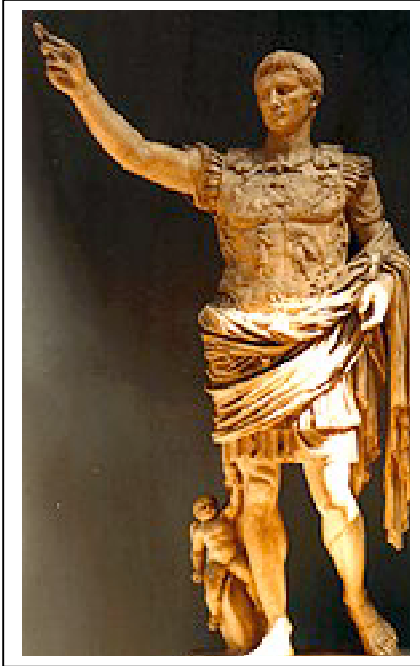


AUGUSTUS (63 B.C.-A.D. 14)



Augustus (Gaius Octavius) was the first emperor of Rome. After his adoption by his great-uncle Julius Caesar he called himself Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus. After Caesar's assassination in 44 B.C. he skillfully lured over Caesar's legions to his side and formed the Second Triumvirate with Mark Antony and Lepidus. After helping to crush Brutus and Cassius at Philippi in Macedonia in 42 B.C., he successfully manoeuvred Anthony into accepting the eastern provinces as his share of Empire. Lepidus was given Africa. Between the years 40 and 31 B.C. Augustus consolidated his control over the West. Sex. Pompeius, son of Pompey the Great and the last major enemy of the triumvirs, was eliminated in 36 B.C. Octavian then forced Lepidus from power, while Antony was in the east fighting the Parthians.

In 31 B.C., the "cold war" with Antony finally broke out in open hostilities. At Actium, off the north-western coast of Greece, Octavian's armada decisively defeated the combined naval forces of Antony and Cleopatra. Antony fled with Cleopatra to Egypt where they both committed suicide.

After his victory, Octavian celebrated a splendid triumph: Rome greeted him as her savior and showed herself willing to accept his sole sovereignty for 44 years. In 28 B.C. he was made *princeps senatus*, the leader of the senate. The next year he received the honorary title Augustus and in a series of senatorial bequests he was made consul, tribune and proconsul. Despite this gradual assumption of complete dictatorial power, his avowed aim was the restoration of the Roman Republic and the purification of its social and religious life. Whatever reforms he did accomplish, he did so on his own, bypassing the Senate and the popular assemblies.

A patron of the arts, Augustus was a friend of the poets Ovid, Horace, and Vergil, as well as the historian Livy. His love for architectural splendor was summed up in his boast that he "had found Rome brick and left it marble." He was succeeded as emperor by Tiberius.

The *Res Gestae* was a pamphlet written by Augustus late in life detailing his accomplishments and the state of the Empire. It was posted throughout the empire and has survived as a unique example of imperial propaganda.