The Year New Hampshire Became First in the Nation: 1920

MANCHESTER UNION.

MANCHESTER, N. H., WEDNESDAY MORNING, MARCH 10, 1920. PRICE: TWO CENTS

PLEDGED-TO-WOOD TICKET IS ELECTED IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

WOMAN WALKS FROM NASHUA TO MILFORD THROUGH DRIFTS

Winning Pledged-to-Wood Delegates Chosen At Primaries

HEAVY MAJORITIES ROLLED UP IN ALL VOTING DISTRICTS

Granite State Republicans Show Clearly That General Leonard Wood Is Their Candidate For Presidency

OUTCOME OF PRIMARY ELECTIONS IS SIGNAL VICTORY FOR WOOD FORCES

New Hampshire Lines Up As Unit Behind Native Son, and Will Do Its Utmost to Further His Interests at Chicago Convention—Murchie Group of Democrats Has Little Difficulty in Winning Over Noone Group—Comparatively Small Vote Cast Outside Cities Because of Impassable Roads and Bad Traveling Conditions Generally, Due to Saturday's Blizzard.

PLEDGED-TO-WOOD TICKET ELECTED:

Delegates-at-Large

JOHN H. BARTLETT, of Portsmouth.
FRED W. ESTABROOK, of Nashua.
FRANK KNOX, of Manchester.
CHARLES GALE SHEDD, of Keene.

First District Delegates

PHILIP C. LOCKWOOD, of Manchester.
JOHN SCAMMON, of Exeter.

Second District Delegates

EARTHQUAKE IN TIFLIS VICINITY

Several Hundred Dead and Thousands Made Homeless by Severe Shock

PUBLIC REQUESTS MADE IN WILL OF GRACE P. SMITH

MANCHESTER U

MANCHESTER, N. H., MONDAY MORNING, MARCH 8, 1920.

GENERAL WOOD'S ME CALL FOR REAL A

General Wood Unable To Reach Manchester

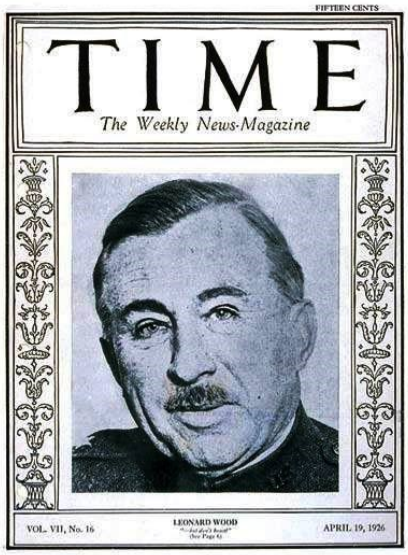
GENERAL LEONARD WOOD

Fearing Great Damage, City Is Planning Municipal Digout

RIVAL

New Hampshire's first presidential primary in 1916 was not the first in the nation. It was the state's second Presidential Primary, held four years later on March 9, 1920, following a huge snow storm, that became the first in the nation, beginning a tradition that has continued for a hundred years.

Certain to win the NH Republican contest that year was a colorful military officer, Major General Leonard Wood, for whom the US Army base in Missouri is named, and who because he was New Hampshire born, was immediately marketed as a "Favorite Son Candidate." State Democrats, however, had no presidential contest on their ballot, with nearly all delegates running as "un-pledged" to any candidate.



FIFTEEN CENTS

TIME

The Weekly News-Magazine

VOL. VII, No. 16 — LEONARD WOOD — APRIL 19, 1926

Wood was well-funded, and had the support of the Republican establishment, including the governor and the owner of the state's largest newspaper, who was a personal friend..

A graduate of Harvard Medical School in 1883, Wood entered the army as a military surgeon, but transitioned easily from the medical corps to combat roles. During that time he served as the personal physician to President William McKinley's invalid wife, and President Grover Cleveland, with whom he also regularly played cards at the White House.

As a candidate, Wood's credentials were substantial. Commander of the famous Rough Riders of the Spanish American War of 1898, under whom Teddy Roosevelt served (he and Roosevelt recruited the regiment). Winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor. Governor of Cuba, which he rebuilt after the war. Governor General of the Philippines, where he mentored future generals, John J. "Black Jack" Pershing and Douglas McArthur. Army Chief of Staff, where he reorganized and modernized the US military, instituting the General Staff system, creating the forerunner of the ROTC program, and generating a culture of professionalism and preparedness that served the country well with the prospects of fighting the First World War.

Time *cover, April 19, 1926*

Best of friends: Teddy Roosevelt and General Leonard Wood. At right is Colonel Wood, commander of the Rough Riders, with Lt. Col. Roosevelt, his second, with the 1st US Volunteer Cavalry in Tampa before leaving for Cuba in June of 1898. At Wood's right is former Confederate General Joe Wheeler. Behind is Major Geo Dunn, Major Alexander Brodie, later Governor of Arizona Territory, and Chaplain Brown assigned to the Rough Riders.

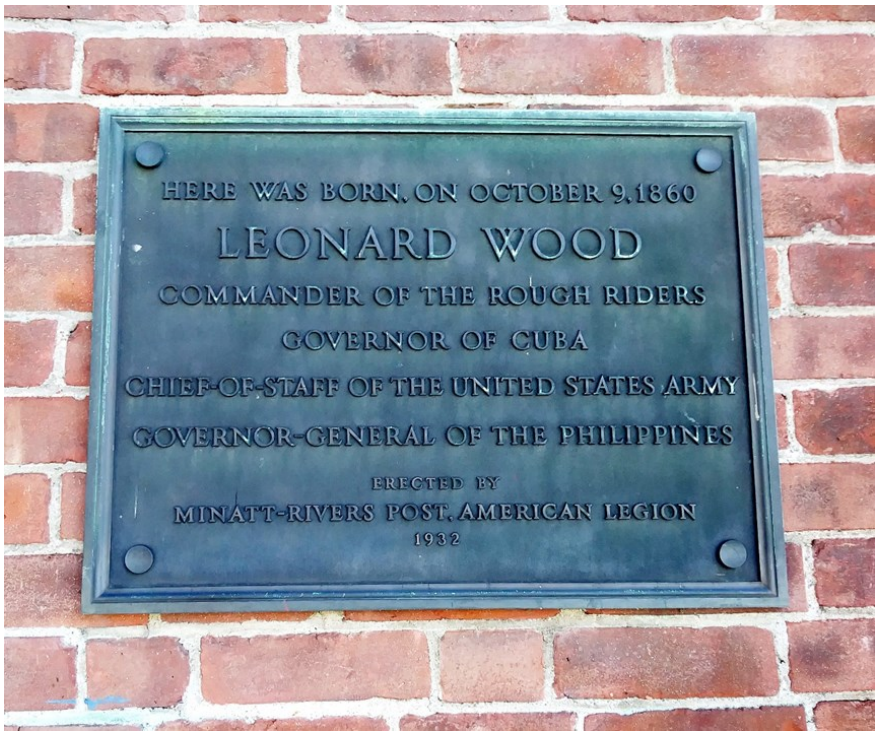
The reason why Wood was running for president, however, was that his close friend, Theodore Roosevelt, had been preparing to, and was considered the front-runner to win the national ticket, but died suddenly in January, 1919. Roosevelt had raised a huge war chest and support from the business and industrial establishment across the country, which Wood inherited. Roosevelt had insisted that Wood run in his stead if for some reason he was unable. Wood biographer Jack McCallum wrote that Wood therefore was able to run the most expensive presidential campaign in history up to that point.

New Hampshire voters did not vote directly for a candidate for president in the primary at this time. This would not change until 1952. Instead, voters would choose delegates and alternates to each party's national convention. These delegates could run pledged to support an individual candidate, or remain neutral.

Wood won the New Hampshire primary because he won the most delegates pledged to support him at the Republican National Convention. California Governor Hiram Johnson had but one delegate, who was unsuccessful. As for the Democrats, all but three ran unpledged. In the end, the total Republican vote for New Hampshire's first, first in the nation primary was 16,195 to the Democrat's 7,103.

The turnout was considered light, however, due to the "paralyzing blizzard," as the *Manchester Union* called it, which hit New England the Saturday before the Primary, causing difficult travel in rural areas and even some cities, even several days after the storm..

Wood's train had been "Storm bound" in Connecticut for 12 hours, causing him to miss weekend events in Manchester sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, two American Legion posts, the Manchester Federated Woman's Club and the Leonard Wood Club.



Plaque commemorating General Leonard Wood's birth as it appears today on the former post office building, downtown Winchester NH, left, placed by the American Legion in 1923. Photos as of May, 2019.

The Concord Evening Monitor reported the Republican vote was one fifth of the normal turnout, "for Democrats the proportion was even smaller."

Wood's delegation included *Manchester Union* owner Col. Frank Knox, a fellow "Rough Rider," who would be on a national ticket as vice president 16 years later, Governor John H. Bartlett, and Historian Hobart Pillsbury, later NH Secretary of State. Defeated as an unpledged delegate was future Governor and US Ambassador England during World War II, John G. Winant.

Wood was boosted as "New Hampshire's Favorite Son," due to his birth in Winchester, a town south of Keene, although the future candidate's time in the Granite State was short-lived. He relocated to Massachusetts at the age of three months and grew up in the Town of Pocasset on Cape Cod.

According to Sybil Dupuis, great granddaughter of Rep. Stephen Bullock, author of the 1913 Presidential Primary bill, who had a home in Winchester, the story in town was Wood's mother was traveling through Winchester to Massachusetts, and "because the baby wouldn't wait," she gave birth in an upstairs apartment over the post office. The building still stands, bearing a plaque commemorating Wood's birth there.

Thus there was perhaps a slightly defensive tone in the lead editorial in Col. Frank Knox's *Manchester Union* the day before the primary:

"Daniel Webster in his day enjoyed no greater fame, nor wider reputation than does Leonard Wood…although he, like Webster, removed from New Hampshire to Massachusetts, that fact does not lessen our prideful loyalty to Wood."

Wood entered the Chicago Republican Convention that June with more delegates than any other candidate, having won nine of the 20 state primaries, beginning with New Hampshire.

The voting went for two days and 10 ballots. "He came to the Republican convention solidly in the lead but was defeated by a combination of political manipulation and last minute bribery," according to biographer McCallum. Unlike the surprise nominee, Warren Harding, who went on to become president, Wood had rebuffed the powerful oil interests, losing their support. The Depot Dome scandal in the administration that followed, was arguably the consequence.

A reporter for the Associated Press broke the story this way: "Harding of Ohio was chosen by a group of men in a smoke filled room earlier today as the Republican candidate." The term, "smoke filled room" appearing in print for the first time. — *Dean Dexter*

A version of this article appears in the 2019 Edition of the New Hampshire Manual for the General Court, Volume 66, also known as the "Red Book," published by the Secretary of State, since 1889.