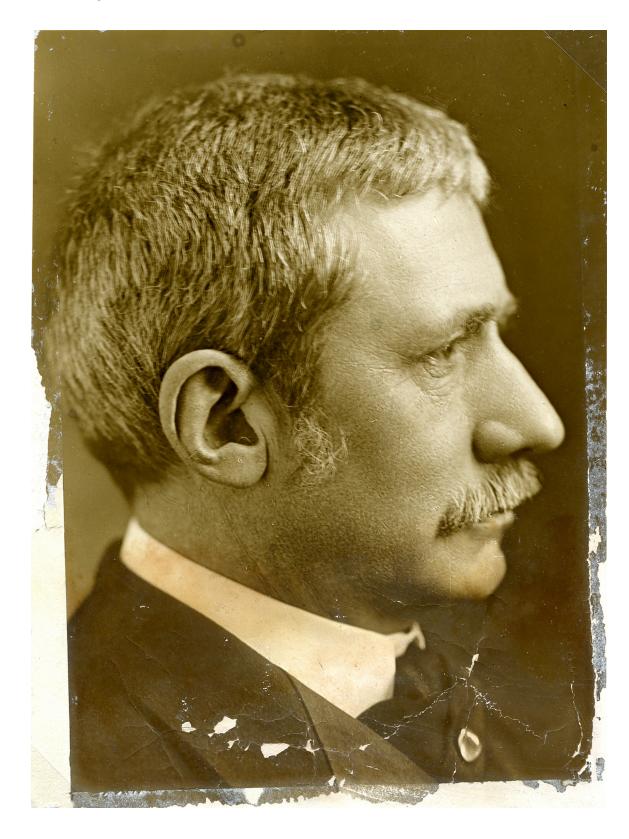# Elihu Root

Secretary of State, Nobel Laureate (1845 – 1937)

Root served as president of the Century from 1918 to 1927. At the January 1928 meeting he asked that his name be withdrawn from the slate of candidates, saying to a friend, "I have already served longer than Choate or Bigelow." "That is no fair criterion," protested the friend; "Both died in office." "Well, of course," replied Root, "that is an avenue of escape." That year, he was made the 13th honorary member of the Club. He was also a member of the Union League Club where he twice served as its president.

In his ninetieth year, after the repeal of Prohibition, he entered the Club bar with a friend and put his foot on the brass rail. "This is a step," he said, "in the right direction.'

Root was born in Clinton, New York, where his father was a professor at Hamilton College. At age 19, Elihu graduated first in his class at Hamilton before graduating from the NYU School of Law in 1867. Root married Clara Frances Wales and they had three children: Edith, who married ULYSSES S. GRANT III, ELIHU ROOT, JR. and EDWARD W. ROOT.

After 30 years in private practice, he was appointed Secretary of War by McKinley in 1899, serving till 1904 under McKinley and THEODORE ROOSEVELT. He was concerned about the new territories acquired after the Spanish-American War and worked out the procedures for turning Cuba over to the Cubans. He wrote the charter of government for the Philippines, and eliminated tariffs on goods imported to the U.S. from Puerto Rico. HENRY L. STIMSON, himself a later Secretary of War, said of Root, "no such intelligent, constructive, and vital force had occupied that post in American history."

In 1905, President Roosevelt named Root to be the Secretary of State after the death of JOHN HAY. On a tour to Latin America in 1906, Root persuaded those governments to participate in the Hague Peace Conference. He worked with Japan to establish the Root-Takahira Agreement, which limited Japanese and American naval fortifications in the Pacific.

Root served a term in the Senate from 1909 to 1915. In June 1916, he was drafted for the Republican presidential nomination but declined, stating that he was too old to bear the burden of the Presidency. The nomination went to CHARLES EVANS HUGHES, who lost the election to Democrat WOODROW WILSON.

Root's initiatives are remarkable. He helped create the Permanent Court of International Justice; he was the founding chairman of the Council on Foreign Relations; he was the first president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; he helped found the American Society of International Law; he was among the founders of the American Law Institute, and he also helped create the Hague Academy of International Law. In 1912, Root received the Nobel Peace Prize.