



Presidents and Politics in Ohio

Learn about Ohio's rich political history, particularly Ohio presidents, as well as other Ohioans in national and state politics. Also explore the national circumstances that made it possible for eight Ohioans to serve as president.

Ohio's Presidents

Ohio claims eight presidents, which earned the state the nickname "Mother of Presidents." This distinction reflects the political and economic power the state enjoyed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many of the Ohio presidents first came to public attention as military leaders and a large number were trained as lawyers. Four of eight died in office, two of natural causes and two by assassination.

William Henry Harrison (1773-1841): The ninth president of the United States was born at Berkley Plantation, Virginia. He served in the army for many years. He campaigned against the Native Americans with General Anthony Wayne, became secretary of the Northwest Territory in 1798, and served as governor of the Indiana Territory for 12 years. General Harrison fought in the war against Tecumseh and the War of 1812 (where he became known as the hero of Tippecanoe), and was made commander of the Armies of the Northwest. Harrison was the Whig candidate for president in 1840. Once elected, he gave the longest inaugural speech in history up to that time and died one month later on April 4, 1841.

Ulysses S. Grant (1822-1885): The 18th president of the United States was born at Point Pleasant in Clermont County. He attended the United States Military Academy at West Point and fought in the Mexican and Civil Wars. He became general-in-chief of the Union Army in March 1864 and presided over General Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox, Virginia, on April 9, 1865. Grant's presidency was noted for the corruption of his administration, bringing the term "Grantism," meaning political cronyism and corruption, into common use. He was re-elected in 1872 and ran for a third nomination in 1880, which he lost.

Rutherford B. Hayes (1822-1893): The 19th president of the United States was born in Delaware, Ohio. He practiced law in Cincinnati and fought in the Civil War. He was elected to the House of Representatives while serving in the war. Hayes won the governorship of Ohio three times between 1867 and 1876 and became Republican candidate for president in 1876. In a hotly disputed election, Hayes won the presidency by the margin of one electoral vote. As president, Hayes continued to promote the rights of African Americans and the return of local government to the South. Hayes was the first president to have a telephone installed in the White House. His wife Lucy Webb Hayes became known as "Lemonade Lucy" for her refusal to serve alcohol at White House functions. He did not run for a second term and retired to his home, Spiegel Grove, in Fremont, Ohio, in 1881.

James A. Garfield (1831-1881): The 20th president of the United States was born in Orange, Cuyahoga County, Ohio. He was the last president to be born in a log cabin. He taught classics at Hiram College and became president of the college in 1857. Garfield was elected to the Ohio Senate in 1859 and fought during the Civil War. In 1880, he failed to secure the



presidential nomination for his friend, Senator John Sherman of Mansfield, Ohio. The convention, however, decided to nominate Garfield because they were so moved by his speech supporting Sherman. As president, Garfield tried to stop the corruption within his party, but did not have much chance to follow through. He was shot by Charles Guiteau on July 2, 1881 and died two months later on September 6, 1881. Vice-President Chester A. Arthur succeeded Garfield as president.

Benjamin Harrison (1833-1901): The 23rd president of the United States was born at the farm of his grandfather, William Henry Harrison, in North Bend, Ohio. He graduated from Miami University of Ohio and moved to Indianapolis, where he practiced law. He served in the U.S. Senate and won the presidency in 1888. Harrison was most noted for his support of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, which was sponsored by Senator John Sherman of Mansfield, Ohio. He ran unsuccessfully for re-election in 1892. Harrison's running mate was Whitelaw Reid, also a graduate of Miami.

William McKinley (1843-1901): The 25th president of the United States was born in Niles, Ohio. He enlisted in the army at the outbreak of the Civil War and after being mustered out, studied law and opened a law office in Canton, Ohio. McKinley served in the U.S. Congress for 14 years, and became president in 1893, largely due to the influence of Marcus Hanna, boss of the Cleveland political machine. McKinley was most noted for his foreign policy and the conduct of the Spanish-American War in 1898. It was during McKinley's administration that the U.S. acquired its first overseas possessions in the Philippines, Guam and Puerto Rico. He was re-elected in 1900, but was assassinated by anarchist Leon Czolgosz in 1901. Vice-President Theodore Roosevelt succeeded McKinley as president.

William Howard Taft (1857-1930): The 27th president of the United States was born in Cincinnati. He graduated from Yale University and returned to his hometown to practice law. A noted judge, Taft served for many years in federal courts. He was appointed by McKinley to be administrator of the Philippines, and Theodore Roosevelt appointed him secretary of war. In 1908, Taft was elected president. He ran again in 1912, but lost. Taft then served as a professor of law at Yale until President Harding appointed him chief justice of the Supreme Court, a position he held until his death.

Warren G. Harding (1865-1923): The 29th president of the United States was born in Corsica (now Blooming Grove), Ohio. He was a newspaper publisher, Ohio senator, lieutenant governor, governor and U.S. senator, before being elected president in 1920. He promoted a "return to normalcy," keeping the U.S. out of foreign wars and imposing high tariffs and strict immigration policies. His administration, however, was tainted by corruption, and the infamous "Teapot Dome" scandal (in which Harding's secretary of the interior leased a U.S. petroleum reserve to a private oil company) nearly destroyed his presidency. He died in office in August 1923, never knowing how the public would react to the scandals of his administration. Vice-President Calvin Coolidge succeeded Harding as president.



Ohio's Politicians

Ohioans in public office also made important contributions to state and local history.

Frances Payne Bolton (1885-1977): Cleveland native Bolton was elected in 1940 to fill the vacancy in the U. S. House of Representatives caused by the death of her husband Chester, a Republican. She retained her seat in Congress until 1969. Bolton was a strong advocate for health care and education. Her son Oliver Payne Bolton (1917-1972) served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1953-1957 and 1963-1965. These years represent the first and only time a mother and son have been in Congress concurrently.

John Bricker (1893-1986): Born near Mount Sterling, Ohio, Bricker served in World War I as a first lieutenant and a chaplain in the United States army from 1917-1918. He graduated from the Ohio State University law school and began his career in politics in 1939, when he was elected governor of Ohio on the Republican ticket. Although unsuccessful in his candidacy for the vice presidency in 1944, Bricker served as United States senator from 1946-1959. The proposed constitutional amendment that bears his name sought to limit the president's power to conclude executive agreements with foreign nations, and became the rallying point of Republicans and peace groups after the Korean conflict. The Bricker Amendment was rejected in the Senate by a single vote. Bricker was not reelected in the 1958 senatorial election and resumed practice in law.

Harold Burton (1912-1964): Born in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, Burton graduated from Harvard law school in 1912. He was a highly-decorated officer during World War I. Burton moved to Cleveland and was appointed director of law in 1929. After serving as mayor from 1935-1940, Burton won an Ohio Senate seat on the Republican ticket. The Hill-Burton Act of 1946, named for Burton and co-sponsor Lister Hill, allotted five million dollars for a survey of existing hospitals and one hundred million dollars for construction of new hospital facilities. President Harry S. Truman appointed Burton to the United States Supreme Court in 1946. Burton resigned from the court in 1958.

Salmon P. Chase (1808-1868): Born in Cornish, New Hampshire, Chase was educated at Dartmouth College and studied law in Washington D.C. He began practicing law in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1830 and was elected to the Cincinnati city council in 1840. He served as a U.S. senator from 1849-1855 and again from 1860-1861, governor of Ohio from 1855-1860, secretary of the treasury under Abraham Lincoln from 1861-1864, and chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court from 1864 until his death. As chief justice, Chase presided at the impeachment trial of President Andrew Johnson in 1868.

James M. Cox (1870-1957): Born near Dayton, Ohio, Cox was the editor-publisher of *The Dayton Daily News* and *Springfield News* prior to entering politics in 1908, when he was elected to the United States House of Representatives as a Democrat. In 1913, Cox was elected governor. In 1920, he ran for president with Franklin Roosevelt. They were defeated by Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge. Cox returned to his career in journalism and purchased newspapers in Atlanta and Miami.



John Glenn (b. 1921): Born near Cambridge, Ohio, Glenn enrolled in nearby Muskingum College in 1939. He left college early in 1942 to join the Navy to earn his airman's wings; he later transferred to the United States Marines. During World War II, Glenn flew 59 bombing missions and received the Distinguished Flying Cross on six separate occasions. In 1953, Glenn flew missions in the Korean conflict with major league baseball star Ted Williams as his wingman. In 1962, Glenn became the first man to orbit the earth on the *Mercury-Atlas Six*. In 1974, Glenn began his career in politics upon his election to the United States Senate as a Democrat. He played a prominent role in developing policies on nuclear weapons reduction, and supported such treaties as the SALT II (Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty), the Nuclear Non-proliferation Act of 1978, and the Nuclear Proliferation Control Act of 1992. Glenn ran for president in 1984, but withdrew from the race before the election. After being reelected to the United States Senate in 1986 and 1992, he became the first four-term senator from Ohio. On October 29, 1998 Glenn returned space on the space shuttle *Discovery*. He did not run for reelection in 1998.

Charles Henry Grosvenor (1833-1917): Born in Pomfret, Connecticut, Grosvenor moved to Ohio in 1838. He served during the Civil War with the 18th Ohio Volunteer Infantry and rose to the rank of brigadier general. He was a member of the Ohio House of Representatives from 1874-1878, and a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1885-1891 and 1893-1907.

Marcus Alonzo Hanna (1837-1904): Born in New Lisbon (now Lisbon), Ohio, Hanna moved to Cleveland in 1852. He attended Western Reserve College and became involved in a multitude of businesses, including wholesale groceries, iron, coal, Lake Erie shipping, and railroads. Hanna became one of the wealthiest industrialists in the area and boss of the Cleveland political machine responsible for electing President William McKinley. Hanna was chairman of the Republican National Committee in 1896 and served in the U.S. Senate from 1897-1904.

Nicholas Longworth (1869-1931): Cincinnati native Longworth graduated from the University of Cincinnati law school in 1894 and began a career in politics in 1899 as a member of the Ohio House of Representatives representing the Republican Party. He served in the state House of Representatives until 1900, when he successfully ran for the Ohio Senate. Longworth was a U. S. Senator from 1903-1913 and 1915-1931, rising to the position of speaker of the house (Longworth was only the second Ohioan to become speaker). He married Alice Lee Roosevelt, daughter of President Theodore Roosevelt, in 1906 at the White House.

Stanley Matthews (1824-1889): Cincinnati native Matthews graduated from Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, in 1840. He passed the bar in 1842 and returned to his hometown, where he served as assistant prosecuting attorney in 1845, editor of the Cincinnati *Herald* from 1846-1849, clerk of the Ohio House of Representatives from 1848-1850, judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Hamilton County from 1850-1852, member of the Ohio Senate from 1856-1857, and U.S. district attorney for southern Ohio from 1851-1858. During the Civil War, Matthews served with the Ohio Volunteers and rose to the rank of colonel. He then became a judge of the Cincinnati Superior Court from 1863-1864, U.S. senator from 1877-1879, and



was nominated by President James Garfield for the position of associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court in 1881, on which he served until his death.

George Hunt Pendleton (1825-1899): Cincinnati native Pendleton attended Heidelberg University in Germany, studied law, and was admitted to the bar in 1847. He was elected to the Ohio Senate in 1854 and served in the U.S. Congress from 1857-1865. He was an unsuccessful vice-presidential candidate in 1864 running with General George McClellan (they were defeated by Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson), a U.S. senator from 1879 to 1885, and chairman of the Democratic Conference from 1881 until 1885. In 1885, he was appointed by President Grover Cleveland as ambassador to Germany, where he served until his death. His most enduring contribution was the Pendleton Civil Service Act, which was intended to end political corruption among presidential appointees, and laid the foundation for the modern Civil and Foreign Service examinations.

Wilson Shannon (1802-1877): Born in Mount Olivet, Ohio, Shannon was educated at Ohio University. He studied law and began practice in St. Clairsville, Ohio, in 1830. Shannon served as prosecuting attorney for Belmont County from 1833-1835, Ohio prosecuting attorney in 1835, governor of Ohio from 1842-1844, U.S. minister to Mexico from 1844-1845, member of the U.S. Congress from 1853-1855. Most notably, Shannon served as governor of the Kansas Territory from 1855-1856, the "Bleeding Kansas" period.

John Sherman (1823-1900): Born in Lancaster, Ohio, John Sherman was the brother of Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman. As a boy, he worked on the canals and studied law. He was admitted to the bar in 1844 and worked as a lawyer in both Mansfield and Cleveland. He was elected to the U.S. Congress in 1853 and continued to serve until 1861, when he was elected U.S. senator, a position he held for thirty years. Sherman also served as secretary of the treasury under President Rutherford B. Hayes and secretary of state under President William McKinley. A Republican nominee for president in 1880, Sherman lost the nomination to James Garfield, the man who made his nomination speech. He is best known for the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, which was meant to break up the powerful business monopolies and is still an important piece of legislation.

Robert A. Taft (1889-1953): Cincinnati native Taft was the son of former President William Howard Taft and is the grandfather of former Ohio Governor Bob Taft. Taft was known as a conservative politician, and adopted the name "Mr. Republican." He was elected to the United States Senate in 1939 and served until 1953. One of his most notable accomplishments as senator was the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, which banned mass picketing and unfair labor union practices. Taft was also famous for his opposition to President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal Policy. Taft succeeded in being promoted to Senate majority leader in 1953. He stood for presidential nomination three times, in 1940, 1948 and 1952, but never won his party's nomination.

Edward Tiffin (1766-1829): Born in Carlisle, England, Tiffin first settled in Charles Town, Virginia (now West Virginia) before moving to Chillicothe, Ohio, in 1796. He was speaker of the Northwest Territory House of Representatives from 1799-1801, president of the Ohio Constitutional Convention in 1802, first governor of Ohio from 1803-1807, U.S. senator from



1807-1809, and speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives from 1809-1811. He was appointed by President James Madison as the first commissioner of the General Land Office from 1812-1814, and served as surveyor general of the Northwest Territory from 1814 until his death in 1829.

George Voinovich (b. 1936): Cleveland native Voinovich has represented Ohio in the U.S. Senate since 1999. He graduated from Ohio University and the Ohio State University College of Law. A Republican, Voinovich began his political career in the Ohio House of Representatives from 1967-1971. He also served as Cuyahoga County auditor from 1971-1976, Cuyahoga County commissioner from 1977-1978, mayor of Cleveland from 1979-1988, and governor of Ohio from 1990-1998.

Thomas Worthington (1773-1827): Born in Jefferson County, Virginia (now West Virginia), Worthington moved to Ross County, Ohio in 1796. He was a member of the Northwest Territory House of Representatives from 1799-1803, delegate to the Ohio Constitutional Convention in 1803, U.S. senator from 1803-1807 and 1810-1814, member of the Ohio House of Representatives in 1807 and 1821-1822, governor of Ohio from 1814 to 1818, and canal commissioner from 1818 until his death.

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