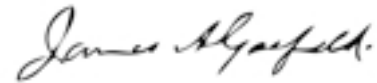


James Garfield
20th President




Terms: 1881

Political Party: Republican

First Lady: Jane Irwin Harrison (daughter-in-law)

Vice President: Chester Alan Arthur

Overview

Born: November 19, 1831, in Orange, Ohio... Garfield, an educator before he served the Union in the [Civil War](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/lincolns/) <www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/lincolns/>, helped to establish the [U.S. Geological Survey](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/canyon/peoplevents/pandeAMEX06.html) <www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/canyon/peoplevents/pandeAMEX06.html> and to strengthen the Smithsonian Institute while in Congress. In July of 1881, a mentally disturbed man shot Garfield. Surgery to remove the bullet may have led to the infection that killed him... Died: September 19, 1881.

The Era

- Clara Barton founds the American Association of the Red Cross (1881)
- Booker T. Washington becomes the first principal of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama (1881)

Domestic Policy

Garfield's federal appointments suggested an independent, reformist leader. He clashed with New York Senator Roscoe Conkling who had expected to name the federal jobs available in his state. Boss Conkling resigned in protest over Garfield's choice to run the Custom House, fully expecting that his state legislature would re-instate him; they did not.

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Foreign Affairs

Garfield organized, with his Secretary of State James Blaine, a Pan-American conference. His untimely death precluded any such meeting until 1889.

Presidential Politics

The Republican convention of 1880 appeared to be a contest between ex-president [Ulysses Grant](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/presidents-grant/) <www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/presidents-grant/> and James G. Blaine. Garfield supported Senator John Sherman from his home state of Ohio. The electors were deadlocked for 33 ballots until Wisconsin threw its votes to Garfield. Sherman and Blaine supporters fell behind the dark horse candidacy and Garfield won the nomination on the 36th ballot.

“We can not overestimate the fervent love of liberty, the intelligent courage, and the sum of common sense with which our fathers made the great experiment of self-government.”

— James A. Garfield, 1881

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