

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

by

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Many years ago, during the summer prior to starting my freshman year at Northwestern University, I was introduced to a current student who suggested that a great way to pay for meals was to get a job working board in a sorority. He said the food was good and the work not too hard. I was convinced. He suggested I apply before school started.

As was my normal pattern at the time, I hitchhiked to Evanston and prepared to go door-to-door on sorority row. It turned out that I was able to get a job as a pots and pans scrubber at the very first sorority where I applied. I should add here that I started as pots guy, but was promoted to head waiter by November and then reassigned myself to dishwasher; a job I still hold today.

To get back home to the northwest side of Chicago, I needed to walk to Dempster Street, which is south of the campus. I decided to walk along the lake. Walking that direction, one sees some very nice houses. Indeed, one sees most of these same houses today. But after a few blocks, I came across a house which stood apart from the rest in terms of style and size. I saw a sign posted in front and soon ascertained it was the house of former Vice-President Charles Dawes and now the Evanston Historic Center. I must admit I had never heard of Charles Dawes.

Fast-forward thirteen years, I end up moving, where I still live today, just a few blocks away from this house and walk my dog past the Evanston History Center every weekend. My wife and I are also members of the Evanston Historical Society, but my knowledge of Dawes had not really advanced.

Then last year, I read a book by Karl Rove entitled The Triumph of William McKinley. The subtitle is "Why the Election of 1896 Still Matters". I had read a lot about Theodore Roosevelt and the McKinley assassination, but knew very little about the election of 1896 other than McKinley faced William Jennings Bryan. The book was worthwhile, but I found one aspect remarkable and that is why I am here today.

In discussing McKinley's early efforts to develop a national organization to secure the Republican nomination for president at the 1896 Republican Convention, Rowe relates that McKinley chose a 28 year-old to manage his Illinois campaign whom he had only met a few months earlier and who had only just moved to Illinois. Given that Illinois was a critical state, and had a very established Republican organization in Chicago and downstate, and that one of McKinley's rivals for the nomination was a favorite son, I found it remarkable McKinley would select this person and wondered what was so special about him. I decided to try and find out. I would like to add that one attraction to undertaking this endeavor was that on the one hand, not much had been written about Dawes, but on the other hand, he kept extensive diaries and his papers were available to research at Northwestern University's archives and at the Evanston Historical Center.

Although I believe it is important to provide a recap of his remarkable life, I will be primarily focusing on his interaction with four presidents of the United States and how the sudden death of two of them changed "what might have been".

Dawes' heritage would, at first blush, make one think he was born with a silver spoon. The earliest family members emigrated to Massachusetts in 1635 as members of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. A great-great grandfather, William Dawes, rode with Paul Revere to warn of the invading British soldiers. Another great-great grandfather, Manasseh Cutler, helped draft the Northwest Ordinance which was the first law to ban slavery within any territory of the United States. Finally, his father, Rufus, was a general in the Union Army and a one-term congressman. However, those impressive credentials did not translate into economic success and, prior to the Civil War, his father migrated to Marietta, Ohio. While his father achieved some economic success after the Civil War, he was essentially wiped out by the Crash of 1873. Thereafter, he ran a business making iron for railroad rails.

Charles Dawes was born on August 27, 1865. He attended and graduated from Marietta College at the age of 19. He then attended Cincinnati Law School where he graduated in two years. Although, in researching this paper, I learned there is still great controversy as to who first coined the phrase "Go west, young man, and grow with the country", Dawes decided to follow that advice. Just as for his forbearers, going west did not mean the west coast. It meant Ohio for his father; in Charles' case, it meant Nebraska. He decided to start his legal career in Lincoln, Nebraska, where he moved in 1887.

Why he chose Nebraska, and Lincoln in particular, is unclear. However, his father's cousin, James Dawes, was a former governor of Nebraska and this may have been a factor. We do know that James Dawes introduced him to participate in a real estate syndicate and likely introduced him to potential clients.

What put Charles Dawes on the map and the start of his economic success was accepting a case for no fee whereby he sued the Burlington Railroad for charging excessive rates for intra-state shipping. He filed a series of replevin actions arguing that the excessive rates constituted an unlawful seizure of property. One year after arriving in Lincoln, he won a major victory in the Nebraska Supreme Court.

While these cases and the Supreme Court decision made him well-known, his economic fortunes were greatly aided when he started to invest in real estate and in the American Exchange Bank of Lincoln. In his first year in Lincoln, his father was subsidizing his living expenses, but by 1884, he had amassed the tidy sum of \$40,000.

Dawes' early years in Lincoln brought him into contact with two people who would turn into life-long friends and have significant influence in his life. First, William Jennings Bryan had his law offices in the same building. Second, John J. Pershing taught ROTC at the University of Nebraska. At the time, army life seemed such a dead end that Pershing went to night law school and approached Dawes about working with him. Luckily, for the well-being of our country, Dawes recommended that the future General Pershing stay in the army.

Debating societies were a common social activity at this point in time. Bryan and Dawes often debated whether the country should remain on the gold standard. Dawes noted in his diary that he respected Bryan's debating ability, but thought his arguments, which would catapult him to the Democratic presidential nomination in 1896, when he gave his "Cross of Gold" speech,

were rather weak. I will comment more on this later. In 1894, Dawes also published his first book, The Banking System of the U.S. and Its Relation to the Money and Business of the Country.

By 1894, Dawes started to develop investments in Chicago and the surrounding area. Most significantly, he invested, and ultimately acquired, the La Crosse Gas Light & Coke Company and the Northwestern Gas Light & Coke Company of Evanston, Illinois. At this time, he decided to move to Chicago. Within his first year, he acquired the contracts to supply natural gas to the villages of Rogers Park and Wilmette.

Some time in 1894, Dawes met William McKinley in Marietta and later that year in Lincoln. Since his father served in Congress with McKinley from the same state in 1880, it is likely McKinley knew Charles' father, but I can find no record that Charles Dawes ever met McKinley before or that his father was anything more than an acquaintance. In fact, Dawes' diaries do not reflect prior contact.

Before trying to analyze the role of Charles Dawes in the McKinley campaign and subsequent presidency, some background on William McKinley is in order.

William McKinley was born in 1843 and was the last president to have served in the Civil War. He enlisted as a private and emerged as a colonel, a title he preferred above all others, including Governor and Mr. President.

After the Civil War, McKinley eventually became a successful lawyer in Canton, Ohio. He met and married Ida Saxtin. Their first child, Katherine, was born in 1871. A second daughter was born two years later, but died within the year. In 1875, Katherine died of typhoid fever. Ida never recovered from this emotional trauma and then developed epilepsy. While essentially becoming an invalid and requiring William to dote on her, she nevertheless encouraged his continued legal career and entering politics.

As we know from personal experience, people react differently to personal tragedy. For some, like Calvin Coolidge, it results in total inability to cope with normal life. In the case of William McKinley, he found the political arena to invigorate him and give him a *raison d'être*.

During the Civil War, Rutherford B. Hayes became William's mentor and this continued after the war. He therefore campaigned vigorously for Hayes in his three terms as governor and successful presidential run in 1876. That same year, McKinley undertook a high-profile pro bono case defending a group of coal miners arrested for rioting after a clash with strikebreakers. He was successful in getting all but one acquitted and enhanced his standing among laborers. Perhaps more importantly, he developed a relationship with Mark Hanna.

Mark Hanna was essentially a very successful and wealthy businessman from Cleveland. The family business was primarily iron and coal. At about the age of 40, he became interested in politics. His initial focus was to try and help Ohio Senator John Sherman obtain the Republican presidential nomination in 1884 and 1888.

Although McKinley and Hanna knew each other for years, it is not totally clear what made Hanna select him as the next guy to back. They agreed on the basic Republican issues, the most important of which was supporting protective tariffs. Neither was particularly staunch at the time regarding the monetary standard. Some believe an incident at the 1888 Republican Convention cemented the relationship.

Both McKinley and Hanna came to the Convention supporting Sherman. When it started to emerge that Sherman could not win the nomination, some factions started to support McKinley. However, McKinley refused consideration, saying he would remain pledged to Sherman. Hanna greatly admired McKinley's ethical position. Benjamin Harrison was ultimately nominated and elected president. As was and is the usual practice, Harrison was re-nominated in 1892, but lost to Cleveland. McKinley, who had been elected governor of Ohio in 1891, and Hanna began strategizing for the 1896 nomination as early as 1892. His extremely popular keynote speech at the 1892 Convention made McKinley a leading candidate for the 1896 nomination. At the end of 1894, Hanna turned over management of his business to his brother, and devoted all of his time to McKinley's campaign for the 1896 nomination.

We return now to Charles Dawes. He met with McKinley once in Ohio and once in Lincoln. He had not yet moved to Chicago. After the Lincoln meeting, McKinley sent Hanna to Lincoln to take stock of Dawes. According to a diary entry of Dawes a year later, Hanna said, "He doesn't look like much". Nevertheless, at McKinley's direction, Dawes was put in charge of Illinois, which was a key state, having the third most delegates behind New York and Pennsylvania. Dawes wrote the following in his diary: Hanna is in full charge of the McKinley

campaign throughout the entire country...He said things look very favorable in the South. He has asked me to look after matters in Illinois. McKinley seems to be the coming man." This was remarkable in several respects. First, Dawes was not yet 30 years-old and never managed a campaign. Second, he had never lived in Illinois. Third, he was trying to get his own personal business foothold in Chicago. Fourth, Illinois had a very well-established Republican organization which was deeply divided between Chicago and downstate. Moreover, the respective heads, John Tanner and William Lorimer, were anti-McKinley. Fifth, Illinois Senator Shelby Moore Cullom was running as a favorite son. He was the former governor and current senator. It was not common for an outsider to prevail against favorite sons prior to the National Convention itself.

By April of 1896, McKinley wrote to Dawes in response for specific instructions and said he had complete confidence in anything Dawes decided. At the end of April, Cullom dropped his candidacy and the Illinois Republican State Convention decided for McKinley.

As it turned out, Dawes was a brilliant organizer and able to reach the many reform-minded Republicans throughout the state. Just as importantly, this was McKinley's time. A nationwide tide was starting to form in his favor. Cullom dropped out and McKinley easily prevailed at the Illinois Delegate Convention. His nomination at the Republican National Convention was now a foregone conclusion.

Upon receiving word of the victory, McKinley wrote to Dawes on April 30, 1896:

I can not close the day without sending you a message of appreciation and congratulations, " he told the young man in whom he had placed all his trust. "There is nothing in all of this long campaign so signal and significant as the triumph at Springfield. I cannot find words to express my admiration for your high qualities of leadership. You have won exceptional honor. You had long ago won my heart.

Even considering the expected appreciation for the result, his comment that "you long ago won my heart" is even more remarkable, especially seeing how little time they actually had spent together. The letter continues with inviting Dawes and his wife to visit McKinley in Ohio and telling Dawes to take care of himself.

As expected, McKinley easily won the nomination, and for the campaign, he appointed Dawes to be the treasurer of all campaign funds on a national basis. With the exception of Hanna, putting Dawes in this role effectively put him in charge of the campaign. He once again applied his business skills and every detail was organized, including accounting to the penny, which accounts still exist in Dawes' papers.

In addition to managing the campaign finances, Dawes also formed various group constituencies, including the newest fad, bicyclists, to support McKinley. Dawes' May 9 diary notes that McKinley told Dawes he wanted him to be part of his administration and to think about what he wanted. Dawes wrote in his diary, "He asked me the line of my ambitions which I

must admit are not modest". On June 18, Dawes notes "I have become so attached to McKinley as a man".

In July, Dawes and his wife attended the Democratic National Convention to see his friend, William Jennings Bryan. Bryan was considered a dark horse candidate at best until he gave one of the most famous and powerful political speeches in American history, usually referred to as the "Cross of Gold" speech. It was given at the conclusion of the debate on the party platform.

The western part of the country felt that its economic woes were greatly caused by America being on the gold standard for currency. They, and Bryan, favored silver. In his speech, after setting out the evils of the gold standard and how it benefited the eastern banking and merchant class, he concluded:

If they dare to come out in the open field and defend the gold standard as a good thing, we will fight them to the uttermost. Having behind us the producing masses of this nation and the world, supported by the commercial interests, the laboring interests and the toilers everywhere, we will answer their demand for a gold standard by saying to them: You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.

The convention went crazy and Bryan received the nomination. Dawes' July 8 diary entry:

July 9. Went to Convention. Sat on platform. Heard my old friend, William J. Bryan, make his speech on the platform's silver plank. His oratory was magnificent - his logic pitifully weak.

I could not but have a feeling of pride for the brilliant young man whose life for so many years lay parallel to mine, and with whom the future years may yet bring me into conflict as in the past.

The scene was memorable. I had for weeks - knowing so well the oratorical capacities and abilities of Bryan - predicted his nomination if he made a speech upon the silver plank.

This was the very exact topic Dawes and Bryan had debated in Lincoln.

As a result of this speech, one of the central issues of the campaign became whether to stay on the gold standard. Previously, neither Hanna nor McKinley held strong views on the issue and wanted to avoid the topic. But that was no longer possible. Dawes' excellent understanding of, and belief in, staying on the gold standard made him the best person to advise McKinley on this issue. Campaigning on the issues of strong trade protection in the form of

tariffs and on maintaining the gold standard, McKinley was easily elected as President of the United States. On the night before election day, Dawes wrote in his diary:

I am so confident of victory...that I cannot even contemplate defeat as a possibility. It has been a great privilege...I have kept my hands clean and finish the campaign with a clear conscience.

Soon after the election, the issues of Cabinet and Dawes' role in the administration became a main issue of discussion.

Dawes traveled to Canton in mid-December. On December 15, his diary notes that:

The President-elect again discussed the question of a Cabinet position with me. He said that he often thought that he owed his nomination in a great part to my efforts in Illinois, and was anxious to know whether his failure to give me a Cabinet appointment would in any way alter our intimate and constant friendship - that he would not have these relations altered for three Cabinet positions. He spoke with much feeling, and touched me deeply. I replied that nothing could ever alter or lessen my regard for him.

Had he been given a Cabinet position, he would have been the youngest ever.

McKinley considered creating a position of Personal Secretary at a Cabinet-type level. Dawes did not seem interested. Ultimately, McKinley offered Dawes the position of Comptroller of the Currency, which Dawes found appealing and which he did ultimately accept.

The position of Currency Comptroller still exists, but it became less prominent after the creation of the FDIC. Created as part of the National Currency Act in 1863, it is an independent bureau within the Department of the Treasury. Its purpose was to monitor the safety and soundness of the national banking system, ensure fair and equal access to financial services and was and is responsible for investigating and prosecuting acts of misconduct by banking officials. It was created under Lincoln to help fund the Civil War, but was quickly transformed into its more regulatory function.

Unlike a Cabinet role, this position had a five-year term. Although McKinley announced this appointment, the current Comptroller, James H. Eckels, chose not to resign until later in 1897. Although Dawes did not get sworn in until late in the year, Dawes took up a second residence in Washington to become familiar with the job and our banking system.

In his diary of June 3, 1898, he said he was determined to make sure he was not viewed as more intimate with those the law meant to sustain (i.e., financial institutions). As a result, he refused to allow bankers to entertain him, and he abolished the then common practice of allowing banks to hire Currency Comptroller examiners to perform supposedly unrelated tasks for additional compensation.

To briefly jump ahead, Dawes served as Comptroller until 1901 when he resigned to run for the Senate. More about this later. Time does not permit further discussion of his role as Currency Comptroller, but he performed it with distinction.

Getting back to Dawes relationship with McKinley, Dawes's diary reflects that he met with McKinley at least 200 times in the period between 1897 until McKinley's assassination in September of 1901. This must take into account the amount of travel both did separately. Most of their contact was at the White House. His diary note of March 8, 1897 states:

The President has arranged for my admittance [to the White House] at any time, having given instructions to this effect, saving me much inconvenience and delay.

The visits included many private lunch and dinners with wives. Many nights were spent by the four of them playing euchre. McKinley would often ask Dawes to review his speeches or talk about decisions he was considering. Dawes also brought people over to the White House to meet with President McKinley, which enhanced Dawes' political status. The visits included many meetings about Cuba when McKinley was making the difficult decision that led to the Spanish-American War. Unlike Theodore Roosevelt, Dawes was trying to counsel McKinley to avoid war if at all possible. Roosevelt was pressing McKinley to declare war.

When the McKinley's traveled away, Mrs. McKinley would leave her jewels with Dawes for safe-keeping. When Vice-President Hobart died in 1899, Dawes attended the funeral with the President in McKinley's private railroad car.

In the McKinley re-election campaign Dawes would play the same key role as in the 1896 campaign. Since Vice-President Hobart had died on November 21, 1899, McKinley needed a new running mate. Mark Hanna was vehemently opposed to Theodore Roosevelt, but McKinley was determined to allow the Convention to select the candidate. Partially because of his fame from the 1898 War and partially because the New York political bosses wanted him out of New York, Roosevelt received the nomination and became Vice-President when McKinley easily won re-election, once again beating William Jennings Bryan.

Early in the new term, there was some speculation in the press that McKinley could secure a third term. After consulting with Dawes, McKinley issued a statement to the effect that under no circumstances would he seek a third term. Immediately, Roosevelt began having discussions with Dawes, including as an overnight guest in his Long Island home, about how Roosevelt could best position himself for the presidential nomination.

In early 1901, Dawes felt he had accomplished all he could hope for as Comptroller of the Currency and resigned with the view of running for the U.S. Senate. He would have the complete backing of President McKinley.

In August 1901, McKinley was to deliver a major speech at the American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. While spending several days with McKinley in Canton, Dawes noted in his diary that McKinley said, "I am going to sit down and write my Buffalo speech. It think it will be the most important one of my life". Quite a statement from a twice-elected president.

Before he ever delivered the speech, McKinley was shot by Leon Czalgosz (Chōl-gosh). Dawes immediately traveled to Buffalo to be with McKinley. At first it appeared McKinley would recover. In fact, his recovery appeared so promising that Roosevelt used the opportunity to discuss his campaign with Dawes. It appeared so promising that Dawes returned to Washington and Roosevelt went on a camping trip. Suddenly, McKinley turned for the worse and died. Dawes raced back and, at the request of Mrs. McKinley, Dawes handled all the funeral arrangements. McKinley died of an infection stemming from the wound.

Immediately, Roosevelt went from someone who needed the assistance of Dawes to obtain the 1904 presidential nomination to being President. Suddenly, Dawes went from being someone with the best possible benefactor to having none at all.

Apart from the personal loss to Dawes resulting from the death of one whom he admired so greatly, Dawes immediately felt the political impact of McKinley's death. Back in 1902, the U.S. senators were still elected by the state senates. It was not a popular election. Although Dawes had become very politically strong in Illinois, because of his known closeness to McKinley, there was still a powerful local machine. Although it had seemed like Dawes had

developed a close relationship with Roosevelt, Dawes noted that Roosevelt seemed to be sending mixed signals. Dawes noted in his diary:

Roosevelt has created the impression that he is against me in this fight. This, I think, he has done unwittingly, for I believe he intends to be impartial.

It seems Roosevelt was not willing to spend political capital on Dawes. The opposite would have been true had McKinley been alive. On May 11, Dawes summed up the situation:

When I decided to become a candidate for United States Senator, I suppose I would have the friendship of the state administration and of the national administration under McKinley. I had the promise of the support of the Sherman-Busse element of the party also.

The assassin's bullet took away my best friend, President McKinley, and from that time my interest as well as my strength in politics declined. President Roosevelt, while endeavoring to be impartial, created the opposite impression, and greatly injured me.

Thus, Dawes decided to largely leave politics and concentrate on his business career and civic interests. On the business side, he organized the Central Trust Company of Illinois, which became highly successful. Dawes also became a leading philanthropist, first developing

extensive soup kitchens. Then in 1912, after the tragic death of his son Rufus at age 22 in a swimming accident in Lake Geneva, he developed working class hotels in Chicago and Boston.

When the U.S. entered the war in 1917, the 52 year-old Dawes volunteered for duty and called upon his Lincoln friend, John J. Pershing, now a major general and commander of the American Expeditionary Force. Dawes initially was commissioned as a Major in the Corps of Army Engineers. However, Pershing soon made him head of the army's General Purchasing Board over all supplies in Europe, and he eventually was put in charge of the Military Board of Allied Supply, often going to the front to assure himself that the most pressing needs were being met. Dawes once again displayed his amazing organizational skills. He received many decorations, including the French Legion of Honor's Distinguished Medal, and left the Army as a Brigadier General.

Prior to Dawes' return home, it was generally assumed that Theodore Roosevelt would secure the 1920 Republican presidential nomination. When Roosevelt died suddenly on January 6, 1919, a vacuum was created. The leading contenders were General Leonard Wood and Illinois governor Frank Lowden, who was a close friend of Charles Dawes. Late in 1919, Senator Warren G. Harding announced his candidacy. After what became called "the night of the smoke-filled room", Harding won the nomination on the tenth ballot. Harding then easily defeated Democratic nominee James M. Cox in the general election.

Although Dawes had never met Harding until the Republican Convention and Dawes openly supported Lowden for the presidential nomination, Harding chose Dawes as his nominee

for Secretary of the Treasury. It turned out that Dawes had recently written an article entitled, "How a President Can Save a Billion Dollars", which greatly impressed Harding. Dawes, however, turned down the offer to be Secretary of the Treasury, but told Harding he would accept the position of Director of the Budget if such a position was ever created.

In February 1921, Dawes was called to testify before a Senate Committee investigating war expenditures. In response to questions that he approved less than the best pricing available, He shouted back, "Hell and Maria, we weren't trying to keep a set of books over there, we were trying to win a war". He became known as Hell and Maria Dawes even though he maintained he was actually saying Helen Maria. Although there was a novelist by the name of Helen Maria Williams, I cannot find any evidence of why Dawes would have said "Helen Maria". As to Hell and Maria, there was a steamship by the name of Maria which was blown up in 1864, killing many members of the U.S. Calvary. G.E. Rule issued a painting of the scene captioned "Hell and Maria", and it became a popular river phrase.

Shortly after expressing these famous words, Congress passed a new law creating the Bureau of the Budget with Dawes as its first director. Harding credited Dawes with saving the government almost \$2,000,000 in the one year he held the position.

During the two years Harding served as President, Calvin Coolidge served as Vice-President. Harding is quoted as telling people, however, that he preferred Dawes over Coolidge to be his successor. According to Jules Witcover in *The American Vice-Presidency*, President Harding told Senator Charles Curtis, who was urging Harding to run again because he did not

feel Coolidge was up to do the job as President, "Charlie, you're not worried about that little fellow in Massachusetts, are you? Charles Dawes is the man who will succeed me". Dawes also became a favorite of Mrs. Harding. Dawes, a heavy pipe smoker, was the only person Mrs. Harding allowed to smoke in the White House. But what happens is Harding dies suddenly of a cerebral hemorrhage on August 2, 1923 and Coolidge becomes President. Sounds like the McKinley scenario all over again. Had Harding served his full term as President, Dawes, the banking and financial expert, may have been President at the time of the Great Depression.

Late in 1923, shortly after Harding's death, Dawes agreed to serve as chairman of an international commission to deal with the question of Germany's post-war reparation payments. Under his leadership, the group produced what became known as the Dawes Plan.

The Dawes Plan was an attempt to solve the World War I reparations issue which was crippling the Germany recovery. The Plan provided for an end to the Allied occupation of the Ruhr industrial area and a staggered payment of war reparations. Its immediate impact was so successful that Dawes and British Foreign Secretary Auster Chamberlain were awarded the Noble Peace Prize. However, after international trade dwindled as the depression set in, the Plan proved unworkable and was replaced by the Young Plan in 1929. It proposed even a lessening of payments, but as the world continued deeper into depression, these lower payments could not be sustained.

Even though the Young Plan reduced Germany's obligations, compliance was opposed in Germany by a political coalition known as the proponents of "Liberty Law", which opposed any

payments and a renunciation of German war guilt. One faction was the National Socialist German Workers Party lead by Adolf Hitler. Ultimately, the Liberty Law was defeated. However, Hitler blamed the leader of the movement, Alfred Hugenberg, as the cause of its defeat, and Hitler was able to utilize defeat to become the dominant conservative party. Some have suggested that the Dawes Plan and the Young Plan helped Hitler come to power. Rather, it was the peace conditions itself and deepening depression.

Since Coolidge was the sitting president as the 1924 election season approached, he easily won nomination on the first ballot. The convention then nominated Dawes' friend Frank Lowden on the second ballot for vice-president, but he declined to accept the nomination. This was the first time in history that this had occurred. Dawes, who supported Lowden, was then nominated on the third ballot and accepted.

The Democrats then nominated John Davis on the 103rd ballot and Robert "Fighting Bob" La Follette then broke from the Republican Party and ran as the candidate of the new "Progressive Party". Before the general campaign even got underway, death once again intervened.

Coolidge's youngest son, Calvin, developed a foot blister playing tennis without socks. Within several days, he died of blood poisoning on July 7. Ironically, Dawes had dinner in the White House with Coolidge that very evening. Given that Dawes' son had died tragically, imagine those memories.

Unlike McKinley, who found solace in political life, Silent Cal became even more remote and virtually did not campaign whatsoever. Dawes, on the other hand, traveled 1500 miles in four months and delivered more than 100 speeches. Despite the fact that the Republicans were split by La Follette's Progressive Party, Coolidge and Dawes won in a landslide.

Unlike the close relationship Dawes enjoyed with McKinley and Harding, it does not appear Dawes and Coolidge got along very well. In fact, that might be an understatement. Although it may have started with Coolidge, Dawes, seemingly unlike himself, did not help matters and contributed to the icy relationship.

It first started when Dawes was nominated. Coolidge wrote to Dawes and asked him to make his acceptance speech very bland. Also, although Coolidge had become the first-ever Vice-President to be invited to attend cabinet meetings, Coolidge never reached out to Dawes. This prompted Dawes to write to Coolidge and essentially say he did not want to attend even though he was never invited. Dawes also requested to be "posted" in Washington to become familiar with the Senate proceedings as being the President of the Senate was the only real role of a Vice-President. Coolidge ignored him. This led to two acts by Dawes which sealed his doomed relationship with Coolidge.

The first faux pas was breaking tradition that a Vice-President say nothing or almost nothing in terms of an acceptance speech after taking the oath. Not only did Dawes break with that tradition, but he delivered a diatribe against what he called antiquated Senate rules, especially criticizing the filibuster rule. The next morning's papers were all over the story and

hardly even mentioned Coolidge. However, the real coup de grace was Dawes' missing a vote in the Senate that resulted in the first time in sixty years that a President failed to get a cabinet member confirmed.

Coolidge nominated Charles Warren as his choice for Attorney General. Incidentally, Warran cast the only negative vote against Dawes from the Michigan delegation in regard to Dawes' Vice-Presidential nomination. According to most accounts, Dawes was told that no vote would be taken on the day in question. Dawes then went to the Willard Hotel for a nap while the debate continued. Does this sound like Dawes? After he left, several scheduled speakers decided not to speak and the vote was called and produced a tie. Dawes was notified and, while he was on the way to break the tie, one Democrat changed his vote to defeat the nomination.

As a result, Dawes became the brunt of humiliating ridicule. Someone placed a sign over the entrance to the Willard lobby reading "Dawes Slept Here". Soon after, he was showing a friend around the Capitol and took him to the Supreme Court, where a particularly boring case was being heard, causing some of the justices to seem about to nod off. Chief Justice William Howard Taft, spotting Dawes in the chamber, sent him a note that said, "Come up here. This is a good place to sleep!" Also, at the 1926 Gridiron dinner, at which high government officials were spoofed by members of the Washington press corps, Dawes was given a large clock, supposedly from Coolidge, with the admonition to stay awake because more ties were anticipated. All this inevitably jeopardized any presidential ambitions for Dawes. Indeed, as the new nominee, Herbert Hoover was a great admirer of Dawes, and there was talk of Dawes

remaining Vice-President, Coolidge made it known he would take it as a personal insult for Dawes to be re-nominated.

In April 1929, the new president, Herbert Hoover, appointed Dawes as the American ambassador to Great Britain, and in 1932 he was named head of the new Reconstruction Finance Corporation, established to help banks and corporations recover from the Great Depression. But in June of that year he abruptly resigned to attend to the near collapse of his own Central Republic Bank of Chicago. Dawes reorganized the bank as the City National Bank and Trust Company of Chicago and paid off its loans. His stock as a financial wizard remained so high that there was some talk in 1932 of dumping Hoover's chosen running mate, Charles Curtis of Kansas, to bring some "Hell'n Maria" fire to the Republican ticket. But Dawes was too engaged in rescuing his bank to consider the possibility. Thus, his political career came to an end. Dawes lived another twenty years and died in his Evanston home on April 23, 1951, at the age of eighty-five.

Thus, this is a brief recap of the political life of Charles Dawes, in which the death of two presidents impacted "What Might Have Been". In my opinion, he certainly ranks as one of the most accomplished public servants in American history.

I would like to add a post script. Dawes was a self-taught and fairly accomplished pianist. He found great relief in playing the piano. In 1911, he wrote a composition entitled, "Melody in A Major". It was issued as a phonograph record and sold 300,000 copies in one month. In 1951,

it was converted to a popular song, "It's All in the Game" by Tony Edwards, which was the No. 1 hit for six weeks.

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