

Herbert Hoover

31st U.S. President (1874 – 1964)



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Hoover in 1919
when he was inducted
into the Century
at age 45.

Hoover was born in Iowa, where he spent his first nine years before moving to Oregon. He entered Stanford University in 1891, the first year of the new college. Hoover claimed to be the first student ever at Stanford, by virtue of having been the first person in the first class to sleep in the dormitory. He graduated in 1895 as a mining engineer.

Hoover married his Stanford sweetheart, Lou Henry, in 1899 and they had two sons, HERBERT CLARK HOOVER and Allan Henry Hoover. In 1908, he became an independent mining consultant, traveling worldwide until the outbreak of World War I. While he was in London, Germany declared war on France, and the American Consul General asked his help in getting stranded tourists home. In six weeks his committee helped 120,000 Americans return to the United States.

President WOODROW WILSON appointed Hoover head of the Food Administration after the U.S. entered the war. Following the Armistice, Hoover organized shipments of food for starving millions in central Europe, and he extended aid to famine-stricken Soviet Russia. When a critic inquired if he was not thus helping Bolshevism, Hoover retorted, "Twenty million people are starving. Whatever their politics, they shall be fed!"

After serving as Secretary of Commerce under Presidents Harding and Coolidge, Hoover became the Republican Presidential nominee in 1928 when Coolidge declined to run. Upon election, Hoover seemed particularly partial towards fellow Centurions: his Secretary of the Interior was RAY LYMON WILBUR; his Secretary of the Treasury, ANDREW MELLON, and Secretary of Commerce, ROBERT LAMONT, became members while serving in Washington. His Chief Justice was CHARLES EVANS HUGHES, with Associate Justices HARLAN STONE and EDWARD T. SANFORD. In 1932, Hoover appointed BENJAMIN N. CARDOZO to the Court.

Within months of Hoover's election the stock market crashed. In 1931, repercussions from Europe deepened the crisis and the President became the scapegoat for the Depression. He was badly defeated by FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT in 1932. In the years that followed, Hoover wrote many books, one of which he was working on when he died at 90 in New York City, a Centurion for six decades.