

**CHARLEY DICKEY, JR. and  
TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
at HARVARD  
1878 — 1880**

**S. W. Lindsay  
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## Charley Dickey, Jr. and Teddy Roosevelt at Harvard

Charles Denston Dickey, Jr. was born in 1860 in Mobile, Alabama. Shortly after his birth his family fled the war and returned to New York City, his father's home town. In 1878 Charley Dickey entered Harvard as a member of the class of 1882. While there he lodged with the Richardson family on Winthrop Street. Theodore "Ted" Roosevelt, a member of the class of 1880, lived upstairs in the same house, so they were housemates for the next two years. Judging from the letters below, the Roosevelt and Dickey families knew each other in New York. Charles and Theodore had an interesting thing in common: their fathers were both upper class New Yorkers who had married women from the Southern aristocracy — Charley's mother was from Mobile, Alabama and Roosevelt's mother was from Atlanta, Georgia. Sadly, Roosevelt's beloved father Theodore Roosevelt, Sr., died in early 1878, during Theodore's sophomore year of college

\*



Charley Dickey



Theodore Roosevelt in 1876

*From a letter from Teddy Roosevelt to Martha Roosevelt (his mother)*

Cambridge, October 8, 1878

“... I have enjoyed Charlie's [sic] being here extremely, and I think I have been of some service to him. We always go to prayers together. For his own sake I have not been much with him in the daytime, after the first one or two days; but every evening we spend a good part of the time together, in my room or his. His room, by the way, is very homelike and tasteful; but of course it is not yet as cosy as mine is. He is just the same honest, good old fellow as ever, and, unless I am very much mistaken, is going to make a thorough success in every way of college ...



*Theodore Roosevelt's room at #16 Winthrop Street*

*Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Anna Roosevelt (Cowles) (his older sister)*

Cambridge, October 13, 1878

Darling Bysie,

Did little Muffie accept my eight page letter as atonement for my previous misdeeds of omission in the way of writing? I hope so. I walked in town day before yesterday to call on Miss Jeannie Hooper, but unfortunately she was out so I had to console myself with a game of billiards with old Arthur instead. I enjoy having Charley Dickey underneath me very much; I almost every evening spend about an hour with him, sitting and talking over the day. It seems funny to think that now over half my college career is done; I have enjoyed it extremely so far — although not quite as much as I do home. I must try and see Mr. Choate this year; it is time for me to think what I shall do when I leave college.

Your Loving Brother —

*Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Anna Roosevelt (Cowles) (his older sister)*

Cambridge, September 29, 1879

Darling Bysie,

I have been in Cambridge four days now, and the senior year has opened most auspiciously. The cart and horse, with whip, rug &c, came to hand in fine condition; and I really think I have as swell a turnout as any man. I am perfectly delighted with it. It will be the greatest pleasure to me all this winter. The horse goes beautifully, very much better than I had any expectation that he would. He hardly breaks at all; in fact never, unless he is frightened by a locomotive or something.

I spent Sunday at the Saltonstalls', who were just too sweet to me for anything. There I met Mr. and Mrs. Peabody, who invited me down to visit them.

Dear old Charles Dickey has just dropped in to say good night, so no more at present from

Your Loving Brother

*[from "The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt Vol 1" (1951) via the Internet Archive]*

In 1906, twenty six years after their graduation, Roosevelt's Harvard classmate William Blodgett wrote a note to now President Teddy Roosevelt, reporting:

"...I am engaged to Miss Hannah Whitney of New Haven. Charley Dickey married her sister [Louise Whitney, married 1893]. It is an awful big score against Yale for there were never two sisters who rooted harder for Yale and both have succumbed to Harvard men. Please tell Mrs. Roosevelt how happy I am and believe me..."

Teddy responded to his friend Billy:

"I am delighted at this good news and congratulate you most heartily. All I object to, my dear fellow, is you're having waited so long. But I know of Miss Whitney, so I am well prepared to believe that she was well worth waiting for."

(Hannah Whitney was 35 and William Blodgett was 50 when they were married.)

Teddy Roosevelt died unexpectedly at Sagamore Hill in January 1919, at age 60. Charley Dickey died a month later, age 58, of the Spanish flu.

*I learned about the connection between my great-grandfather Charles Dickey and Teddy Roosevelt when I mentioned to my mother on the phone one evening in 2014 that I was watching Ken Burns's "The Roosevelts - An Intimate Portrait" on PBS. Mom [Mary Dickey Lindsay], who was 94 years old at the time, responded nonchalantly "Oh yes - my grandfather was very fond of Teddy when they roomed together at Harvard." That sent me off in a Googling frenzy, which turned up the letters quoted above, verifying Mom's casual pronouncement. The world of wealthy Eastern WASPs was very tight knit in those days, as evidenced by the web of Roosevelts, Saltonstalls, Peabodys and Whitneys that appear in the letters.*

*Stephen Whitney Lindsay  
November 2024*



The Richardson home, residence of Teddy Roosevelt and Charley Dickey during their Harvard years.  
#16 Winthrop Street (later #38), Cambridge, Mass.