

FDR: Selected Days in the Life of President Franklin Roosevelt

Two Sessions

Thursdays -- March 26 and April 2, 2026

12:30 – 1:30 PM

Instructor: Carl Fields (ccf149@bellsouth.net)

What's Ahead

1. Introduction: Overview of Day-by-Day web site and the Day of Crown Princess's Visit
2. FDR Timeline
3. FDR Day-by-Day Information for Selected Key Dates in FDR Administration
4. Meetings with Leaders: 1930s, 1940s, and Future (with an "Arkansas Interlude")
5. FDR Medical Issues – and the Doctor's Office
6. Lucy Mercer Rutherford (maybe?) and FDR's Final Weeks

FDR Timeline

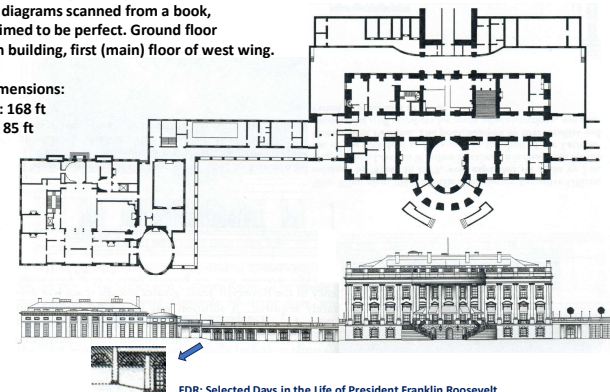
- **January 30, 1882:** Born in Hyde Park, New York
- **1900–1903:** Attends Harvard University
- **March 17, 1905:** Marries Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962)*
 - 6 children; 4 sons and 1 daughter survived to become adults
- **1907:** Passes bar exam (Columbia Law School)
- **1910:** Elected to the New York State Senate
- **1913–1920:** Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Wilson Administration, WW1*)
- **1920:** Democratic Party vice-presidential *nominee*, not elected*
- **August 1921:** Stricken with "polio," resulting in permanent paralysis of his legs*
- **1921–27:** Physical rehab; works in law & banking; nominates Al Smith at 1924 Democratic National Convention; establishes Warm Springs Foundation (1926)
- **1928:** Elected Governor of New York, reelected 1930*
- **March 4, 1933:** Inaugurated as 32nd President, re-elected 3 times*
- **December 7, 1941:** Pearl Harbor attacked; U.S. enters WWII*
- **April 12, 1945:** Dies of a cerebral hemorrhage in Warm Springs, Georgia*

Note: This "wordy" slide is in handout.

White House Layout (~1942-48) – Sheet 1 of 1

Note: Stitched together by an amateur from 4 diagrams scanned from a book, not claimed to be perfect. Ground floor of main building, first (main) floor of west wing.

WH Dimensions:
Length: 168 ft
Width: 85 ft



FDR's Health – Curious Scattered Information

White House Physician(s) – Saw FDR almost every day*

FDR Protected privacy* about his health (paralysis “underplayed”)

Usually visited Warm Springs twice per year (often ~3 weeks in Nov, pre-WW2)

Apparent declining health for last year of his life

Cardiologist traveled with him to Warm Springs (April 1945)

Specialist summoned *from Atlanta* – after FDR collapse on April 12

No attempt to reach closer medical assistance

No autopsy performed*

Few medical records “revealed” after death (primary medical file “vanished”)*

“F. Davis Rolph”

Some published “recollections”

Dr's 1946 memoir (people, travels, FDR: “normal for a man his age”*)

Medical journal article by cardiologist (1970)

Naval Aide McCrea (1942) “map room” “memoirs” -- “packing” (as sinus treatment)

Later “conspiracy theories”

Note: Paralysis “underplayed,” CCF opinion -- *-items: consistent with patient obsessed with medical privacy and had Dr who respected that. This slide in handout. FDR: Selected Days in the Life of President Franklin Roosevelt

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Lucy Mercer Rutherford Timeline

- April 26, 1891: Born Washington, D.C.
- 1893: Formerly-wealthy, socially-connected family loses fortune in financial panic.
- ~1912: Worked in dress shop.
- 1914: Hired as the social secretary for Eleanor Roosevelt (ER).
- June 1917: Leaves employment with ER, enlists in US Navy, assigned to FDR's office
- Mid-1918: ER said to have discovered a Mercer-FDR relationship
- ~1919: Hired as governess for children of widower Winthrop Rutherford (1862-1944)
- February 12, 1920: Married Rutherford
 - 1 daughter, 5 stepsons, one stepdaughter
 - Homes: Allamuchy (Township), NJ; Aiken, SC; Manhattan, NY (apartment)
- 1941: Winthrop Rutherford disabled by severe stroke
- March 19, 1944: Winthrop Rutherford dies.
- April 1945: Present at Warm Springs, Georgia, when FDR suffered a fatal stroke
- July 31, 1948: Dies, Aiken SC

Note: Washington DC social connections, probable need to work due to reduced family finances, Rutherford wealth (NJ home, Peter Stuyvesant direct descendant), oldest “stepson,” Teddy Roosevelt son-in-law death in 1931. Married surname is Rutherford. This slide in handout.

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If you would like to know more (books):

- Goodwin, Doris Kearns; *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: the Home Front in World War II*; 1994, Simon & Schuster.
- McCrea, John L (Vice Admiral, USN) and (Editor) Julia Tobey; *Captain McCrea's War*; 2016; Skyhorse Publishing.
- McIntire, Ross T (Vice Admiral, USN) and George Creel; *White House Physician*; 1946; G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- Phillips-Schrock, Patrick; *The White House: An Illustrated Architectural History*, 2013, McFarland & Company, Publishers.

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If you would like to know more (Web Sites):

- “Timeline: FDR Day-by-Day,” Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Museum; US National Archives and Records Administration; <https://www.fdrlibrary.org/timeline>
- Wikipedia contributors, "Franklin D. Roosevelt," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Franklin_D._Roosevelt&oldid=134472106 (accessed March 23, 2026).
- Wikipedia contributors, "Lucy Mercer Rutherford," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lucy_Mercer_Rutherford&oldid=1325778212 (accessed March 23, 2026).
- Wikipedia contributors, "James F. Byrnes," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=James_F._Byrnes&oldid=1343734590 (accessed March 23, 2026).

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