

**Oscar II of  
Sweden  
1829 - 1907**





## Oscar II of Sweden

Oscar II (Oscar Fredrik 21 January 1829 – 8 December 1907) was the King of Sweden from 1872 until his death, and was also the final King of Norway from the House of Bernadotte.

Portrait of Oscar II by Anders Zorn 1898

## Father



## Oscar I of Sweden

Oscar I (4 July 1799 – 8 July 1859) was King of Sweden and Norway from 8 March 1844 until his death. He was the second monarch of the House of Bernadotte.

The only child of King Charles XIV & III John, Oscar inherited the thrones upon the death of his father. Throughout his reign he would pursue a liberal course in politics in contrast to Charles XIV, instituting reforms and improving ties between Sweden and Norway. In an address to him in 1857, the Riksdag declared that he had promoted the material prosperity of the kingdom more than any of his predecessors

## Mother



## Josephine of Leuchtenberg

Joséphine of Leuchtenberg or Joséphine de Beauharnais (Joséphine Maximilienne Eugénie Napoléone de Beauharnais; 14 March 1807 – 7 June 1876) was Queen of Sweden and Norway as the wife of King Oscar I, as well as Princess of Bologna from birth and Duchess of Galliera from 1813. She was known as Queen Josefina, and was regarded to be politically active during the reign of her spouse. She acted as his political adviser and actively participated in state affairs. She was particularly active within the laws of religion in Sweden and Norway, and is attributed to have introduced more liberal laws regarding religion.

**Wife**



## **Sophia of Nassau**

Sophia of Nassau (Sophia Wilhelmine Marianne Henriette, Swedish: Sofia; 9 July 1836 – 30 December 1913) was Queen consort of Sweden and Norway. Sophia was Queen of Sweden for 35 years, longer than anyone before her. She was the longest-serving queen until 2011, when she was surpassed by Queen Silvia. She is also the most recent woman to have been officially Dowager Queen of Sweden.

## Marriage and children

On 6 June 1857 he married in Wiesbaden-Biebrich, Duchy of Nassau (located in present-day Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany) Princess Sophia Wilhelmina, the youngest daughter of Duke William of Nassau and Princess Pauline of Württemberg. They had four sons:

**King Gustaf V** (1858–1950)

**Prince Oscar**, Duke of Gotland, later known as Prince Oscar Bernadotte, Count of Wisborg (1859–1953)

**Prince Carl**, Duke of Västergötland (1861–1951)

**Prince Eugén**, Duke of Närke (1865–1947)



**Carl**, Prince of Sweden

**Erik**, Prince of Sweden/Norway

**Gustav V**, King of Sweden

**Gustav VI Adolf**, King of Sweden

**Ingeborg of Denmark**, princess of Sweden

**Margaretha**, princess of Sweden

**Prince Eugen** of Sweden

**Teresia**, princess of Sweden and Norway

**Victoria**, Queen of Sweden

**Oskar II**, King of Sweden/Norway

Queen of Sweden



**King Gustav V  
of Sweden  
(1858-1950).**



**Gustaf Adolf as Crown  
Prince and Duke  
of Scania**

## Alleged extramarital children

Oscar II is also suspected to have had several extramarital children,[10] of which at least five are named:

**Anna Hofman-Uddgren** (1868–1947) by Emma Hammarström (1849–1910)

**Elin Esping Smitz** (1878–1960) by Paulina Mathilda Esping (1858–1878)

**Knut August Ekstam** (born 1878, in U.S.A. 1903, death unknown) by Marie Friberg (1852–1934)

**Nils Teodor Ekstam** (1889–1954) also by Friberg above

However, unlike his father, Oscar II, never officially recognized any illegitimate children of his.

**Oscar II was King** during a time when both Sweden and Norway were undergoing a period of industrialization and rapid technological progress. His reign also saw the gradual decline of the Union of Sweden and Norway, which culminated in its dissolution in 1905. He was subsequently succeeded as King of Norway by his grandnephew Prince Carl of Denmark under the regnal name Haakon VII, and as King of Sweden by his eldest son, Gustaf V.

Oscar II is the paternal great-great-grandfather of Carl XVI Gustaf, King of Sweden since 1973. Harald V, King of Norway since 1991, is a great-grandson of Oscar II, through his third son Prince Carl, Duke of Västergötland.

## Early life

Oscar Fredrik was born in Stockholm on 21 January 1829, the third of four sons of Crown Prince Oscar and Josephine of Leuchtenberg. Upon his birth, he was created Duke of Östergötland. During his childhood he was placed in the care of the royal governess, Countess Christina Ulrika Taube.

Prince Oscar entered the Royal Swedish Navy as a midshipman at the age of eleven, and was appointed junior lieutenant in July 1845. Later he studied at Uppsala University, where he distinguished himself in mathematics. On 13 December 1848, was made an honorary member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.



OSCAR II  
Foto Bernadottebiblioteket, Sthlm



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Foto Bernadottebiblioteket, Sthlm



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Foto Bernadottebiblioteket, Sthlm

**A distinguished writer** and musical amateur himself, King Oscar proved a generous friend of learning, and did much to encourage the development of education throughout his dominions. In 1858 a collection of his lyrical and narrative poems, *Memorials of the Swedish Fleet*, published anonymously, obtained the second prize of the Swedish Academy. His "Contributions to the Military History of Sweden in the Years 1711, 1712, 1713", originally appeared in the *Annals of the Academy*, and were printed separately in 1865. His works, which included his speeches, translations of Herder's *Cid* and Goethe's *Torquato Tasso*, and a play, *Castle Cronberg*, were collected in two volumes in 1875–76, and a larger edition, in three volumes, appeared in 1885–88.

**In 1859**, Prince Oscar became heir-presumptive to the thrones of Sweden and Norway, as his eldest brother King Charles XV of Sweden/Charles IV of Norway was without a legitimate heir, having lost his only son, Prince Carl Oscar, Duke of Södermanland, to pneumonia in 1854. His second elder brother, Prince Gustaf, Duke of Uppland, had before died of typhoid fever in 1852.



Charles XV photographed by Mathias Hansen around 1865

## **King of Sweden and Norway**

**Oscar II became King on 18 September 1872**, upon the death of his brother, Charles XV. At his accession, he adopted as his motto *Brödrafolkens väl / Broderfolkenes Vel* ("The Welfare of the Brother Peoples"). While the King, his family and the Royal Court resided mostly in Sweden, Oscar II made the effort of learning to be fluent in Norwegian and from the very beginning realized the essential difficulties in the maintenance of the union between the two countries.

## Foreign and domestic statecraft

His acute intelligence and his aloofness from the dynastic considerations affecting most European sovereigns (both his paternal and maternal grandfathers were French military commanders who served under Napoleon I) gave the king considerable weight as an arbitrator in international questions. At the request of Great Britain, Germany and the United States in 1889 he appointed the Chief Justice of Samoa under the Treaty of Berlin, and he was again called on to arbitrate in Samoan affairs in 1899.

In 1897 he was empowered to appoint a fifth arbitrator if necessary in the Venezuelan dispute, and he was called on to act as umpire in the Anglo-American arbitration treaty that was quashed by the United States Senate. He won many friends in the United Kingdom by his outspoken and generous support of Britain at the time of the Second Boer War (1899–1902), expressed in a declaration printed in *The Times* of 2 May 1900, when continental opinion was almost universally hostile

He remained a strong supporter of the Navy throughout his life, and frequently visited ships of the fleet. When the coastal defence ship Oscar II was launched, he even signed his name on the vessel's aft main gun tower.

The office of Prime Minister of Sweden was instituted in 1876. Louis De Geer became the first head of government in Sweden to use this title. The most known and powerful first minister of the Crown during the reign of Oscar was the conservative estate owner Erik Gustaf Boström. Boström served as Prime Minister in 1891–1900 and 1902–1905. He was trusted and respected by Oscar II, who had much difficulty approving someone else as prime minister. Over a period of time, the King gave Boström a free hand to select his own ministers without much royal involvement. It was an arrangement (unintentional by both the King and Boström) that furthered the road to parliamentarism.

## Science and the arts

His Easter hymn and some other of his poems are familiar throughout the Scandinavian countries. His work on Charles XII of Sweden were translated into English in 1879. In 1881 he founded the world's first open-air museum, at Bygdøy, located next to his summer residence near Oslo (back then known as Christiania). In 1885 he published his Address to the Academy of Music, and a translation of one of his essays on music appeared in Literature in May 1900. He had a valuable collection of printed and manuscript music, which was readily accessible to the historical student of music.



Aides Daniel Nordlander (upper left) and Fritz von Dardel, Ordonnance Officer Ferdinand-Alphonse Hamelin, General Henri-Pierre Castelnau, King Charles XV of Sweden and Prince Oscar, future King Oscar II of Sweden, at the 1867 International Exposition in Paris, France.

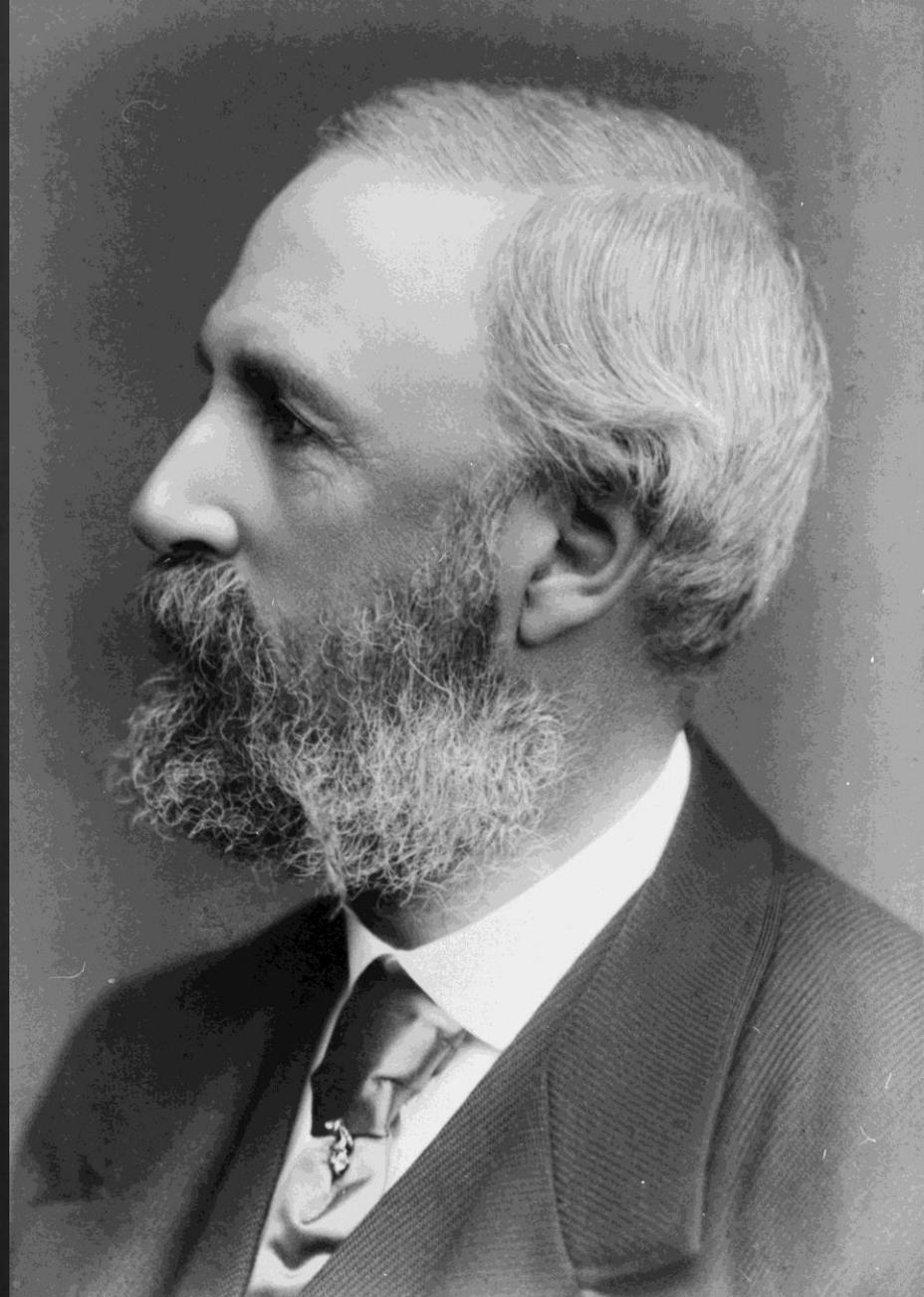
**Being a theater lover**, he commissioned a new opera house to be built by Axel Anderberg for the Royal Swedish Opera which was inaugurated on 19 September 1898. It remains as the home of that institution. Oscar II once told playwright Henrik Ibsen that his Ghosts was "not a good play". As he was dying, he requested that the theatres not be closed on account of his death. His wishes were respected.

**King Oscar II was an enthusiast of Arctic exploration.** Along with Swedish millionaire Oscar Dickson and Russian magnate Aleksandr Mikhaylovich Sibiryakov, he was the patron of a number of pioneering Arctic expeditions in the 1800s. Among the ventures the king sponsored, the most important are Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld's explorations to the Russian Arctic and Greenland, and Fridtjof Nansen's Polar journey on the Fram





**1889 - 1901**

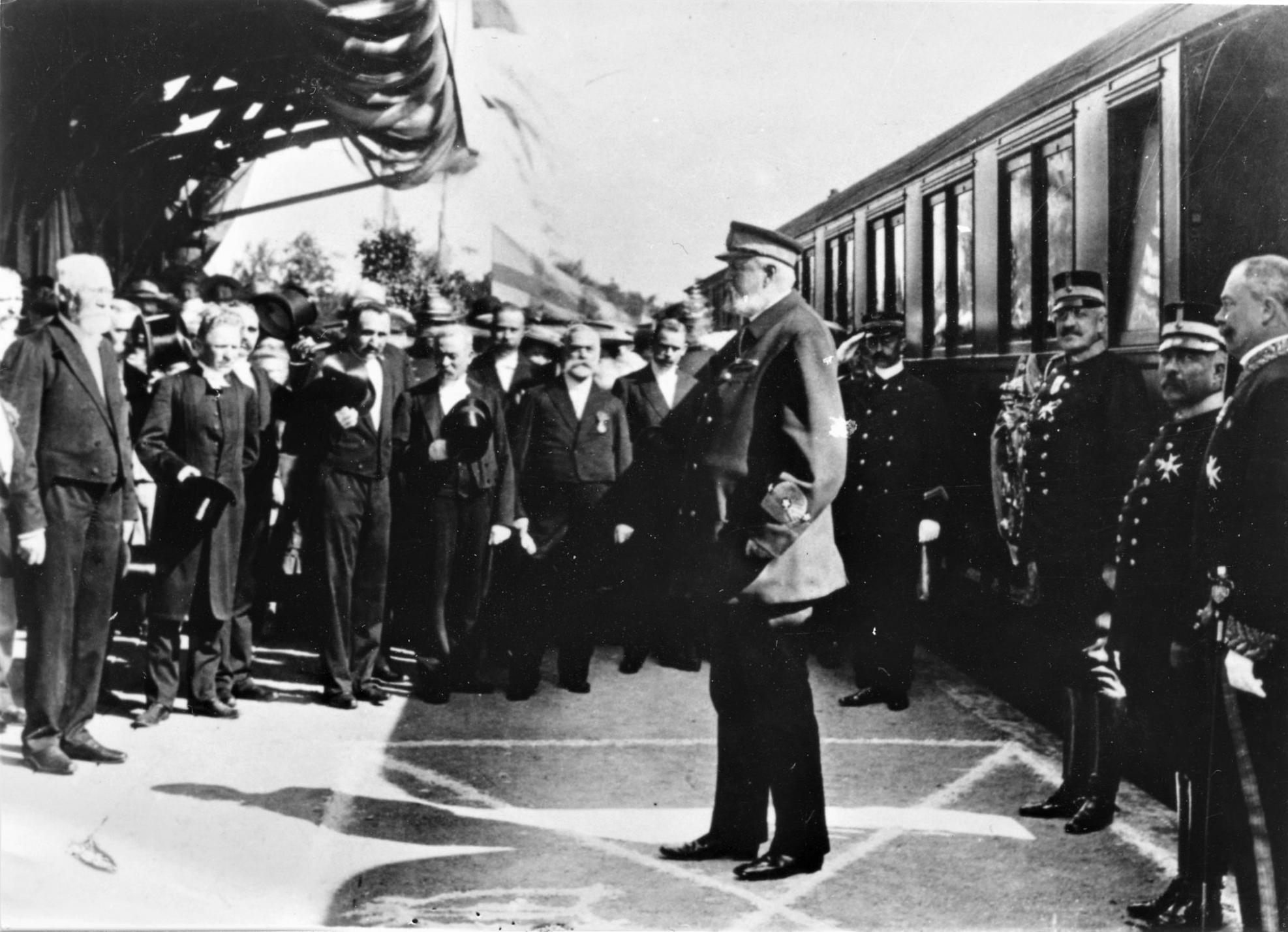


*Gösta Florman*

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STOCKHOLM

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**City  
Sölvesborg**

**Year 1900**



**1902**

**Oscar was also a generous sponsor of the sciences** and personally funded the world famous Vega Expedition which was the first Arctic expedition to navigate through the Northeast Passage, the sea route between Europe and Asia through the Arctic Ocean, and the first voyage to circumnavigate Eurasia. Oscar was also particularly interested in mathematics. He set up a contest, on the occasion of his 60th birthday, for "an important discovery in the realm of higher mathematical analysis"



**Year  
1907**

**King Oscar II**



# Death

The political events which led up to the peaceful dissolution of the union between Norway and Sweden in 1905 could hardly have been attained but for the tact and patience of the king himself. He was dethroned on 7 June 1905 by the Storting and renounced the Norwegian throne on 26 October. He declined, indeed, to permit any prince of his house to become king of Norway, but better relations between the two countries were restored before his death. **Oscar II died in Stockholm on 8 December 1907 at 9:10 am.**



**Graves**

**Oscar II**

**And**

**Sofia**

His eldest son Gustaf was Duke of Värmland and succeeded him as King Gustaf V of Sweden from 1907 until 1950, married Princess Victoria of Baden and they had three sons. His second son, Prince Oscar, lost his rights of succession to the throne upon his unequal marriage in 1888 to a former lady-in-waiting, Ebba Munck af Fulkila, and was granted the title of Prince Bernadotte first in Sweden, and from 1892 in Luxembourg, where he also was created Count of Wisborg as an hereditary title for his marital progeny (Adolphe, Grand Duke of Luxembourg was the half-brother of his mother, Queen Sophia). The other sons of Oscar II were Prince Carl, Duke of Västergötland who married Princess Ingeborg of Denmark; and Prince Eugén, Duke of Närke, who was well known as an artist and remained a bachelor all his life.

**King Oscar II**  
**Visting Särö**







# Honours

## National

Knight and Commander of the Seraphim, 21 January 1829

Knight of Charles XIII, 21 January 1829

Commander Grand Cross, Order of the Sword, 21 January 1829

Commander Grand Cross, Order of the Polar Star, 21 January 1829

Commander Grand Cross, Order of Vasa, 15 June 1866[18]

Grand Cross with Collar, Order of St. Olav, 21 January 1829

Founder and Master, Order of the Norwegian Lion, 1904-1905