

## FROM THE ARCHIVES: SPOTLIGHT ON REGENTS

### ***Theodore Roosevelt*** Ex Officio Regent, 1901

Vice President Theodore Roosevelt, an Ex Officio Regent who served on the Board in 1901, established an early relationship with the Smithsonian when, as a boy, he corresponded with Secretary Spencer Baird. Later he began donating his natural history collections, particularly when he decided not to pursue a natural history career.

Although Vice President Roosevelt's membership on the Board of Regents was brief, as President he strongly



encouraged the Smithsonian to accept the Freer gift. When he left office he led collecting expeditions to Africa and South America to collect for the National Museum, providing many of the iconic specimens displayed in the new museum after it opened in 1910. He also supported funding for the Biological Survey of the Canal Zone in 1910–1911, which led to the creation of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute.

At one point there were plans to build a museum in his honor next to what is now the Natural History Museum.



Former President Theodore Roosevelt (left of flag) and other members of the Smithsonian expedition party to Africa, where he collected natural history specimens for the U.S. National Museum and live animals for the National Zoological Park

***Jeannine Smith Clark***  
**Citizen Regent, 1983–1995**

Jeannine Smith Clark joined the Board of Regents in 1983, and played an active role for the next 12 years. A Washington, D.C., community leader, Clark was a member of the D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics; was active in the Urban League, YWCA, Howard University Hospital board, and Phillips Collection council; and had volunteered at the Smithsonian for many years.

She received a BA and MA in African studies from Howard University and taught at Sidwell Friends School and the University of the District of Columbia. At that time, women could not teach after their third month of pregnancy, so Clark directed her energies towards volunteer work when she started her family.

Clark first volunteered for the Smithsonian during the 1968 Poor People’s March on Washington. She tried to establish a program to take children from the Resurrection City campsite on tours of Smithsonian museums.

She was a docent from 1968 to 1977, giving tours of the Natural History Museum’s Africa Hall. She was a fundraiser for the Museum of African Art before it became part of the Smithsonian in 1979. She also was an active member of the Smithsonian Women’s Committee, chairing its volunteer program in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

As a Regent, she was appointed the first chairwomen



**Jeannine Smith Clark, 1980**

the Cultural Education Committee in 1986. The committee consisted of 12 to 18 members from outside the Smithsonian and focused its activities for the next decade on educational programs; diversity at all levels of the Smithsonian, including the monitoring and accountability of diversity efforts; sensitivity to cultural pluralism in exhibit programs; and public

outreach.

She also was a member and chair of the Board’s Audit and Review Committee from 1985 to 1994, serving as chair in 1994, and on the Personnel Committee of the Audit and Review Committee from 1989 to 1994. During her tenure on the Board, Clark also was appointed chair of the National Portrait Gallery Commission in 1989.



**William Howard Taft**  
**Ex Officio Regent, 1921–1930**

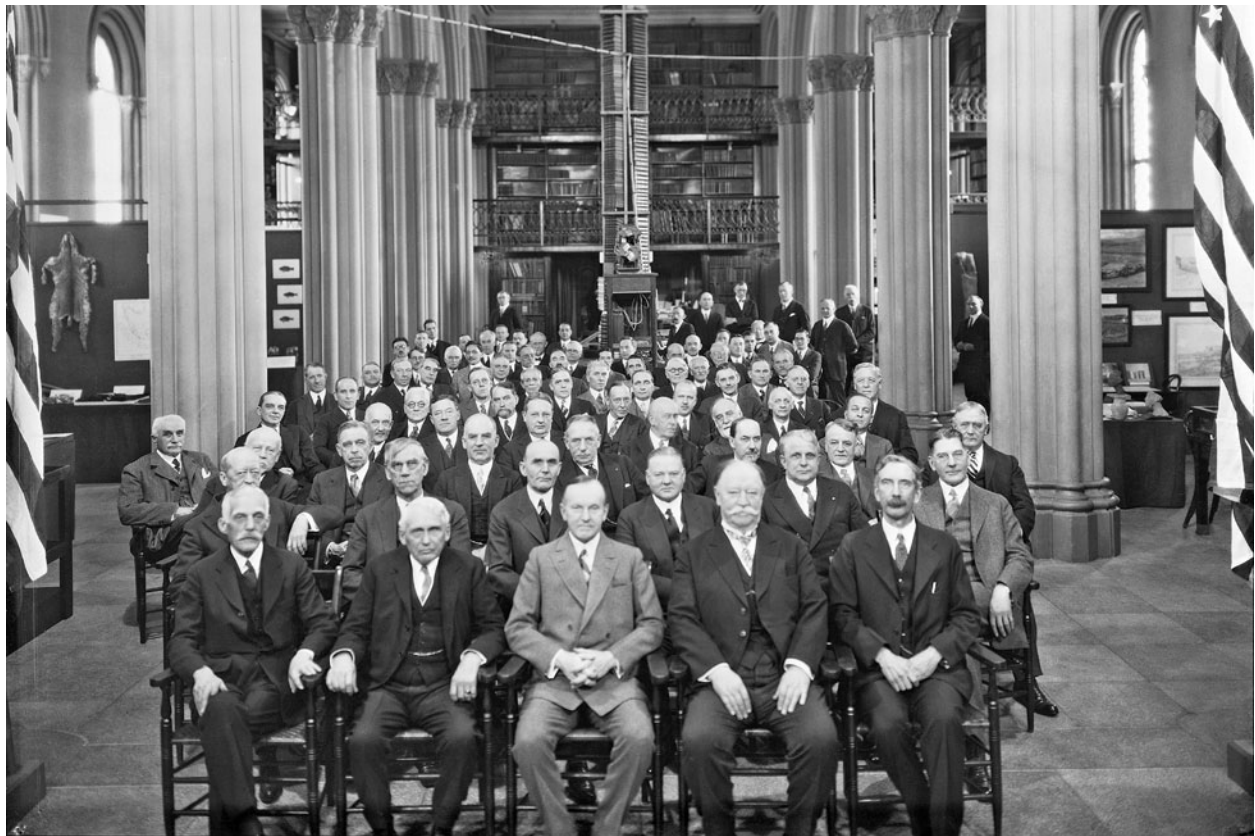
William Howard Taft was the 27th President of the United States (1909–1913) and the 10th Chief Justice of the United States, during which time he served as an Ex Officio Regent on the Board.

The Chief Justice was one of the most activist Chancellors of the Board. He was very involved in day-to-day Smithsonian activities and planning and even held staff meetings in the new U.S. National Museum building (now the National Museum of Natural History). As Chancellor, Taft

presided over the 1927 Conference on the Future of the Smithsonian, a major evaluation and planning effort that led to the Smithsonian's first capital campaign, which was unfortunately launched just as the Stock Market crashed in the fall of 1929.

First Lady Helen Herron Taft donated her inaugural gown to the National Museum, the first dress in the First Ladies gown collection.

**First Lady Helen Herron Taft donated her inaugural gown (right) to the National Museum Collection in 1912, the first dress in the First Ladies gown collection**



Fifty leaders of the scientific, political and industrial life of the country gathered at a conference held in the Smithsonian's Great Hall in February 1927. In the front row, left to right: Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon; Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg; President Calvin Coolidge; Chief Justice William Howard Taft; and Acting Secretary of the Smithsonian Charles Greeley Abbot

**Clarence Cannon**  
**Congressional Regent,**  
**1935–1964**



Clarence Cannon, oil on canvas, by Irving Resnikoff (signed as Charles J. Fox), 1967

Cannon's lifelong interest in American history was reflected in his first career, when he taught and authored several books on family and local history. He then studied law at the University of Missouri while teaching history at Stephens College and was admitted to the bar in 1908.

In 1911, he joined the staff of his Congressman, Champ Clark, and served as House parliamentarian from 1917 to 1920. Cannon soon established himself as a leading authority on parliamentary procedure. He held the position of parliamentarian of the Democratic National Convention from 1920 to 1960.

Cannon had a lasting influence over the workings of Congress through his writings, including *Procedure in the House of Representatives* (1920) and *Cannon's Precedents of the House of Representatives* (1936). He was elected a Representative (Democrat) from Missouri in 1922 and retained that seat until his death.

Despite his reputation as a budget-slashing fiscal conservative, especially after he became chair of the House Appropriations Committee in 1941, Cannon was a strong advocate for the Smithsonian's budget. As chair of the House Committee on Appropriations, Cannon shepherded the legislation for the National Museum of History and Technology (MHT;

now the National Museum of American History) through the Congress. When the subcommittee hearings began on the MHT planning appropriation, Cannon suggested that the bill encompass construction as well as planning. Smithsonian staff hastily pulled together a budget for the full legislation that was then passed handily with Cannon's support. (He also shepherded the Kennedy Center legislation through the Congress without opposition.)

Cannon served on the Regents' Executive Committee from 1941 to 1964, playing an active role in the affairs of the Smithsonian on many levels, as it coped with the Great Depression and World War II, and then began a period of growth in research and museum programs in the 1950s.



The January 15, 1954, Board of Regents' meeting: from left to right, Secretary Leonard Carmichael, Justice Owen J. Roberts, Representative John M. Vorys, Representative Clarence Cannon, Mr. Robert V. Fleming, Chief Justice Earl Warren (center), Senator Leverett Saltonstall, Dr. Vannevar Bush, Dr. Jerome C. Hunsaker, and Representative Leroy Johnson

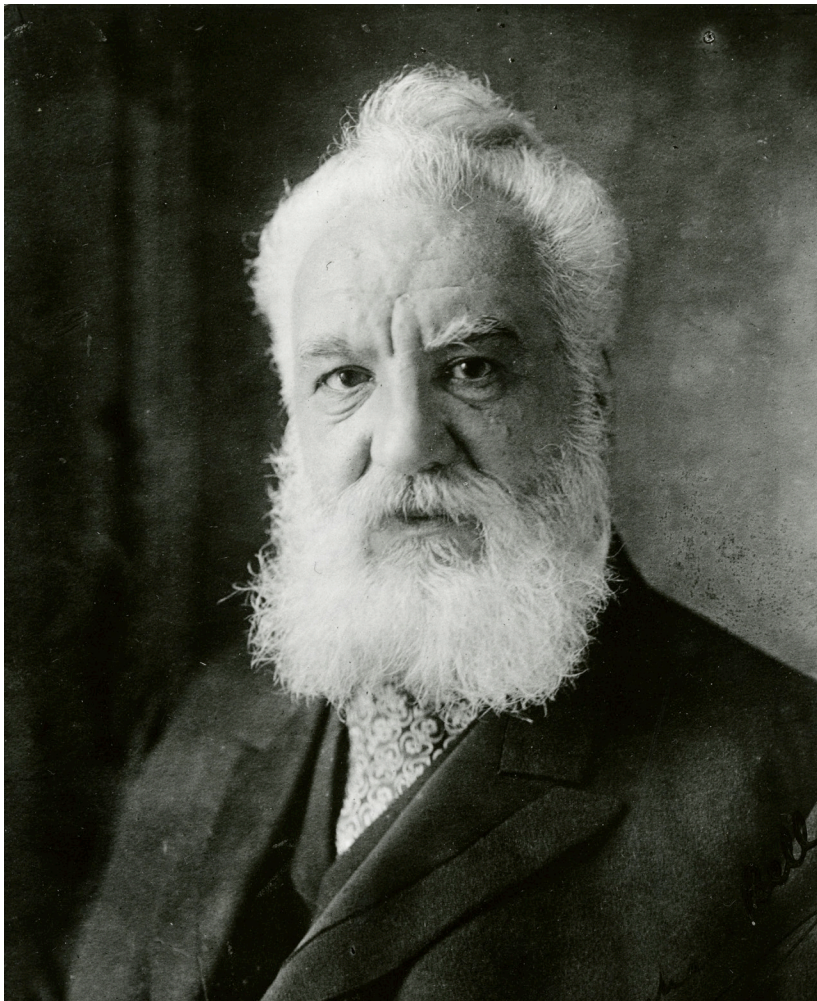


**Alexander Graham Bell**  
**Citizen Regent, 1898–1922**

Alexander Graham Bell was a protégé of the first Smithsonian Secretary, Joseph Henry. As he began his development of the electromagnetic telephone, Bell visited Henry in 1875 and asked what he thought of his proposed invention. Henry was impressed and told him to continue his work. Bell wrote to

his parents about the meeting and used that letter in patent fights over his invention.

Bell was a lifelong supporter of the Smithsonian. After Henry died, he bought Henry's scientific library to help the Henry family financially. He combined it and left it to the Smithsonian, where it currently is held in the Dibner Library. Bell was inspired by James Smithson and brought Smithson's body from Italy to



**Alexander Graham Bell (1847–1922), Scottish-born inventor and scientist, and later Smithsonian Regent, c. 1910s**



**An instantaneous photograph by Alexander Graham Bell of Langley Aerodrome No. 5 in flight on May 6, 1896**

the Smithsonian in 1904 when Smithson's cemetery plot was going to be moved for rock quarrying.

Always interested in kites and flight, he supported Secretary Samuel P. Langley's research into aerodynamics and photographed one of the flights of Langley's "aerodrome." Bell also donated \$5,000 in 1891 to support the creation of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory. In addition, Bell donated significant history of technology collections and was active in the evaluation of the Freer art collection when it was being offered to the Smithsonian.

In honor of his role at the Smithsonian, a bust of Bell by Victore Salvatore was presented to the Board of Regents at its December 9, 1926, meeting.

**James Edwin Webb**  
**Citizen Regent, 1970–1982**

James Edwin Webb, who joined the Board in 1970, previously served as the second NASA administrator from 1961 to 1968, during which time he was responsible for the creation of the Apollo program.

Webb's energy was evident during his 12 years on the Board of Regents. When he first joined the Board, he found that it did not play a particularly active role in the affairs of the Smithsonian. Webb subsequently used his skills as a management specialist to focus on modernizing the Smithsonian's management. He served as chair of the Executive Committee and, in collaboration with Secretary S. Dillon Ripley, encour-



James Webb, c. 1966

aged the Regents to actively engage with the Smithsonian community.

In 1982, the Smithsonian honored Webb by establishing the James E. Webb Fellow-

ships for the promotion of excellence in the management of cultural and scientific not-for-profit institutions. Although no longer in existence, the program benefitted many staff by funding advanced education in management, such as MBA degrees, for Smithsonian staff who showed promise as future managers. Today the Smithsonian honors Webb with the James E. Webb Internship Program for Minority Undergraduate Juniors, Seniors and Graduate Students in Business and Public Administration. Designed to promote excellence and diversity in the management of not-for-profit scientific and cultural institutions, the 10-week Smithsonian internships are offered to minority students who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents.



Former Regent James E. Webb (center), with (from left) Gretchen Ellsworth, director of the Office of Fellowships and Grants, and fellowship winners Deborah Warner, associate curator and vice chair of the Department of Science and Technology at the National Museum of American History; Rebecca Webb of the Smithsonian Museum Shops; and Jon Yellin, director of the Office of Programming and Budget, 1983