



**MAJOR GENERAL LEONARD WOOD**  
1860-1927

Major General Leonard Wood was an aggressive and energetic soldier who was instrumental in transforming the U.S. Army into a modern fighting force. He was born on 9 October 1860, in Winchester, New Hampshire. Following his father's lead, he entered Harvard Medical School in 1880. He graduated from the school in 1883.

His sense of adventure led him to accept a medical position in the Army as a contract physician in 1885. His first assignment was to Fort Huachuca, Arizona. The next year, he participated in the last campaign against Geronimo. His gallantry and service as a medical and line officer was recognized by a Medal of Honor in 1898.

From 1887 to 1898, General Wood served in a number of medical positions. The last was as the personal physician to President William McKinley and his family.

When war with Spain began in 1898, he sought a line command and was ultimately given command of the 1st Volunteer Cavalry. His second in command was the former Assistant Secretary of Navy, Theodore Roosevelt. The regiment was soon to be known as the "Rough Riders". General Wood led his men at Las Guasimas and San Juan Hill. He led the 2nd Cavalry Brigade for the remainder of the war.

After the end of hostilities, General Wood remained in Cuba and was the Military Governor of Cuba from 1900 to 1902. In that position, he instituted a number of political, social, and educational reforms. He also worked to improve the medical and sanitary conditions on the island. Before leaving Cuba, he received his first star as a Brigadier General in the Regular Army.

From 1902, General Wood served in a number of leadership positions to include commander of the Philippines Division and commander of the Department of the East. In 1910, he was named Chief of Staff of the Army, the only medical officer to ever hold the position.

It was as Chief of Staff that General Wood made his greatest contributions to the Army and the Nation. He strengthened the General Staff and firmly established the Chief of Staff as the senior officer of the Army. He also reduced the influence of the old bureau system which had hindered military reforms. He was instrumental in developing the Maneuver Division and the Mobile Army concept. As a result, the Army formed its first truly combined arms divisions. This allowed the American Army to fight as a force in the battles and campaigns of the Great War, WWI.

Following his tenure as Chief of Staff, he returned to the Department of the East. There he was a tireless champion of military preparedness and training. General Wood was the principle sponsor of the Plattsburg training camps which gave young men their first orientation to military life. He advocated military training in colleges and universities and laid the foundation for the Reserve Officer Training Corps. When the nation was drawn into the First World War, General Wood trained the 89th and 10th Infantry Divisions for service in Europe.

Following the war, General Wood was a candidate for the Republican nomination for President. However, the Republican Convention deadlocked. The party chose a compromise candidate, Warren Harding, who went on to win the election in 1920.

Following his retirement in 1921, General Wood accepted the post of Governor General of the Philippines. He held this position from 1921 to 1927. He died in Boston, Massachusetts on 7 August 1927 following unsuccessful surgery for a brain tumor.

Source: U.S. Army, Fort Leonard Wood