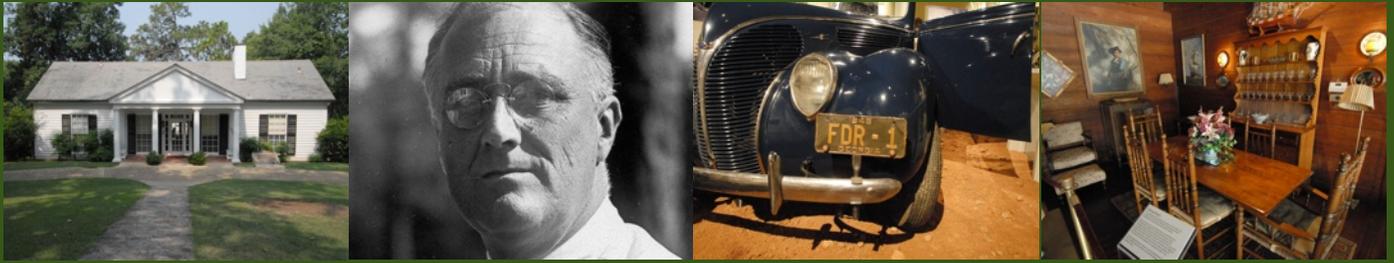


# The Little White House NEWSLETTER



Summer Quarter 2019

## Franklin D. Roosevelt: Newspaperman

Did you know that FDR was the editor of the Harvard Crimson in 1904? Twenty-one years later, while in Warm Springs, Roosevelt re-established his career as a journalist.

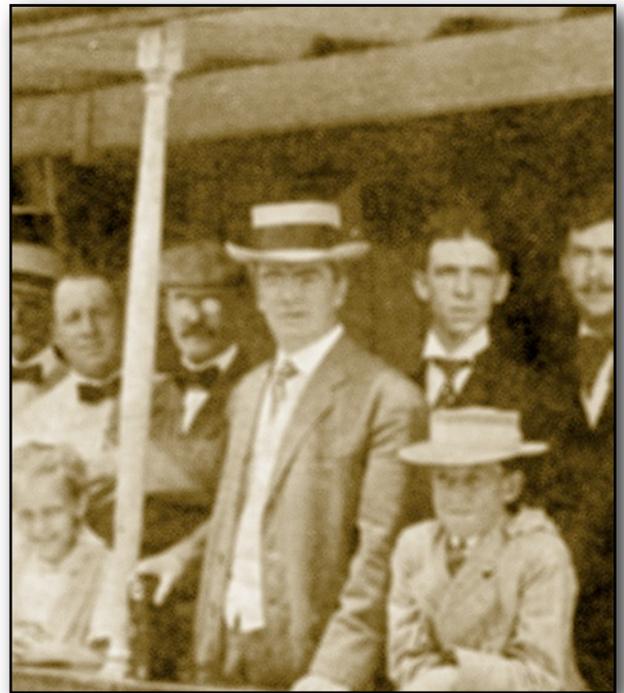
On his second visit to Warm Springs in 1925, Franklin D. Roosevelt wanted his privacy. Unbeknownst to him, polio patients from across the United States began to make a pilgrimage to the run down resort in west Georgia. Newspaperman Tom Loyless was working on restoring the old Meriwether Inn, when he asked Roosevelt to pen some editorials for the Macon Telegraph. Titled, "Roosevelt Says," as he typed nine columns, beginning as a light hearted conversation concerning Georgia politics. However, in the remaining columns, we can begin to see the genesis of what will become the New Deal programs formulate in his thoughts.

First, a little background on Tom Loyless, sourced from Wikipedia.

"Tom W. Loyless (ca.1871 - March 19, 1926) is now best known as the managing owner of the Warm Springs spa resort (for which his financial backer was George Foster Peabody). Prior to managing the resort, Loyless, a native of west Georgia, served as a newspaper reporter, editor and publisher for papers in Augusta, Columbus and Macon.

As a young editor Loyless earned a reputation for bluntness and a fiery temper that did not always limit itself to print. An 1897 dispute with H.C. Hanson, editor of the rival Macon Morning Telegraph (later merged with *Macon Evening News* to form the *Macon Telegraph*) in which Loyless accused Hanson of bias in

reporting became so heated that when meeting Hanson in person Loyless struck him. Hanson in turn drew a handgun.



Tom Loyless standing front (with hat).

By 1915 Loyless was editor of the *Augusta Chronicle*. He was one of the few newspaper editors in Georgia to proclaim the innocence of Leo Frank and denounced his prosecutors as corrupt. Frank was accused of murdering a young girl, Mary Phagen, in Atlanta and was quickly convicted and hung by vigilantes. Though Loyless

continued to edit the paper until 1920, his editorials about Frank cost him his local popularity and made him an enemy of the Ku Klux Klan. Soon after his departure from the *Chronicle*, he became the manager of the Warm Springs resort and Editor of the *Macon Telegraph*.

Loyless proved an ambitious caretaker of the much-in-disrepair property. After a young man suffering from polio discovered that the springs helped him, Loyless and Warm Springs attracted the attention of Franklin D. Roosevelt, who had been stricken by a paralytic illness in 1921, diagnosed at the time as polio. Based on his own improvement, Roosevelt decided that Warm Springs could help victims of polio, and he worked together with Loyless on improvements to the resort and spa.

Loyless remained at Warm Springs until his health failed due to cancer in 1925. An obituary (featuring the

subheading "Georgia Editor Was an Unceasing Enemy of the Klan") appeared on page 19 of the March 22, 1926, issue of the New York Times.

Loyless is portrayed in the 2005 movie "Warm Springs" by Tim Blake Nelson. While the film gives the impression that Loyless was no longer active in newspapers at the time of Roosevelt's visits, he was in fact still involved with the Macon Telegraph. Franklin Roosevelt contributed to the paper as a guest editor, articles which were syndicated nationally.

The following is a reprint from FDR's first editorial in April 1925. You can see where he pokes fun at Loyless, enjoys the hospitality of the region and more importantly, you can read his thoughts on the plight farmers were beginning to face as the economic depression had begun to hit the South, long before it hit the nation.

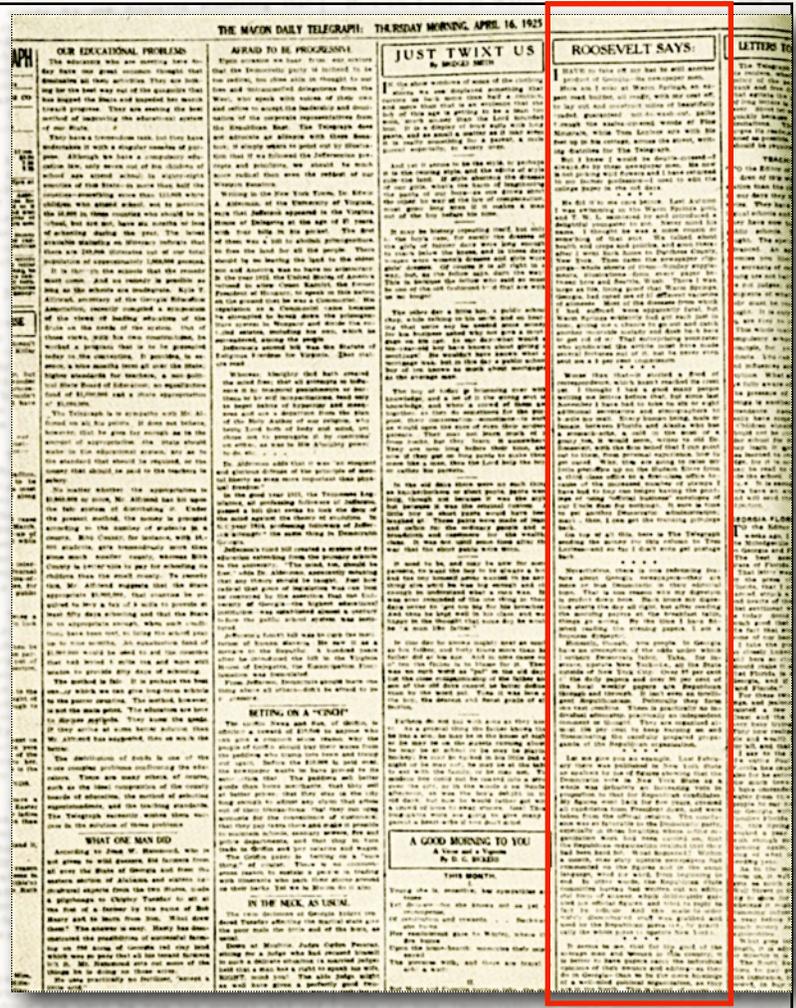
Macon Telegraph April 16, 1925

# ROOSEVELT SAYS

I have to take my hat off to still another product of Georgia -- its newspaper men. Here I am over at Warm Springs, an expert road builder, all ready, with my coat off, to lay out and construct miles of beautifully graded, guaranteed not-to-wash-out, paths through the azalea-covered woods of Pine Mountain, while Tom Loyless sits with his feet up in his cottage, across the street, writing diatribes for The Telegraph.

But I knew I would be double-crossed --I always do by these newspaper men. He now is out picking wild flowers and I have returned to my former profession. I used to edit the college paper in the old days.

He did it to me once before. Last Autumn I was swimming in the Warm Springs pool, and T.W.L. (Loyless) sauntered by and introduced a delightful youngster to me (the Atlanta Journal reporter). Never mind his name. I thought he was a mere cousin or something of that sort. We talked about health and crops and politics, and soon thereafter I went back home to



Print of the Macon Telegraph April 16, 1925

Dutchess County, New York. Then came the newspaper clippings whole sheets of them - Sunday supplements, illustrations from every paper between here and Seattle, Wash. There I was, large as life, living proof that Warm Springs, Georgia had cured me of 57 different varieties of ailments. Most of the diseases from which I had suffered were apparently fatal, but Warm Springs evidently had got each just in time, giving me a chance to go out and catch another incurable malady and dash back here to get rid of it. That enterprising youngster who syndicated the article must have made several fortunes out of it, but he never even sent me a 5 per cent commission.

Worse than that, it started a flood of correspondence, which hasn't reached its crest yet. I thought I had a good many people writing me letters before that, but since



Unexpected arrivals began seeking FDR's therapy in 1925.

last November I have had to take on six or eight additional secretaries and stenographers to handle my mail. Every human being, male or female, between Florida and Alaska who has a stomach-ache, a cold in the nose or a gouty toe, it would seem, writes to old Dr. Roosevelt, with the firm belief that I can point out to them, from personal experience, how to get cured. Why, they are going to raise my little post office on the Hudson River from a third-class office to a first-class office because of the increased number of stamps I have had to buy (no longer having the privilege of using 'official business' envelopes of our Uncle Sam for nothing). It sure is time to get another Democratic

administration; maybe then I can get the franking privilege back.

On top of all this here is The Telegraph sending the money for this column to Tom Loyless -- and so far I don't even get postage back.

Nevertheless, there is one redeeming feature about Georgia newspapers -- they are more or less Democratic in their editorial tone. That is one reason why my digestion is perfect down here. Back home my digestion starts the day all right, but after reading the morning papers at the breakfast table, things go wrong. By the time I have finished reading the evening papers, I am a hopeless dyspeptic.

Honestly though, you people in Georgia have no conception of the odds under which Northern Democrats labor. Take, for instance, upstate New York - i.e. all of the State outside of New York City. Over 90 per cent of the daily papers and over 90 per cent of the local weekly papers are Republican through and through. It isn't even an intelligent Republicanism. Politically they form one vast combine. There is practically no individual editorship, practically no independent comment or thought. They are organized almost 100 per cent to keep harping on and disseminating the carefully prepared propaganda of the Republican organization.

Let me give you an example. Last February there was published in New York State an analysis by me of figures showing that the Democratic vote in New York State as a whole was definitely an increasing vote in proportion to that for Republican candidates. My figures went back for five years, covered all candidates from President down, and were taken from the official returns. The conclusion was so favorable to the Democratic party, especially those in localities where active organization work had been carried on, that the Republican organization realized that they had been hard hit. What happened? Within a month, over sixty upstate newspapers had commented on the figures and in the same language, word for word, from beginning to end. In other words, the Republican State committee bureau had written out an editorial form of an answer, which deliberately garbled my official figures, and tried to reply to fact by ridicule. And this made-to-order

widely disseminated stuff was grabbed and used by the Republican press (i.e. by practically the whole press in upstate New York).

It seems to me, that for the good of the average man and woman in this country, it is better to have papers carry the individual opinions of their owners and editor -- as they do in Georgia -- than to be the mere hirelings of a well-oiled political organization, as they are in the North. This is based, of course, on the assumption that down here the average reader reads more than one paper. In upstate New York, even if you do read several papers, you get precisely the same opinions from each, and generally in the same language. Down here, it is a liberal education to read, for example, the editorial comments of

The Macon Telegraph, the Atlanta Constitution, and the Atlanta Journal, the same day.

However, I must not get mixed up in Georgia politics. You people can mix it up to your heart's contents over all the local matters in the world just so long as you come together and work shoulder to shoulder when it comes to national issues and the general strengthening and better organization of the Democratic party throughout the United States. I shall send this off before T.W.L. comes back with the wild flowers -- otherwise he might edit it.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

Warm Springs, Ga.

## Snapshots from 1925

Roosevelt's second visit was full of activity, mostly unexpected. More and more patients arrived and "Doc" Roosevelt had to think about caring for those seeking his help. He would go on to write more articles for the Telegraph and at the same time, develop plans for a center to treat polio patients.

Franklin D. Roosevelt was becoming FDR.

