

William Henry Harrison was born February 9, 1773 in Charles City County, Virginia, the youngest of Benjamin Harrison V and Elizabeth Bassett's seven children. He was the last president born as a British subject before American Independence. His father operated a plantation and was a delegate to the Continental Congress and signatory to the Declaration of Independence.

In 1787, at the age of 14, Harrison entered the Presbyterian Hampden-Sydney College, attending the school until 1791 and then transferred to the University of Pennsylvania where he studied medicine. As Harrison explained to his biographer, he did not enjoy the subject. Shortly after he had arrived at the university, his father died, leaving him without funds for further schooling.



Harrison's 1840 Campaign

Governor Henry Lee of Virginia, a friend of Harrison's father, learned of Harrison's impoverished situation after his father's death and persuaded him to join the army. Within 24 hours of meeting Lee, Harrison was commis-

sioned as an ensign in the U.S. Army, 11th U.S. Regiment of Infantry, assigned to the Cincinnati post in the Northwest Territory

Harrison was promoted to lieutenant in the summer of 1792 because of his strict attention to discipline and the following year was promoted to serve as aide-de-camp to General "Mad Anthony" Wayne, commander of the army. It was from Wayne that Harrison learned how to successfully command an army on the American frontier. Harrison participated in the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794, which brought the Northwest Indian Wars to a close. After the war, Lieutenant Harrison was one of the signatories of the Treaty of Greenville in 1795.

Following the war Harrison met Anna Symmes, of North Bend, Ohio, the daughter of Judge John Cleves Symmes, a prominent figure in politics. When the judge refused to permit his daughter to marry him, William and Anna eloped and married on November 25, 1795. Afterward, concerned about Harrison's ability to provide for Anna, Symmes sold the young couple 160 acres of land in North Bend. Together they had 10 children: six sons and four daughters. Nine lived into adulthood and one died in infancy.

After his resignation from the army in 1797, he became Secretary of the Northwest Territory and in 1799 was elected to represent the territory in congress. In 1801 President John Adams nominated him to become governor of

the Indiana Territory and he took up residence in the town of Vincennes.



Harrison's Home in Vincennes, IN

During the War of 1812, he was given command of the Army of the Northwest and he chose the high ground just upriver from what is now Perrysburg to build a fort which he named in honor of Ohio Governor Return Jonathan Meigs.

Fort Meigs had no sooner been completed when the British and their Indian allies began an attack on May 1, 1813 which was repulsed by Harrison's army. On June 21 a second siege commenced, ceasing after one week when the enemy became discouraged at their lack of success and left the battlegrounds.

Following Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry's September 1813 victory over the British fleet in the Battle of Lake Erie, Harrison moved to the attack. Ferried to Detroit by Perry's victorious squadron, Harrison set off in pursuit of British and Native American forces under Major General Henry Proctor and Tecumseh. Catching them

on October 5 near present-day Chatham, Ontario at the Battle of the Thames. Here, Harrison won a key victory which saw Tecumseh killed and the war on the Lake Erie frontier effectively ended. Though a skilled, popular commander, Harrison resigned in the summer of 1814 after disagreements with Secretary of War John Armstrong.

Harrison then returned to his farm in North Bend, semi-retired, until he was nominated for the presidency in 1836. Defeated, he retired again to his farm.

Originally gaining national fame for leading the army against American Indians at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811, he earned the nickname "Old Tippecanoe". In the presidential elec-



Harrison's Tomb in North Bend, OH

tion of 1840, the Whigs capitalized on Harrison's fame as a military hero and nominated him to run against incumbent Democrat Martin Van Buren.

Speaking at a Fort Meigs rally during his presidential campaign of 1840, Harrison offered his opinion to war veterans and supporters on the candidate

selection process, stating *"It has ever appeared to me, that the office of President of the United States should not be sought after by any individual; but that the people should spontaneously, and with their own free will, accord the distinguished honor to the man whom they believed would best perform its important duties."*

Shortly after his lengthy (two hours) inaugural address, Harrison developed pneumonia. He died on April 4, 1841, and his body was returned to North Bend for burial. A limestone obelisk with marble entranceway rises 60 feet above the tomb overlooking the scenic Ohio River valley.

Perrysburg annually celebrates Harrison Rally Day to commemorate his historic 1840 visit, when more than 40,000 people attended his rally. This event is the largest political rally ever held to this day in a presidential election campaign in the United States.

Harrison Rally Day(s) began in September 1989 as a 3-day festival, but is now limited to a single day. A grand parade, a community arts and crafts exposition and musical entertainment are the main events of the day.

Things You Should Know About Perrysburg, Ohio

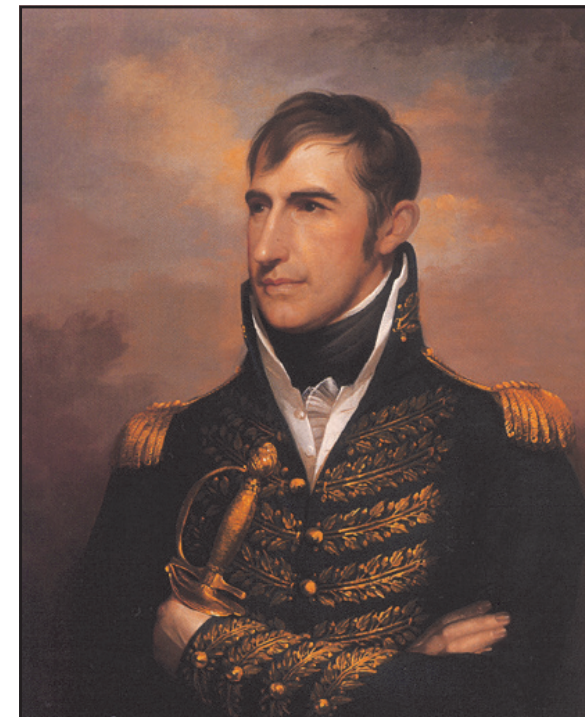
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The William Henry Harrison Connection



General William Henry Harrison

Things You Should Know About Perrysburg, Ohio

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