an era remembered for its speakeasies, flappers, and anything-goes attitudes. Calvin Coolidge, as journalist William Allen White aptly recorded, was "A Puritan in Babylon."¹

Youth

Calvin Coolidge grew up in the bucolic setting of rural Vermont in the late nineteenth century. He was a slight, red-headed, blue-eyed boy whose decided nasal twang was made worse by numerous childhood allergies until it gave his voice a quacking sound. His invalid mother died when he was just twelve years old, and he was raised by his father, Colonel John Coolidge, a talented jack-of-all-trades, who ran a general store and farmed, as well as serving as justice of the peace and a member of the state legislature. For all these accomplishments, Colonel Coolidge was

not a man who could express his emotions openly, and one senses from reading Calvin Coolidge's *Autobiography* that he spent much of his life trying to earn his father's respect and approval. As Coolidge later noted, "A lot of people in Plymouth can't understand how I got to be President, least of all my father!"²

A Shy Politician

A painfully shy boy, Coolidge would go into a panic at the sound of a stranger's voice in the house. Writing in a letter to a friend years later, he recalled that when visitors would sit with his parents in the kitchen, he found it difficult to go in and greet them. "I was almost ten before I realized I couldn't go on that way. And by fighting hard I used to manage to get through that door. I'm all right with old friends, but every time I meet a stranger, I've got to get through the old kitchen door, back home, and it's not easy."³

Shortly after his mother died, Coolidge escaped from the drudgery of farm work to attend the Black River Academy in Ludlow, Vermont, his "first great adventure," which he described as "a complete break with the past." His parents and a grandmother had attended the school briefly, but Coolidge embraced schoolwork more thoroughly, going on to Amherst as the first member of his family to attend college. He did well enough to be chosen one of the three commencement speakers at his graduation, assigned to deliver the "grove oration," which was to describe the class members in a witty and humorous manner. Coolidge later related that he learned from the experience "that making fun of people in a public way was not a good method to secure friends, or likely to lead to much advancement."⁴ After college he read law with the firm of Hammond and Field in Northampton, Massachusetts, before joining the bar in 1897. Politically a conservative Republican, Coolidge had marched in a torchlight parade for Benjamin Harrison's unsuccessful reelection campaign in 1892 and wrote letters to the local papers in support of William McKinley's election in 1896. In December 1898 he won his first election to the Northampton city council, an unsalaried job that he saw primarily as a means of making useful contacts for his law practice. He was then elected city solicitor, a post that paid six hundred dollars annually, which he believed would make him a better lawyer. Next came election to the Massachusetts house of representatives, and appointment to its judiciary committee, which he again considered more in terms of promoting himself as a lawyer than as a politician. He ran for mayor of Northampton, "thinking the honor would be one that would please my father, advance me in my profession, and enable me to be of some public service." As a local office, it would not "interfere seriously with my work."⁵

Coolidge always insisted that he never planned his political career. He meant only "to be ready to take advantage of opportunities."⁶ In 1911 he ran for the state senate and soon became its president, a role that took him from local to statewide office. Coolidge summed up his philosophy as a legislator in a letter to his father upon the elder Coolidge's election to the Vermont Senate:

It is much more important to kill bad bills than to pass good ones, and better to spend your time on your own committee work than to be bothering with any bills of your own. . . . See that the bills you recommend from your committee are so worded that they will do just what they intend and not a great deal more that is undesirable. Most bills can't stand that kind of test.⁷

A Return to Conservatism

Coolidge began his ascendancy in statewide politics at a time when the Massachusetts Republican party was still divided between conservatives and progressives. In 1912, Theodore Roosevelt had walked out of the Republican party and campaigned for president on the ticket of the Progressive ("Bull Moose") party. In that election, the Republican nominee, William Howard Taft, had come in a distant third behind the more progressive candidacies of Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. Coolidge was far from comfortable with the reform politicians and muckraking magazines of the era. "It appeared to me in January, 1914, that a spirit of radicalism prevailed which unless checked was likely to prove very destructive," he later wrote. "It consisted of the claim in general that in some way the government was to be blamed because everybody was not prosperous." He believed that progressive reforms and "unsound legislative proposals" would destroy business and that the country needed "a restoration of confidence in our institutions and in each other, on which economic progress might rest." Fittingly, Coolidge's first address as president of the state senate appealed "to the conservative spirit of the people."⁸

Coolidge correctly anticipated the shift in public opinion. Even before the First World War, a conservative reaction to the progressive era was apparent as voters grew tired of political crusades. In 1914, an economic recession that was especially severe on the East Coast also hurt progressive candidates. Conservative challengers argued that more laws and more regulations would only mean more taxes. In one sign of the changing atmosphere, when the first direct elections for U.S. senators were held in 1914, progressive candidates went down to defeat. Conservative Republicans swept the field in many states, reducing the Democratic majorities in both the Senate and House. Most symbolically, the staunchly conservative Senator Boies Penrose of Pennsylvania beat one of the nation's most prominent progressives, Gifford Pinchot. "The most curious part," Pinchot confessed, "is that no one seemed to know in advance that we were to be beaten and certainly no one thought the defeat would be so complete."⁹

Calvin Coolidge's fortunes rose as those of the progressives fell. In 1915 he was elected lieutenant governor, and on January 1, 1919, he was inaugurated as governor of Massachusetts. Before that year was out, unexpected events had made him one of the most famous and admired men in the country. "No doubt it was the police strike of Boston that brought me into national prominence. That furnished the occasion and I took advantage of the opportunity," Coolidge wrote with characteristic understatement in his *Autobiography*.¹⁰

Boston's police force was badly underpaid and overworked. As a legislator, Coolidge had achieved a reasonably favorable record toward labor, and as governor he tried unsuccessfully to persuade the legislature to improve the policemen's lot. The police then organized the Boston Social Club and sought to affiliate with the American Federation of Labor, but Boston Police Commissioner Edwin Curtis had no intention of dealing with a police union, and he suspended the police union organizers from the force. Angry police voted to go out on strike, throwing the city into a panic. There was an increase in looting and robberies, and volunteers turned out to police the streets. Governor Coolidge ignored all appeals to intervene, and his inactivity undoubtedly allowed the situation to worsen. Finally, after much confusion and delay, Coolidge sided with the hard-line Police Commissioner Curtis, who had announced that the striking police would not be reinstated. More than for his actions, "Silent Cal" became famous for his words. In a telegram to AFL President Samuel Gompers, who had sought his support for the police, Coolidge asserted, "There is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, any time." At a time when the nation was rocked by a series of often violent postwar labor disputes, many citizens welcomed this message. Coolidge became the "law and order" governor. His photograph appeared on the front pages of newspapers nationwide, and thousands of telegrams and letters poured in to congratulate him. There was talk of running Calvin Coolidge for president in 1920.¹¹

The Coolidge Phenomenon

New York Times correspondent Charles Willis Thompson was among the many journalists curious about this new phenomenon. Thompson noted that Coolidge began making political speeches outside of Massachusetts but not in such likely places as Chicago and New York. Instead, Coolidge went to Oregon and to the Rocky Mountain states, and his speeches were always on nonpolitical themes. "Each one of these non-political speeches had in it that quality of arrest; there was something in it, unpretentious as it was as a whole, that made you stop and think," Thompson observed. "There was nothing spectacular about him yet, or ever." The 1920 Republican convention opened in Chicago with many candidates and no clear frontrunner. The real story was not in the primaries or in the main convention hall, but in the back rooms, which became immortalized as the "smoke-filled room" where decisions were made by a coterie of Republican senators. When the convention became deadlocked between General Leonard Wood and Illinois Governor Frank Lowden, the senators met privately to pick a candidate and prevent a rift in the party. They were determined to name someone who would reduce the powers of the presidency, which they believed had expanded disproportionately during the administrations of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. To this end, they chose one of their most pliable colleagues, Ohio Senator Warren G. Harding, as the Republican presidential nominee.¹²

Harding had been far from a leading contender among the delegates, who nominated him without much enthusiasm. Seeking to balance the conservative Harding, and hoping to make it an all-senatorial ticket, the senators first offered the vice-presidential nomination to California Senator Hiram Johnson, who turned it down. They next went to

progressive Senator Irvine Lenroot of Wisconsin. When Illinois Senator Medill McCormick stepped to the podium to nominate Lenroot, a delegate from Portland, Oregon, former Judge Wallace McCamant, called out loudly, "Coolidge! Coolidge!" Other delegates took up the cry. When Senator McCormick finished his address, McCamant leaped on a chair among the Oregon delegation and nominated Governor Calvin Coolidge of Massachusetts for vice president. Showing enthusiasm for the first time, the delegates demonstrated spontaneously in Coolidge's behalf. Lenroot would be "just one too many Senators on the presidential ticket," a reporter observed. Delegates for other candidates who felt they had been denied their choice for the top spot were determined to have a voice in the second place. They voted 674 for Coolidge to 146 for Lenroot.¹³

Coolidge himself was back in Boston, in the hotel where he lived as governor, nursing his disappointment that all of his quiet campaigning had seemingly made no impact on the presidential race. That evening as he and Mrs. Coolidge were preparing to go down to dinner, he received news about McCamant's surprising speech and the demonstration that followed. The phone rang again, and Coolidge turned to his wife to utter a single word: "Nominated."

"You aren't going to take it are you?" asked Mrs. Coolidge.

"Well--I suppose I'll have to." said Coolidge.¹⁴

It had been perhaps the most unusual and independent vice-presidential nomination in American political history. Where parties normally balance, both Harding and Coolidge were unabashed conservatives and comprised the most conservative ticket since the party had gone down to disastrous defeat in 1912. But in 1920 that proved to be exactly what the nation wanted, and in November the Harding-Coolidge ticket overwhelmed the Democratic ticket of James M. Cox and Franklin D. Roosevelt. At his inauguration as vice president, Calvin Coolidge took satisfaction that "the same thing for which I had worked in Massachusetts had been accomplished in the nation. The radicalism which had tinged our whole political and economic life from soon after 1900 to the World War period was passed."¹⁵

An Impassive Senate President

"More hotel life, I suppose," Grace Coolidge commented on their move to Washington, D.C. The U.S. vice president still had no official place of residence, and Coolidge was not prepared to spend his \$12,000 a year salary on purchasing a house commensurate with his position. "There is no dignity quite so impressive, and no independence quite so important, as living within your means," he observed. The Coolidges moved into the suite of rooms at the Willard Hotel being vacated by Vice President and Mrs. Thomas R. Marshall, for which they paid eight dollars a day. As vice president, he occupied an office in the Capitol and another in the Senate office building. His staff consisted of a secretary, a clerk, an assistant clerk, and a chauffeur. He inherited Vice President Marshall's Cadillac.¹⁶

"Presiding over the Senate was fascinating to me," Coolidge later wrote. Although the Senate's methods at first seemed peculiar, he soon became familiar with them and suggested that they were "the best method of conducting its business. It may seem that debate is endless, but there is scarcely a time when it is not informing, and, after all, the power to compel due consideration is the distinguishing mark of a deliberative body." However, as Coolidge tried to master the Senate rules, he soon discovered that there was but one fixed rule: "that the Senate would do anything it wanted to do whenever it wanted to do it. When I had learned that, I did not waste much time on the other rules, because they so seldom applied."¹⁷

Vice President Coolidge presided in a remarkably impassive manner. Once James A. Reed, a Missouri Democrat, and Porter J. McCumber, a North Dakota Republican, engaged in a shouting match on the Senate floor. Other senators and the galleries joined in the uproar, while Coolidge simply watched the commotion. When the parliamentarian begged him to use his gavel to restore order, the vice president replied, "Yes I shall if they get excited."¹⁸

Doomed to be an Outsider

Coolidge's most controversial moment as vice president came in July 1921. Midwestern progressive Republicans were seeking federal relief for farmers, whose sales and purchasing power had collapsed after the war. Senator

George Norris of Nebraska introduced a bill that would make it easier to market American farm products overseas. The Harding administration countered with a bill sponsored by Minnesota Senator Frank Kellogg to make domestic marketing of farm goods easier. Norris had asked Coolidge, as presiding officer, to recognize Senator Joseph E. Ransdell, a Louisiana Democrat, first. Coolidge had agreed, but then he left the chair and asked Charles Curtis of Kansas, a tough-minded partisan senator, to preside in his place. When Ransdell stood and sought recognition, Curtis ignored him and instead called upon Kellogg, who in fact was still in his seat and had not even risen to seek recognition. After the ensuing hubbub, as Kellogg claimed the floor, Coolidge reentered the chamber and once again presided. Progressive Republicans and Democrats long remembered this maneuver and never fully trusted Coolidge again. His biographer, Donald McCoy, concluded, "The episode may have doomed Coolidge to be an outsider for the rest of his time as Vice President and even have contributed to his troubles with Congress while he was President. He was now distrusted by the progressives and perhaps even disliked by the regulars for violating one of the unwritten rules of the Senate." He had gone back on his word.¹⁹

Coolidge lacked either the jovial good humor of his predecessor Thomas Marshall or the type of personality that would attract senators to him. In the Senate restaurant, Coolidge ate alone, in a corner, facing the wall. "Is that how you treat your presiding officer?" someone asked Senator Edwin Ladd of North Dakota. "Nobody has anything to do with him," said the Senator. "After this, of course, he's through." Coolidge cast no tie-breaking votes and spoke only as required—and as briefly as possible. Biographer Donald McCoy noted that, while Coolidge had been a success as presiding officer in Massachusetts, in the U.S. Senate he was "almost a nonentity."²⁰

Largely overlooked in the Senate, Coolidge won more notice for all of the "dining out" that he and his wife did. "As the President is not available for social dinners of course the next officer in rank is much sought after for such occasions," he noted. On an average they ate out three times a week during the congressional season. At first the Coolidges enjoyed these social dinners, since as the ranking guests they were able to arrive last and leave first. He considered it an opportunity to become acquainted with official Washington. But Washington proved a cruel atmosphere for the Yankee Coolidge. Stories spread through the city that the new vice president was either very dumb or very shy. Coolidge's table manners were peculiar to say the least. He sat quietly, nibbling nuts and crackers and saying next to nothing to those around him. Soon it became a Washington parlor game to tease the vice president into talking. One famous story had a Washington socialite telling him that she had bet her friends she could get him to say three words. "You lose," Coolidge replied. "They provoked him to Yankee aphorisms and he knew what they were up to," wrote William Allen White. "So he clowned a little for his own delight, played the dumb man, impersonated the yokel and probably despised his tormenters in his heart." New Hampshire Senator George Moses told of a stag party where Coolidge was a guest, when several senators spiked the punch—this during Prohibition—to loosen up the vice president, but the more Coolidge drank, the quieter he became. The longer he stayed in Washington, the more suspicious he grew of everyone he met. When an old friend warned that this was an unhealthy state of mind, Coolidge replied: "I do not think you have any comprehension of what people do to me. Even small things bother me." Later, when he was president, Coolidge declined an invitation to a fashionable Washington home. "When I lived at the Willard and was vice president they didn't know I was in town," Coolidge exploded. "Now that I am President they want to drag me up to their house for one of their suppers and show me off to a lot of people, and I'm not going. . . . I'm not going, and I'm not going to let that wife of mine go."²¹

Coolidge was blessed with a wife, Grace Goodhue Coolidge, whose warmth and charm more than made up for his aloofness and eccentricities. However, Coolidge tightly restricted her activities, forbidding her to drive, ride horseback, or fly, from wearing slacks, bobbing her hair, or expressing her opinion on any political issue. In the age of the liberated woman of the 1920s, he wanted Grace to be the model of old-fashioned womanhood. As if this were not enough, he also made her the target for his pent-up anger and unhappiness. Always a quiet man in public, Coolidge would explode in private by throwing temper tantrums. Historian Donald McCoy has noted that "the reserved and unathletic New Englander could not release his frustrations in a healthy way. Whatever release he got came in the form of tantrums, the brunt of which his wife bore. Anything that was unexpected could lead him to prolonged moods of sulking and even to fits of yelling." Most likely, Coolidge's private outbursts resulted from his disappointment in the vice-presidency, which left him in the shadows, powerless.²²

Sitting with the Cabinet

A major exception to Coolidge's isolation during this period was President Harding's invitation to him to sit with the cabinet. This was probably a response to the unhappy situation in the last years of the Wilson administration, when Vice President Marshall had declined to preside over the cabinet during the president's illness, and Secretary of State Robert Lansing had been fired by Wilson for holding cabinet meetings without his authorization. Harding had made the offer first to Irvine Lenroot, when he was considered for the vice-presidency, and then to Coolidge.²³ When they met after the convention, Harding told the press:

I think the vice president should be more than a mere substitute in waiting. In reestablishing coordination between the Executive Office and the Senate, the vice president can and ought to play a big part, and I have been telling Governor Coolidge how much I wish him to be not only a participant in the campaign, but how much I wish him to be a helpful part of a Republican administration.²⁴

Coolidge joined the cabinet meetings, becoming the first vice president to do so on a regular basis. He sat at the farthest end of the table from Harding, listening to what was said and saying almost nothing himself. In his *Autobiography*, Coolidge wrote, "If the Vice-President is a man of discretion and character so that he can be relied upon to act as a subordinate in that position, he should be invited to sit with the Cabinet, although some of the Senators, wishing to be the only advisers of the President, do not look on that proposal with favor." Coolidge believed that, although the vice president could probably offer little insight about the Senate, and virtually nothing about the House, a vice president needed to be fully informed of what was going on in case he should become president. "My experience in the Cabinet," he concluded, "was of supreme value to me when I became President." By contrast, Coolidge's own vice president, Charles Dawes, disagreed and let it be known publicly that he did not consider it wise for vice presidents to be invited to cabinet meetings because of the separation of powers between the branches.²⁵

The Harding administration meanwhile had become mired in scandal. The Senate had launched an investigation of improper leasing of naval oil reserves at Teapot Dome in Wyoming. There were also indications of scandals brewing in the Veterans Administration and the Department of Justice. Whether Harding would be reelected, whether he would keep Coolidge on the ticket, and whether the ticket could be reelected in the face of these scandals were all unanswerable questions in the summer of 1923, when a dispirited Harding traveled to Alaska and the Pacific Coast. Vice President Coolidge was on vacation at his father's home in Plymouth, Vermont, when on the night of August 2, 1923, he was awakened by his father calling his name. "I noticed that his voice trembled. As the only times I had ever observed that before were when death had visited our family, I knew that something of the gravest nature had occurred," Coolidge recorded. Colonel John Coolidge informed his son that a telegram had arrived announcing that President Harding had died in San Francisco. As Calvin Coolidge noted, his father "was the first to address me as President of the United States. It was the culmination of the lifelong desire of a father for the success of his son." Coolidge quickly dressed, and in a downstairs parlor, lit by a flickering kerosene lantern, his father as a notary public administered to him the oath of office as president. Arizona Senator Henry Fountain Ashurst, a Democrat, observed that "the simplicity of this episode fired the public imagination." Harding's death and "the sportsmanship of the American people," Ashurst believed, built public support for Coolidge's presidency and revived Republican spirits.²⁶

A Surprisingly Popular President

After his unsatisfying years as vice president, Coolidge became a surprisingly popular president, easily winning reelection in 1924. Correspondent Charles Willis Thompson, a keen observer of presidents during the first decades of this century, believed that the nation found psychological relief in Coolidge after the high-minded oratory of Wilson and the bombast of Harding. Recognizing that he did not have the voice of an orator, Coolidge "never wasted time trying to acquire it." His message was straightforward, with "no purple . . . no argument, no stock official phrases. He told Congress what he thought would be for the good of the country and told it as briefly as he could." Thompson concluded that Coolidge was as good as elected the day he sent his first message to Congress in

1923. "Congress, with its historic political wisdom, banged him around the Capitol walls by the hair of his head," but the people loved him, and decided to "Keep Cool With Coolidge."²⁷

Coolidge had the advantage of being everything that Harding was not—which provided him some comfortable distance as the news of the Harding administration's scandals broke. Harding was tall and handsome. Coolidge was smaller, five feet nine inches tall, and weighed perhaps a hundred and fifty pounds. Harding had a famous smile. Coolidge's skin was smooth, one biographer noted, "because of lack of exercise in either frowning or smiling." Harding was gregarious. Coolidge was aloof. Harding tolerated his friends, even the most corrupt of them. Coolidge preached thrift and honesty. During the 1924 campaign, the Democratic and Progressive candidates tried to tar Coolidge with the Teapot Dome scandal but not a trace stuck to him.²⁸

The press, which had belittled Coolidge during his vice-presidency, now helped build up his public image. Coolidge said very little, but newspaper reporters must have news. "So we grasped at little incidents to build up human interest stories," explained correspondent Thomas L. Stokes. At first the press pictured Coolidge as a "strong, silent man," so much so that the *Baltimore Sun's* veteran Washington correspondent Frank R. Kent accused his press corps colleagues of inflating Coolidge to make him look good. Kent compared Coolidge's "weak and watery utterances" at his press conferences with the "forceful and vigorous" dispatches that reporters produced. He charged reporters with turning a passive, indecisive chief executive into "a red-blooded, resolute, two-fisted, fighting executive, thoroughly aroused and determined." This mythical presidential image served reporters' interests by appealing to the illusions of their readers and their editors. But as time passed and it became clear that Coolidge was neither strong nor silent, newspapers shifted their emphasis to his dry wit and created a national character: "Cal." "Everyone spoke of him fondly as 'Cal.' He was one of us," observed correspondent Stokes. "He was the ordinary man incarnate." Another veteran correspondent, Delbert Clark, speculated that the press enjoyed writing, and even manufacturing, homey little stories about Coolidge because "the mounting evidence he gave of being a very small, very solemn man in a very big job, intrigued them by reason of the contradictions involved."²⁹

The presidency was far more gratifying for Coolidge than the vice-presidential years had been. He claimed to maintain as much simplicity in life as possible, clearly disliking most formal ceremonies. Yet he also enjoyed the pomp and circumstance of office, and he could not hide the pleasure on his face when the band played "Hail to the Chief." But the presidency was not always a happy time for Calvin Coolidge. In July 1924, he was devastated by the death of his son, Calvin, Jr. In playing lawn tennis on the White House South Grounds, the boy had raised a blister on his toe which resulted in blood poisoning. "In his suffering he was asking me to make him well. I could not," Coolidge remarked. "When he went the power and the glory of the Presidency went with him."³⁰

Coolidge was never an innovative or active president. He was largely uninterested in foreign policy. Embracing a laissez-faire philosophy opposed to government intervention, he had no bold domestic programs but carried on the policies begun under Harding. As he had throughout his political life, he felt more comfortable blocking legislation that he opposed than he did in proposing new measures. Thus, he vetoed such legislation as the soldiers' bonus, the McNary-Haugen farm bills, and Senator Norris' efforts to develop water power in the Tennessee River Valley. He believed in reducing government regulation, cutting taxes, and allowing business to operate with as little restraint as possible. His presidency coincided with a period of tremendous economic prosperity, for which he reaped full credit. The stock market soared, although an investigation by the Senate Banking and Currency Committee a few years later concluded that fully half of the fifty billion dollars worth of stocks sold during the 1920s had been "undesirable or worthless." His secretary of commerce, Herbert Hoover, repeatedly urged Coolidge to increase federal controls on private banking and stock trading practices. (Coolidge could barely hide his distaste for his active, energetic commerce secretary, whom he mocked as "The Wonder Boy.") But the government continued its "hands-off policies" under Coolidge's dictum that "the business of America is business." Coolidge left the presidency in March of 1929. By November the stock market had crashed, taking the Coolidge prosperity with it. By the time he died in January 1933, the nation was paralyzed in the worst depression of its history. Although his successor Herbert Hoover bore the weight of blame for that depression, historians have found Calvin Coolidge culpable of contributory neglect.³¹

Calvin Coolidge never made any pretensions to greatness. "It is a great advantage to a President and a major source of safety to the country, for him to know that he is not a great man," he recorded in his *Autobiography*. That seems the most fitting epitaph for the man.³²

Notes:

1. Claude M. Fuess, *Calvin Coolidge: The Man from Vermont* (Boston, 1940), p. 5; William Allen White, *A Puritan in Babylon: The Story of Calvin Coolidge* (New York, 1938).
2. Calvin Coolidge, *The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge* (New York, 1929), pp. 99, 174; White, p. vii.
3. Donald R. McCoy, *Calvin Coolidge, The Quiet President* (Lawrence, KS, 1988), p. 8.
4. Coolidge, p. 71.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 83-99.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
7. Fuess, pp. 107-8.
8. Coolidge, p. 107.
9. Gifford Pinchot to Lady Jonstone, November 9, 1914, Gifford Pinchot Papers, Library of Congress.
10. Coolidge, p. 141.
11. McCoy, pp. 83-94.
12. Charles Willis Thompson, *Some Presidents I Have Known and Two Near Presidents* (Indianapolis, 1929), pp. 327-29, 361; Coolidge, p. 148; Andrew Sinclair, *The Available Man: The Life Behind the Masks of Warren Gamaliel Harding* (New York, 1965), pp. 142-49.
13. Thompson, pp. 362-64; Fuess, pp. 234-67; Herbert F. Margulies, "Irvine L. Lenroot and the Republican Vice-Presidential Nomination of 1920," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 61 (Autumn, 1977): 21-31.
14. White, p. 214.
15. Coolidge, p. 158.
16. Fuess, p. 287; McCoy, p. 134.
17. Coolidge, pp. 161-62.
18. Irving G. Williams, *The Rise of the Vice Presidency* (Washington, 1956), p. 124.
19. McCoy, p. 136.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 134-35, 145.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 162; Coolidge, pp. 160, 173; White, p. 222; Fuess, p. 303.
22. McCoy, p. 145; White House Chief Usher Ike Hoover later wrote: "Those who saw Coolidge in a rage were simply startled. The older employees about the White House who had known [Theodore] Roosevelt used to think he raved at times, but in his worst temper he was calm compared with Coolidge." Relating the tempers of various other presidents, Hoover concluded, "It remained for Coolidge, the one who from his reputation would be least suspected, to startle the household with sparks from his anger. Many times, too, the cause was of but trifling importance. He would just work himself up to a real explosion." Irwin Hood (Ike) Hoover, *Forty-Two Years in the White House* (Boston, 1934), p. 233.
23. Margulies, p. 25. See Chapter 28 of this volume, "Thomas R. Marshall," pp. 11-13.
24. McCoy, p. 123.
25. Coolidge, pp. 163-64; George H. Haynes, *The Senate of the United States: Its History and Practice* (Boston, 1938), 1:225, 228-29.
26. Coolidge, pp. 174-75; George F. Sparks, ed. *A Many-Colored Toga: The Diary of Henry Fountain Ashurst* (Tucson, AZ, 1962), pp. 211, 223.
27. Thompson, pp. 354-55.
28. McCoy, p. xv; John D. Hicks, *The Republican Ascendancy, 1921-1933* (New York, 1960), p. 81.
29. Thomas L. Stokes, *Chip Off My Shoulder* (Princeton, NJ, 1940), pp. 135-41; Donald A. Ritchie, *Press Gallery: Congress and the Washington Correspondents* (Cambridge, MA, 1991), p. 210; Delbert Clark, *Washington Dateline* (New York, 1941), pp. 62-66.
30. White, p. 413; Coolidge, p. 190.
31. Stokes, p. 138; Donald A. Ritchie, "The Pecora Wall Street Expose," in *Congress Investigates: A Documented History, 1792-1974*, ed. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., and Roger Bruns, (New York, 1975), pp. 2555-56; David

Burner, *Herbert Hoover: A Public Life* (New York, 1979), pp. 244-45; William E. Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-32* (Chicago, 1958), p. 246.
32. Coolidge, p. 173.