

Smoldering ashes at the Capitol

There is an old black and white photo in the Oregon State Capitol café, located in the basement of the building, and it has always spoken to me.

Located off in a non-descript place near dining tables along the wall, it shows the old capitol building engulfed in flames. I can almost feel the heat from the 1935 photo, but maybe that's because of my perspective. I operate in a political environment. To me, sometimes it really does feel — metaphorically, like the capitol is burning to the ground of course.

The current capitol building dates to 1938, and is only the most recent version. You see, Oregon's capitol has had a bit of a fire problem. The April 25, 1935, inferno was the second time in Oregon history that the capitol building was destroyed by fire. In 1855, a building constructed specifically to be the territorial capitol had also burned. There was also a fire in 2008. That one was quickly put out.

I am not a fan of the of 1938 building, erected after the old one burned. It was designed in an art deco style by New York architects Trowbridge & Livingston, with a cylindrical dome and an "Oregon Pioneer" statue on top.

The capitol hosts heated debates over our most vital issues. That was the case in 2022, when one-party rule rammed agricultural overtime down the throats of the agricultural community. Passions were high, debate was heated, but in the end, the Oregon Legislature did not choose a moderate path. It missed its opportunity to help both farms and farmworkers.

Roosevelt the conservationist

Theodore Roosevelt is often considered the "conservation president." He frequently used his authority to protect wildlife and public lands. He signed a law passed by Congress to create the United States Forest Service (USFS), under which there are now 154 national forests. When the 1906 American Antiquities Act was passed, he established 18 national monuments.

One of his signature achievements was in 1902, right here in Oregon, with the creation of Crater Lake National Park.

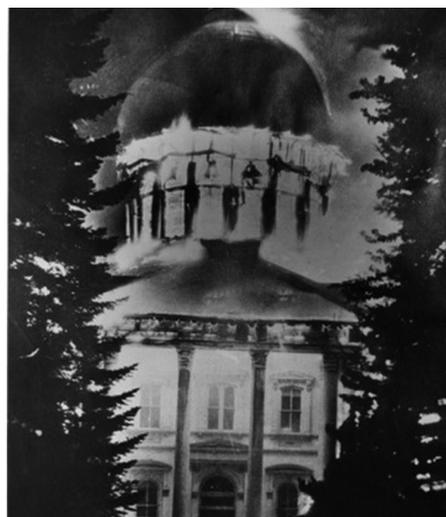
Roosevelt is remembered as our youngest president. While serving as governor of New York, he ran for vice president and won, but only served in the job for 194 days. He became president on September 14, 1901, after the assassination of President William McKinley.

Go West, Mr. President

In 1903, Roosevelt visited Oregon as part of an eight-week, 25-state tour of the American West. He gave a total of 263 speeches in his five and a half weeks of public appearances — that's seven or eight per day on average.

Almost 22 years before the infamous day the Oregon State Capitol would burn down, on May 21, 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt stepped off a train onto the platform at Salem's old railroad depot and frenetically toured a series of locations that would be unrecognizable to the public today. His final stop was the state capitol. Reports at the time described a capitol quite different in appearance, with a round copper dome and ornate façade. On the front steps of the capitol, a huge platform 15 feet above the ground was constructed in preparation for Roosevelt's presidential visit.

Roosevelt was passionate about accountability, character and understanding our fellow citizen. The nation still was mend-



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ing the deep wounds of the Civil War, and still managing a fundamental transition into an industrial economic age. The president had a high opinion of Oregon, saying that "a good westerner is a good American."

Roosevelt firmly believed that regardless of location, all Americans should believe in the unity and greatness of this country.

Civics, civility, and common sense

Teddy Roosevelt was an imperfect man and president, but he was prescient about several things, one in particular: "The more you know about the past, the better prepared you are for the future." History helps us to understand change and how the society we live in came to be. It explores the past, which causes the present, and so the future.

Sometimes it feels like political agendas by the unions have, like a fire, stripped our capitol building down to scarred outside walls and the dome's metal frame. Though the fire of 2022 may be doused, embers and smoke permeate the air.

Each time the Oregon Legislature meets, they should keep care for the institution in mind, not to mention listening to real people rather than paid union lobbyists. The Oregon Way of compromise and civility can and must prevail.

The OAN is blessed with common sense voices. Every spot on the political spectrum is accounted for in the membership, but all stand behind an association dedicated to helping small and large growers, greenhouses and retailers, industry vendors and associate members alike. Our voice must be the one who first puts out the fire, so we can rebuild decency and common sense back into the political process. We must understand the past to guide us into the future. ©