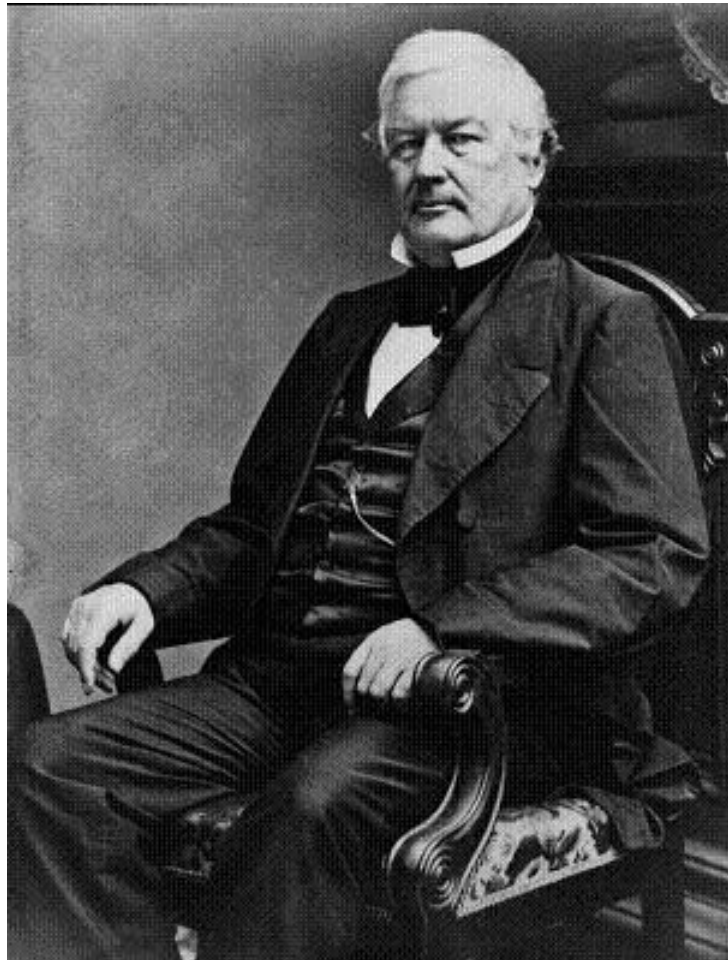


Millard Fillmore

Teacher's Pet
Thirteenth, 1850-1853



Nicknames: "The Accidental President", "The Wool-Carder President", "The American Louis Philippe"

Birth: January 7th, 1800, Cayuga County, New York

Death: March 8th, 1874, Buffalo, New York

Significant Events During Fillmore's Partial Term: Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" ... Number of States remains thirty-one

Quotes: *"When he had carefully examined a question and had satisfied himself that he was right, no power on earth could induce him to swerve from what he believed to be the line of duty."*
-- Alexander H.H. Stuart, Secretary of the Interior

"Providence has at last led the man of hesitations and double opinions where decision and singleness are indispensable." -- William H. Seward, 1850

"It is a national disgrace that our Presidents...should be cast adrift, and perhaps be compelled to keep a corner grocery for subsistence...We elect a man to the presidency, expect him to be honest, to give up a lucrative profession, perhaps, and after we have done with him we let him go into seclusion and perhaps poverty." -- Millard Fillmore

How his term ended: Fillmore was not nominated by his party to run for President in his own right; Winfield Scott, who ultimately lost to Franklin Pierce, was nominated by them.

Other Professions: Apprentice Cloth Maker; Teacher; Lawyer

Worst Mistake: Fillmore approved of the "Compromise of 1850," which included (among some good or neutral things) a strengthening of the Fugitive Slave Law, an abomination which called for the federal government to actively assist in returning slaves who had "stolen themselves." Worse, suspected runaway slaves were not allowed to defend themselves in court and so a person could claim any northern black was their runaway slave, and the "slave" would be more or less doomed. The New York Times wrote about this in 1874: "It must always be regretted that such a man as Millard Fillmore had not a mind comprehensive enough to properly meet a great crisis...It was, moreover, his misfortune to see in slavery a political and not a moral question. Upon this one issue, though, which, it is true, was one of transcendent importance, he was a politician and not a statesman."

Saving Grace: Fillmore bailed newspaperman Horace Greeley out of a Paris jail in 1855, although in 1851 Greeley had written of him, "Fillmore lacks pluck. He wants backbone. He means well, but he is timid, irresolute, uncertain and loves to lean."

Notes: Fillmore was born in a log cabin.

As a young man, Fillmore was apprenticed to a cloth maker out of necessity (his family were poor farmers and needed the income). At the suggestion of his girlfriend (a schoolteacher two years his senior) Fillmore purchased his freedom for \$30, bought a dictionary, and became a schoolteacher himself.

Fillmore had been his fiancé's oldest pupil, when she was twenty and he was nineteen. Seven years later they married.

Fillmore and his wife modernized the White House, replacing the open-hearth fireplace which was used for preparing meals with a newfangled cast-iron cooking stove, installing a bathtub with running water, and adding a library to the Oval room.

Within a span of sixteen months, Fillmore lost the presidency, and both his wife and his daughter died.

In 1856, Fillmore ran as a “Know-Nothing,” a secretive, anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant party.

Although Fillmore supported the Union in the Civil War (which one would certainly expect from a former President, but which was not always the case—see the chapter on tenth President John Tyler), on Lincoln's assassination a mob, remembering Fillmore's role in the Fugitive Slave Act and viewing him as a Copperhead, vandalized the outside of his home in New York State.

Although the Fillmores had two children, a son and a daughter, neither of *them* had children (the daughter, multilingual and a multi-instrumentalist, contracted cholera and died at twenty-two), so Fillmore has no descendants.