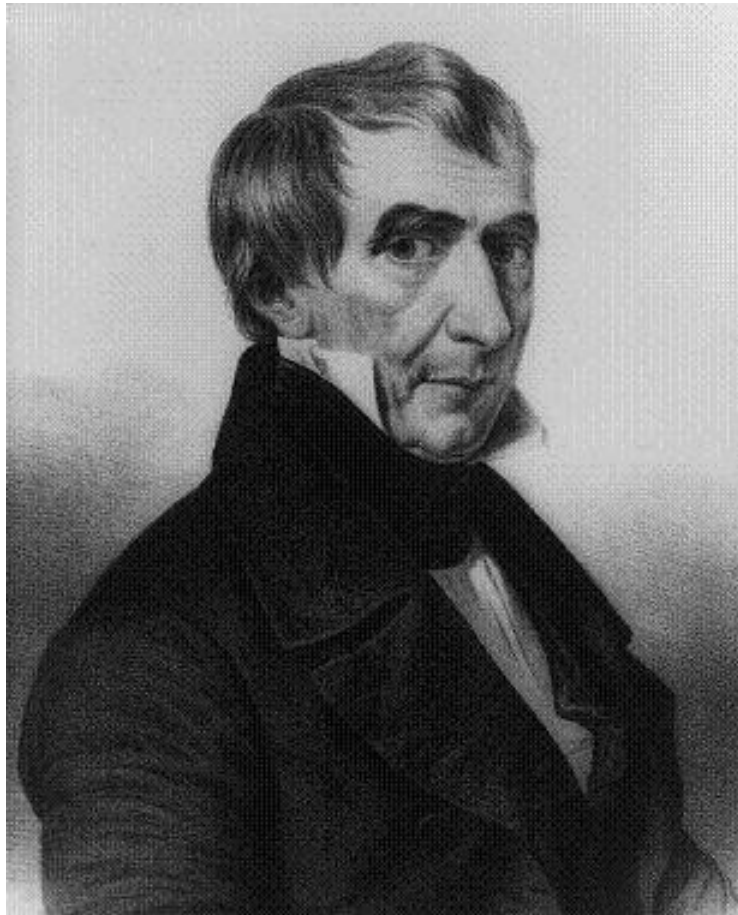


# William Henry Harrison

Tippecanoe's Waterloo  
Ninth, 1841



**Nicknames:** "Old Tippecanoe", "Granny Harrison", "General Mum", "The Log Cabin Candidate", "The Cincinnatus of the West"

**Birth:** February 9<sup>th</sup>, 1773, Charles City County, Virginia

**Death:** April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1841, White House, Washington, D.C.

**Significant Events During Harrison's Partial Term:** Harrison Dies ... Number of States remains at twenty-six

**Quotes:** *"I am the clerk of the Court of Common Pleas of Hamilton County at your service...Some folks are silly enough to have formed a plan to make a President of the United States out of this Clerk and Clod Hopper."* -- William Henry Harrison

*"All the measures of the Government are directed to the purpose of making the rich richer and the poor poorer."* -- William Henry Harrison, 1840

*"Under no circumstances will I consent to serve a second term."*  
-- William Henry Harrison, who died after one month in office.

*"It is true, the victory of 1840 did not produce the happy results anticipated; but it is equally true, as we believe, that the unfortunate death of General Harrison was the cause of the failure. It was not the election of General Harrison that was expected to produce happy effects, but the measures to be adopted by his administration. By means of his death, and the unexpected course of his successor, those measures were never adopted."* -- Abraham Lincoln, 1843

*"My father! The sun is my father, and the earth is my mother; I will repose upon her bosom."*  
-- Shawnee leader Tecumseh, at a meeting with William Henry Harrison when an interpreter, referring to Harrison, who was then Territorial Governor of Indiana, said, "Your father requests you to take a chair."

**How his term ended:** Harrison died after only one month in office.

**Other Professions:** Soldier, Apprentice Doctor, Farmer

**Worst Mistake:** Harrison opposed restrictions on the spread of slavery.

**Saving Grace:** Harrison voted to censure Andrew Jackson for his conduct in the First Seminole War, when Jackson invaded a foreign country (Spain) without provocation, hounded runaway slaves, destroyed villages, and attacked the Seminoles to boot.

**Notes:** While a child, William Henry Harrison's family home in Virginia was attacked by a force of British troops and American loyalists (loyal to Britain, that is) led by Benedict Arnold.

In William Henry Harrison's successful "Log Cabin and Cider" campaign to unseat Martin Van Buren as President, Van Buren was depicted as an aristocrat, drinking wine from elegant goblets and eating off silver plates, while Harrison was supposedly a frontiersman in a cabin (more of an Andrew Jackson type) who was content to quaff home-made cider. In reality, Van Buren was the son of a tavern keeper, while Harrison was born to an aristocratic family in a Virginia mansion.

The strangest thing about it all, perhaps, is that the Harrison camp got their idea for the "Log Cabin and Cider" mirage from Van Buren supporters. Speaking of Harrison in 1836, one of them had claimed: "Give him a barrel of hard cider and settle a pension of two thousand dollars a year on him and, my word for it, he will sit the remainder of his days in a log cabin

by the side of a sea coal fire and study moral philosophy.”

Despite their origins, there was something to the characterizations used by the Harrison campaign. Although born to privilege in Virginia, Harrison lived his adult life in what was then thought of as “The West,” specifically Indiana and Ohio, where he fought Indians, farmed, and “worked” as a politician. And Van Buren, although from humble origins, had become what we would call in modern parlance a “girly man,” at least according to Davy Crockett, who said in 1835: “Van Buren is as opposite to General Jackson as dung is to a diamond...he is what the English call a dandy. When he enters the senate-chamber in the morning, he struts and swaggers like a crow in the gutter. He is laced up in corsets, such as women in town wear, and, if possible, tighter than the best of them. It would be difficult to say, from his personal appearance, whether he was man or woman, but for his large ... whiskers.”

Harrison got the nickname “Old Tippecanoe” from fighting at The Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811 against Shawnee Indians, from whom the intruders had taken three million acres. Harrison was also at the Battle of the Thames in 1813, where Shawnee leader Tecumseh was killed. Because of this nickname, the campaign slogan used by Harrison and his Vice Presidential candidate, John Tyler, was “Tippecanoe and Tyler Too.”

As would happen again forty years later, there were three Presidents in 1841: outgoing President Martin Van Buren (#8), William Henry Harrison, and finally, after Harrison died, his replacement, former Vice President John Tyler.

Andrew Jackson's (#7) extreme slenderness saved his life in his duel with Charles Dickinson. Later, the long speech Theodore Roosevelt (#26) would give in Milwaukee, when running as the Bull Moose candidate in 1912, would indirectly save his life. In 1841, though, it was Harrison's long speech that (indirectly) killed him.

Harrison's inauguration took place on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1836. He died exactly one month later. The sixty-eight year old held forth with a long address in cold, rainy, blustery weather, and he presented his speech bare-headed, to boot. Harrison caught a cold, which turned into pneumonia and led to his untimely demise. His wife had planned to move into the White House within a few months of Harrison taking office, but she never did.

Harrison's family line is interesting: His five most immediate forebears on his father's side were named Benjamin. Benjamin Harrison V, the President's father, had signed the Declaration of Independence. William Henry also had a son he named Benjamin, who became a doctor, and eventually a grandson Benjamin who became the 23<sup>rd</sup> President in 1889.

William Henry Harrison's sons were an interesting lot: one was an embezzler, another an alcoholic, and another, John Scott Harrison, an anti-slavery politician. This last son (Harrison and his wife had ten children) became the father of future (twenty-third) President Benjamin Harrison. Soon after John Scott Harrison had died and been buried, grave robbers stole his body and sold it to a medical college (medical colleges buying cadavers from the black

market was a common practice at the time). One of *his* sons happened to visit the school on business shortly thereafter, and accidentally came across his father's body amidst a grouping of many destined for use by the medical students, dangling with a rope around its neck.