

JAMES ABRAM GARFIELD  
SHORT TERM PRESIDENT – LONG TERM FREEMASON  
BY  
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President James Abram Garfield only sat in the oval office of the White House for 200 days. He suffered assassinated and died on September 19, 1881. During his short term in the Presidency, he accomplished more than many of our presidents who were fortunate enough to serve out their full term.

Born on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of November in the year 1831, James Abram Garfield was the last of our American Presidents to be born in a log cabin. He began his life in Moreland Hills, Ohio. His early life was on a farm, raised by his mother. His father had died early in his life. Garfield was married to Lucretia Rudolph, a student of Garfield's at the Eclectic Institute, where he was an instructor in 1858. The Garfield family had seven children,

James Garfield earned his bachelor's degree from Williams College located at Williamstown, Massachusetts in the year 1856. James Garfield also attended Western Reserve University Eclectic Institute (also known as Hiram College). He went on to a degree in law which was earned in 1860. At the time of graduation from law school James Garfield was serving as an Ohio State Senator, a position he held from 1859 to 1861. During his career Garfield was also a lay preacher and an Elder in the church, Disciples of Christ.

Garfield entered military service and rose through the ranks. Garfield was opposed to the idea of secession of the Southern states. He served in the military from 1861 to 1863, during the Civil War he was commissioned as a lieutenant colonel, and attained the rank of Major General in the Union Army. He had a distinguished military career. During the War Between the States Garfield fought in several major battles, including, the battles of Middle Creek, Shiloh, Corinth, and Chickamauga. Garfield's commands included the 42<sup>nd</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry and the 20<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 6<sup>th</sup> Division, Army of Ohio

Garfield's first entry into national politics came when he was elected as Representative of the 19<sup>th</sup> District of Ohio. During his early political career, Garfield was an enthusiastic supporter of the Republican Party. During his term as representative, he became closely associated with then Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon P. Chase. The record indicates that the Republican Party was made up of several different political factions. Garfield became a member of the Radical Republican Party. History tells us that Garfield could not abide by the moderates in the Republican Party but even disliked a moderate such as Abraham Lincoln.

Garfield was an enemy of slavery and favored abolition. He believed that the leaders of the Confederacy had violated their constitutional rights and wanted to confiscate southern plantations to punish the leaders of the rebellion. After Lincoln's assassination Garfield tried to get the moderate and conservative wings of the Republican Party together during the presidency of Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson. However, this attempt at reconciliation failed and Garfield joined in the effort to impeach President Johnson.

Garfield served nine terms in the United States Congress. During this distinguished Congressional career he was known as a great orator. He was on the Military Affairs Committee, the Appropriations Committee, and the Ways and Means Committee. While originally a Radical Republican, Garfield softened his political views

and took a more moderate approach to governance. In the start of his Congressional career Garfield was in favor of the radical view of reconstruction. He later took the more moderate view of civil rights enforcement.

In 1880, Garfield was elected to the U. S. Senate by the Ohio legislature. However, there was a challenging route to the Republican nomination at the Republican convention. There were three contestants for the Republican nomination for President, Ulysses S. Grant, James G. Blaine, and John Sherman. Neither of these potential candidates was able to gain sufficient support to gain the nomination.

James Abram Garfield was presented as a compromise candidate and became the party's selection to run for President of the United States in the election of 1880. The candidate of the Democratic Party was Winfield Hancock. Garfield waged a successful campaign and was elected to the United States Presidency in the year 1880 as the nation's 20<sup>th</sup> president. He thus became the only member of the United States House or Representatives to be elected directly to the Presidency. Garfield's choice for Vice President was Chester A. Arthur.

Garfield only served in the Presidency for 200 days, when he was the target of an assassination. During that short time in office, Garfield had a contentious appointment for head of the U. S. Post Office. The Post Office was reformed at this time. He was also known for trend setting appointments to various government positions.

He was in favor of an educated electorate. He increased technical knowledge in agriculture. Garfield also proposed reform of the Civil Service.

Garfield was a staunch advocate for the civil rights of African Americans. Notable in his accomplishments was his appointments and the placing of African Americans in government positions.

James Abram Garfield was initiated as an Entered Apprentice on November 19, 1861 in Magnolia Lodge #20, Columbus, Ohio. Because of this involvement in the Civil War, Garfield was unable to immediately complete his Blue Lodge degrees. Garfield was raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason on November 22, 1864 in Columbus Lodge #30, Columbus, Ohio. On October 10, 1866 he affiliated with Garrettsville Lodge #246, Garrettsville, Ohio. He served as Chaplain of Garrettsville Lodge in 1868-1869. Brother Garfield then became a charter member of Pentalpha Lodge #43 of Washington, D.C. on May 4, 1869, where he was one of the Petitioners for the Lodge charter. President Garfield was exalted in Columbus Royal Arch Chapter in 1866 and was made a Knight Templar in the same year. The record also indicates that James A. Garfield received the 14<sup>th</sup> Degree in the Scottish Rite in 1872.

It was on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July, 1881 that Garfield was shot by Charles J. Guiteau. He went to meet the Supreme Architect of the Universe when he died on September 19, 1881. Thus ended the life on earth for a just and upright Mason.