



## Frances Perkins Fact Sheet

- The first woman to hold a Cabinet member position and the driving force behind the New Deal
- Connected to present day challenges; a pioneer in advocating for social justice, economic security, labor rights, and liberal democracy
- Born in Boston in 1880, but had roots in Maine (mother was from Bethel and father was from Newcastle)
- Embodied the down-to-earth, common-sense values of Maine
- Graduated from Mount Holyoke College in 1902
- Engaged in social work, including efforts to prevent exploitation of women and girls, particularly in factory work
- Studied sociology and economics, focusing on childhood malnutrition and enrolled as a master's degree candidate at Columbia University
- In 1910, became Executive Secretary of the New York City Consumers League, focusing on factory conditions and workers' benefits
- Was present the day the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire took place in 1911 and was hired as the executive secretary of the Citizen's Committee on Safety
- Worked with and provided counsel to Roosevelt, ultimately served in his cabinet as Secretary of Labor for all 12 years of presidency (one of only four people who served at the top echelon of FDR's administrations from beginning to end)
- Working solely in the company of the world's most powerful men, was depended upon by Roosevelt to both create legislation and push it through congress
- The creator of the Fair Labor Standards Act, laws that govern our workplaces today (minimum wage, overtime pay and child labor protections)
- During World War II, Roosevelt relied upon her as an intelligence asset through her on-the-ground work in Europe (even warning Roosevelt about France's vulnerability despite State Department reports to the contrary)
- Advocated on behalf of German Jewish refugees who sought immigration to the U.S., despite facing intense opposition from the State Department and public sentiment
- Utilized the Homestead as a place to rest and rejuvenate before resuming her tireless work in Washington D.C.