

JAMES A. GARFIELD

James A. Garfield is most commonly recognized as the twentieth president of the United States and the second president to die from an assassin's bullet. Often overlooked, however, is the fact that Garfield was a friend and admirer of Alexander Campbell, and life-long member of the Stone-Campbell Movement. As a political figure, a preacher (the only preacher to serve as a U.S. president), and a participant in the movement, Garfield is a noteworthy contributor to Stone-Campbell history.

Ohio's Western Reserve served as both a fertile ground for Campbellite ideas and the birthplace of Garfield in 1831. With his mother's influence, Garfield accepted the teachings of the Stone-Campbell Movement and was baptized in 1850. The year after his baptism, Garfield entered the recently formed Western Reserve Eclectic Institute (an academic institution affiliated with the Stone-Campbell Movement and now known as Hiram College), from where he graduated in 1854. Upon completing additional studies at Williams College in Massachusetts, Garfield accepted the presidency of Hiram College in 1857. By 1860, however, Garfield resigned from his college presidency and began his political career as an Ohio State Senator.

The outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 prompted Garfield to pledge his allegiance to the Union and to promote a loyalty resolution within the American Christian Missionary Society. The organization's acceptance of the loyalty resolution essentially disenfranchised southern supporters of the society because of their failure to remain loyal to the Union. In addition, Garfield eagerly accepted the command of Ohio's Forty-Second Infantry, where he engaged in numerous military engagements and ultimately rose to the rank of major general before retiring from the army in 1863 when he was elected to the U.S. Congress.

During his years as a congressman (1863-1880) and his brief stay in the White House, Garfield remained faithful to his Stone-Campbell heritage. Along with his regular attendance at the Vermont Avenue Christian Church in Washington, D.C., Garfield served as a member of the board of directors for Hiram College. Moreover, he played a significant role in organizing and calling together the group that founded the *Christian Standard*.

Garfield's political career reached its pinnacle when he won the presidential election of 1880 and was inaugurated on March 4, 1881. His presidency was cut short, however, when Charles Guiteau, a mentally-unstable office seeker, shot Garfield on July 2. After slightly more than six months as president, Garfield died at the age of forty-nine on September 19, 1881.

Visitors may view Garfield's final resting place at Lake View Cemetery in Cleveland, Ohio. The impressive Garfield Monument, dedicated in 1890, houses a beautiful memorial rotunda above the Garfield family mausoleum. In Mentor, Ohio, nearly twenty miles from his burial site visitors may tour "Lawnfield," the Garfield home. Garfield purchased the home in 1876 and ran his "front porch" campaign for the presidency from this site. After Garfield's assassination, his wife, Lucretia, maintained the home as a memorial to her husband. Most of the objects contained in the house are authentic family possessions.

For additional information see:

- www.nps.gov/jaga
- <http://www.lakeviewcemetery.com/index.asp>
- Allen Peskin – *Garfield: A Biography*
- William C. Ringenberg, "The Religious Thought and Practice of James A. Garfield," in *The Stone-Campbell Movement: An International Religious Tradition*, edited by Michael W. Casey and Douglas A. Foster.

