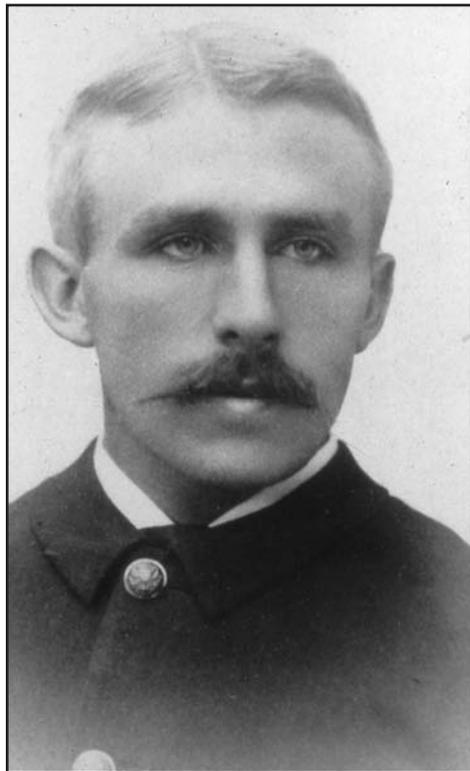


# General Leonard Wood

Leonard Wood is certainly a familiar name in our environs but few know the particulars of his illustrious career of fighting, diplomacy, politics, and innovation.

Leonard Wood was born October 9, 1860 in Winchester, New Hampshire. Like his father, he entered Harvard Medical School in 1880 and graduated



Leonard Wood as a Harvard medical student. Courtesy of Fort Leonard Museum.

ed in 1883.

Seeking adventure, he signed on as a contract physician with the U. S. Army in 1885 and was assigned to Fort Huachuca, Arizona. The next year, under General Nelson A. Miles, Wood participated in the last campaign against Geronimo, for which he received the Medal of Honor.

Leonard Wood filled a number of medical positions and was promoted to Captain in 1891. Assigned to Washington, D. C. in 1895, he became the personal physician to President William McKinley and other senior government officials.

Seeking more adventure, Wood sought a line command. When war with Spain erupted in 1898, Congress authorized the raising of three regiments of calvary, to be drawn from the rough men of the west. While in Washington, Wood had made the acquaintance of the former Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt. They both

believed it was necessary to interfere in Cuba and drive the Spanish from this hemisphere. Raising a calvary regiment from the wild riders of the west appealed to them.

In his book *Rough Riders* (1899), Theodore Roosevelt describes Leonard Wood this way:

“Naval officers came and went, and Senators were only in the city while the Senate was in session; but there was one friend who was steadily in Washington. This was an army surgeon, Dr. Leonard Wood. I only met him after I entered the navy department, but we soon found that we had kindred tastes and kindred principles. He had served in General Miles's inconceivably harassing campaigns against the Apaches, where he had displayed such courage that he won that most coveted of distinctions—the Medal of Honor; such extraordinary physical strength and endurance that he grew to be recognized as one of the two or three white men who could stand fatigue and hardship as well as an Apache; and such judgment that toward the



The staff of General Nelson A. Miles. Captain Leonard Wood is far right. Courtesy of Post Museum, Fort Leonard Wood.

close of the campaigns he was given, though a surgeon, the actual command of more than one expedition against the bands of renegade Indians. Like so many of the gallant fighters with whom it was later my good fortune to serve, he combined, in a very high degree, the qualities of entire manliness with entire uprightness and cleanliness of character. It was a pleasure to deal with a man of high ideals, who scorned everything mean and base, and who also possessed those robust and hardy qualities of body and mind,

for the lack of which no merely negative virtue can ever atone. He was by nature a soldier of the highest type, and, like most natural soldiers, he was, of course, born with a keen longing for adventure; and, though an excellent doctor, what he really desired was the chance to lead men in some kind of hazard. To every possibility of such adventure he paid quick attention.”

Roosevelt broached the subject of raising a calvary regiment to Secretary Alger and was encouraged to do so. Roosevelt had no practical experience in military matters and in equipping and training a regiment. He stated that he believed he could learn the required skills in a month but it would be valuable time wasted. He was afraid he would miss the action in Cuba. Roosevelt proposed that Leonard Wood be commissioned Colonel of the First United States Volunteer Cavalry, Wood having the requisite experience, and himself commissioned the Lieutenant-Colonel of the regiment. The President and Secretary agreed and the First United States Volunteer Cavalry, dubbed the “Rough Riders” by the press, found their glory in the charge up San Juan Hill.

Wood was appointed Military Governor of Cuba and received his first star, becoming a Brigadier General in the

## Geronimo

As a young man, Geronimo was a peaceful Indian but after the slaughter of his family, he joined a fierce Apache band of Chiricahuas. They raided in New Mexico, Arizona, and Mexico. After a brief peaceful period on a reservation from 1883-1885, Geronimo and 140 followers left the reservation to take up their old ways. Although not a chief, Geronimo was revered by the Apache for his fighting skill and as a medicine man.

General George Crook, who subdued the Apache and put them on a reservation in 1873, was brought back to Arizona. After persuading most of the Apaches to surrender, he was unable to rein in Geronimo. Amid official disapproval, General Crook resigned and General Nelson A. Miles assumed command and the chase. After months of eluding the Federal force, Geronimo and his small band of seventeen men and nineteen women and children surrendered in August of 1886. They were exiled to Florida, then later to Alabama, and lastly to Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

Geronimo was under arrest for the rest of his life but as the most famous Apache, he appeared at the St. Louis World's Fair and rode in the procession in honor of the inauguration of Theodore Roosevelt. For income, Geronimo sold photographs of himself and brass buttons from his coat. He died in 1909 of pneumonia at Fort Sill.



Regular Army. After his tenure as Governor ended in 1902, General Wood was commander of the Philippines Division and the Department of the East.

In 1910 General Wood was named Chief of Staff of the Army, the only medical officer to hold that position. Here he may have made his most important, if less visible, contributions to the military profession. Through his leadership, the Chief of Staff position became the senior officer of the Army. He



Leonard Wood as Governor of Cuba. Courtesy of Fort Leonard Wood Museum.

streamlined the old bureaucratic system that slowed up the continued modernization of the Army. He was a key player in developing the Maneuver Division and Mobile Army concept. He stressed preparedness and training. He initiated the Reserve Officer Training Crops. With his term as Chief of Staff over, he trained the 89<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions for European service in World War I.

or duty, Wood was a candidate for the Republican nomination for President in 1920. The convention deadlocked and Warren G. Harding was selected as a compromise candidate. General Wood retired from the Army in 1921 and then became Governor General of the Philippines from 1921 until 1927. After an unsuccessful operation for a brain tumor, Leonard Wood died in Boston on August 7, 1927.

Whether it was a sense of adventure



General Leonard Wood toward the end of his career. Courtesy of Fort Leonard Wood Museum.

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