



Gerald R. Ford

Given by Michigan to the National Statuary Hall Collection

Gerald R. Ford, thirty-eighth president of the United States, was the first person to assume the offices of vice president and president upon the resignation of his predecessors. This followed upon twenty-five years of service in Congress, including eight as House minority leader.

The future president was born Leslie Lynch King, Jr., on July 14, 1913, in Omaha, Nebraska, and was raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan. After his mother divorced his father, she married Gerald Rudolff Ford, in whose honor her son would take the name Gerald Rudolff Ford, Jr. He studied economics and political science at the University of Michigan, where he was also a champion football player. At Yale University he earned a law degree while coaching football and boxing. He graduated in 1941, practiced law briefly, and enlisted in the navy in 1942 after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. His service included time on an aircraft carrier that saw action in the Pacific until it was irreparably damaged by a typhoon and fire, and he was honorably discharged in 1946.

In 1948 Ford married Elizabeth (“Betty”) Bloomer and was elected to the first of thirteen terms in the U. S. House of Representatives. During his service on committees and on the Warren Commission, which investigated the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, he established a reputation for fairness and integrity, and beginning in 1965 he served as minority leader. Upon the resignation of Vice President Spiro Agnew, President Richard Nixon selected him to fill the vacancy, and he was confirmed by the House and Senate as required by the twenty-fifth amendment to the Constitution. On August 9, 1974, Nixon himself left office because of the ongoing Watergate scandal, and Ford assumed the presidency. Among the



Bronze by J Brett Grill
Given in 2011; located in Rotunda

challenges he faced were low public confidence in the government, economic inflation, conflict in the Middle East, the fall of South Vietnam and Cambodia, and an increasing Soviet military threat. He ran for election to a full term in 1976 but was defeated by Governor Jimmy Carter of Georgia.

Ford remained athletic, robust, and active after leaving office, appearing at historical and ceremonial events, such as state funerals, and speaking out on subjects of domestic and international importance. He died on December 26, 2006, at his home in Rancho Mirage, California. His remains lay in state in the Capitol Rotunda from December 30, 2006, to January 2, 2007. Following a state funeral and a memorial service held at the National Cathedral on January 2, Ford was interred at his Presidential Museum in Grand Rapids.

The statue depicts Ford wearing a three-piece suit and leaning forward, his feet splayed and his slightly raised left heel suggesting forward motion; the sculptor stated that this posture is “meant to embody the idea of someone standing up to serve their country when called.” The president’s right hand holds his open suit jacket with two fingers below the right lapel and his left hand holds two thick files, the outer one of which carries the presidential seal. The pedestal, clad in India Black granite, is inscribed on the front with Ford’s name, life dates, positions and terms of federal service, and the state name “Michigan.” On the

proper right side is inscribed a quotation from a tribute by Thomas P. “Tip” O’Neill, Speaker of the House during Ford’s presidency: “God has been good to America, especially during difficult times. At the time of the Civil War, he gave us Abraham Lincoln. And at the time of Watergate, he gave us Gerald Ford—the right man at the right time who was able to put our nation back together again.” On the proper left side are words from Ford’s swearing-in address: “Our constitution works. Our great republic is a government of laws and not of men. Here the people rule.” The statue was unveiled in the Capitol Rotunda on May 3, 2011.

Sculptor J Brett Grill (1979–) holds a BFA in sculpture from the University of Michigan and an MFA in painting from the New York Academy of Art. Now an assistant professor of art, he teaches painting and drawing at the University of Missouri. He was selected by a panel of experts on behalf of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation following a national call for applications; the Foundation commissioned the sculpture on behalf of the state of Michigan. Born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Grill also grew up there, as did Ford. Grill was familiar with Ford’s history and had previously depicted him in a bust.

This statue replaced one of Detroit mayor and United States Senator Zachariah Chandler, which the state of Michigan donated to the National Statuary Hall Collection in 1913.

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