



Presidential Profiles

BARACK OBAMA

44th President and First Black President

Born in Hawaii in 1961, Barack Obama was elected to his first term in office in 2008. He served eight years in the White House, with his wife, Michelle, and two daughters, Malia and Sasha. As the first black president of the United States, he also won the Nobel Peace Prize and a Profile in Courage Award.

EARLY LIFE

Obama is the only U.S. president that was born outside the contiguous 48 states. His mother is Ann Durham, a Kansas native who lived in Hawaii, and his father is Barack Obama Sr., a Kenyan who was attending college in Hawaii when he met Durham. The Obamas divorced in 1964 and Durham remarried an Indonesian man, meaning the younger Obama spent some of his childhood in Indonesia, where he learned to speak the language fluently.

EDUCATION

In 1971, Obama returned to Hawaii to live with his maternal grandparents. There, he attended the Punahou School, a private college prep school, on scholarship. After graduation, he attended Occidental College before transferring and graduating from Columbia University. After a few years in the workforce, where he was a writer, researcher and community organizer, Obama entered Harvard Law School, where he served as editor and then president of the Harvard Law Review. He graduated in 1991 and returned to Chicago, where he taught constitutional law at the University of Chicago.

PERSONAL LIFE

Obama met Michelle Robinson in



PETE SOUZA/OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO

1989 while both were at the law firm of Sidley Austin. The couple married in 1992 and had daughter Malia in 1998 and Sasha in 2001. Obama is an avid sports fan and basketball player.

POLITICAL LIFE

Obama's first political office was election to the Illinois state Senate in 1997, where he represented parts of Chicago's South Side. He was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2004, where he supported transparency in federal spending, relief for the Democratic Republic

of the Congo, de-escalation of the Iraq War, and sanctions on Iran. Obama chaired the Senate Subcommittee on European Affairs and held seats on several Senate Committees, including Foreign Relations.

PRESIDENCY

Obama became the first black president of the United States in 2009, with Delaware Sen. Joe Biden as his vice president. Obama and Biden held office for two four-year terms.

During his time in office, he appointed two women as Supreme Court justices; pushed reforms for LGBT rights, such as signing the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act and repealing the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Act military sexual orientation policy; pushed for increased conservation of public lands and more strict regulation of carbon emissions; and advocated for and eventually passed health care reform.

POST PRESIDENCY

After the Obama family left the White House in 2017. A survey of historians by the American Political Science Association in 2018 ranked Obama the 8th greatest American president. His presidential library will be built in Chicago's Jackson Park.

JOHN ADAMS AND JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

2nd and 6th Presidents, First Father-Son Duo

John Adams, the second U.S. president, was a Revolutionary leader who also served as the country's first vice president under President George Washington. His eldest son, John Quincy Adams, was the sixth president, and also served as Secretary of State.

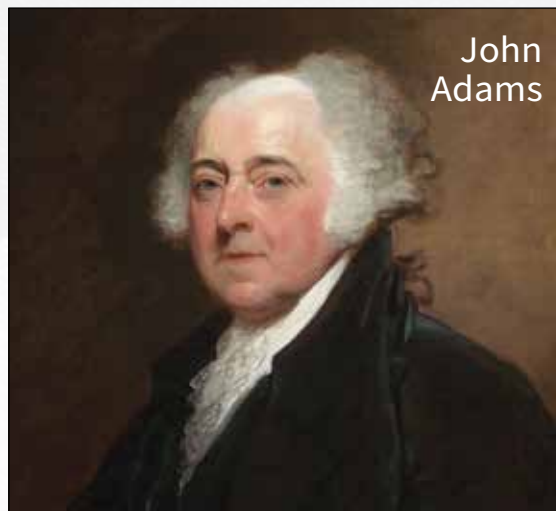
JOHN ADAMS

John Adams was a lawyer who defended British soldiers against murder charges in the Boston Massacre and advocated for the right to counsel and the presumption of innocence. He helped draft the Declaration of Independence, and, as a Massachusetts delegate to the Continental Congress, pushed for its approval. He went on to help negotiate peace with Great Britain, author the Massachusetts Constitution, and serve two terms as vice president under George Washington.

John Adams served one term as president as a Federalist. He signed the Alien and Sedition Acts and was the first president to live in the White House. He lost a bid for reelection and retired to Massachusetts, where he lived with his wife Abigail. He died on July 4, 1826, just hours after his former enemy Thomas Jefferson and on the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

John Quincy Adams spent much of his youth in Europe, as his father was a diplomat before serving as president. In 1794, he became one in his own right when President George Washington

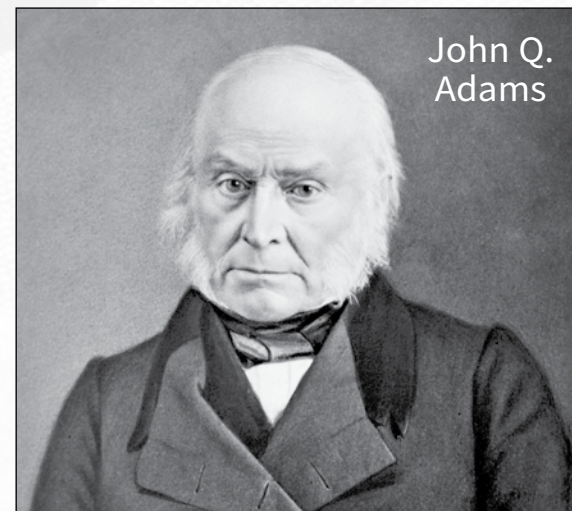


John Adams

GILBERT STUART/PUBLIC DOMAIN

appointed him ambassador to the Netherlands. He served in several foreign relations posts until Thomas Jefferson's presidency; then he was elected to the U.S. Senate representing Massachusetts until 1802, when he broke with the Federalist Party. John Quincy Adams returned to public service in 1809 as ambassador to Russia under President James Madison. In 1817, he became Secretary of State to President James Monroe, where he helped negotiate the annexation of Florida.

He was elected president in 1824 in a contentious election where no candidate won the outright majority, mean-



John Q. Adams

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

ing the House of Representatives held a contingent election that John Quincy Adams won. As president, he won approval of national infrastructure projects, like roads, canals and railroads to connect the young nation. He also struck deals and negotiated to expand American trade.

FATHER-SON RELATIONSHIP

Because John Quincy Adams spent his youth abroad with his father, he was closer to him than his mother Abigail. Like John Adams, he preferred private life. John Quincy Adams also suffered from depression and often blamed it on his parents' high expectations of him.

RONALD REAGAN

40th President, Oldest Man Inaugurated

A former actor and governor of California, Ronald Reagan served two terms as president from 1981-1989.

He was a native of Illinois who moved to California to pursue an acting career. Reagan's first wife was actress Jane Wyman, with whom he had two children, Maureen and Michael. They divorced in 1949. He married actress Nancy Davis in 1952, and they also had two children, Patricia Ann and Ronald Prescott.

ACTING CAREER

Reagan starred in 53 movies, including playing George "The Gipper" Gipp, in "Knut Rockne: All American," a nickname that would stick to Reagan for life. Reagan also served seven terms as president of the Screen Actors Guild, leading the organization through the Hollywood blacklist era.

POLITICAL CAREER

After stumping for Barry Goldwater in the 1964 presidential election, Reagan ran for and won the race for California governor in 1966. He would lead the state until 1975. He clashed with student political movements, sending in the California Highway Patrol to break up protests at the University of California, Berkeley. Reagan also spoke out against the welfare state and solidified his anti-abortion stance.

PRESIDENCY

Reagan and running mate George H.W. Bush defeated President Jimmy Carter in the 1980 election, promising



PETE SOUZA/PUBLIC DOMAIN

strong national defense, states' rights and less government interference in private lives.

On March 30, 1981, would-be assassin John Hinckley Jr. shot Reagan, press secretary James Brady, police officer Thomas Delahanty, and Secret Service agent Tim McCarthy. Reagan was rushed to the hospital and underwent surgery, but recovered and was released on April 11. He is the first president to survive being shot in an assassination attempt while in office.

One of Reagan's most famous policies revolved around the domestic economy, where he favored supply-side and trickle-down economics,

in which low tax rates would encourage investment, which would then lead to higher employment and higher wages.

Reagan escalated the simmering Cold War with the Soviet Union with a strong buildup of the U.S. military and defense programs. He also sent military forces into Lebanon and invaded Grenada to overturn an established Marxist government. He also fulfilled his campaign promise of nominating the first woman to the Supreme Court in Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

His second term began on Jan. 20, 1985, when, at 73, he became the oldest person to take the presidential oath of office. Reagan's second term was marked by the War on Drugs, the 1986 bombing of Libya, the Iran-Contra scandal, and the end of the Cold War.

POST-PRESIDENCY

After leaving the White House, the Reagans moved back to California and continued to work for conservative causes, including a constitutional amendment requiring a balanced budget. In 1994, the Reagans announced that, at 83, the former president had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, an incurable neurological disease that causes dementia. He died in 2004 at the age of 93. Nancy Reagan went on to become an advocate for stem-cell research as a possible Alzheimer's cure, until her death in 2016.

ZACHARY TAYLOR

12th President, First Man Elected Without Prior Political Office

A career officer in the U.S. Army, Taylor rode his victories in the Mexican-American War and subsequent popularity to the White House. He took office as simmering tensions over slavery threatened to explode into the Civil War, but with just 16 months in office before he died, Taylor didn't have much time to resolve the issue.

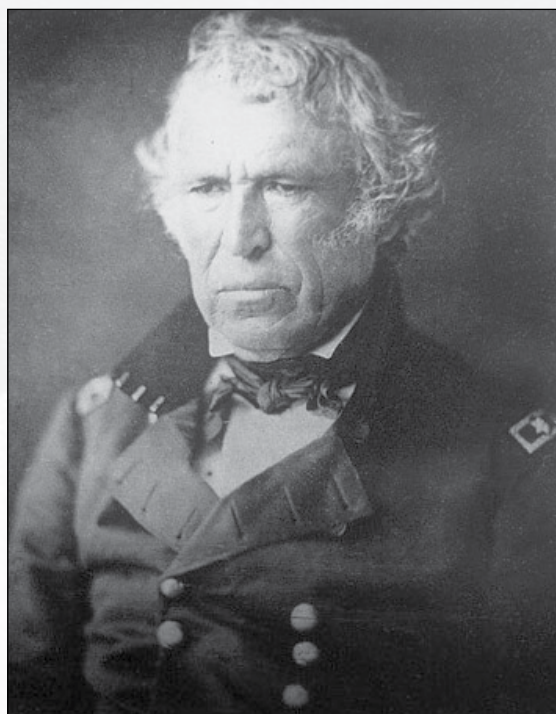
EARLY LIFE

Taylor was born into a family of slave-holding planters that trekked west from his birthplace of Virginia to Louisville, Kentucky. His education was spotty, as Kentucky was the frontier, but he did receive the basics of reading and writing. In 1810, Taylor married Margaret Mackall Smith. The couple had six children, Ann Mackall Taylor, Sara Knox Taylor, Octavia Pannell Taylor, Margaret Smith Taylor, Mary Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Scott Taylor.

MILITARY CAREER

Taylor joined the Army in 1808 as a first lieutenant following the Chesapeake-Leopard Affair, which inflamed tensions between the U.S. and Britain, and also served in the Territory of Orleans. He went on to serve in the War of 1812, and moved his family to Louisiana before serving in the Black Hawk War and the Second Seminole War, where he earned the nickname "Old Rough and Ready." Taylor was made commander of the Second Department of the Army's Western Division in May 1841, overseeing territory west of the Mississippi and south of the 37th parallel north.

Taylor was ordered to a prize post in 1844 — defending the newly annexed Texas territory from attack. When hostilities commenced in 1846, Taylor defeat-



PUBLIC DOMAIN

ed the Mexican army at the Battle of Palo Alto and the Battle of Resaca de la Palma. He was promoted to major general, then marched out in captured the Mexican city of Monterrey. He then won the Battle of Buena Vista in 1847, despite being enormously outnumbered by Mexican forces.

ELECTION AND PRESIDENCY

Despite some wavering and an independent streak, Taylor eventually declared himself a Whig candidate in the 1848 election. Broadly, he was a

nationalist who favored a strong banking system and low tariffs and, of course, he owned slaves.

After his election, Taylor appointed his cabinet geographically, intending to reflect the diverse views of the country, but he avoided choosing any Democrats or any prominent Whigs. He was immediately faced with the question of how to divide up the immense Western territory won in the Mexican-American War, and whether to admit it was states or territories, and, most importantly, whether slavery would be allowed there. Tensions flared as Henry Clay and Daniel Webster proposed the Compromise of 1850, which would allow California to join the Union as a state to decide slavery for itself while other territories would remain under federal control. Slave trade would be banned in the District of Columbia though slavery would still be legal there, and a strict fugitive slave law would be enacted.

DEATH

Before the compromise reached Taylor's desk, however, he died on July 9, 1850, from an unknown intestinal ailment. On July 4, the president had eaten lots of raw fruit and iced milk, which many believed contributed to his death at age 65. He was buried in Louisville, Kentucky.

GERALD FORD

38th President, First to Serve as President and Vice President Without Being Elected by the Electoral College

Traditionally in the United States, presidents are elected when citizens cast their vote, then electors to the Electoral College from their states vote for the president. This is how a president can win the popular vote, but still not be president. Gerald Ford, who is the only man to have served as vice president and president without first winning the Electoral College.

EARLY CAREER

Ford was born in Nebraska but raised in Michigan and, after a stint in the U.S. Naval Reserves and graduation from Yale Law School, returned there to serve as U.S. representative from Michigan's 5th congressional district for 25 years. He eventually rose to House minority leader.

He married Elizabeth Bloomer, and the couple had four children: Michael Gerald, John Gardner, Steven Meigs and Susan Elizabeth.

VICE PRESIDENCY

In 1973, President Richard Nixon's vice president, Spiro Agnew, resigned amidst a corruption investigation in Baltimore. Nixon then named Ford vice president under the terms of the 25th Amendment. He was sworn in Dec. 6, 1973, after Senate confirmation of the appointment and amidst the unfolding Watergate scandal.

PRESIDENCY

Nixon resigned Aug. 9, 1974, and Ford assumed the presidency, taking the oath of office in the East Room of the White House and addressing the nation. "I am acutely aware that you have not elected me as your president by your ballots, and so I ask you to confirm me as your president with



DAVID HUME KENNERLY/PUBLIC DOMAIN

your prayers," he said. Ford pardoned Nixon on Sept. 8, saying it was the best option to move the country forward. However, for years, he wouldn't mention Nixon by name, saying "my predecessor" or "the former president" instead.

Ford replaced almost all of the members of Nixon's cabinet during his 895 days in office. He also pardoned military deserters and Vietnam War draft dodgers and took steps to rein in inflation. Domestically, he signed the

Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, establishing special education in the U.S., and was a vocal supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Ford visited China in 1975 and continued a policy of detente with the Soviet Union and China both. He attended the inaugural meeting of the G7, or Group of Seven, industrialized nations. But the biggest challenge he faced was in Vietnam, presiding over the evacuation of Americans and others from the fall of Saigon and allowing more than 100,000 Vietnamese refugees into the U.S.

Ford was the target of two assassination attempts, one by Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, a follower of Charles Manson, and a second by Sara Jane Moore. Both women wielded guns and both were foiled. He reluctantly agreed to run for re-election in 1976, but lost to Georgia Gov. Jimmy Carter.

POST-PRESIDENCY

The Fords moved to Colorado, where the former president invested in oil and continued to make appearances. Ford published a biography, "A Time to Heal," and served on boards and lent his voice to various causes. He died in 2006 at 93.

WOODROW WILSON

28th President, First Southerner Elected Since the Civil War

Thomas Woodrow Wilson was born in Virginia and grew up in Georgia and South Carolina. After serving as president of Princeton University and the governor of New Jersey, he became the first Southerner elected president since the end of the Civil War.

EARLY LIFE

Born in 1856 Virginia, Wilson grew up in a home with slaves. His father, Joseph Ruggles Wilson, was a Presbyterian pastor who moved the family to Augusta, Georgia, and Columbia South Carolina. Woodrow Wilson graduated from Princeton University and briefly attended the University of Virginia School of Law before pursuing political science and history at Johns Hopkins.

Wilson married Ellen Louise Axson, and had three children, Margaret, Jessie and Eleanor. Axson would die while he was in office in 1914, and Wilson remarried Edith Bolling Galt in 1915.

GOVERNOR OF NEW JERSEY

New Jersey's Democratic Party turned to Wilson after five consecutive defeats in the gubernatorial race. He resigned from Princeton after earning the Democratic nomination and won election to the seat in 1910. Wilson put together a reformist agenda, largely ignoring party politics, and won passage of laws restricting labor by women and children and a series of antitrust laws.

PRESIDENCY

Wilson won the 1912 presidential



WOODROW WILSON PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY ARCHIVES

election, defeating William Howard Taft, former President Theodore Roosevelt, and Socialist candidate Eugene V. Debs. He introduced a comprehensive New Freedom domestic agenda at the outset of his presidency, focusing on natural resources, bank reform, tariff reduction and access to raw materials.

Foreign affairs, however, would largely dominate his presidency as the U.S. intervened in Latin America and World War I broke out in 1914. The

U.S. entered the war in 1917 after the sinking of the Lusitania, a series of attacks on American ships, and the interception of the Zimmerman Telegram in which Germany tried to convince Mexico to go to war with the U.S.

After World War I, Wilson sought to establish the League of Nations to prevent a world war from breaking out again. In establishing the organization, nations signed a covenant to respect freedom of religion, treat racial minorities fairly and peacefully settle disputes.

At home, flu and an economic recession were compounded by workers strikes and a rash of anarchist bombings. Prohibition also passed during this time, as did women's suffrage with the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920. Wilson's health was failing, however, and though his policies were the center of the 1920 election, Wilson didn't run again.

POST-PRESIDENCY

Wilson and his wife stayed in Washington, D.C., where he followed politics and opened a law office with former Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby. He died in 1924 and was interred in the Washington National Cathedral.

GROVER CLEVELAND

22nd and 24th President, Only President to Serve Non-Consecutive Terms

Stephen Grover Cleveland was a New Jersey native who was raised in New York. He won the popular vote in three presidential elections, 1884, 1888 and 1892, and served from 1885-1889 and again from 1893-1897.

FIRST PRESIDENCY

Cleveland was previously mayor of Buffalo, New York, and the governor of New York before running for president. When he took office, he filled and reformed federal jobs, declining to use the spoils system and choosing candidates by merit. Domestically, he also created the Interstate Commerce Commission and advocated for the gold standard.

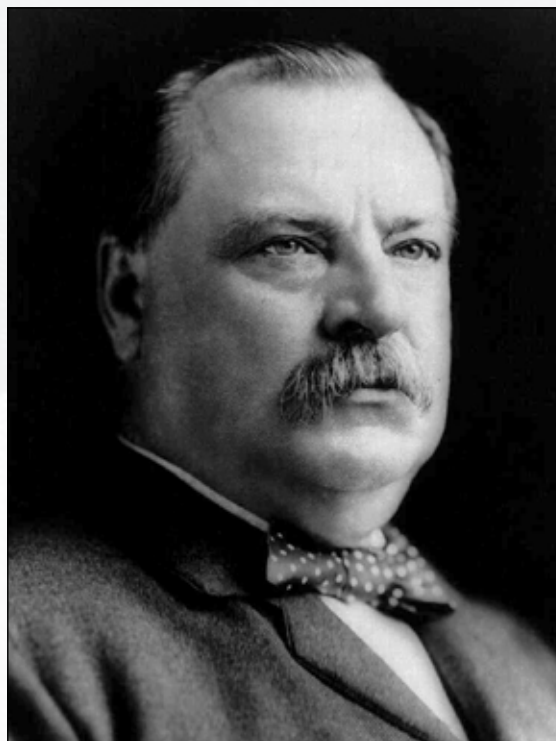
Cleveland also modernized the U.S. Navy, fought for lower protective tariffs, opposed expansion and imperialism, and thought immigrants and Native Americans should assimilate rather than keep their cultural identities.

While in his first term, Cleveland married Frances Folsom, a student at Wells College. They married in the Blue Room of the White House. At age 21, she was the youngest first lady in history. The Clevelands had five children: Ruth, Esther, Marion, Richard and Frances.

Cleveland was succeeded by William McKinley.

FOUR YEARS A CITIZEN

The Clevelands left the White House for New York City where he took a job at the law firm of Bangs, Stetson,



PUBLIC DOMAIN

Tracy, and MacVeigh. In 1891, Cleveland criticized President McKinley over the aggressively protectionist McKinley Tariff and an increase in money backed by silver.

SECOND TERM

Cleveland was elected again in 1892 and took office just before the Panic of 1893 caused a depression. He fought to reverse the McKinley Tariff and fought labor strikes and protest fueled

by the 1893 recession, including the Pullman Strike in 1894. Abroad, Cleveland supported the Monroe Doctrine of American influence. He also continued his previous term's modernization of the U.S. military, constructing coastal fortifications, adopting a bolt-action repeating rifle for the Army, and ordering give new battleships and 16 torpedo boats.

In 1893, amid the panic and resulting unrest, Cleveland found a tumor and ulcer on the roof of his mouth. The subsequent surgery was kept secret so as not to worsen the panic, and parts of his upper left jaw and hard palate were removed. He had another surgery to fix his now impaired speech and improve his appearance. At the time, doctors said the tumor was not malignant, but subsequent testing found it to be verrucous carcinoma, a low-grade skin cancer.

RETIREMENT

Cleveland's adherence to the gold standard lost him the nomination in 1896 and he retired to New Jersey. He was a trustee of Princeton University and spoke on political matters, including women's suffrage. He died in 1908 at the age of 71.