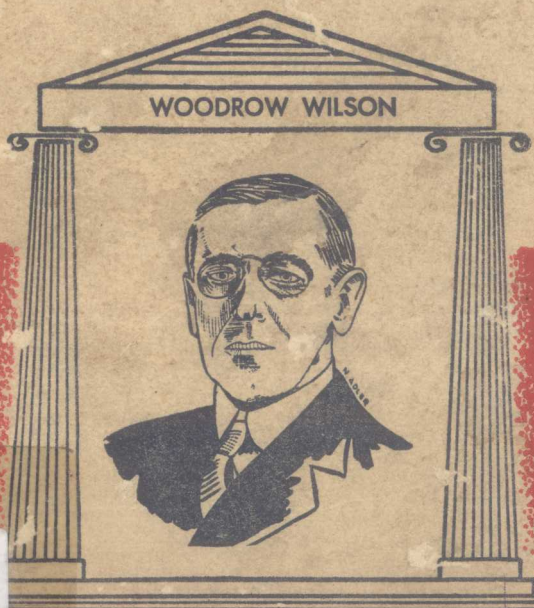


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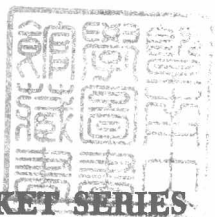
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DOCKET SERIES

Volume 4

Oceana Publications

New York City

1956

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DEDICATED TO THE
MEMORY OF
MY MOTHER AND FATHER

Printed in U. S. A.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS TO PUBLISHERS

The editor extends appreciation to the following authors, publishers and periodicals for granting special permission to reprint passages from the books and articles indicated below, copyrights for which were originally secured by them:

Alfred A. Knopf, from Richard Hofstadter's *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (1949); *The Atlantic Monthly*, for Wilson's article entitled "The Road Away From Revolution" (August 1923); Bobbs-Merrill Company, from Edith Bolling Wilson's *My Memoir* (1939); and from the *War Memoirs of Robert Lansing* (1935); Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., from Ray Stannard Baker's *Woodrow Wilson, Life and Letters* (1927-39), and from Joseph P. Tumulty's *Woodrow Wilson As I Know Him* (1921); *Foreign Affairs*, from Charles Seymour's article "Woodrow Wilson in Perspective" (January 1956); Harcourt, Brace and Company, from John Maynard Keynes' *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1920, copyright renewed 1948 by Lydia Lopokova Keynes); Harper & Brothers, from Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd's *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (1925-27), from Gerald W. Johnson's *Woodrow Wilson—The Unforgettable Figure Who Has Returned to Haunt Us* (1944), and from Arthur S. Link's *Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era* (1954); the Johns Hopkins Press, from Charles Seymour's *American Diplomacy and the World War* (1934); the Macmillan Company, from Thomas A. Bailey's two books, *Woodrow Wilson and the Lost Peace* and *Woodrow Wilson and the Great Betrayal*; the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* from Wilson's "Princeton For the Nation's Service" (1902); the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, from David Loth's *The Story of Woodrow Wilson* (1956) and for the addresses by John Foster Dulles (1948) and Bernard M. Baruch (1955); the Yale University Press, from Charles Seymour's *Woodrow Wilson and the World War* (1921).

P R E F A C E

In this little volume I have attempted to present a picture of Woodrow Wilson as he appeared to some of his contemporaries and as he appears today in the brief perspective of thirty years.

Choice of materials—and they are, of course, voluminous—has been governed chiefly by three criteria. I have tried to select passages which throw light on Wilson's character and personality, which mark turning points in his career and which highlight his place in history. For the most part, Wilson himself speaks in these pages; yet I have included also passages from those who have attempted to delineate his personality and evaluate his achievements. Editorial notes are designed to fill in gaps and furnish leads to other sources.

Perhaps a word of warning is needed. No one is more fully aware than the editor that the effort to present a true picture of a complex personality is at once difficult and elusive. The lights and shadows that play upon the portrait not only reflect judgments of time and place but also mirror the moods and convictions and hidden assumptions of those who seek to evaluate it. This seems particularly true of Wilson for he was no ordinary man and he lived in no ordinary time. It is only natural, therefore, that his character and personality and his role in helping to shape history should continue to provoke controversy and to elicit the need for repeated assessment.

It is hoped that the present volume, inspired by the one hundredth anniversary of Wilson's birth, will help the reader better to understand the man and his significance for our own time.

The editor owes a special debt of gratitude to Professor Hardy C. Dillard, of the Law Faculty of the University of Virginia, for generously and patiently

serving as the editor's constant and severest critic throughout the preparation of this volume. It is a pleasure, as well, to acknowledge appreciation to other members of the faculty and colleagues at the University of Virginia: to President Darden for contributing the concluding essay; to Dean of the Law School F. D. G. Ribble and Professor Leslie H. Buckler, Chairman of the Law Library Committee, for their encouragement; to Professor Robert K. Gooch, head of the University's Department of Political Science, for directing the editor to helpful sources; to the University's Librarian Emeritus Harry Clemons, who was Reference Librarian at Princeton during Wilson's presidency there, and whose interest and suggestions have been graciously extended; and finally to the members of the staff of the University's Alderman Library and to my own immediate associates on the Law Library staff, whose individual assistance has reinforced my pride in being one among them. Thanks are due also to Professors of History Thomas A. Bailey, of Stanford University, and Arthur S. Link, of Northwestern University, and to the Woodrow Wilson Birthplace Foundation, especially its Vice-President, Mrs. Herbert McK. Smith, of Staunton, Virginia, for their suggestions and assistance. Mrs. Woodrow Wilson has been extremely gracious in extending her encouragement and granting permission to reprint material, and to her the editor records sincere appreciation.

F. F.

Charlottesville, Va.
February 15, 1956

WILSON'S LIFE AND WORK

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH — BY THE EDITOR

For the convenience of the reader the editor has attempted to highlight some of the critical aspects of Wilson's life and career which will be elaborated upon throughout this volume. A detailed chronology will be found on page 275.

I

RISE TO PROMINENCE

Of Scotch-Irish descent, Woodrow Wilson, christened Thomas Woodrow Wilson, was born in Staunton, Virginia, on December 28, 1856, the third child and first son of the Reverend Dr. Joseph Ruggles Wilson and Jessie Woodrow Wilson. He was graduated from Princeton University in 1879 after a brief attendance at Davidson College in North Carolina. He studied law at the University of Virginia and, following a brief and uneventful practice in Atlanta, he decided to continue his study and writing, entering Johns Hopkins University in 1883. He published his Ph.D. thesis, *Congressional Government*, an analysis of the federal legislative system, in 1885.

That same year Wilson was married in Savannah to the daughter of a minister, Ellen Louise Axson, and became a professor at Bryn Mawr College where he remained until 1888, going then to teach at Wesleyan University until 1890 when he became Professor of Jurisprudence at Princeton. Elected President of Princeton in 1902, he introduced a program of reform that established him as an outstanding educational statesman. An effective lecturer, he became a prominent spokesman of Democratic conservatism.

In 1906 George Harvey, editor of *Harper's Weekly*, who, with other influential New Jersey politicians, had

become impressed with Wilson's inaugural speech as President of Princeton, began efforts to make him the Democratic presidential nominee in 1908 and 1912. The defeat of one of Wilson's programs at Princeton culminating, after an early period of brilliant success, in the controversy between Wilson and Andrew F. West, Dean of the Graduate School, and Wilson's nomination and successful campaign for the governorship of New Jersey, his establishment of control over the Democratic party in the State of New Jersey, and his remarkable reform program as Governor, along with Harvey's efforts, combined to bring Wilson prominently to the public's notice as the 1912 campaign approached. Before the election, however, Harvey went over to the opposition, having been rebuffed rather bluntly by Wilson who was to lose many of his friends at various periods in his career because of the unfortunate characteristic of speaking too frankly. Harvey, because of his alignment with Thomas Fortune Ryan, was popularly accused of representing "the money interest." When he asked Wilson whether he would feel embarrassed by his continued support, Wilson replied in the affirmative. On the other hand, William Jennings Bryan, for whom Wilson had earlier revealed a strong dislike, was to join Wilson's followers as the opening of the convention approached. It was at this time that Colonel E. M. House, who was to play such a prominent role later in Wilson's life, as his close friend and adviser, was joining the group of Wilson admirers.

By the time the Democratic convention assembled in Baltimore, the Republicans had split, with Taft as their nominee and Theodore Roosevelt heading a third party. Bryan threw his support to Wilson who received the Democratic nomination after forty-six ballots. When the election was over Wilson had polled a little over 6,000,000, out of 15,000,000 votes, but a landslide in the electoral college where he received 435 out of 531 votes made him the President of the United States. On March 4, 1913, with his wife and three daughters he moved into the White House at age

56. His rise to political prominence had been swift and spectacular.¹

This rise was followed by a remarkable capacity, demonstrated early in his administration, of securing Congressional consent for his legislative program. Indeed it has been frequently stated that, with the exception of Jefferson, no President could boast of so great a success in this respect.²

Having asserted in the campaign that he was "more concerned about human rights than about property rights," the new President plagued with poor health in earlier days, actually found the strain of office invigorating. With his "single track mind," to which he so often referred, and his unusual powers of concentration, he compiled an impressive record of reforms that gave the era the name, "The New Freedom." The Federal Reserve System, the Underwood-Simmons Tariff, the Federal Trade Commission, a farm credit program, and labor legislation were among the achievements of an energetic President fully in control of Congress.

"It would be the irony of fate if my administration had to deal chiefly with foreign affairs," Wilson remarked just before going to the White House,³ yet from the first week of his administration he was confronted with one crisis after another in foreign affairs. Discussing the administration's policy at this time, Arthur Link states that both Wilson and Bryan were ignorant of and indifferent to foreign affairs, that they were fundamentally moralists and missionaries "obsessed with the concept of America's mission in the world" and motivated by "the ambition to do justly, to advance the cause of international peace and to give other peoples the blessings of democracy and Christianity."⁴

Early opportunity to exercise this "missionary diplomacy" was offered when troubles arose in Mexico and the Caribbean. In his efforts to deal with Huerta, the Mexican bandit-dictator, Wilson's earlier policy of "watchful waiting" was followed by intervention which took the form of a blockade of the coast, occu-

pation of Vera Cruz and an expedition to capture Francisco Villa, another bandit revolutionist who at one time had been friendly toward the administration's policies.

Following Huerta's fall and the military occupation of Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, Wilson's policy of the good neighbor was incorporated in the Pan-American pact binding the republics of the Western Hemisphere to mutual guarantees of independence and territorial integrity. Despite its failure, this pact did point toward the League of Nations and the "good neighbor policy" of later years.

II

FAMILY LIFE

Two weddings had taken place in the White House within a little over a year after the Wilsons moved in. There were three Wilson daughters, Margaret, Jessie, and Eleanor. Jessie was married to Francis B. Sayre in November 1913 and Eleanor was married to Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo in May, 1914. Mrs. McAdoo who makes her home in California is the only daughter still living.

Tragedy struck shortly thereafter in the summer of 1914 with the death of Wilson's wife, Ellen Axson Wilson, who was never too happy over having to play a part in public life but who, as a quiet counselor, sustained her husband through many problems at Princeton, Trenton, and during the early days in the White House.

It was a warmly hospitable household over which Mrs. Wilson presided. A gentle person interested in art and poetry and devoted to her husband and family, she made the home at Princeton—first in Library Place, later at "Prospect," and thereafter in Cleveland Lane—though not luxurious, a source of comfort and

pleasure and a delightfully distracting background for a hard working professor-lecturer-writer, and later President of the University, and for her three daughters as well as a number of in-laws of both Wilson and herself.

Stockton Axson, Mrs. Wilson's brother, became a member of the household when the Wilsons were at Wesleyan and again when he joined the Princeton faculty. Wilson's father, Dr. Joseph R. Wilson, to whom the son was so ardently devoted, came to join the household at the death of Wilson's mother. The constant and extensive hospitality was maintained on a modest income yet gracefully by Mrs. Wilson, and the family circle was indeed a happy one. The professor, austere in many respects, enjoyed his evenings and entertained all the members of the household with his ready wit and singing and playing the piano. Wilson had told his wife soon after their engagement that he had gained confidence in himself for the first time when he knew that she loved him and he repeated that statement to his wife frequently throughout their life together. Mrs. Wilson's efforts in making a home at the White House were no less effective and, though she assumed her role there reluctantly, she did it well. When Ellen Wilson died on August 6, 1914, Wilson was indeed a stricken man, perceptibly bearing his deep grief only by burying himself in pressing affairs of state.

Wilson wrote to Colonel House on August 18, "... the best thing possible for me is to stick to my task. The matters I have to consider are imperative. They compel my attention and my great safety lies in having my attention absolutely fixed elsewhere than upon myself. . . ."⁵

The growing holocaust in Europe was the matter upon which the President had to fix his attention. Germany had invaded France and Russia had invaded Germany. Two weeks later, on August 19, the President made his appeal to the nation to be neutral in action and in thought. But the latter was hardly possible with the country teeming with so-called

"hyphenates"—German-Americans and Irish-Americans, and the pro-Allies groups. Voices of every shade of opinion were clamoring advice to and criticism of the administration.

Neutrality became increasingly difficult, confronted, as it was, with the British blockade of the Germans and the Germans' submarine blockade of the British. When the *Lusitania* was torpedoed on May 7, 1915, despite frenzied protests over the loss of 1,100 lives, including 128 Americans, Wilson—still not convinced that the American people were ready for war—dispatched a series of his now historic notes to Germany, the second of which Bryan felt so certainly would bring on war, that he resigned. Criticised as "the man in the White House" with the "do-nothing policy," lonely and burdened with almost insurmountable problems of state and wrestling with his conscience, Wilson faced one of the most difficult periods in his life.

In the spring of 1915 the Wilson daughters sought to bring to their harassed father whatever relaxation might be snatched from the perplexing daily ordeals. Through them and a cousin, Helen Bones, he came to know their friend, Mrs. Edith Bolling Galt. A native of Virginia and a sympathetic and cheerful woman in her early forties, the widow of a former Washington business man who had traveled extensively in Europe since the death of her husband, Mrs. Galt's visits to the White House seemed always to add a note of cheerfulness to the otherwise dark days for the President. They met in May, were married on December 18, and in January 1916 Mrs. Wilson took her place in the White House to become the closest of all the President's political confidants, even to the not altogether unintentional exclusion of Colonel House and Joseph Tumulty, his secretary from the time he became Governor of New Jersey.

Mrs. Wilson relates that during their engagement through daily communications from Wilson she was kept informed of the affairs of state and of his anxieties

and responsibilities—"a partnership," she continues, "of thought and comradeship unbroken to the last day of his life."⁶ The mounting tension caused by the European situation meant that following their marriage, with rare exceptions, every evening was spent until well past midnight in the President's study with Wilson working at his typewriter and Mrs. Wilson sitting by. When Colonel House left for Europe in October 1917 the greatest secrecy surrounded the correspondence between him and Wilson, only the two of them and Mrs. Wilson knowing the code, and she performing the task of coding and decoding the messages for her husband. This early association with Wilson's day to day work set the stage for the more conspicuous role Mrs. Wilson was to play in her husband's last illness.

III

WORLD WAR I PERIOD

Wilson, who understood Americans' strong emotionalism over the *Lusitania* disaster, felt even more keenly the strong urge to have the United States serve in the role of mediator and three days after the sinking of the *Lusitania* he delivered one of his most pacifistic addresses, popularly known as the "Too Proud to Fight" speech, an unfortunate phrase used by Wilson and one at which many people sneered. In the same address he had also said "the example of America must be a special example . . . of peace because peace is the healing and elevating influence of the world and strife is not."⁷ This latter statement more nearly reflected Wilson's thought and intent.

At the same time Wilson was addressing notes to Germany over the *Lusitania* and as a result he secured their promise not to attack unresisting passenger ships—a pledge broken in March when a U-boat sank a

French liner, the *Sussex*, resulting in injury to several Americans. Wilson then issued an ultimatum to the effect that, unless the Germans ceased unrestricted submarine warfare, the United States would be forced to break diplomatic relations.

"He kept us out of war" was the slogan which helped to re-elect Wilson in 1916; yet he had not used the phrase and it is unlikely that he believed it. On the contrary, he realized that the United States might be drawn in at any moment. Fearing this, he had appealed to the crowds with great eloquence and urged them to exercise clear and cool thinking. Early on election night in November a Republican victory appeared so assured that some of the leading newspapers conceded to Charles Evans Hughes before midnight, but it was learned thirty-six hours later that Wilson had carried California and so the nation.

There probably exists no more revealing testimony to Wilson's staunch adherence to the principles he believed in and the lessons he taught in government than the letter he addressed to Secretary of State Lansing when he thought he would not win the election in 1916. In that letter he offered to resign the presidency and have T. R. Marshall, the Vice-President, resign with him so that the supposedly successful candidate, Charles Evans Hughes, might assume promptly the reins of government.⁸

Wilson made his first peace move on December 18, 1916. This was incorporated in a note addressed to the belligerent governments to state their war aims. He was hoping thereby to bring to bear upon them the pressure of public opinion, but neither the Germans nor the Allies were ready to bargain at this point.

Wilson, still dedicated to finding a basis for peace, on January 22, 1917, delivered before Congress his famous "Peace Without Victory" speech.⁹ As Buehrig has put it "The address . . . was indeed a far cry from the preparedness speeches of a year before. From the narrow base of maritime rights Wilson had shifted to broader foundations relating to the settlement of the war itself."¹⁰ As most historians agree, neutral