

See if forward *1. 7. 1913*

THE SECRETARY OF WAR.
WASHINGTON.

December 8, 1913.

My dear Mr. Secretary:

I have your note of the 5th instant, in which you recommend Mr. Robert Rosenbluth for appointment to the position of Assistant Director of Lands in the Philippine Islands.

The power of appointment to this position is vested in the Philippine authorities. Accordingly, upon receipt of your letter, the Department cabled the Governor-General at Manila, advising that Mr. Rosenbluth was an applicant, that he had excellent recommendations, and suggesting that, if the appointment had not already been made, he await the receipt of papers. We are today in receipt of a reply, stating that Mr. Rosenbluth's name is being considered for the place.

In order that the Governor-General may know of your interest in Mr. Rosenbluth, your letter has been forwarded for his consideration.

Very sincerely,
Lindley M. Garrison

Honorable Franklin D. Roosevelt,
Assistant Secretary of the Navy,
Navy Department.

1913 Young Franklin D. Roosevelt and "The American Dreyfus"

(Roosevelt, Franklin D.) Garrison, Lindley M., **Typed Letter Signed as President Woodrow Wilson's first Secretary of War, Department of War, Washington, D.C., December 8, 1913, to Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt**

octavo, one page, in very good, clean and legible condition.

Concerning his recommendation of Robert Rosenbluth for a government position in the Philippines:

"I have your note ... in which you recommend Mr. Robert Rosenbluth to the position of Assistant Director of Lands in the Philippine Islands. The power of appointment to this position is vested in the Philippine authorities ... the Department cabled the Governor-General at Manila, advising that Mr. Rosenbluth was an applicant, that he had excellent recommendations, and suggesting that, if the appointment had not already been made, he await the receipt of papers. We are today in receipt of a reply, stating that Mr. Rosenbluth's name is being considered for the place. In order that the Governor-General may know of your interest in Mr. Rosenbluth, your letter has been forwarded for his consideration.

Before young Franklin Delano Roosevelt became Assistant Secretary of the Navy in the Administration of Democratic President Woodrow Wilson, he had served in the New York legislature, chairing the State Senate's Conservation Committee. In that capacity, he had frequent contact with 21-year-old Robert [Owen] Rosenbluth – named for the early British Socialist by his Russian Jewish immigrant parents. A graduate of Yale Forest College who had joined the new US Forestry Service, he had surveyed the unknown interior of the Philippines and the most rugged country of the southwestern United States before moving to the New York Forest Service to investigate the misuse of state lands by railroad corporations, and, tangentially, to carry out a plan to rehabilitate convicts in state prisons in forestry techniques.

Rather than returning to the Philippines – the position for which Roosevelt recommended him – Rosenbluth instead headed the New York City Reformatory and worked for a foundation dedicated to city planning. He had thus already had a varied career when the US entered World War I. At age 26, volunteering for active Army service, he was commissioned a Major but was disappointed to be assigned as military administrator at the Port of New York. He vainly insisted on going to the front in France; when his superior officers refused to release him, he asked Roosevelt, then still at the Navy Department, for help. Roosevelt was “much amused at the spectacle of a man trying to avoid a major's commission,” and after discussing the problem with the Assistant Secretary of the Army, advised Rosenbluth to accept a commission as first lieutenant and leave for France immediately. Rosenbluth complied and sailed for the front that night.

Tough the Roosevelt-Rosenbluth friendship was life-long, Rosenbluth's biographer, Rosemary Davies (*The Rosenbluth Case, Federal Justice on Trial*, 1970) gave it only short shrift, as her focus was on the wartime incident that was to bring Rosenbluth tragic notoriety as “the American Dreyfus”:

On October 25, 1918, Army Major Alexander Cronkhite, the son of a General, was shot and killed at Camp Lewis, Washington; while his father insisted that his son had been murdered, a board of inquiry declared the wound to be self-inflicted, though accidental. Three years later, Rosenbluth, who had been serving at the base as a Captain after being invalided home from France, was charged by the US Department of Justice with Cronkhite's murder. While, incidentally, Roosevelt' suffered the paralysis that nearly ended his political career, Rosenbluth spent four years trying to clear his name in a complicated case that involved the War Department, the FBI and many prominent Americans in military circles with tinges of anti-Semitism. In 1924, he was finally scheduled for trial, but the case against him was finally dismissed – but not before Henry Ford's infamously anti-Semitic *Dearborn Independent* declared his vindication to be a “Jewish Smoke-Screen”.

Rosenbluth spent the rest of his long life as a social worker in Chicago, maintaining his friendship with Roosevelt, who, wrote Davies, humorously “persisted for the rest of his life in addressing his friend as Major Rosenbluth, ignoring protests that he had never risen higher than captain.”

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