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SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR

CIVIL WAR PRESIDENTS Feb 2010

Generally when we think of Civil War presidents we think only of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis. But, the Civil War helped propel several other men into the White House. Seven Civil War veterans became president of the United States; six of them were army generals.

Abraham Lincoln's tragic death allowed his vice president Andrew Johnson to become the 17th President of the United States. Johnson was a Democrat serving in the United States Senate from Tennessee when the war started. Tennessee left the Union and joined the Confederate States of America, but Johnson remained loyal and stayed in Washington. When Tennessee was conquered in 1862 Lincoln appointed Johnson military governor of his home state with the rank of brigadier general. In 1864 he was nominated to run as vice president with Lincoln on the National Union Party ticket.

The 18th President of the United States was Union Army hero Ulysses Simpson Grant. Grant who graduated from West Point had served in the Mexican War, but when the Civil War started he was a civilian living in Illinois. Governor Yates commissioned him as colonel of the 21st Illinois Infantry Regiment. Eight months later he was a major general of volunteers and following his victory at Vicksburg on July 4, 1863 he was commissioned a major general in the regular Army. On March 9, 1864 he was given the rank of lieutenant general and at the end of the Civil War on July 25, 1866, Congress gave him the rank of General of the Army; a title given only to George Washington before the Civil War. General Grant, a man who had never held an elective office before the Civil War, was elected President of the United States twice.

General Grant was followed in office by Rutherford B. Hayes who was elected the 19th President of the United States. Hayes was appointed a major in the 23rd Ohio Infantry in June, 1861. He was severely wounded in the left arm at the Battle of South Mountain on September 14, 1862 causing him to miss the Battle of Antietam. In October, 1862 he was promoted to colonel and named commander of the 23rd O.V. I. In July, 1863 he engaged Morgan's Raiders in the Battle of Buffington Island along the Ohio River. In October, 1864 he wrenched his ankle as his horse was shot out from under him during the Battle of Cedar Creek. He was promoted to brigadier general of volunteers and in March, 1865 was brevetted major general of volunteers. He took part in over 50 engagements. He was wounded several times, and had his horse shot out from under him four times.

General Hayes was followed by James A. Garfield, who was elected the 20th President of the United States in November, 1880. In August, 1861 Garfield was commissioned a lieutenant colonel in the 42nd Ohio Volunteer Infantry. In November of that year he was promoted to colonel. As Commander of the 18th Brigade he defeated Confederates at the Battle of Middle Creek in eastern Kentucky in January, 1862 and was promoted to brigadier general. At the Battle of Shiloh he contracted camp fever and went home to Hiram, Ohio for two months to convalesce. He served as chief of staff for Major General William S. Rosecrans, Commander of the Army of the Cumberland. At the Battle of Chickamauga, under heavy enemy fire, he conveyed vital information from flank to flank. His horse was wounded. He was promoted to major general. He resigned from the army in December, 1863 to accept a seat in the United States House of Representatives. He was elected in September, 1862. He took office as President of the United States on March 4, 1881. He was shot by an assassin four months later on July 2, 1881, and died from his wounds on September 19, 1881.

Garfield's vice president, Chester A. Arthur finished his term becoming the 21st President of the United States. In 1857 before the Civil War started he was appointed judge advocate of the Second Brigade, New York State Militia. In 1860 he was appointed engineer-in-chief on the staff of Governor Morgan with

the rank of brigadier general, New York State Militia. In July 1862 he was named quartermaster general with the rank of brigadier general. Arthur finished Garfield's presidential term but was unable to get the Republican Party to nominate him in 1884.

Grover Cleveland who paid a substitute to take his place in the Civil War was elected in 1884 as the 22nd President, but he was defeated in 1888 by Civil War General Benjamin Harrison. The 23rd President of the United States was born in North Bend, Ohio and graduated from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, but lived in Indianapolis when the Civil War started and was commissioned a 2nd lieutenant of Indiana Volunteers in July, 1862. He formed Company A, of the 70th Regiment, Indiana Volunteer Infantry, and was made captain. At the organization of the regiment he was commissioned colonel and went with the regiment to Kentucky and served until June, 1865. The unit distinguished themselves in the Atlanta campaign and at Nashville. By the end of the war Harrison had been appointed Brigadier General.

The last Civil War veteran to serve as President of the United States was Major William McKinley who was elected 25th President of the United States in 1896 and took office March 4, 1897. On June 11, 1861 he enlisted as a private in the 23rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment. This unit was led by Rutherford B. Hayes who served as our 19th President. In April, 1862 he was promoted to commissary sergeant. His action in keeping hot coffee and food at the front during the Battle of Antietam resulted in his being commissioned a second lieutenant. A monument in his honor has also been erected on the Antietam battlefield. In Feb., 1863 he was promoted to first lieutenant. In July, 1863 he was promoted to captain during the campaign in southern Ohio to capture confederate General John Morgan. March 13, 1865 he was brevetted major of volunteers for gallant and meritorious services at the battles of Opequan, Fisher's Hill and Cedar Creek. He was re-elected President in 1900 starting his second term on March 4, 1901 but was shot by an assassin on September 6, 1901 and died from his wounds a few days later on September 14, 1901

Holidays and other special days http://suvcw.org/ftp/PI_handbook.pdf

National, Federal and Special holidays – Days the Flag should be Flown

February 1 - National Freedom Day First observed on February 1, 1949

The purpose of this holiday is to promote good feelings, harmony, and equal opportunity among all citizens and to remember that the United States is a nation dedicated to the ideal of freedom. Major Richard Robert Wright Sr., a former slave, fought to have a day when freedom for all Americans is celebrated. When Wright got his freedom, he went on to become a successful businessman and community leader in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Major Wright chose February 1 as National Freedom Day because it was the day in 1865 that President Lincoln signed the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. This amendment, an important change to our written law, outlawed slavery in the United States. Wright gathered national and local leaders together to write a bill declaring February 1 "National Freedom Day" and President Harry Truman signed the bill on June 30, 1948 making it official.

February 12 – Union Defender’s Day or Abraham Lincoln’s Birthday First observed 1866

Abraham Lincoln, perhaps our greatest President, gives us insight into the qualities desired in leadership. Clearly Abraham Lincoln is considered one of the greatest U.S. Presidents of all time. From his humble log cabin beginnings to his martyrdom, his intellect, determination, humility, wit, and savvy is recognized. His determination to keep the nation together during the Civil War, his prowess in stopping the bloodshed, and most importantly his Emancipation Proclamation are hallmarks of his shortened presidency.

His birthday was first recognized in 1866, less than a year after his death. At a ceremony in the Capital building, President Andrew Johnson, his cabinet, and many other dignitaries were present. It wasn't until 1892, however, that it was officially recognized and that was in the state of Illinois only. Other states soon followed suit, but it wasn't until Lincoln's one-hundredth birthday that Congress officially sanctioned the holiday.

The Third Monday in February – President's Day

The original version of the holiday was in commemoration of George Washington's birthday in 1796 (the last full year of his presidency). Washington, according to the calendar that has been used since at least the mid-18th century, was born on February 22, 1732. According to the old style calendar in use back then, however, he was born on February 11. At least in 1796, many Americans celebrated his birthday on the 22nd while others marked the occasion on the 11th instead.

By the early 19th century, Washington's Birthday had taken firm root in the American experience as a bona fide national holiday. Its traditions included Birth night Balls in various regions, speeches and receptions given by prominent public figures, and a lot of revelry in taverns throughout the land. Then along came Abraham Lincoln, another revered president and fellow February baby (born on the 12th of the month).

The first formal observance of his birthday took place in 1865, the year after his assassination, when both houses of Congress gathered for a memorial address. While Lincoln's Birthday did not become a federal holiday like George Washington's, it did become a legal holiday in several states.

In 1968, legislation (HR 15951) was enacted that affected several federal holidays. One of these was Washington's Birthday, the observation of which was shifted to the third Monday in February each year whether or not it fell on the 22nd. This act, which took effect in 1971, was designed to simplify the yearly calendar of holidays and give federal employees some standard three-day weekends in the process.

Apparently, while the holiday in February is still officially known as Washington's Birthday (at least according to the Office of Personnel Management), it has become popularly (and, perhaps in some cases at the state level, legally) known as "President's Day." This has made the third Monday in February a day for honoring Washington and Lincoln, as well as all the other men who have served as president.

George Washington's Birthday – February 22 First observed on February 11, 1782

While there are a number of lingering questions about Washington, he was known as a man of integrity, possessing great leadership skills, and a true patriot. His role as commander of the Continental Army is legendary. He was later the presiding officer at the Continental convention of 1787 and was unanimously selected to inaugurate a new county's democracy as its first President. He also established the Constitution of the United States as a true guiding light for the new nation.

As early as 1775, his birthday was celebrated by some. Initial birthday celebrations were on February 11 because the Gregorian calendar wasn't adopted by the colonies in 1732, the year of his birth. It wasn't until 1796 that February 22 was officially adopted as the celebratory day.