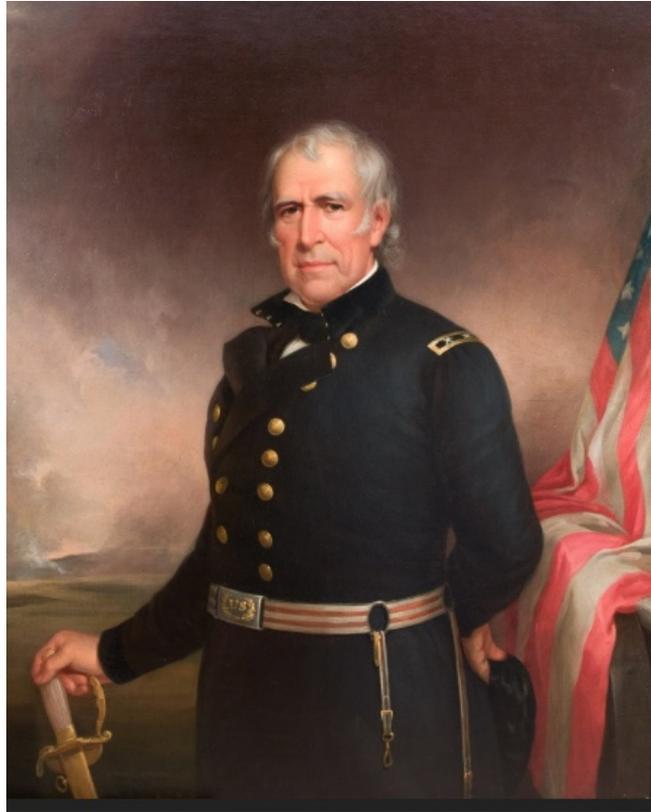


President Zachary Taylor

Compiled by D. A. Sharpe

Zachary Taylor was born November 24, 1784 in Orange County, Virginia. His Christian faith was in the Episcopal Church.

Zachary Taylor is my 32nd cousin, once removed. In addition, he is the father-in-law of [Confederacy President Jefferson Davis](#), the Uncle to Susanah Elizabeth Davis Abney, the wife of James (Jim) Addison Abney of Lufkin, Texas. Jim is a brother-in-



law of [Judge Felix Benedict Dixon](#), my great, great grandfather, the ancestor with whom my qualification was documented for membership in the [Sons of the Republic of Texas](#) in 2005. President Davis' first wife, Sarah Knox Taylor, is my 33rd cousin. Sarah is the third cousin, five times removed to my son-in-law, Steven O. Westmoreland.

President Zachary Taylor is a 15th cousin, four times removed to President Thomas Jefferson, as well as a half 13th cousin, six times removed to President Washington. Taylor was a second cousin to President James Madison. Taylor's great grandfather was also the great grandfather of James Madison.

Destined to become the 12th President of the United States, Zachary Taylor, a strong military man known as "Old Rough and Ready." This was one of the descriptive nicknames that were to be given him later in life.

Zachary studied under tutors, as there were not schools near their Louisville, Kentucky farm. He worked on his father's farm. In 1808, he was appointed first lieutenant in the U.S. Army. In 1810, he was promoted to Captain.

Zachary married [Margaret Smith](#). They gave issue to five daughters and the last child was a son: Ann Taylor, Sarah Knox Taylor, Octavia P. Taylor, Mary Smith Taylor, Mary Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Taylor.

During the [War of 1812](#), Zachary was promoted to major for his defense of Fort Harrison in the Indiana Territory. In 1819, he became a lieutenant colonel. He served in Wisconsin during the Black Hawk War and received the surrender of [Chief Black Hak](#), in 1832.

In Florida, he led the forces that defeated the Seminole Indians at Lake Okeechobee on Christmas Day, 1837. This victory brought him the honorary rank of brigadier general. In 1841, Zachary became commander of the second department of the Western Division of the U.S. Army, headquartered at Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Margaret Taylor



12th First Lady of the United States

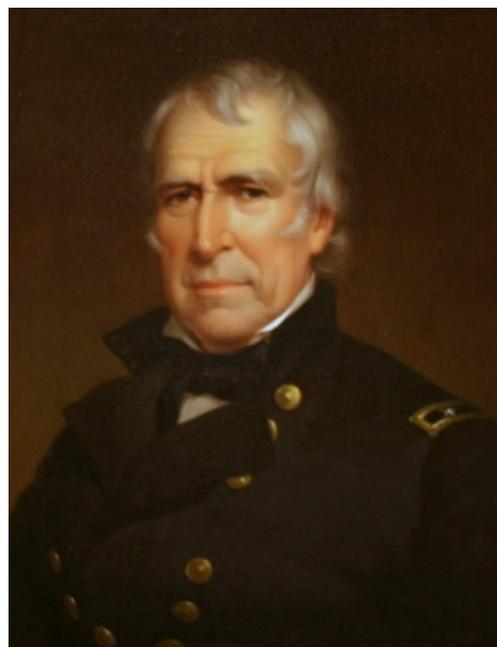
In 1846, he ordered about 4,000 troops to the Rio Grande to meet the threat posed by Mexico making an invasion of the land which had been annexed away from Mexico. Zachary's troops defeated the Mexican forces in battles at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. The United States declared war on Mexico on May 13, 1846. He advanced into Mexico and captured Matamoros and Monterrey.

After these victories, Zachary seemed the obvious choice to lead an invading army into the central valley of Mexico. But [President James K. Polk](#), a Democrat, knew that Zachary favored the rival Whig Party. Because Polk feared the growth of a popular Whig leader, he named [General Winfield Scott](#) to lead that campaign.

On February 22-23, 1847, before Scott's army departed, Taylor's army, then about 5,000 strong, was attacked by [General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna's](#) forces of between 16,000 and 20,000 Mexican soldiers. Zachary's troops won a stunning victory over Santa Anna's troops. The triumph, some historians evaluate, was due more to the skill and vigor of the U.S. Army troops than to his generalship, but the victory made General Zachary Taylor a national hero.

Taylor's favorite warhorse was named "Old Whitey."

He served as President of the United States from March 5, 1849. Constitutionally, he should have assumed the Presidency on March 4. However, since that was a Sunday, he declined to use Sunday for that purpose, choosing instead to attend worship services. Some historians claim that David R. Atchison, president pro tempore of



the Senate, served as acting President on March 4, because the presidency was vacant on that day. Taylor was age 64 when inaugurated as President. This was the only elective office he ever served.

He was informed of his winning the Presidency via a U.S. Postal Service letter. The story is that there was postage due, insufficient postage having be affix by the sender. Taylor objected to receiving any postage-due mail. So, it ended up several days later before the winning notification finally came into his hands!

In those days, the political parties nominated the presidential and vice presidential candidates, sometimes with the presence of the nominated persons. As it happened, Taylor never met face-to-face his Vice Presidential running mate, [Millard Fillmore](#), until the election was over!

In the question of Christian faith of Zachary Taylor, a quote from a semi-weekly tribune sheds light in his view of the Bible:

“It was for the love of the truth of this great book (the Bible) that our fathers abandoned their native shores for the wilderness. Animated by its lofty principles, they toiled and suffered till the desert blossomed as the rose ([Isaiah 35:1](#)) ... The Bible is the best of books, and I wish it were in the hands of everyone. It is indispensable to the safety and permanence of our institutions; a free government cannot exist without religion and morals, and there cannot be morals without religion, nor religion without the Bible. Especially should the Bible be placed in the hands of the young. It is the best school book in the world ... I would that all of our people were brought up under the influence of that Holy Book.”

Source: *“The President and the Bible,”* New York Semi Weekly Tribune, Wednesday, May 9, 1849, Vol IV, No. 100, page 1

Taylor took ill after participating in a July 4th ceremony in 1850, and died a few days later, on July 9, 1850 in Washington, D.C. Taylor celebrated Independence Day at the [Washington Monument](#). He snacked on cherries that are believed to have had bacteria on them. He became sick and died five days later.

He was the second President to die in office. He died after serving only 16 months as President.

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