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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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| |  | | --- | | 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* | |