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| **It Also Happened in Pittsfield** **by Nancy Hall** |

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| On September 3, 1902, almost one year to the day since **Theodore Roosevelt** became president following the assassination of William McKinley on September 14, 1901, Roosevelt set out on the campaign trail to support New England Republicans in the **mid-term primaries.** Roosevelt believed primary victories in an area of the country not particularly favorable to him could win support for his own "accidental" presidency. However, vigorous campaigning by a president or presidential candidate was not the norm – McKinley himself was remembered for his laid back “Front Porch Campaign” style: he stayed close to home and let supporters come to him.   Sitting or waiting on his front porch was not Roosevelt’s style, neither as a vice presidential candidate (when TR traveled throughout the country stumping for McKinley) nor as president, but this particular trip unsettled those who were assigned to protect the president, not because TR was breaking precedent but because of concerns for his safety.   There were well-founded concerns that copycat assassins or anarchists might attempt to mark the one year anniversary of McKinley’s death with another killing. Given the fact that McKinley was the third American president to be killed in office (Lincoln and Garfield being the other two), the Secret Service, whose duties previously focused on catching counterfeiters, assigned two agents, **William Taylor** and **William Craig**, to protect TR on this campaign-style trip from Maine to Connecticut. However, even with Secret Service bodyguards, this trip would claim a fatality, not TR but Craig, known affectionately as **“Big Bill”, the first Secret Service agent to be killed in the line of duty.**  |

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William Craig, 45, immigrated to the United States from Scotland after serving for twelve years in the British Army, including the Grenadiers and cavalry. At 6’4”, with an “unusually fine physique”(Siry) and a master swordsman, Craig was literally a “standout” among his fellow soldiers, prompting TR to specifically request him for duty at the White House. Craig was known as “the Secret Service Man Extraordinary and the Plenipotentiary to the President” (Siry). He was also a favorite with the Roosevelt children.So it was that on September 3, just a few days into the President’s New England trip, a terrible accident occurred that sent an injured TR back to Sagamore Hill earlier than expected and ended Craig’s life as he attempted to protect the President.The accident occurred just after 9:30 in the morning in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, a stop en route to Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where Roosevelt planned to board the special Pullman train, *Mayflower*, that would take him to New Haven where he would then sail home to Oyster Bay. On this day, Roosevelt shared his open carriage with Governor Crane of Massachusetts and TR’s secretary, George Cortelyou. The crowds were friendly; the early fall weather was crisp and beautiful. Deputy Sheriff David Pratt, a noted horseman, drove the president’s carriage; Craig sat next to Pratt, keeping one hand firmly placed near the hip pocket in which he carried his revolver.  Following a brief speech, Roosevelt’s entourage of four carriages and escort horses headed down South Street toward the Pittsfield Country Club where the President was expected to sign its register. Sheriff Pratt, who had been driving the carriage to the left side of the trolley tracks, slowly, too slowly as it turned out, maneuvered the horses over tracks that veered from the center of the road to the right side and into the path of Trolley #25. TR and his companions, alarmed at the sight of the approaching trolley, heard a rumble and a clanging warning bell.   When Craig heard the trolley’s bell, he rose from his seat next to Pratt, waved and shouted at the motorman, and “gazed up...in horror” as he reached “an arm over President Roosevelt’s head” (Solomon) to protect him. But the force of the collision was such that it threw Craig directly into the front of the trolley, his skull and chest crushed, his facial features mangled beyond recognition. As for Pratt, he was also seriously injured but recovered; Cortelyou and Governor Crane received only minor injuries though they were badly shaken.The impact of the collision was such that TR was thrown 30-40 feet from the carriage, hitting his face and then the back of his head, ripping his coat and breaking his glasses. And the president suffered a badly bruised left leg just below the knee. The knee injury proved to be more serious than first thought, and though the resulting abscess in that area required two surgeries, the leg never healed properly and possibly contributed to the near-fatal complications resulting from another leg injury twelve years later during the expedition down the River of Doubt in 1914. When asked what his initial reaction was to seeing the crushed carriage and mangled body of “Big Bill,” TR angrily replied, “I’ll tell you! I picked myself up, went to the rail of the car, shook my fist at the motorman’s face and said, ‘If this was an accident that’s one thing; but if it was anything else than an accident, then I tell you it’s a G\*\* d\*\*\* outrage!’” (Lovering). Those remarks were printed in full the next day in a New York paper; the reporter was fired for using foul language in print! Edith Wharton remembered TR’s later comments to be more somber. He said, “I loved [Craig] because of his faithfulness and his kindness to my children,” his voice choking with emotion. (Siry).    |

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| **TR's carriage after the crash** |

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| The details as to exactly how the trolley came to collide with the president’s carriage remained a source of controversy. Madden was charged and pleaded guilty to manslaughter, fined $500, and served a jail sentence of 60 days, spending most nights in his own home. Though Madden claimed he was speeding at the instruction of his superiors in order to get his passengers to the country club ahead of Roosevelt, others contested this accusation; and conspiracy theorists speculated that the collision was no accident. Author **Burt Solomon** (whose scheduled appearance at a 2020 spring Gable lecture was canceled due to the coronavirus shutdown) capitalizes on these controversies as a backdrop to the plot of his highly entertaining novel, ***The Attempted Murder of Teddy Roosevelt.*** In December 2000*,* the men and women of the Secret Service who gave their lives in the line of duty were memorialized on its **Wall of Honor in Washington D.C.** And for his heroic service to Theodore Roosevelt on that September day in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, **Scotsman, immigrant, soldier, and friend of the President and his family, William “Big Bill” Craig’s name heads the list of 37 selfless agents.** **﻿Sources:**Department of Homeland Security webpage.iBerkshires.com. Wed, May 15, 2019.Lovering, Frank W. “Eyewitness Tells of T.R.’s Pittsfield Outrage”. *Pittsfield Gazette*, August 20, 1960. Reck, Donna Decker. "Teddy Roosevelt’s Rough Ride”. SAHI archives.Roosevelt, Tweed. E-mail to Amy Verone. SAHI archives.Siry, Steven E. “Theodore Roosevelt’s Brush with Death in 1902”. *Theodore* *Roosevelt Association Journal.* Volume XXV, Number 1. August 7, 2002.  Solomon, Burt. *The Attempted Murder of Teddy Roosevelt*. Thomas Doherty Associates ebook, 2019. *Trolley Car Treasury* |

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