



# The Garfield Telegraph

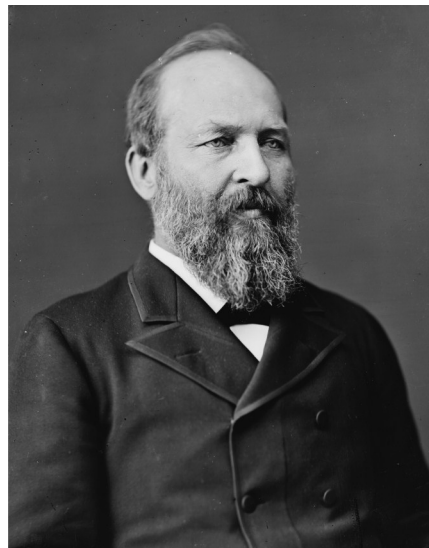
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## “My God! What is This?”

### The Shooting of President Garfield, July 2, 1881

President James A. Garfield was in a fine mood the morning of Saturday, July 2, 1881. In office just four months, he had recently scored a major political victory in his fight to reform the nation’s civil service system. His archrival on this issue, Senator Roscoe Conkling of New York, had resigned from the U.S. Senate in protest, and the New York legislature had declined to reappoint him. In addition, Garfield was due to take a train ride south to New Jersey, where his wife Lucretia, recovering from a nasty bout of malaria, awaited him. He spent the early part of the morning in the White House, playing with his two eldest sons. He planned to go to Elberon, New Jersey to pick up his wife, then head to New England to give a speech at his alma mater, Williams College, in Massachusetts. The Garfields would then spend some time at the Maine home of Secretary of State James G. Blaine and then return to their own farm in Mentor, Ohio for the first time since moving into the White House.

Secretary Blaine accompanied the president to the Baltimore and Potomac train station and walked into

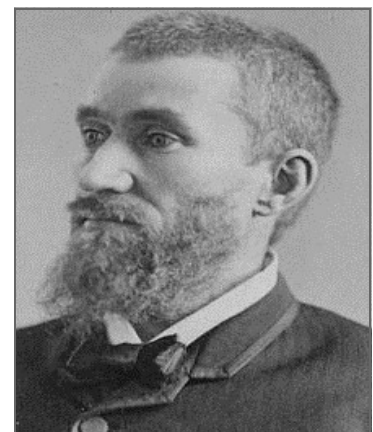


*President James A. Garfield*

the station with Garfield. The two exchanged pleasantries with Patrick Kearney, a Metropolitan Police officer. The two sons Garfield had played with earlier that morning, Harry and Jim, walked behind their father and Secretary Blaine. Other people in the waiting area included Sarah White, the matron for the ladies’ waiting room; Simon Camacho, the Venezuelan charge d’affaires; and a small, disheveled man lurking in the corner. His name was Charles Guiteau.

Charles Julius Guiteau was James

Garfield’s opposite in almost every way. Guiteau was small and slight; Garfield stood over six feet tall and weighed more than 200 pounds. Guiteau’s life had been a series of professional and personal disappointments, while Garfield had attained success in nearly every venture. Guiteau considered himself a loyal Republican and believed that his support had won Garfield the presidency. Guiteau had pestered Secretary Blaine for months for a position as the American

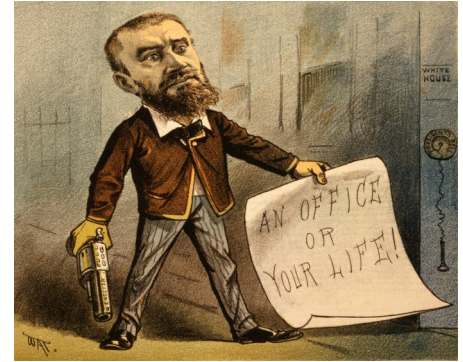


*Charles J. Guiteau*

consul to Paris. Blaine had consistently refused him, gently at first and, later, quite harshly. As Guiteau watched the Garfield

presidency unfold, he became alarmed at Garfield's plans to reform the nation's civil service. The president intended to scrap the patronage system, which allowed those in power to give important, lucrative jobs to their friends and allies regardless of qualifications. Instead, Garfield sought a system based on merit, where only the most qualified candidates would receive government jobs. This would leave unqualified job seekers like Guiteau out in the cold. In Gui-

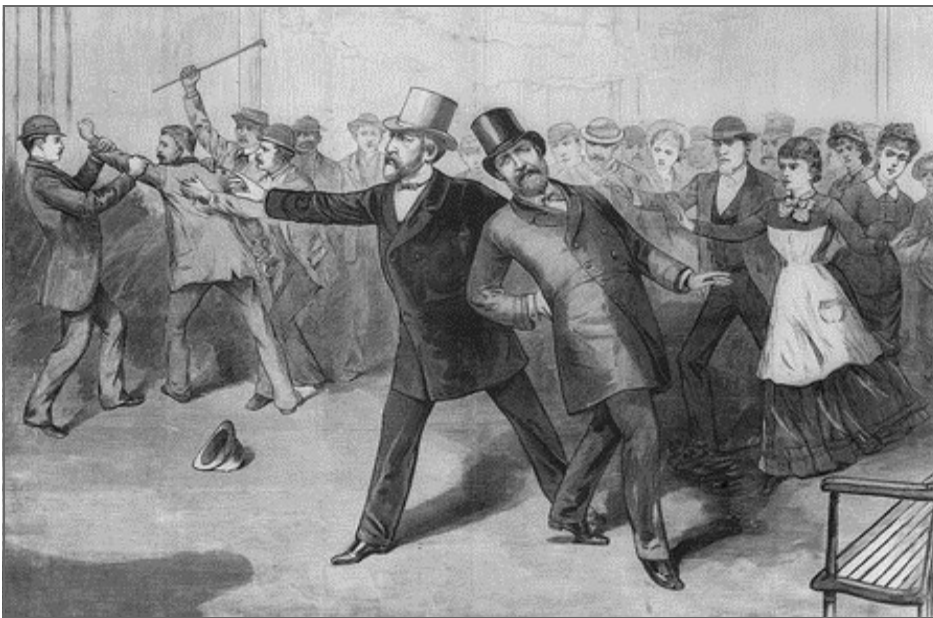
On the morning of July 2, as Garfield stood waiting for his train, Guiteau approached and, from a distance of about six feet, pointed the revolver at the president's back. He pulled the trigger. The first bullet cut through Garfield's right arm, passing through his jacket. Garfield threw up his arms and shouted, "My God! What is this?" The president started to turn toward the sound of the first shot just as Guiteau fired again. The second bullet entered the middle of the right side



the general that "I have just shot the president" and describing himself as a "Stalwart of the Stalwarts." He also asked Sherman to "order out your troops, and take possession of the jail at once." A handwritten note found on Guiteau after his arrest explained that Garfield's death was "a sad necessity" that would "unite the Republican Party and save the Republic."

Chaos reigned as Garfield lay bleeding on the train station floor. Almost immediately, medical personnel began to arrive and probe Garfield's back wound with dirty fingers and instruments. Dr. Willard Bliss, who would direct Garfield's treatment for the next two-and-a-half months, was by the president's side within 15 minutes. About an hour after the shooting, the doctors elected to move Garfield back to the White House. By 12:40 p.m., Lucretia Garfield had been informed of the shooting and was on a train bound for Washington from New Jersey.

For 80 days, the public eagerly sought any news of the president's condition. Led by Willard Bliss and his antiquated techniques, Garfield's doctors eventually succeeded where Guiteau failed: they introduced infection into the president's body, and he died on Sept. 19, 1881.



*The shooting of President Garfield.*

teau's mind, Garfield's brand of Republicanism was dangerous and had to be stopped. Vice President Chester A. Arthur, a New York acolyte of Roscoe Conkling's, was much more to Guiteau's liking. Guiteau eventually decided that removing Garfield from office and making Arthur president would not only get Guiteau the job he wanted, but also save the nation from the wrong kind of Republicanism. He bought an English Bulldog revolver and began stalking the president around Washington, D.C.

of Garfield's back. The president crumpled to the floor as Guiteau attempted to flee. A ticket agent named Robert Parke grabbed him; Officer Patrick Kearney, who had spoken with Garfield just moments before, seized Guiteau from Parke's grip. "I did it and I will go to jail for it," Guiteau said calmly. "I am a Stalwart [Republican], and Arthur will be president." Even before shooting Garfield, Guiteau had made plans. He had sent a letter to Gen. William T. Sherman informing

# UPCOMING EVENTS

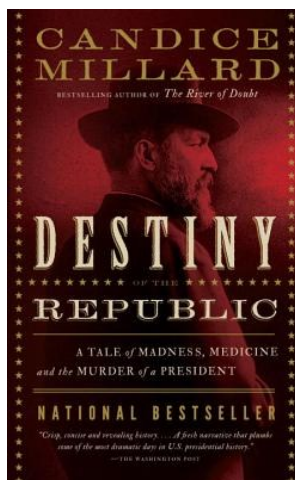
**Naturalization Ceremony, July 6 @  
10 a.m.**

**Civil War Encampment, July 14-15  
@ 11 a.m.**



**Old Village Market, Friday nights,  
July 27, Aug. 3, 10, 17 @ 4 p.m.**

**Candice Millard program and book  
signing, August 8 @ 7 p.m.**



## A Message from the Superintendent

As hard as it is to believe, summer has once again come to James A. Garfield NHS. Like many national parks, summer is our busiest season. We always look forward to this time of year when the park is busy with tour groups, families, and travelers.

During the month of July, we conduct our annual Visitor Use Survey. All national parks are required to do so once per year. Many visitors will be asked to fill out a card that asks a few questions about your opinions of the site. We use your responses to measure our success in communicating to you the national significance of James A. Garfield NHS. The survey also represents YOUR chance to tell us what you think we're doing well and what we might improve. If you're selected to receive a survey, please take a few minutes to fill it out. You can either mail it using the provided envelope or place it into a drop box in our visitor center. Thanks in advance for sharing your thoughts about YOUR national park!

*-Sherda K. Williams*

For more information about James A. Garfield NHS:

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# The Garfield Pietra Dura



*The pietra dura up close (left) and in context within the Memorial Library inside the Garfield home (above).*

This issue's artifact extraordinaire is a pietra dura of President James A. Garfield, circa 1882. It is found atop the bookshelf in the southwestern corner of the home's Memorial Library. This memorial piece is attributed to Enrico Bossi of Florence, Italy. It was sent to Lucretia Garfield the year after her husband's death. The portrait of James A. Garfield is bordered with a floral band and set in a frame of black slate and carved wood.

Pietra dura or *pietre dure* refers to an inlay technique using cut, fitted, highly polished colored stones to create images. After the work was loosely assembled, it was so meticulously glued stone by stone to a backing that the contact between each stone is practically invisible. The stability of a pietra dura is due to grooving the underside of the stones so they are interlocked like a jigsaw puzzle. Different types of marble, precious and semi-precious stones were used in this art form, which first appeared in sixteenth century Rome.