



# Island of Vice: Theodore Roosevelt's Quest to Clean Up Sin-Loving New York

*Richard Zacks*

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## **Island of Vice: Theodore Roosevelt's Quest to Clean Up Sin-Loving New York** Richard Zacks

In the 1890s, young cocksure Theodore Roosevelt, years before the White House, was appointed police commissioner of corrupt, pleasure-loving New York, then teeming with 40,000 prostitutes, illegal casinos and all-night dance halls. The Harvard-educated Roosevelt, with a reformer's zeal, tried to wipe out the city's vice and corruption. He went head-to-head with Tammany Hall, took midnight rambles looking for derelict cops, banned barroom drinking on Sundays and tried to convince 2 million New Yorkers to enjoy wholesome family fun.

The city rebelled big time; cartoonists lampooned him on the front page; his own political party abandoned him but Roosevelt never backed down. *Island of Vice* delivers a rollicking narrative history of Roosevelt's embattled tenure, pitting the seedy against the saintly, and the city against its would-be savior.

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