

William Franklin Knox was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on 1 January 1874. He attended Alma College, in Michigan, and served in Cuba with the First Volunteer Cavalry (the "Rough Riders") during the Spanish-American War. Following that conflict, Knox became a newspaper reporter in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the beginning of a career that grew to include the ownership of several papers. He changed his first name to Frank in about 1900. During World War I, Knox was an advocate of preparedness and United States participation. He served as an artillery officer in France after America entered the hostilities. In 1930, Frank Knox became publisher and part owner of the Chicago "Daily News". An active Republican, he was that party's nominee for Vice President in the 1936 election. Knox, who was an internationalist and supporter of the World War II Allies, became Secretary of the Navy in July 1940, as President Roosevelt strived to create bi-partisan appeal for his foreign and defense policies following the defeat of France. As Secretary, Frank Knox worked hard to expand the Navy into a force capable of fighting in both the Atlantic and Pacific. His selection of new uniformed leadership in the wake of the Pearl Harbor disaster was important to seeing the Navy through the difficult, losing months of 1942 and the intense fighting that marked the U.S. offensives that followed. Though he tended to leave military matters to the officer corps, his administrative talents and good judgment made invaluable contributions to the victory that he would not live to see. On 28 April 1944, following a brief series of heart attacks, Secretary Knox died in Washington, D.C.