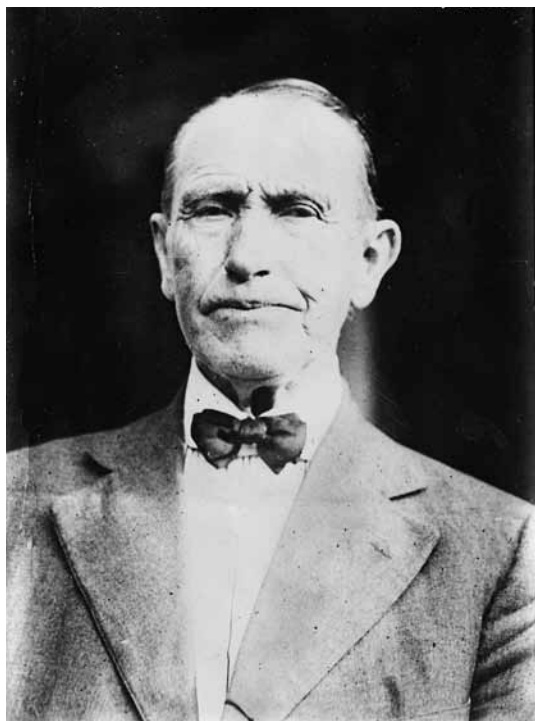


# COOLIDGE



AMITY SHLAES



#### **BORN ON THE FOURTH OF JULY.**

Calvin Coolidge came into the world on July 4, 1872, in the downstairs bedroom of a small house adjacent to his father's general store in Plymouth Notch, Vermont. Coolidge wrote of his fellow villagers: "They were a hardy, self-contained people."

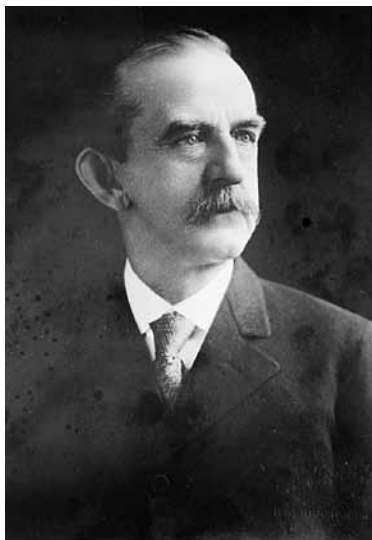
**A FATHER'S WISDOM.** From his father, John Calvin Coolidge, Sr., the president learned what he called the "fundamental idea of both private and public business." Over the course of his life John Coolidge served as merchant, town tax collector, general store operator, notary, selectman, sheriff, and member of both the Vermont House of Representatives and the State Senate. Wrote Coolidge: "If there was any physical requirement of country life which he could not perform, I do not know what it was."



**THE OUDEN.** At Amherst College in Massachusetts, an institution founded for impoverished Protestant clergy, the Vermonter initially attracted little notice and failed, at first, to be admitted to one of the numerous fraternities. Senior year, however, his debate skills drew the attention of more popular students such as Dwight Morrow. Amherst alumni, including his future employers, began to notice Coolidge as well.



**A SIMPLE RENTAL.** The Coolidges' home at 21 Massasoit Street in Northampton, Massachusetts. Home ownership was the rage when the Coolidges married in 1905. Yet the Coolidges rented their home, half of a two-family house. Their linens were purchased secondhand from the Norwood Hotel.



**LOOMING FIGURES.** Senator Murray Crane, from Coolidge's own Western Massachusetts, helped Coolidge from his early days in Northampton politics. The reticent Crane became Coolidge's mentor. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Boston and Nahant, Massachusetts, treated Coolidge as a parvenu, even when Coolidge presided over the U.S. Senate as vice president.

**A STRIKE TO END ALL STRIKES.** In 1919, when Coolidge was serving as Massachusetts governor, the Boston police affiliated with the American Federation of Labor and went on strike. Many expected the new governor to negotiate with the strikers. Their pay was low and their station houses infested with vermin.





**“THERE IS NO RIGHT TO STRIKE AGAINST THE PUBLIC SAFETY BY ANYBODY, ANYWHERE, ANY TIME.”** Coolidge at his desk during the 1919 Boston police strike. In standing up against the strikers, Coolidge upstaged President Woodrow Wilson, who was waffling on labor unrest. Coolidge’s steely resolve during the strike calmed a nervous nation. “No doubt, it was the police strike of Boston that brought me into national prominence,” Coolidge later wrote.



**AN ELECTION TO END UNCERTAINTY.** In a time of enormous budget deficits and high taxes, Warren Harding and Coolidge campaigned on the theme of “normalcy.” After Harding’s 1920 election, Congress passed a landmark budget law and tax cuts. When Harding died, Coolidge vowed to carry out Harding’s policies “to perfection.”



#### AN EDUCATED FIRST LADY.

Coolidge and his wife, Grace, casting their ballots in the 1920 presidential election shortly after the passage of the nineteenth amendment, which gave women the right to vote. Grace, who trained to teach the deaf at the Clarke School after college, was the first first lady to have graduated from a coed university.

#### "I AM FOR ECONOMY. AFTER THAT I AM FOR MORE ECONOMY."

From his first days in office, Coolidge met regularly with General Herbert Lord, the director of the Bureau of the Budget. In sustained sessions, they trimmed and cut the expenditures of the federal government. This was Coolidge's way of telling the country he would not relent until the war debts were reduced.





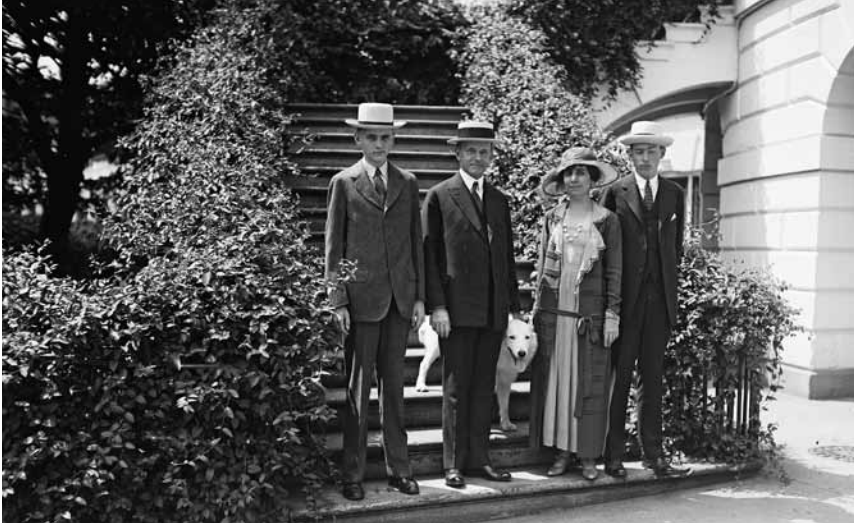
**SURPRISINGLY LOQUACIOUS.**

Congress quickly learned that “Silent Cal” was not as taciturn as alleged. The title of this cartoon is “But when he does speak, he says a mouthful.” The speech of December 1923 was the one in which he staked his presidency on tax cuts.



## A SON'S SENSE OF OFFICE.

Coolidge sent his younger son, Calvin, Jr., to work in a Massachusetts tobacco field over the summer. A fellow laborer told the boy, "If my father was president, I would not work in a tobacco field." Young Calvin responded, "If your father were my father, you would."



**BEFORE A LOSS.** Calvin Coolidge, Jr.; President Coolidge; the first lady; and John Coolidge on June 30, 1924. The day this picture was taken, Calvin, Jr., had developed a blister on his toe from playing tennis on the White House court. A week later the boy died of sepsis.



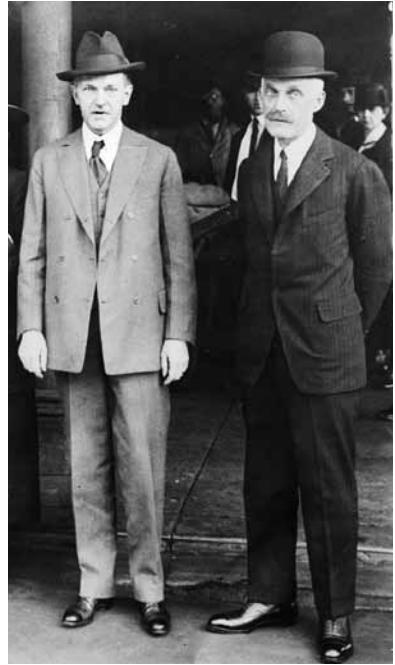
**AN OUTSTANDING VICTORY.** The swearing in of President Calvin Coolidge on March 4, 1925. Coolidge won an absolute majority of the popular vote although he faced two competitors, Democrat John W. Davis and Progressive Robert La Follette, a former Republican.





**"I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WOULD DO WITHOUT HER."** Grace, a kind extrovert, paved the way in Washington for the reserved Coolidge. Coolidge protected his wife jealously. In all matters, their friends counseled, Grace came first.

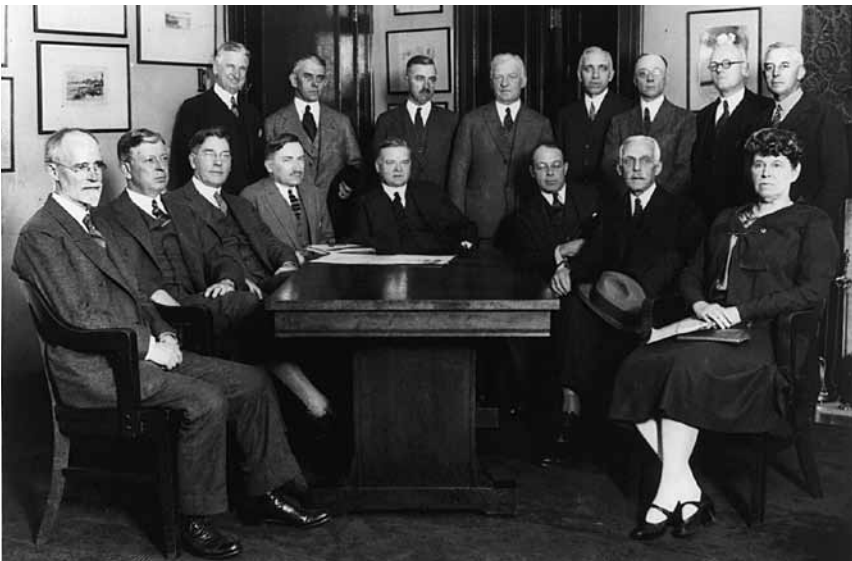
**THE ADVISER.** Coolidge with Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon. Mellon wagered that what he called scientific taxation would yield greater budget surpluses and a stronger economy. Coolidge backed Mellon in his policy experiment. Observers joked that the two reserved men conversed in pauses.



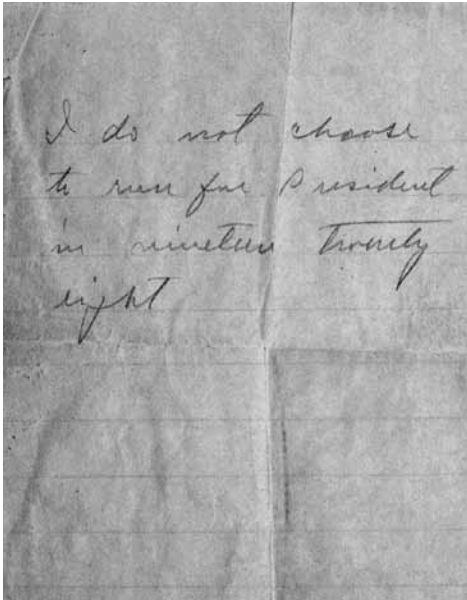
**THE AMHERST MEN.** Dwight Morrow, an old Amherst friend, in September of 1925, when he was chair of the Special Aviation Board. Another Amherst acquaintance, Harlan Fiske Stone, became Coolidge's attorney general and then Supreme Court justice.



**ALOFT.** President Coolidge speaks at a ceremony held in honor of Charles Lindbergh, after he completed his epic flight from France to America. Aviation was to Coolidge evidence of the country's future greatness and its ability to get around regulatory bottlenecks involving highways and railroads.



**CONFLICT OVER A FLOOD.** Members of Coolidge's cabinet gathered to discuss the administration's response to the disastrous Mississippi River Valley flood of 1927. Herbert Hoover, at center, advocated strong federal intervention and infrastructure spending.



**"I DO NOT CHOOSE TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT IN NINETEEN TWENTY-EIGHT."** With these historic words, Coolidge upended his party by refusing to run for office even though polls indicated he was a sure winner. This note and other copies were handed out to shocked reporters during Coolidge's 1927 stay in the Black Hills of South Dakota.



**A DIFFICULT DECISION.** Coolidge, ambivalent, at a ceremony naming him honorary chief of the Sioux Native Americans, days after his decision not to seek reelection. *Left to right:* Grace Coolidge, Calvin Coolidge, Rosebud Yellow Robe, Chief Chauncey Yellow Robe, and Henry Standing Bear. His policy of helping Indians to assimilate through education differed dramatically from his successors' treatment of Native Americans as a nation and a group.



**A PRESIDENTIAL MONUMENT.** Gutzon Borglum's model for his presidential colossus. Coolidge visited the site and endorsed Borglum's plan to sculpt past presidents into the Black Hills of South Dakota. Coolidge, however, was loath to endorse monuments to himself.



**A TEST OF CHARACTER AND FEDERALISM.** After the Mississippi flood, a flood struck the president's native Vermont. He had not gone to the Mississippi flood, and he did not go to this one, to demonstrate his commitment to the authority of a state government in an emergency. This image depicts Montpelier, the capital.



**SAVE WORDS.** The Coolidge administration went to great lengths to instill frugality in the federal government. In the spring of 1928, General Lord wrote to Coolidge to say that the placard above was placed on the desks of correspondence clerks of the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Animal Industry "with a view to reducing the number and length of letters."



**ANOTHER HISTORIC PARTNERSHIP.** After working with Andrew Mellon to pass historic tax cuts, Coolidge teamed up with Secretary of State Frank Kellogg to write the Kellogg-Briand Pact against war. Critics called the treaty a swordless sheath, but Coolidge believed its emphasis on law would foster worldwide peace.