



## James A. Garfield

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JAMES ABRAM GARFIELD, BORN NOVEMBER 19, 1831, was the last American president to be born in a log cabin. He grew up in poverty and first tried his hand at being a frontier farmer. He was able to finish his studies, first at Western Reserve Eclectic Institute (Hiram College) and later at Williams College; he was just under 30. In 1859 Garfield was elected to the Ohio Senate as a Republican. He studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1860.

Garfield became a major general in the Union Army during the Civil War and served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1863 to 1880; there he served on the Military Affairs Committee and the Ways and Means Committee and became an expert in public finance. He was a firm supporter of backing money with gold, but not a strong supporter of a high tariff. Garfield was elected to the Senate in 1880 but never served, as he also was elected president. His short presidency was quite stormy due to the numerous political problems he inherited. He also generated some of his own by personally making even the most minor political appointment in his administration, and his selection of moderate Republicans angered the conservative faction known as the Stalwarts.

On July 2, 1881, President Garfield was shot in a Washington railroad station, located on the Mall, by Charles J. Guiteau, a disappointed office seeker. Garfield died from his gunshot wound eleven weeks later on September 19, 1881.

April 2011

Marble by Charles H. Niehaus  
Given in 1886; located in Rotunda.

