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**Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”**

**The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945**

**Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension**

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**File No. 31**

**1914 August 1**

**Reading, PA**

August 1, 1914

[Reading, Pennsylvania]

FDR Speech File

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Copy of speech of Franklin D. Roosevelt,  
Assistant Secretary of the Navy, at Reading, Pa.

There are a number of cities having relics of the MAINE, but few have as fine a memento of that ship as the City of Reading.

In certain cases controversies have arisen over the distribution of these relics, some of which are amusing, as in the case of a town in Ohio, which after making strenuous efforts to be given the Captain's bathtub as a souvenir, became so sensitive to the many jests made at its expense that they asked permission to return it. Fortunately, a neighboring town was not so sensitive, and the bathtub still holds an honorable position in Ohio.

As is well known, the Battleship MAINE was blown up about half-past nine at night on February 15, 1898.

As nine o'clock is the sailors' bed time all the world over, taps had sounded but shortly before, and those of the crew who were not on watch were asleep in their hammocks. The explosion took place in the forward part of the ship where most of the crew were quartered, and 258 enlisted men and 2 officers were killed. The entire forward part of the ship was blown off, and fell over on its side, while the remainder of the ship rapidly filled and sank.

The MAINE was not at anchor at the time of the explosion, but moored to a buoy. Consequently, all six of the MAINE'S anchors were on board at the time, and the four largest anchors were carried down with the wreck of the bow.

She carried six anchors, designated as follows: Two bowers, weighing about 10,000 pounds each, which were the anchors ordinarily used, and were carried one on each side of the bow.

Next to these came the two sheet anchors of approximately the same size and intended to be used in addition to the bowers when necessary to ride out a gale.

There were also two smaller anchors, one called the stream anchor of about 3,500 pounds, and one, the stern anchor, of 2,800 pounds.

The work of removing certain portions of the wreck was interrupted by the outbreak of the Spanish War, and further efforts of recovery were not resumed until nine years later, but, it was not until 1912, or 14 years after the disaster, that the wreck was finally towed out to sea and sunk.

In the process of raising the wreck, it was found that certain parts were so deeply buried in the mud as to make recovery impossible, and among these articles were most of the anchors.

The anchor now in Reading, however, was recovered and was sent to the Navy Yard at Key West, Florida. From Key West the anchor, together with a gun and two pumps which had also been recovered, were shipped to the Navy Yard, Norfolk, Virginia, on the Naval Collier CAESAR, where they arrived on April 30, 1913.

The CAESAR being unable to proceed up the Potomac, these

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relics were loaded on a barge and towed by the Naval Tug HERCULES to the Navy Yard, Washington, where they were stowed until the anchor was asked for by Mr. Stratton, the Mayor of Reading, and at the solicitation of Mr. Rothermel the Department granted the request and ordered the anchor shipped to that city.

It has come to my ears that certain persons, who must have had either a strongly perverted sense of humor or a malicious design to circulate a falsehood, have suggested that the National Government has deliberately attempted to perpetrate a fraud on the City of Reading by sending it an anchor which was not one of the anchors of the MAINE. I have briefly outlined the history of the anchor that is being dedicated today in the City of Reading. There is, of course, absolutely no question that this anchor was on the MAINE at the time she was blown up in Havana Harbor; that it was raised from the wreck fourteen years afterwards, taken to Key West, Florida, thence to Norfolk, Virginia; from Norfolk to Washington, and thence to its present resting place. Its history is complete and absolutely authenticated, but I cannot refrain from suggesting my disappointment that there can exist in any community people so small as to ~~show~~ allow personal or political jealousies to influence them so far that they publicly doubt the honesty of the National Government.

It so happens that a few years ago I had the honor of being a member of the upper House of the New York State Legislature. As such I had an opportunity of becoming pretty well acquainted with the workings of a State government. I can assure you that I saw enough of that State government to convince me that there was a vast amount of room for improvement, both in its honesty and in its efficiency. Naturally, also, I have read and heard much about the State Government of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and it is not going too far to say that the sentiment which I have expressed about the government of my own State could be applied with at least equal force to the government of this State. But, I can also say this: Since I came to Washington in March, 1913, I have been every day struck by the fact that the ~~standards of Albany and of Harrisburg~~ standards of Albany and of Harrisburg are by no means the standards of Washington, for in the National Capital I have found on the part of the members of the Administration a sincere and successful desire to manage and maintain the Government of the Nation for the sole benefit of the people who go to make up that nation.

There have been two kinds of successful politics devised in our system of government up to the present time. The first is the kind which seeks to build up party strength by obtaining for

that party power based on the personal domination of a few men and the perpetuation in places of authority of these few men and their own appointed successors. That has been in the past, we must admit it to our shame, a successful kind of politics, but the day of its success has just about come to an end. The Administration in Washington believes in a very different kind of successful politics. It goes back to the fundamental theory that the success of a government depends upon the freely expressed consent of the governed. It is seeking to handle the affairs of the Nation that no man, no group and no class shall have privilege to the exclusion of any other man or group or class to the end that there may be equal opportunity for all. The Administration believes that the National Government should be conducted for the benefit of the ninety-nine per cent. and not, as has sometimes been the case in the past, for the benefit of the one per cent. To this end there has been cooperation of the heartiest sort in the Capital of the country -- cooperation in the three great branches of the Government, the Judicial, The Executive and the Legislative -- and, while I have no desire to enter into a discussion of any political questions on an occasion of this kind, it is only fair to state that the help of some of the Representatives in Congress from this State has been a really great factor in bringing to a successful conclusion constructive legislation designed to remedy existing evils. Congressman Rothermel, you all know, and I need not say that his work in Congress has been worthy of the best traditions of his State, and further that the magnificent powers of Representative Mitchell Palmer have been of the greatest possible service, not only to the people of his district and to the people of his State but also to the people of the whole Nation. His influence has been more than a local one -- it has been consistently and successfully applied on national lines in a hundred different ways.

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The MAINE was not at anchor at the time of the ex-

plosion, but was moored to a buoy. Consequently all six of the MAINE'S anchors were on board at the time and the four largest anchors were carried down with the wreck of the bow.

She carried six anchors, designated as follows: two bowers weighing about 10,000 pounds each, which were the anchors ordinarily used, and were carried one on each side of the bow.

Next to these came the two sheet anchors of approximately the same size and intended to be used in addition to the bowers when necessary to ride out a gale.

There were also two smaller anchors, one called the stream anchor of about 3500 pounds and one, the stern anchor, of 2800 pounds.

The work of removing certain portions of the wreck was interrupted by the outbreak of the Spanish War and further efforts of recovery were not resumed until nine years later, but, it was not until 1912, or 14 years after the disaster, that the wreck was finally towed out to sea and sunk.

In the process of raising the wreck it was found that certain parts were so deeply buried in the mud as to make recovery impossible, and among these articles were most of the anchors.

The anchor now in Reading however was recovered and was sent to the Navy Yard at Key West, Fla. From Key West the anchor, together with a gun and two pumps which had also been recovered, were shipped to the Navy Yard, Norfolk, Va., on the Naval Collier CAESAR, where they arrived on April 30, 1913.

The CAESAR being unable to proceed up the Potomac, these

relics were loaded on a barge and towed by the Naval Tug HERCULES to the Navy Yard, Washington, where they were stowed until the anchor was asked for by Mr. Stratton, the Mayor of Reading, and at the solicitation of Mr. Rothermel the Department granted the request and ordered the anchor shipped to that city.



## Speeches

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Speech at presentation of an Anchor from the Battleship *Maine* to the city of Reading, PA,  
August 1, 1914.

See: FDR's Assistant Secretary of Navy Papers, Scrapbook 2, page 154.

RJC  
1-18-49