Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
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Rye, New York
Speech at Philmont, N. Y., May 30, 1912
This is a Decoration Day Speech delivered by the President in 1911 or 1912.

[Philmont, N.Y., May 30, 1912]

R.L.
It has been said that the past is helpful to the present only only as an inspiration for the future. I never see a gathering of this kind on a day set aside as a Memorial of Past without turning unconsciously to the days to come. It is a good thing for our nation to have certain days like this to commemorate the greatest men and the greatest deeds of our past; it is a good thing for us who are young to see faces before you who have helped to make us what we are. It is the highest honor due to speak before you who have been spared to us today as living reminders of that great past, as living guides to a great future.

For as the years go by I like to think that Memorial Day will be an ever increasing factor for the good of our country. It will and it must take on for the generations yet unborn a quality of sacred consecration which
will strengthen our children's arms to deal with the problem that are yet to come.

To you men of the Grand Army, to you men and women who have faced those days half a century ago, to you who went to the front and fought and endured, and to you who at home helped with almost equal courage and suffering and spirit this Day is first of all a Day of Reverence, a Day for which you are of right entitled to

Most of Devote & Memories, to the solemn Tribute to those who have gone before, and to struggles of the past in which you have worthily borne your share.

This is your day, but I like to think and I know that you would like those of us who are young to think that it is our Day too — but that is why I say that this Day is going to become greater each year.
In 1783, when the Treaty was signed by which Great Britain acknowledged the independence of her 13 colonies, her forefathers without doubt be


ferred that independence had been won and an independent nation been born for all time, without question.

But it took long years of humiliation of our country on the high seas, long years of insults at the hands of
Theodore of other nations to show us that a Second War for Independence must be fought - and as just as the Revolution gave the Thirteen colonies freedom from the Crown of England, so the War of 1812 was needed to make us definitely an independent nation.

Our grandfathers believed in 1815 that the final perfecting step has been successfully taken, but we know today that long years had to elapse, long years of internal dimensions of the wild coining of wild cats - a score and another war and the gathering of them all must with the fighting, before the land could become a perfect whole, a perfect body in which the motion of every limb bore a definite relation to the motion of every other part.

My mother's family came from
New England, and there the War was
conceived upon fundamentally as a war
to free the Slaves — In the South it
was largely regarded as a War to
end the Sovereignty of the States, a
War to give dangerous powers to a
Disputed Central Government. But we
today looking back, whether we come
from the North or from the South can
read more truly, and we know today
that the War of Half a Century ago
should be called The War for The
Union.

That is the Title by which it will
go down into History. It should not be
called a Civil War, it should not be
called the Rebellion. It was greater
than that, it was more fundamental
and far reaching — it was truly a
Trial by Fire from which a Series
of Sections emerged welded into
A perfect whole — It has taken
Time to heal the wounds, Time to
Smooth off the rough edges left by
the battle, but thank God the Union
has been accomplished today and you
who fought are rejoicing to see the
day.

These are the greatest feature we
look back to — and as we study them
we learn how the men of the
Revolution and of the Second War
for Independence, and the men of
the War for the Union carried themselves
when those crises came. We learn
what Patriotism meant, what privation
and suffering meant, what good at.
Zanship called for. We read that
Two million men were under arms,
that another two million were at
home directly furnishing those necessary
victims of war; that the women Too...
An almost equally important part, that scarcely a family in the land that did not lose a father or a brother.

And we come at last to realize in a measure the devotion, the self-sacrifice and the moral courage which were of necessity called forth if the Cause was to be won. We can realize at least in part what Washington passed through at Valley Forge and what Lincoln endured in the dark days of 61 and 62. And we can realize too in part what many a private endured in the towns of the March to Quebec and in the Campaign of the Wilderness.

There said that Memorial Day will grow in importance to the Nation, because of its lessons and memory. And I say this because those lessons...
And memories are very necessary to our future.

Today we are in times of peace; but those concepts and memories are just as important now as in times of war.

It has been perhaps the tendency of the American people to procrastinate in dealing with its problems.
The Senate of
The State of New York
Albany