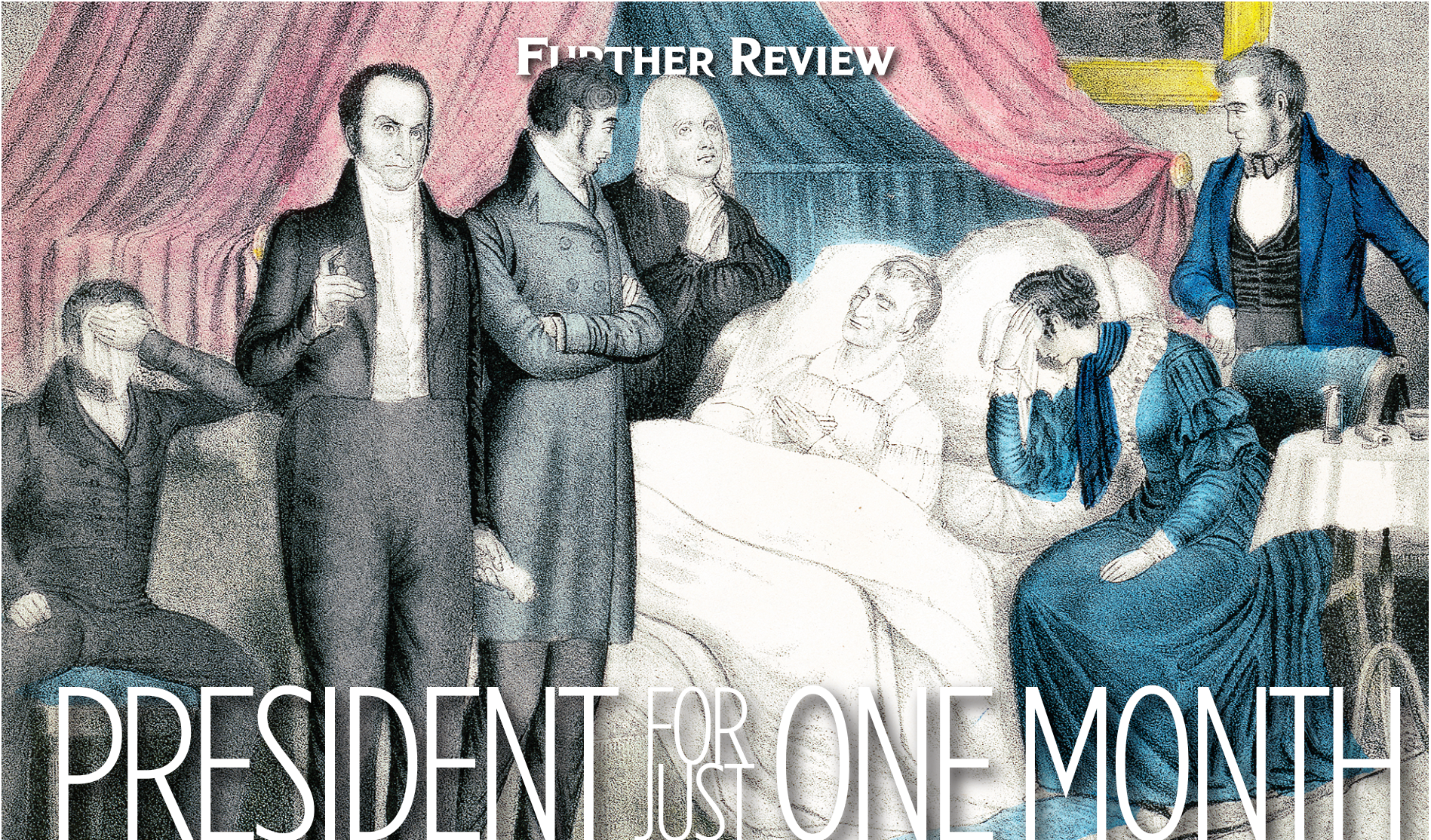


FURTHER REVIEW



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

By Charles Apple | THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

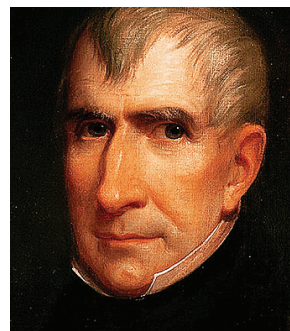
On April 4, 1841 — 185 years ago — President William Henry Harrison died of what was diagnosed at the time as pneumonia.

The nation was shocked: This was the first time an American president had died in office.

What was even worse, it happened only 31 days after Harrison had been sworn in.

DEFEATED A SITTING PRESIDENT

William Henry Harrison had served as a major general in the Northwest Indian War and the War of 1812. He then as a congressman for the Northwest Territory and governor of the Indiana Territory.



THE WHITE HOUSE

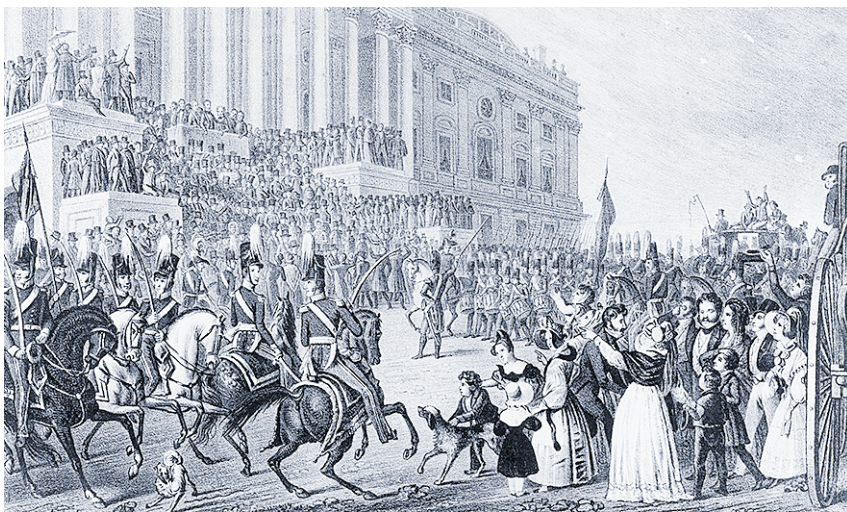
In 1836, Harrison ran for office as president and was defeated by Martin Van Buren. But then the financial Panic of 1837 eroded Van Buren's popularity, Harrison ran again

in 1840 and defeated the sitting president.

At age 68, Harrison was the oldest man elected to that office. And Van Buren complained Harrison "does not seem to realize the vast importance of his elevation ... he is tickled with the presidency as a young woman is with a new bonnet."

Andrew Jackson referred to him as "the present imbecile chief."

AN EXHAUSTING INAUGURATION CELEBRATION



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

By all accounts, Harrison wore himself out at his inauguration. Even with his friend Daniel Webster helping out by trimming the length his address, Harrison set a record for longest inaugural speech at 8,445 words.

He spoke for two hours in wet, freezing weather. Wanting to appear vigorous, Harrison elected to wear neither a hat nor a heavy overcoat.

And then there was an inaugural parade and three inaugural balls. Totally exhausted, Harrison finally retired upstairs to his bedroom. His wife, who was quite ill herself, hadn't yet made the trip to join him in Washington.

Harrison grew ill a few weeks later,

suffering respiratory symptoms and pain in his abdomen. He was treated with opium, castor oil, wine, brandy and Virginia snakeweed — none of which helped. Nor did the inevitable bloodletting with leeches that followed.

On April 3, Harrison developed diarrhea and grew delirious. At one point, he mistook his doctor for Vice President John Tyler and said what would be his last words: "Sir, I wish you to understand the true principles of the government. I wish them carried out. I ask nothing more."

Harrison died shortly after midnight on April 4, 1841 — nine days after falling ill and 31 days after he had been sworn into office.

BUT WHAT, EXACTLY, KILLED HIM?

It was assumed Harrison's decision to spend so much time outdoors without appropriate cover had led to his illness and death. But historians aren't so sure. In those days, the sewage of Washington, D.C., was dumped into a marsh along the shore of the Potomac River. Seven blocks downstream of this was the intake for the White House water supply.

In 2014, researchers speculated that Harrison's severe gastroenteritis was more likely caused by bacteria in his drinking water. His age and existing health issues just made his illness worse.

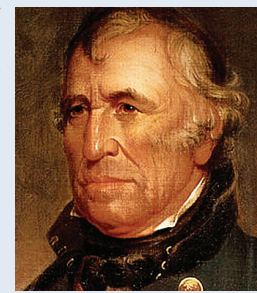
A funeral procession and ceremony was hastily arranged — the difficulty being that so many government officials were out of town. After a 30-day mourning period, Harrison's coffin was placed in a vault in the Congressional Cemetery. That summer, it would be hauled back out and shipped via train and river barge to his home in North Bend, Ohio.

Tyler was sworn in as president, the first vice president to take the Oval Office. Political opponents would call him "His Accidency." That June, Tyler would sign a bill granting a \$25,000 pension to Harrison's widow.

SEVEN OTHER PRESIDENTS WHO DIED IN OFFICE

ZACHARY TAYLOR

JULY 9, 1850



THE WHITE HOUSE

What he did before: Army captain in the War of 1812, colonel in the Black Hawk War, major general in the Mexican-American War.

Took office: March 4, 1849

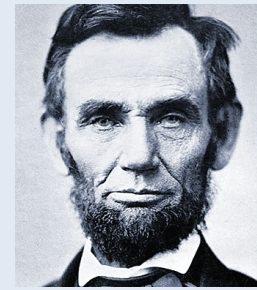
Served: 492 days

Died: Of a severe case of gastroenteritis

Vice president: Millard Fillmore

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

APRIL 15, 1865



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

What he did before: Lawyer, four-term Illinois state representative, one-term congressman from Illinois.

Took office: March 4, 1860

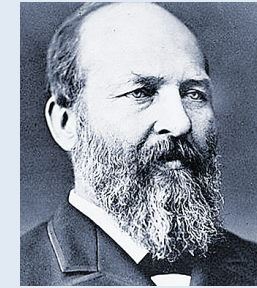
Served: 1,503 days

Died: Assassinated while watching a stage production at Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C.

Vice president: Andrew Johnson

JAMES GARFIELD

SEPT. 19, 1881



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

What he did before: Lawyer, Ohio state senate, general in the Civil War, four-term congressman from Ohio.

Took office: March 4, 1881

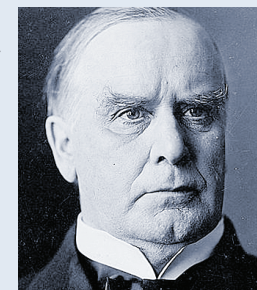
Served: 199 days

Died: Two months after being shot by a disappointed office seeker at a Washington train station.

Vice president: Chester A. Arthur

WILLIAM MCKINLEY

SEPT. 14, 1901



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

What he did before: Civil War soldier, lawyer, seven-term congressman from Ohio, governor of Ohio.

Took office: March 4, 1897

Served: 1,654 days

Died: After being shot while visiting the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York.

Vice president: Theodore Roosevelt

WARREN G. HARDING

AUG. 2, 1923



THE WHITE HOUSE

What he did before: Newspaper publisher, Ohio state senator, lieutenant governor of Ohio, U.S. senator from Ohio.

Took office: March 4, 1921

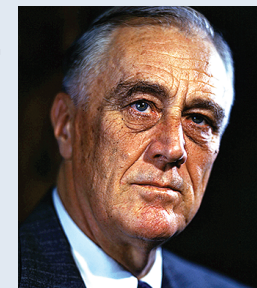
Served: 881 days

Died: Of a heart attack in San Francisco while on a "Voyage of Understanding" tour of the West.

Vice president: Calvin Coolidge

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

APRIL 12, 1945



FDR PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY

What he did before: Lawyer, New York state senator, assistant secretary to the Navy, governor of New York.

Took office: March 4, 1933

Served: 4,422 days

Died: Of a cerebral hemorrhage while visiting Warm Springs, Georgia.

Vice president: Harry Truman

JOHN F. KENNEDY

NOV. 22, 1963



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

What he did before: PT boat skipper in World War II, three-term congressman, senator from Massachusetts.

Took office: Jan. 20, 1961

Served: 1,036 days

Died: Assassinated during a motorcade in Dallas.

Vice president: Lyndon B. Johnson