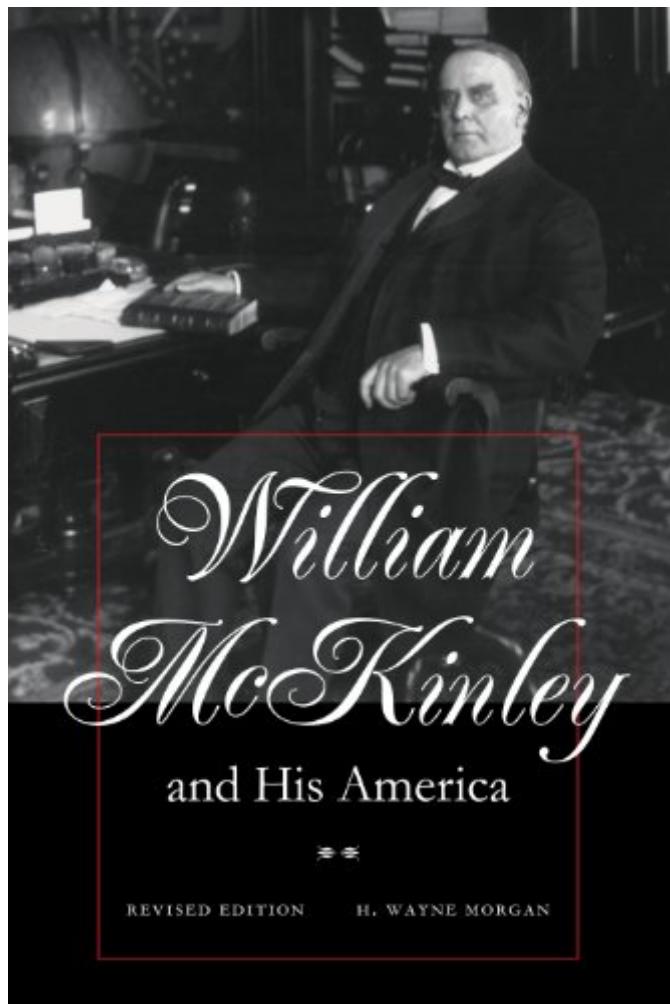


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William McKinley And His America



Synopsis

When George W. Bush won the White House, he was first incumbent Republican governor elected president since William McKinley in 1896. William McKinley was the last of the Civil War veterans to reach the White House. Known widely as the Major, in honor of his military rank, he rose through Congress to head the crucial Ways and Means Committee where, in the early 1890s, he passed a strong and popular tariff bill. That success caught the eye of Marcus Hanna, a Cleveland industrialist with a passion for politics and an ambition to help make and elect a president. Democrats complained the McKinley was a mere puppet of the wealthy Hanna, but historians generally believe they were a well-matched team of two strong-willed men. With Hanna's help, McKinley was elected governor of Ohio in 1892. In 1896 McKinley swept away all rivals to win the presidential nomination on the first ballot. Faced in the general election by the well-respected and highly touted orator William Jennings Bryan, Republicans adopted their Front Porch Campaign. Thousands of citizens from across the country were brought to McKinley's home in Canton for a handshake and a few words. Hanna arranged for \$3.5 million campaign to be paid for by big business, with oil baron John D. Rockefeller writing the largest check. McKinley's military service and his support among veterans were significant factors in his campaign. He became the first presidential candidate in a generation to win a majority of the popular vote. McKinley was a popular president. Pushed reluctantly into the Spanish-American War, McKinley was instrumental in starting America on the path to becoming a global power. He was reelected by a landslide, and in 1901, after delivering a speech at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, he was assassinated by anarchist Leon Czolgosz. McKinley's vice president, Theodore Roosevelt became the nation's 26th president. H. Wayne Morgan's extensively revised and expanded edition of McKinley and His America will prove to be a welcome resource to historians and scholars.

Book Information

File Size: 2139 KB

Print Length: 488 pages

Publisher: Kent State University Press; Rev ed. edition (October 31, 2002)

Publication Date: November 6, 2012

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00A2UZRQU

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #332,652 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #182 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Reference & Collections](#) #332 in [Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > United States > Presidents](#) #576 in [Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Presidents & Heads of State](#)

Customer Reviews

I was eager to read this biography of William McKinley by my former history professor and hoped this would be the "definitive" biography of McKinley. But the book did not deliver to that level and left me wanting more. The book was more than adequate and effectively related McKinley's life and career, but it was not particularly engaging or insightful. It was more like reading a history lecture than reading a top-flight presidential biography. I am hopeful that Robert Merry's biography of McKinley that is to be published later this year will prove to be the definitive biography that to my knowledge has not been published yet.

The problem with this book is basically what is left unsaid. Much is made of the mentoring of Rutherford B. Hayes but there is never a mention of the controversy of his election, the anger Democrats had for years later of his "selection" in the tight race with Tilden and the removal of federal troops from the South which left Blacks at the mercy of Jim Crow hatred. The book just suggests that Hayes was just a great mentor and leaves it at that. Another blind spot is the role Mark Hanna had over McKinley and his significant control thereby. Throughout the book the influence is downplayed to the point that it seems insignificant. Little is said of the assassination of McKinley by Leon Czolgosz who is mentioned only as a professional anarchist. More likely was his troubled mind and the mad assumption that killing McKinley was for the common man. I would have appreciated more about the tragic death of McKinley which, as a byproduct, propelled Theodore Roosevelt to the Presidency. The problem is not what is said about McKinley but what is left unsaid and the rosy picture of McKinley who, while kindhearted, had his flaws.

The first part of the biography was good and kept my interest. Mid-way thru the book, I thought the author became repetitive and gave very burdensome details about the tariff issue and the Philippines. Obviously they were important issues during the McKinley administration and campaigns, but the author spent so much of the book on those issues that he failed to really delve into the Spanish-American war in any detail at all by comparison. I did enjoy learning more about McKinley's personality and that of his wife, Ida from the author's research. In the end, I found the assassination poorly covered by the book, almost overlooked. You'll not learn anything about the assassination from this book except that an anarchist shot him at Buffalo and he lingered and died. The last chapter and the Epilogue were very anti-climatic and no further mention of the assassin, Hanna, Hay or other important figures was made. One could argue that the book is not about these other figures, but the author spent much time on Hanna & Hay only to leave you wondering what happened to them after McKinley. The author was almost too free in his praise for McKinley and too negative on Hanna & Roosevelt. The flattery of McKinley bordered on eulogizing rather than totally factual.

I read this bio in my ongoing project of reading a biography on every President. This was an outstanding bio of what seems to be a very underrated man and President. I didn't know anything about McKinley prior to reading Morgan's book. Other than he was assassinated in Buffalo and helped TR springboard to the Presidency. I found his life to be very interesting and well detailed. The research was outstanding. The author spent enough time on some of the more laborious subjects such as the gold/silver debate. He also went into detail on the Spanish-American war and the issue in the Phillipines. These were subjects I was very interested in knowing more about and Morgan was sure to detail these which I appreciated. I think he understood his reader pretty well in this bio. He did a nice job of detailing McKinley's early years and his relationship with friends and family. As someone that has read a lot of Presidential bios this one was definitely worth reading.

Insightful book which brings this relatively unknown president into full view. McKinley was a pivotal occupant of the white house whose handling of the office showed the way for future presidents. A skilled politician whose greatest gift was dealing fairly with both sides of the aisle and disarming friend and foe with his guileless charm.

This was the first in-depth book I have ever read about McKinley and was very good. It shows a leader of great intellect and compassion as well as a top flight politician. The book was well-written

and covered the key aspect of this period in great detail while providing a look at the human side of a not very well known leader.

I have read a biography on each of the presidents through T Roosevelt (the 26th). This one is among the better of them but not among the best. If you want to learn about William McKinley, it may be the best biography available.

I knew almost nothing about President McKinley when I started this book. He was a great man, who accomplished much. It is a sad thing to have lost him so soon. I would like to visit his memorial as I feel I know him now. I would recommend this book to any American.

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