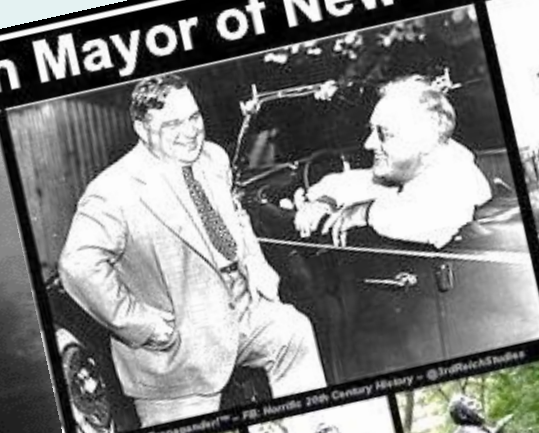


FIORELLO LA GUARDIA

The Ninety-Ninth Mayor of New York City



Fiorello Henry La Guardia, 12/11/1882-9/20/1947

SCOURGE OF THE OLD ORDER

INVENTOR OF THE NEW ~~ORDER~~ CITY

TIME MACHINE

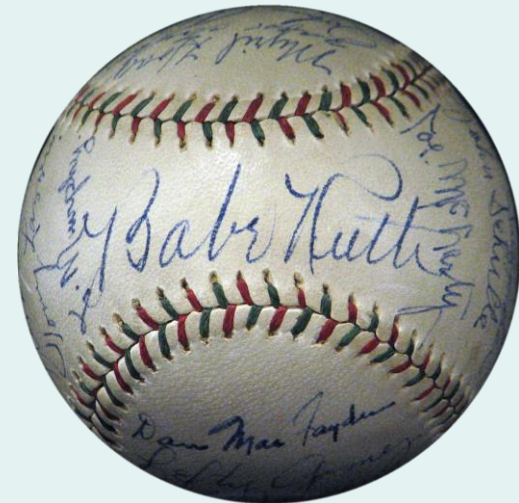
NEW YORK 1930's



Herald Square & The "El" Train



1934 NEW YORK YANKEES



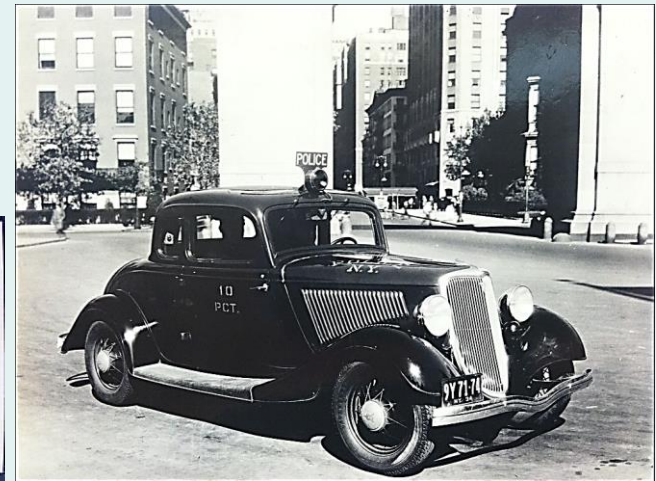
TIME MACHINE 1934



NYC Blizzard of 1934



1934 TARS 3rd Av Rail Trolley



Police Radio Car, New York City, 1934 |
The 10th Precinct ...

ANTECEDENTS: WHY “FIORELLO”?

SON OF A REBEL - ACHILLE LA GUARDIA



Father Achille, born in Foggia, Italy to a family of municipal officials.

Runs away, age 13. Relies on musical talents to build his own career.

Works as musician & military band conductor in Switzerland, Indonesia, USA and Austro-Hungarian Empire. Learns English and German in his travels.

Immigrates with wife Irene to NYC, 1880.

GREAT-GRANDSON OF SCHOLAR RABBI



Mother Irene Luzzatto Coen.

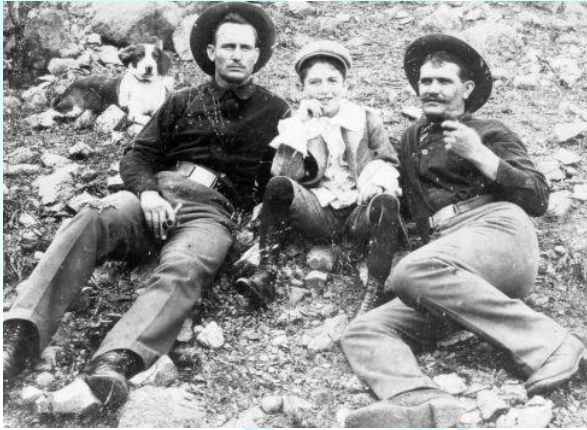
Her Grandfather Rabbi Samuel David Luzzatto was first to translate the Talmud from Hebrew to Italian; published poetry, biblical and linguistic treatises in Hebrew, Italian, German, French. A leading Rabbi and intellectual of 19th century Europe.

Fiorello, born Greenwich Village 1882, 17 years after the Rabbi's death, is named in honor of his maternal grandmother *Fiorina* – daughter of Rabbi Luzzatto.

As Rabbi Luzzatto might point out, under the matrilineal principal of Talmudic law *Fiorello* may be considered fully Jewish, though in fact he became Episcopalian.

BOY OF THE WILD WEST: FORMATIVE YEARS

ARMY BRAT: ADVENTURE, AND GREAT MUSIC



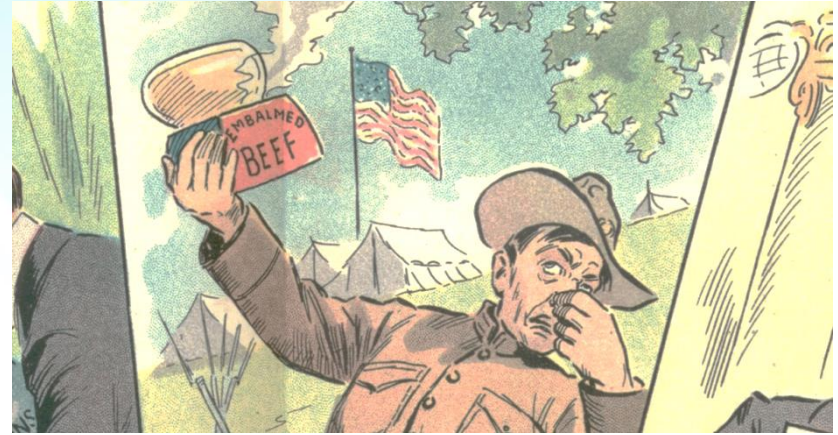
Age 2, Dakotas; family soon transfers to Prescott AZ

- Fiorello always considered Prescott “Home”
- Seethes at exploitation of Mexicans, Native Americans, Chinese by contractors & govt. agents
- Gets into physical & verbal fights defending himself (“shorty”, “wop”) & other underdogs.

Achille teaches him Trumpet, Cornet, Banjo. Learns horsemanship (considers becoming a jockey).

Reads Pulitzer’s “The New York World” - Tammany scandals. Preparing him for real windmills to tilt at.

TRAGEDY AND THE SPANISH - AMERICAN WAR



Age 15 tries to enlist. Too short, too young.

Persuasive! Convinces St. Louis Post Dispatch to make him war correspondent to go with his father to Cuba.

Tragedy: en route, father Achille is poisoned by “Embalmed Beef”. Packed in toxic chemicals, sold to Army by well known brand (still around). More soldiers die from this than in battle.

Fiorello learns a life-long hatred of “**War profiteers . . . chislers, cheats and tin horns**” that he will act on later.

TRIESTE, BUDAPEST, FIUME – YOUTH: LEARNING TO ACT, INDEPENDENTLY

1898: Family back in Trieste for Achille to recuperate at in-laws. But he dies from his illness after four years.

Fiorello becomes fully fluent in Italian (Papa would not allow Italian spoken at home in America, to assimilate his children) . . . plus German, Croatian, and French in this polyglot region.



Fiume – Rijeka,
circa 1900



Fiorello La Guardia
soloes in a “Parasol”
plane.

FHL clerks at US Consulate in Budapest, then becomes Consular Agent at Fiume (now Rijeka, Croatia) at age 21.

Suffers to see immigrants return from America financially, spiritually broken if they failed health tests on US arrival.

FHL inaugurates health pre-screening *before departure*.

Makes enemies of the Consul General, and Cunard Lines, who enjoyed payment for shipping immigrants to, and in many cases also back from the USA if unfit upon arrival.

After a while, FHL decides he’s not a diplomat - with a little help from the boss. But he’ll fly high in spite of that!

BACK IN THE USA: ELLIS ISLAND, GHETTO LAWYER, FAILED CANDIDATE

1906: Returns to NYC, works as Ellis Island interpreter - Italian, Croatian, German. Some days over 10,000 pass through, 1907 was busiest year ever, processing over 1.25 Million immigrants.



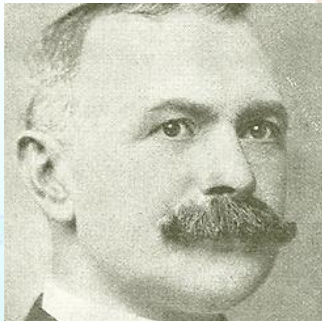
Enters NYU night law school. Final year is night court interpreter. Sees Tammany at work!

1910: Passes Bar exam, opens “Ghetto Law” practice, fighting against Tammany. Labor lawyer, especially for Garment Workers. Lives in Greenwich Village tenement. Friends include Enrico Caruso, artists, labor and political activists, entrepreneurs.

Joins Madison Republican Club. *“I joined the Republican Party because I could not stomach Tammany Hall.”* Becomes a regular speaker, advocate, organizer (he’s a natural).



1914: runs for Congress against Michael Farley, Saloon keeper Congressman, 14th C.D. (Greenwich Village - lower East Side). First serious challenge by a Republican to Tammany Hall in this C.D.



Close call!



Wait ‘til next time!

Farley, called by FHL the “sitting” Congressman

CONGRESSIONAL YEARS, 1917 – 1920: WAR AND SPIRITS!

1916: 1st Republican to win 14th C.D. upsetting Tammany's Michael Farley.
1st "Italo-American" congressman. Patriot GADFLY.

65th Congress: most consequential since the *Civil War*, authorizing our *first World War*.
Evenly divided 215 to 215, with 5 independents/progressives.



FHL votes YES on declaration of war & draft. When opposition taunts those who vote Yes to ***put their lives where their votes are*** by enlisting, he is one of five who stand up.



Loud NO to the Espionage, Sedition + Trading with the Enemy Acts. Vocal opponent: calls these draconian, featuring speech & press censorship, 10 - 20 years jail.

"Curb the hysteria so that we did not destroy, in the war we were now engaged in, the rights we were anxious to preserve". - Congressman La Guardia

Resulted in >2,000 arrests, 800 imprisonments, almost none for espionage. Most are political foes of a sitting president: Rep Victor Berger ("***You got nothing out of the war except the Flu and Prohibition. We should have to drain the Swamp***"), Eugene Debs, > 100 labor leaders+.



NO! to the Volstead Act (Prohibition): FHL claims it penalizes the working man, breeds criminal organizations. Bootleggers and politicians will do fine, the man on the street will not. Prescient and right, but again in the minority.

FLYING CONGRESSMAN – ITALIAN ORATOR



FHL had learned to pilot from Giuseppe Bellanca, aircraft designer, legal client, who also educated him on the importance of air war. Signs up for the new Air Corps.

Before leaving Congress for WWI, is named Chairman House Military Affairs Sub Committee on Aeronautics; helps pass \$640,000,000 to set up Military Air Service.

Also fought (and won) any new orders of the “Liberty Motor”, AKA “Flying Coffin”. A defective engine, he was one of few Congressmen to see this, though pilots knew it.



Thomas Nelson Page – “Sir Thomas of Shenandoah” (Virginian, US Ambassador, best selling novelist) meets Fiorello the airman in Italy.

Page drafts FHL to explain US role to demoralized Italians, get their spirits up. Public speeches/rallies in Italian to over 300,000 - Milan, Genoa, Rome, Naples, Turin, Bari.

“He looked small, but when he started to speak, he became a giant”.

Huge success, King Victor Emmanuel invites to dinner, awards FHL the highest medal. Also befriends key figures in Italian government, and among AEF leadership in Paris.

ROLES IN ITALIAN CAMPAIGN: EVER-INCREASING RESPONSIBILITY

FHL crashed once. He survived, but a back injury plagued him for life.

"By far the greatest victim of U-Boats was the Taja line."
Paul Jeffers: Napoleon of New York

1. Captain, 8th Aviation Instruction Center, Foggia (where his father came from).
2. Major, Commanding Officer American Combat Division; and Pilot - Bombardier, at San Pelagio (North Adriatic Coast, 9 miles from Mother's home).
3. US Army representative to Joint Army and Navy Aircraft Committee in Italy (responsible for aircraft & related materials procurement).
4. Public speaker on behalf of the AEF, and Ambassador Page
5. BS detector & life saver for his "boys" (SIA, STD's, Catered Food, Malaria nets+).
6. Smuggler of steel, wood via neutral Spain for Italian aircraft (gracias al Señor Taja!)

"He had gone off to battle a vaguely known freshman Congressman. In Foggia he became an experienced leader who commanded men, negotiated with foreign governments, served as a popular spokesman for the American cause, and earned a chestfull of medals to boot".

– Thomas Kessner: Fiorello La Guardia and The Making of Modern New York

Wins 2nd House term, November 1918. Even Tammany supported FHL, now a national celebrity.

ALDERMANIC PRESIDENT: PROMISES, PROMISES - BROKEN

1919: with popular La Guardia, Republicans see opportunity to elect him **President, NYC Board of Aldermen**. FHL agrees to run, **on a promise** that he'll be REP Mayoral candidate in 1921.

Wins, leaves Congress. Gets up close view of corrupt city government and Aldermen.

Angers his own party and Tammany. Won't "play ball". Starts investigations targeting Comptroller Charles Craig's (D) awarding of city contracts.

Sixty-nine Craig associates and contractors convicted & sent to prison (though not Craig himself). La Guardia gets results, but is disgusted.

Republicans turn on him – too "insurgent". Renege on nomination promise.

He does not run again for top Alderman. Instead, runs in REP mayoral primary without party blessing, against chosen Henry Curran. FHL loses, big.

Consolation: Curran loses to Mayor "Red Mike" Hylan, who came to admire FHL.

LA GUARDIA WINS BY 1,530

Beats Moran for President of Board of Aldermen in a Close Contest.

KOENIG ORDERED VIGILANCE

Warned Republican Chairmen to Stay by the Ballot Boxes and Scrutinize Count.

CURRAN DEFEATS BOYLE

Five Republican Votes in Board of Estimate Assured—Clean-Cut Result in Supreme Court.

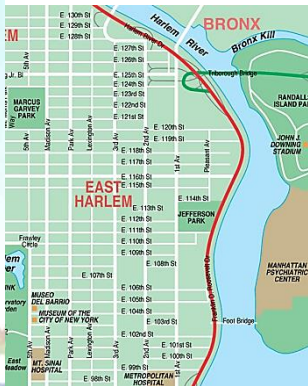


"No more efficient, no fairer or conscientious man ever held office in City government. There is no office or gift of the people that is too good for you."

Mayor Hylan

A NEW DISTRICT, ANOTHER LANGUAGE: THE HENRY FRANK CAPER – CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION OF 1922

Postage Stamp 20th
C. D. 1922



- Dense: 250,000 residents
- Tiny: 1 Sq. Mile
- East 99th to 120th Streets, East River to 5th Ave

1922 Republican candidate for a different C.D. - East Harlem. REP Party realized the 20th C.D. is a natural for him: 26 ethnic groups, the largest being Italian and Jewish. Most Italians of any district; but he had to get some of the Jewish vote to win.

Mayor Hylan (D) breaks with his own party endorsing FHL, sends police to guard ballot boxes against Tammany.

BackFire: Henry Frank (D) mails a postcard to every Jewish voter, claiming he is the only “Jewish” candidate in the race and the others are: **“Karlin the atheist (Socialist), and second, the *Italian* La Guardia (R) who is a pronounced anti-Semite and Jew-hater.”**

Golden Opportunity. Frank, though Jewish, can’t speak Yiddish (most district Jewish voters do). So La Guardia publishes an Ad in the local Yiddish language newspaper:

“Very well, then, I hereby challenge you to publicly and openly debate the issues . . . to be conducted by you and me ENTIRELY IN THE YIDDISH LANGUAGE.”

Frank declines. FHL goes to Jewish groups and speaks on issues anyway – in Yiddish!

He even gets the Rabbis on his side. Check Mate! La Guardia wins.

CONGRESS 1923 to 1929: COALITION BUILDING

"It is unwholesome in any Republic that 5% of the nation's citizens own 80% of the nation's wealth. Only a well-fed, well-housed, well-schooled people can enjoy the blessings of liberty." - Congressman La Guardia

1880–1919: USA's largest population transfer yet: 25 Million immigrants. Two thirds pass through NYC, many stay. By **1920** NYC added 400,000 Italians, 1.1 million Jews. Mostly poor, dwelling in tenements (at times up to half of NYC housing).

FHL realizes he can't just be a gadfly, *needs allies*. **Joins new "Progressive" alliance. He leads it in the House, Nebraska Sen George Norris (R) in Senate.**

Farm, labor, urban progressives in common cause. New coalition pointing to "New Deal".

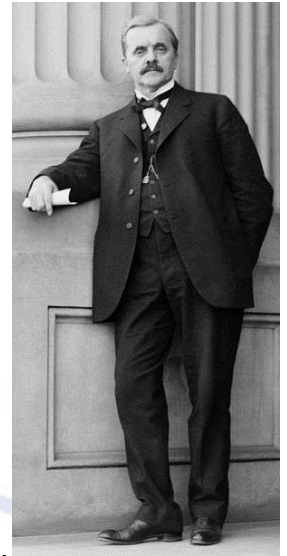
Fights Treas. Sec Andrew Mellon, Coolidge & Hoover over "regressive" taxes.

"Old Guard" in his own party reject him, so he runs as a Socialist in **1924** (landslide victory).

He's Republican again from **1926** on: *"Still better to joke about being a lone Republican [from NYC] than a lone Socialist [in Congress]."*

1929 FHL finally gets Republican nomination for NYC Mayor vs "*Beau James*" Jimmy Walker (D), the dapper, popular but corrupt mayor. FHL calls out Walker's political & criminal excesses. Loses, but still has his Congressional seat.

Sen. Norris



FINAL CONGRESSIONAL YEARS, 1930 - 1933: THE NORRIS-LAGUARDIA ACT + OTHER NEW ORDER FORAYS

FDR so named La Guardia, honoring his long battle for reform, his early criticism of Europe's dictators and frequent calls to protect Europe's Jews.



Ich ken die drei menschen, die schlag zoll zei trefen.

(I know these three men, the devil take them!) – FHL to NYC's Rabbis, 1937

"We cannot let this happen. Hitler is a perverted maniac" - FHL 1933

Backs with action. As Mayor cancels TBA's 500 ton German steel order.

"A pitiful caricature of a man, a barbershop bully in a game far beyond his capabilities" - FHL on Mussolini, 1925

La Guardia during his own Congressional 'wilderness years' fought for a series of innovative & reform legislation not just on social issues, but consumer, financial, and national infrastructure.

- TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority),
- Boulder (Hoover) Dam
- NLRA (National Labor Relations Act)
- FHA (Federal Housing Act)
- Old-age pensions (Social Security)
- Unemployment & health insurance
- Bank deposit insurance
- Reforms to farm and labor laws
- Trade restrictions on Nazi Germany
- more. . .

Plus the close-to-his-heart **"Columbus Day". Yesterday's hero - today's statue to topple!**

THE NORRIS-LA GUARDIA ANTI-INJUNCTION ACT, 1932 was his crowning legislative achievement.

It eliminates "catch-all" injunctions against labor actions, extends worker & union rights, and legislates more even treatment of labor by government. Precursor to The Wagner Act of 1935.

LAME DUCK CONGRESSMAN LA GUARDIA & SENATORS DRAW UP A NEW DEAL AND THROW OUT AN OLD PROHIBITION

'Cactus Jack'
Garner
lowers the
gavel one
last time.
Ok –drinks
on me!



John Nance Garner (House Speaker, also VP-elect) names lame duck La Guardia (who lost reelection in 1932 Democratic sweep) to work with the Senate preparing New Deal legislation during the 3 month lame duck session December 1932 to March 1933. Including:

- Reconstruction Finance Corp legislation
- Glass-Steagall Act Extension
- Emergency Relief and Construction Act
- Federal Home Loan Bank Act, and more . . .

The list of bills FHL introduced in this Congress is 6 closely spaced typed pages. Blueprint for New Deal legislation.

Pres. Hoover sought to plug the depression-era deficit with a new sales tax on manufactured goods. A vocal FHL led opposition. He prevailed, tax not passed. **The tide had turned.**

As part of this new turning Hoover signs a last minute bill *amending* the Bankruptcy Act of 1898 to provide debtors credit extension and relief, plus transfer reorganization of defaulting railroads from private interests to the Interstate Commerce Commission to avoid a domino effect of bond defaults, further bank failures.

Quack Quack! The 72nd Congress (last lame duck session in U.S. history) finally passes the 21st Amendment, repealing prohibition (Feb 20, **1933**), raising La Guardia's stature further.

"America's Congressman" goes home after hugely successful final term, recognized as *the* leader to prepare the way for the New Deal in the House, and as a prophet for the past decade. Congratulations pour in.

PATRON SAINT SAMUEL SEABURY & THE FUSION COMMITTEE: ULTIMATUM

The Seabury Investigation & A New “Fusion”

1929: in Mayoral Campaign, FHL had called on Gov. Roosevelt to investigate gangland ties to Mayor Walker.

Within 2 years events forced FDR’s hand as pay-offs to judges revealed. He names Samuel Seabury, blue blood NY attorney with Mayflower ancestors & impeccable credentials to investigate.

Seabury extends investigation to Tammany. Brings down judges, mobsters, NY County sheriff, Mayor Walker (bribery, graft). Walker resigns, flees to Europe (while his broker/bagman flees to Mexico).

A sea change – for which FHL is widely given credit.

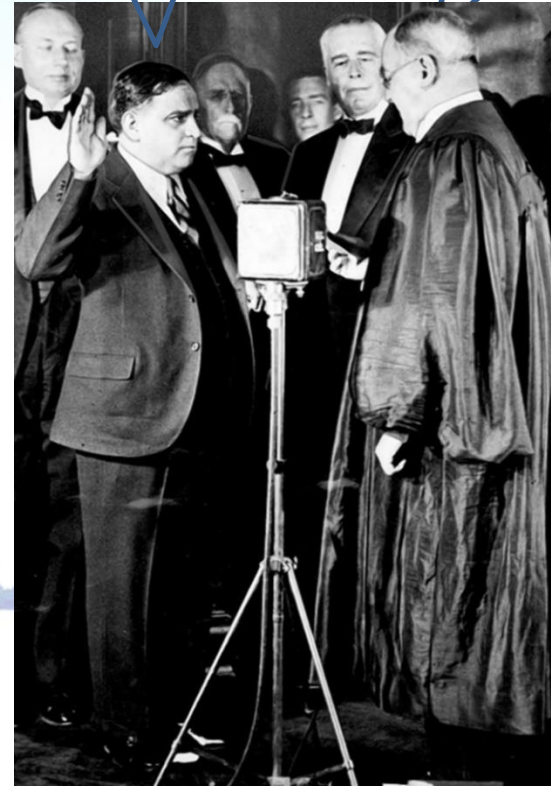
1933: “Fusion” Party established to take back Mayoralty: reform DEM’s like Seabury, Labor, progressive REP’s (plus some old guard)

Seabury, or “Holy Joe” McKee, were the obvious candidates. Both refused. That left La Guardia (backed by Seabury). Majority on Fusion Committee see him too “ethnic”, “insurgent”. Look at a dozen others, settle on Robert Moses, not consulting Seabury first.

When told at lunch, Mr. unflappable Seabury has a fit – slams his hand down on the table so the silverware jumps! NO WAY! It will be La Guardia, or I will splinter. Okay, Yes, La Guardia – agreed!

My first official act :
cut my own salary in
half.

“In little or in much,
do not act corruptly.”
-Sirach, 5:15



The New Mayor and the Goo-Goos!

Without Samuel Seabury’s intervention,
La Guardia would not have been Mayor.

THE FIRST 100 DAYS: “MIDGET MUSSOLINI, OR LIGHT-SPEED CEO?”

“In this administration, I am the majority.” – Mayor La Guardia

FRONT 1: FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- CWA (Civil Works Administration) and Federal Relief Administration under Harry Hopkins were to fund short term projects and relief. Hopkins did so, fast!
- PWA (Public Works Admin) under Harold Ickes funded larger infrastructure. Tight fist, slow, “Old Curmudgeon”.
- After Mayoral election FHL was a D.C. fixture working with Hopkins & Ickes to help “invent” projects. After all no one had ever done this before. Keys: feasibility + jobs creation!
- Weeks *before inauguration* FHL was already signing contracts with vendors to hit the ground running.

“By the time [he] took office, NY had captured 20% of all job slots allocated by the CWA.”

Unsung heroes: age 58, Travis Whitney, a leading NYC lawyer, takes on CWA’s NY office. Works around the clock, places 200,000 workers in under a month. Exhausted, collapses - heart attack. **“Killed in Action”** per FHL. Comptroller (age 39) and Aldermanic President (age 51) also died in first term.

FRONT 2: CITY AND STATE GOVERNMENT

DAY 1: FHL proposes **Emergency Economy Bill (EEB)**

Tammany had brought NYC to financial ruin. High interest short term debt of \$330 Million in a budget of \$551 Mill.

To get NYC out of default, the EEB gives FHL authority for 2 years to merge bureaus, reorganize pensions, reduce salaries, cut departments, order unpaid furloughs, cut 10,000 employees by executive order.

DAY 2 Compromise: 9 months, not 2 years. Acceptable to both NYC Board of Aldermen & NYS Assembly.

Not so fast! Gov. Lehman writes 12 page veto threat - “dictatorial powers”. FHL meets Lehman, they agree to remove parts of the Bill. FDR also sent word to Albany Federal funds to be cut if they don’t cooperate with FHL.

JAN 25 Tammany screams! EEB rejected in legislature.

APRIL 5 - 9: after a pro-La Guardia press campaign, a more limited EEB becomes law. Spring is in the air!

FIRST TERM: HIT THE GROUND RUNNING, NEVER STOP, RE-INVENT!

Historians agree FHL had the most talented group of NYC Commissioners & Dept. Heads ever. Professionals, best in their fields, including:

- Robert Moses, Parks
- Langdon Post, Housing
- Lewis Valentine, Police
- John McElligot, Fire
- Paul Windels, Corporation Counsel
- Adolf Berle, City Chamberlin
- William Fellowes Morgan, Markets
- William F. Carey, Sanitation

And if this isn't enough, FHL & team complete the NYC Charter Revision, a long overdue City govt. and Civil Service reform.

Selected from both public & private sectors.



Work around the clock! My engineers say they don't get any sleep. I buy cots, put them in halls, offices, spare rooms. But remember that's the **only time you get to sleep on the job!**

FHL seized the opportunity of Federal programs like the PWA to transform construction from a mainly private activity to a public one also. During 1st term:

- Triborough Bridge, and East River Drive
- First Houses (1st public housing, proof of concept)
- Williamsburg Houses (successful larger scale PH)
- Lincoln Tunnel, and Queens Midtown Tunnel
- Piers in multiple boroughs
- Public Schools, Libraries, Hospitals
- High School of Music and Arts
- Sewage Disposal Plants
- Hunter & Brooklyn Colleges
- Public swimming pools
- Orchard Beach
- Subway extensions
- Marine Parkway, multiple parks
- Health Centers
- Public Health Research Institute
- New Prisons



And Victory in The Artichoke War!

“A great constitutional lawyer two years ago told me it would be a cold day when the government builds houses. Well, he was right that time –”

–FHL, Dec. 1935, at a very cold day “First Houses” Opening Event

A FORTUITOUS NEW DEAL BROMANCE: LEADING TO A NEW CITY

Friend, it's a
New Deal!

A Grrreat Deal
Chief! - Thanks



\$264,254,193 IN JOBS SENT TO PRESIDENT; Advisory Committee Urges Allotments for 404 Projects to Create Work.

- NY Times Headline 8/28/1935

“Our Mayor is probably the most appealing person I know. He comes to Washington and tells me a great story. The tears run down my cheeks and tears run down his cheeks and the first thing I know, he wangled another fifty million dollars.” – FDR

Rocky start:

- FDR tries to block FHL appointment of Robert Moses to lead NYC Parks & TBA.
- Harold Ickes tries to take control of NYC's PWA funds.
- FHL resists fiercely. Keeps Moses, and control of funds after a long stare-down, court actions, and passage of the EEB yanking NYC from edge of default.

Things get smoother.

FHL makes regular visits to D.C. (even rented a DC apartment), visiting key players: Ickes, Harry Hopkins, Frances Perkins, FDR, Henry Morgenthau, Congress+

FHL creates a strong bond with FDR, many of his “brain trust” and cabinet. From **1935 – 1945** La Guardia also assumes **national role as President, US Conference of Mayors, de facto spokesman for cities.**

FDR invites La Guardia to take the “Mayor’s Chair” on his “**Allotment Advisory Committee**”. FDR and FHL are the only members to attend all 22 meetings. He has a unique say on what works at the city level, fosters spending on NYC as *the* New Deal “laboratory”. FHL also travels the country speaking for New Deal programs and FDR, helping FDR’s 1936 re-election.

Under La Guardia’s influence 25% of all Federal Highway funds went to cities.

SECOND TERM: NEW ACCOMPLISHMENTS & VISIONS OF HIGHER OFFICE

I love this job! But I can think of one better.



Al Smith's "irreconcilables" (anti-FDR wing) nominate NYS Supreme Court Justice Jeremiah T. Mahoney.

"Within 4 years his [La Guardia's] innovative extensions of municipal responsibility had become the 'new normal' and no serious candidate, least of all a moderate like Mahoney, dared attack it". - Kessner

FDR tacitly backed FHL by not endorsing his party's candidate, Mahoney. FHL wins in a landslide.

1937: REPs try to block re-nomination, due to FHL's support of New Deal and FDR.

But they had no other choice, it would split the party. DEMs split instead.

"Lincoln Of The Ghetto" for President in 1940?

Roosevelt had won his 2nd term too, with FHL's help, in 1936. Many expected (or hoped) FDR would not run in 1940, respecting the "two term" norm. La Guardia was considered possible Pres or VP candidate as he was very popular in NY and nationally. But with war in Europe, and US preparing for war, FDR did run.



GANG BUSTERS! CLEANING UP THE NEW CITY: MOB BOSSES, "HONEST GRAFT" POLS, "CHISLERS AND TINHORNS" – A NEW SHERIFF'S IN TOWN!

Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia



Smash'em Up!

P.C. Lewis J. Valentine



Muss'em Up!

Prosecutor Thomas E. Dewey



Lock'em Up!

These 3 did not discriminate, went after Italian and Jewish mobsters, or Irish Tammany crooks with equal gusto. Dewey won convictions in 72 of 73 indictments, a rare record.

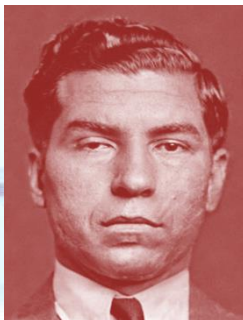
Not to mention
German American
Nazis: Fritz Kuhn
– 5 years

Lucky Luciano, "The" Mob Boss:
62 Counts compulsory prostitution.
Sentence: 30 to 50 years

Waxy Gordon (Irving Wexler):
Led bootlegging & gambling.
Sentence: 10 yrs, Tax Evasion

Jimmie Hines, Tammany Kingpin:
13 Counts of Racketeering.
Sentence: 4 to 8 years

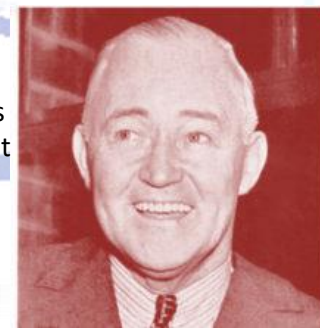
I saved
Dewey's life.
Ingrato!



Meshuggener!
Lucky & Lansky
ratted me out.



Sher I can't
get out a this
with just a bit
of the ol'
Blarney!



ANOTHER MUST HAVE FOR THE “NEW” CITY - AIRPORTS & GLOBAL TRAVEL

La Guardia knew air travel was “the future”; wanted NYC to have the biggest, best airports.

“**Fiorello’s Folly**”: acquired 357 acres of marsh around Curtiss Field, filling in marshes to build an expanded airport.

Huge project: 5,000 men working 3 shifts around the clock 6 days/week for 2 years. Must be ready for the **1939 World’s Fair (another pet project)**.

Most modern airport in the world, with the longest runway and brightest tower beacon.

Fiorello’s Folly no more! 350,000 attend Opening, Oct. 15, 1939.



Pioneering Novelty: offers a concession to any real estate firm to lease space to retail businesses serving airport consumers.

No takers. Asks David Rockefeller to manage retail rentals directly.

Soon generating \$100,000 annual rent – huge success.

- La Guardia raised rents so regularly that tenants called him “**La Chargia**”.
- Later he buys land further out in Queens, called Idlewild . . . The rest is history (and JFK).

3RD TERM MAYOR & WARRIOR IN A SECOND WAR TO SHAPE A NEW WORLD



Bombers Over Manhattan, 1940

1941: *“I shouldn’t do this for the SOB but we’re going to give him the endorsement again”* – Tom Dewey.

REP party reluctantly re-nominates FHL for Mayor.

Brooklyn DA William O’Dwyer is DEM nominee.

Some say FHL is taking on too much, his nerves are frazzled. Foul language! Temper tantrums! Intolerant! Stress, or stunted ambition.

Very dirty election. FHL squeaks by in a close victory.

A MAN OF MANY HATS

1941: FDR names him:

- Chair, US-Canadian Joint Defense Board
- Head, Office of Civil Defense (OCD), a springboard to higher office (which he coveted).

Spends 3 days a week in D.C. at Cabinet meetings+.

Then back to NYC as Mayor. Stress, Health problems.

Organizes civil defense + spy networks in NYC, nationally. Flies to California to organize air defense against feared Japanese attacks after Pearl Harbor.

Irascible, press relations at breaking point. The Press challenge him. DC – NY – DC – NY – CA: too much!

Finally a full time professional takes over OCD. Relief!

“Sin does not pay - I am about to give up my dual life.”

ONE MORE MAYORAL MODEL: CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Black population up 40% to 500K by FHL's third term.

FHL did more for this group than any previous mayor:

- Public housing such as Harlem River Houses
- Central Harlem Center & local health clinics
- New Women's wing at Harlem Hospital
- New schools, swimming pools, parks
- City hospitals ordered to hire black MD's/Nurses
- Also Police, Fire, Transit, and Relief agencies
- Pressed FDR to enact Fair Employment Practices

We want the
"Double V"



Adam Clayton Powell Jr. - also a great orator/showman, fights for more.

Race riots explode in USA summer of 1943. Worst: Detroit, June - 34 dead, 700 injured. Arson, looting.

FHL took preemptive actions.

1st, used his regular radio address to calm passions.

2nd he puts together committee with black leaders to improve race relations.

3rd PC Valentine promotes more black officers, limits gun use by police to self defense.

August 1: brief fracas between white police officer, black woman, black army private ignites Harlem riot on rumors police killed the soldier (not true). FHL took fast action:

- Sets up command post -28th precinct. In command Sunday night to Tuesday AM, with PC Valentine.
- Orders all police to remain on duty after their shift.
- Calls in Army detachment, deputizes 1500 black volunteers to fan out and keep the peace.
- Travels Harlem with black leaders on a flatbed truck telling people to go home, the soldier was not killed.
- Seals off Harlem except for food and medicine deliveries, implements a curfew.
- With forewarning, uses force on "hoodlums".
- Riot was over in 36 hours (6 deaths).
- Did not rest: after riot used his judicial power to fight discrimination, including against powerful Met Life (ran housing projects). Added more new Harlem initiatives.
- Even Adam Clayton Powell praised his "wise and effective" leadership and handling of the riot.

LEGACY: LA GUARDIA IS CONSIDERED AMERICA'S MOST SUCCESSFUL MAYOR EVER, THE MODEL FOR GOOD GOVERNMENT

Entered office January 1934 with five main goals, all of which he achieved.

1. Restore NYC's financial health and break free from the bankers' control
2. Expand federally funded work-relief program for the unemployed
3. End corruption in government and racketeering in key sectors of the economy
4. Replace patronage with a prestigious, merit-based civil service
5. Modernize the infrastructure, especially transportation and parks

Pioneered use of radio, from 1920's on:

Report on Congress

Weekly Talks to the People

Mayor La Guardia calling Rome

Mayor La Guardia reads the Comics

How did he do this? Reformed NYC governance by revising its Charter, a 2,000 page antiquated document.

Created a new City legal and admin structure: where govt is expected to provide professional management, with infrastructure and systems that facilitate individual initiative, commerce, education & cultural activity.

First to link cities directly to the Federal Government, with new financing models enabling larger projects to modernize City life, expand transportation, replace tenements, reduce disease, create relief and safety nets.

Also -

- Modernized the Subway system buying out failing privately-run operators & adding miles of new track.
- Made NYC a world destination with 2 state of the art airports – ushering in the age of air travel.
- Created first public-private health insurance for middle & lower income: HIP (Health Insurance Program)

Incorruptible. ***"I just couldn't understand that guy. We offered to make him rich he wouldn't even listen."*** – Lucky Luciano.

But, like most great leaders he left a legacy of problems to be solved later. Especially - how to pay for the continued maintenance of the public relief, housing, recreation and healthcare programs he created?



The Mayor seemed to have a vision
Not of the Statue of Liberty
Calm, static, dignified lifting her lamp
Beside the Golden Door

But of the Little Fleur-de-Lis himself
His torch a flaming sword

Riding the whirlwind of reform
Directing the storm of progress
Straight into the millennium.

- Robert Moses, after La Guardia's death

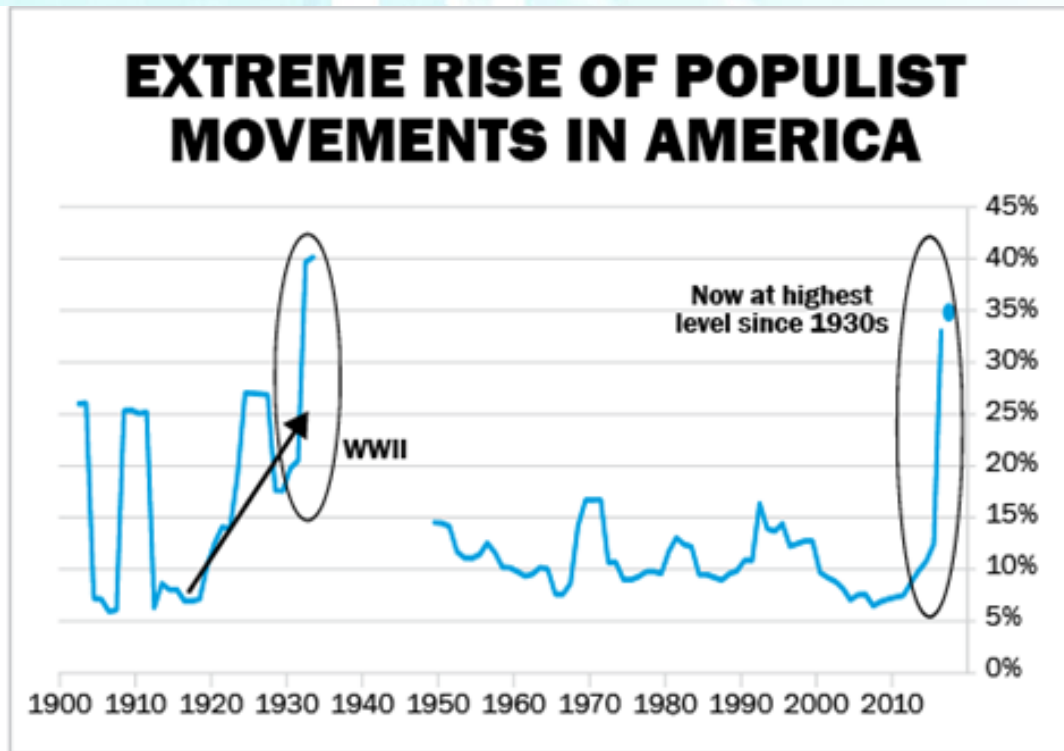
What are you most proud of? *"I raised the standard of municipal government everywhere in this country, by raising it in New York and so proving it could be raised."*



"A Mayor who cannot look fifty or seventy-five years ahead is not worthy of being in City Hall."

- Fiorello H. La Guardia

ALMOST EXACTLY 75 YEARS AFTER HIS FINAL TERM ARE WE ENTERING A NEW ERA? OR IS HISTORY RHYMING - AGAIN?



A FEW CHOICE WORDS

La Guardia ran on 9 different party lines (or “tickets”) during his career, or as he put it:

- *“I could run on a laundry ticket and be elected.”*

Tammany used various vote theft mechanisms. La Guardia had his “Gibboni” (800 strong) in response.

- *“We must fight fire with fire – all is fair in love, war and politics. They are stealing, cheating, and murdering us, and we must fight them on their own grounds.”*
- *“It makes no difference if I burn my bridges behind me – I never retreat.”*
- *“When I make a mistake, it’s a beauty!”*
- *“It is impossible to tell whether prohibition is a good thing or a bad thing. It has never been enforced in this country.”*
- *“We have two chickens in every pot, two cars in every garage, and now we have two headaches for every aspirin.”*
- *“There is no Democratic or Republican way of cleaning the streets.”*

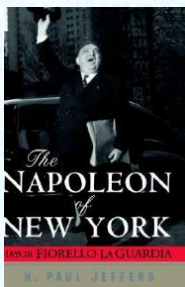
On being asked if he needed special lighting when invited to conduct the orchestra at Carnegie Hall:

- *“Hell, no. Just treat me like Toscanini”*

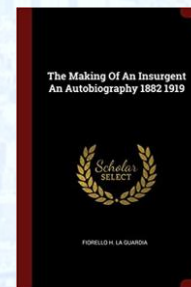
Letter to a Constituent who enquired about his family tree:

- *“I am sure you are quite mistaken in the genealogy of my family. I have never had time to look this matter up myself. In fact, the only member of our family that I know who has a real pedigree is our little Scotch Terrier known as Mac, who is a son of McIntosh, who is a son of Glasgow, but with all of that is still only a son of a bitch.”*
Yours truly, Fiorello La Guardia

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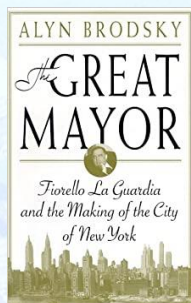


LISTEN TO LAGUARDIA: “IT IS OUR DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM THAT IS IMPORTANT TODAY, NOT INDIVIDUALS”

<https://www.loc.gov/item/afccal000001/>

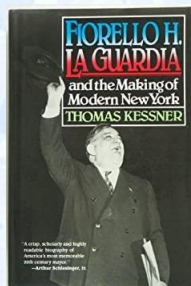
MAYOR LA GUARDIA READS DICK TRACY COMICS TO THE “KIDDIES”:

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