

Hiram Johnson

1866–1945

**WHY HE MADE HISTORY** A

progressive political leader from California, Hiram Johnson enacted some of the most important political reforms and measures in that state. He organized labor, fought big business, and rallied against political corruption. He is remembered for being a champion of the people.



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-DIG-ggbain-07191]



As you read the biography below, think about the ways in which Hiram Johnson helped reform government. What kind of changes did he make as a politician?

At the turn of the twentieth century, big businesses and politicians had a great deal of power. Many industries were not yet regulated, and workers did not have many rights. Politicians often chose their friends and favorites for government positions and contracts or were bribed to do business with a particular person or company. As a result, many people across the nation began calling for reform. One of the most outspoken of these people was Hiram Johnson.

The son of Grove L. Johnson, a lawyer and Republican political leader, Hiram Johnson was born in Sacramento, California, in 1866. He enrolled in the University of California in 1884, but dropped out in 1887 to get married. He studied law under his father, and was admitted to the bar in 1888. Almost a decade later he set up his own practice in San Francisco with his brother Albert.

Johnson became a well-known lawyer when he began to work as an assistant district attorney, earning a reputation for fighting against political corruption. He attracted national attention in 1908 when his boss was shot in the courtroom while trying to prosecute a case involving city officials who took bribes. Johnson took over and won the case. California's progressive Republicans asked him to run for governor.

Johnson accepted the nomination. He won the election and became governor in 1911. During his two terms, he passed several important measures, including those involving initiatives, referenda, and recall. These reforms allowed the voters to vote for or overturn many political actions. Johnson also approved legislation that regulated public utility corporations. He enacted child labor laws and election reforms, too. The work Johnson

The Progressives

Biography

did in California attracted national attention. In 1916, he ran for the U.S. Senate and won.

During his time as a California senator, Johnson became known as an isolationist. He opposed the United States entering World War I and joining the League of Nations. He thought the organization would send Americans into foreign wars. Later, and for the same reason, he was also against membership in the United Nations.

Hiram Johnson brought great changes to this country. His political career spanned two of the most important eras of political change in the United States—those of progressivism and the New Deal. Johnson made three unsuccessful bids for president, but he remained active in the Senate for 30 years, until his death in 1945.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. **Recall** What were some of the reforms Hiram Johnson made during his political career?

2. **Analysis** What did it mean to be a political reformer in the early 1900s? Do you think reform was necessary at that time? Explain.

Victoria Claflin Woodhull

1838–1927



WHY SHE MADE HISTORY Victoria Claflin Woodhull was the first woman to run a stock brokerage firm, and the first woman to run for president of the United States.



As you read the biography below, think about the ways in which Victoria Woodhull was a pioneer. How did she pave the way for women of future generations?



© Bettmann/CORBIS

In the late 1800s, women began entering the workforce in numbers greater than ever before. Some women attended college and began looking for challenging careers outside the home. Many jobs, however, were not open to women. Nevertheless, some women refused to let their gender stand in the way of success.

An original thinker and reformer, Victoria Claflin Woodhull was born into a poor family in 1838. At 15 she married Dr. Canning Woodhull and had two children. After working in the theater, Woodhull joined her sister, Tennessee, running a traveling medicine and fortune-telling show. Woodhull was a very spiritual person and claimed she could heal sick people by touching them. This career eventually made her wealthy.

In 1865, Woodhull divorced her first husband and the next year married Civil War hero James Harvey Blood, who introduced her to many of the reform movements she would embrace. Two years later, the couple, together with Tennessee and the Claflin family, moved to New York City where the sisters met railroad tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt.

Following Vanderbilt's advice, Woodhull made a small fortune in the Gold Exchange, then opened the first stock brokerage firm run by a woman. Later she said the brokerage was part of her plan to further her political and reform ideas. She also started a newspaper called *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*. The newspaper promoted Woodhull's political career, equal rights for women, and other controversial causes. The progressive weekly was also the first to publish an English translation of Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, a guide to the basic practices of communism.

Woodhull was a radical reformer who fought for women's rights. She also had big political plans. In 1872 she announced that she was running for president of the United States. Woodhull organized her own convention and was nominated by the newly established Equal Rights Party, a group of

The Progressives

Biography

people who wanted government reform. She ran on a platform that supported labor reform, financial regulation, women's suffrage, and an end to government interference in women's private lives.

Before the presidential election, Woodhull published an exposé about a powerful religious leader that included accusations about the man's personal affairs. Woodhull was arrested under the Comstock Act for sending offensive material through the mail. She spent election day in jail and received no votes.

By 1876 Woodhull had lost much of the support she had found in her earlier years. She and Blood divorced, her newspaper shut down, and her career as a reformer in the United States was over. She moved to England where she married a wealthy banker. She continued to write and became known there as a philanthropist.

Though Woodhull never fulfilled her goals as a reformer, she achieved numerous successes that were unusual for women of her time.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. **Describe** When did Victoria Woodhull run for president? What kind of programs and ideas did she support?

2. **Draw Conclusions** Why might Victoria Woodhull be considered ahead of her time? Explain.

Mother Jones

1837-1930



WHY SHE MADE HISTORY A radical activist, Mother Jones is best known for her work as a labor organizer. She fought on behalf of working men, women, and children for fair wages and safe working conditions.



As you read the biography below, think about the role Mother Jones played in the labor movement. What made her such a strong voice for the causes she represented?



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ62-7678]

In 1902, soon after Theodore Roosevelt became president of the United States, 150,000 Pennsylvania coal miners went on strike for higher wages, shorter hours, and recognition of their union. Just three years before, they had been unionized by Mother Jones, a small, 62-year-old woman filled with passion and energy who gave lively speeches supporting the workers and their efforts.

Born in Cork, Ireland, in 1837, Mary Harris, as she was born, was the daughter of Richard Harris, a labor organizer, and Ellen Cotter. Her family fled Ireland's potato famine in the 1850s and settled in Toronto, Canada. Jones attended school and went on to work as a teacher and then a dressmaker. Before the American Civil War began, she moved to Memphis, Tennessee, where she met her future husband, George Jones. He was an iron molder and a union member. His involvement in organized labor gave Jones a glimpse of the labor movement in the United States.

During their six years of marriage, the Joneses had four children. Sadly, Mary Harris Jones lost her husband and all four children in a yellow fever outbreak in 1867. She then moved to Chicago and opened a dress shop. The store, however, burned down during the Chicago fire of 1871. She lost all her possessions. The help she received from the Knights of Labor, an organization that was trying to improve working conditions, inspired her to become an activist.

Jones turned her attention toward union organizing. She fought for child laborers in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1894, and soon after, began helping the Pennsylvania miners. It was her work as a union supporter and labor organizer that earned Mary Harris Jones the nickname Mother Jones. Many of the labor leaders she worked with called her Mother, and she, in turn, called them her boys.

The Progressives**Biography**

By the early 1900s, Jones had become a paid organizer for the United Mine Workers. She gained fame for many of her unorthodox rallies and strikes. She organized the wives of the miners into brigades armed with mops and brooms to challenge and drive away officials who tried to break up the strike. In 1903 she gathered dozens of underage mill workers to march to President Theodore Roosevelt's summer home to protest working conditions for children.

As a labor organizer, Jones traveled the country from town to town to support a wide range of labor groups. She served time in jail at age 78 when a strike by miners in West Virginia erupted in violence. At age 83 she was jailed and deported from Colorado on three different occasions while supporting striking miners at John D. Rockefeller's Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. After the Colorado militia machine-gunned and burned the miner's tent colony, killing 20 women and children, Jones testified before Congress about the massacre.

Embracing her grandmotherly persona, Jones exaggerated her age. Though she was given a grand party for her "100th" birthday, in fact she was only 93. Just a few months later, Mother Jones died. During her lifetime and after, Mother Jones stood for justice and equality and inspired thousands of Americans to fight for the same thing.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. **Recall** What labor groups did Mother Jones support during her lifetime?

2. **Inference** What was the cause of the Pennsylvania coal miners strike of 1902? What effect did Mother Jones's efforts have on the labor movement?

Gifford Pinchot

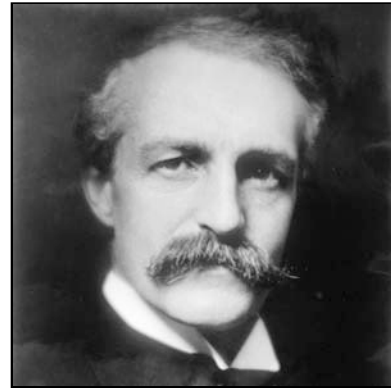
1865–1946



WHY HE MADE HISTORY Gifford Pinchot was America's first professionally trained forester. A progressive politician, Pinchot created policies that have protected the environment for decades.



As you read the biography below, think about how Gifford Pinchot influenced conservation policies in the United States. Why did Pinchot believe it was important to protect the environment?



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-DIG-ggbain-04976]

It was during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt that the U.S. government began actively protecting the environment. Roosevelt set in motion many new government policies regarding land use. He also appointed Gifford Pinchot, a well-known forester, to promote conservation. Conservation is the movement to preserve natural resources, such as soil, vegetation, and water.

The son of a wealthy merchant, Gifford Pinchot was born in Simsbury, Connecticut, in 1865. His father had been interested in forestry, and from an early age Gifford Pinchot was taught the beauty of the environment.

Pinchot graduated from Yale in 1889. He continued his studies in several European countries, studying forestry there because no academic programs in forestry then existed in the United States. In the 1890s he began putting his knowledge to use managing George Vanderbilt's 8,000-acre Biltmore estate. He surveyed forests for the state of New Jersey and for several private landowners in the Adirondack Mountains located in northeastern New York.

In 1896 Pinchot was appointed to the National Forest Commission. Two years later he became head of the Division of Forestry in the Department of Agriculture. Supported by President Roosevelt, Pinchot became a well-known conservationist. In 1898 he was appointed chief of the U.S. Forest Service (a job he held until 1910), where he established many government regulations for commercial land use. He supported use of the forests for mining, grazing, lumbering, railroads, and irrigation, but all under strict control of the government.

After William Howard Taft became president things changed. Taft's secretary of the interior, Richard Ballinger, allowed several people to illegally purchase public land in Alaska in 1910. Pinchot accused Ballinger

The Progressives

Biography

of not enforcing conservation policies. The result was that Pinchot was fired by President Taft. The Ballinger-Pinchot affair, as it was known, left many people feeling that Taft was not committed to protecting the environment.

Pinchot moved on. He helped Theodore Roosevelt form the progressive Bull Moose Party. He also became a state forester in Pennsylvania. In 1914 he made an unsuccessful bid for the U.S. Senate, and in 1923 he became governor of Pennsylvania.

During his two terms as governor, Pinchot helped settle a coal mining strike and improved the efficiency of the state's government. He was most proud, however, of paving miles of dirt roads in the countryside, which provided jobs for many of the state's unemployed during the Great Depression.

Pinchot continued to be active in trying to protect the environment. He helped get legislation passed that allowed the forest reserves to be expanded through purchase. He also helped win passage of the Water Power Act of 1920, which began federal regulation of the power industry, and federal control over water power sites on public land.

Pinchot died of leukemia in 1946. He left his mansion, Grey Towers, in Milford, Pennsylvania, to the U.S. Forest Service to use as a museum and training center for foresters.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. **Contrast** What similarities exist between the environmental issues of Pinchot's era and the environmental issues of today?

2. **Evaluate** Was Pinchot successful in creating policies that help protect the environment? Explain.
