

Zachary Taylor

by Nathan Shepard

- I. Father Richard Taylor
 - A. Fought in the revolutionary war
 - B. Received 8,166 acres of land in Kentucky from government as a bonus for fighting against England
 - C. He was an influential citizen of Kentucky
 - D. November 24, 1784- Zachary Taylor is born- the third of 9 children
- II. Zachary's Childhood
 - A. Richard wanted his son to have a good education- Zachary may have gotten this, but it appears he had little formal education although his family had money and prominence
 - B. Grew up with other soldiers' sons because government gave many soldiers their bonuses of land close to one another
 - C. Lived in Louisville on the edge of the frontier and was attacked by Indians many times
- III. Manhood
 - A. 1808 at age 24 accepted into the army as a lieutenant- helped to that position by a high-ranking second cousin, James Madison
 - 1. First job was recruiting the soldiers that he would command when he got enough troops to command
 - 2. Temporarily assigned to command Fort Bickering with his troops
 - B. 1810- returns to Kentucky and Marries Margaret Smith at age 26, who was a devout Episcopalian, but he never joined a church- had five daughters and a son- his oldest daughter, Sarah, married Jefferson Davis, but died just months after the marriage, and his son fought for the Confederates in the Civil War
 - C. September 4th, 1812- Successfully defends Fort Harrison with only 50 men up on the Wabash river that flows out of the Mississippi River in Ohio from an attack of over 400 Shawnee Indians- so he was promoted to major
 - D. Fought against Great Britain in the war of 1812
 - E. Becomes a farmer on June 15th, 1815, after being demoted from major at age of 30, because he does not like the demotion in peacetime and wanted to stay a major like some others- resigns from the army
 - F. My 17th 1816- reinstated as Major- said farming wasn't even worth talking about- however, he was very involved in land speculation, and made lots of money from it, but he always said he wasn't doing well
 - G. Moves his Family to Louisiana while he is assigned to the Jefferson Barracks in hopes of living there, but two of his daughters die of one of the many diseases there, so he doesn't build a plantation there and moves his family back to Kentucky

- H. He was transferred to Illinois and Wisconsin along the Mississippi River to keep the Indians peaceful- fought in the small Black Hawk war and was promoted to colonel
- I. He is moved to the south-east to pacify the Seminole Indians in Florida- He Defeated them with a victory on Dec. 25th, 1837 for which he got the nickname from his soldiers "Old Rough and Ready"; however, he couldn't get the Indians out of Florida because of disadvantages in fighting skills- However, he was made a brigadier general- eventually asked to be transferred someplace else because he accomplished his mission but didn't meet his personal goal of getting them out- never content- always wanted to make things better
- J. He was then transferred to Louisiana, while there he purchased a 2000 acre plantation on the Mississippi River- he had over 100 slaves; however his position on slavery was that it was necessary where it existed but it shouldn't be expanded
- K. Transferred to Texan frontier in 1845 at age 61 to settle the dispute of the boundary of a newly annexed Texas with Mexico- Occupied all the land up to the Rio Grande, and was ordered to stay there and fight if attacked- Mexico thinks it is an invasion and tries to drive them back- The Mexican War has Begun!
- L. Battle of Buena Vista:
 - 1. May 8th, 1846- defeats Mexicans at Palo Alto with brilliant use of his artillery- promoted to Major general, given two gold medals from congress
 - 2. Took Monterrey using great strategy of diverting from the east, and attack from the West, Seized Saltillo on Nov. 15, 1846, Held the line at the Sierra Madres, Marched to Vera Cruz
 - 3. Santa Anna's spies and guerrillas give him excellent knowledge of American troop movements
 - 4. Santa Anna attacks Taylor's troops on Dec. 10 while Taylor is taking Montemorelos
 - 5. Taylor defeats him and takes Montemorelos and Victoria
 - 6. His favorite commander, Commander Wool, occupies Hacienda de Buena Vista in the defensive position
 - 7. 19,525 Mexicans under Santa Anna leave San Luis Potosi Jan. 27
 - 8. President Polk sees that Taylor is becoming too popular and might keep him from getting another term, so he gave almost all of Taylor's trained troops to Scott to help him attack Mexico City , and leaves him with a few inexperienced volunteers to try to make him lose a battle and lose popularity, but Taylor wins even though greatly outnumbered for even more glory
 - 9. Feb. 5- Taylor takes Agua Nueva
 - 10. Feb. 22- all 5000 American troops retire behind Wool's forces at Buena Vista, Santa Anna demands Surrender
 - 11. Feb. 22, 2:00pm- Mexicans fire first shot

12. Taylor attacks with good position on top of a hill with his men and his guns in the shadow of high ground- constantly shifting his troops for each Mexican attack
13. Taylor watches the battle from the top of a nearby Plateau- boosts moral of soldiers
14. Around noon Some soldiers trapped behind American lines call for a truce, claiming that they are bearers of a message from Santa Anna, so Taylor calls for a Cease Fire and allowed them to return to the enemy lines- many complained that he was too lenient on the enemy
15. Results:
 - a) American:
 - (1) Killed: 272 men
 - (2) Wounded: 387 men
 - (3) Missing: 6 men
 - (a) Taken Prisoner: 0 men
 - (b) Deserted: 6 men
 - (4) Percent of Army Killed, Missing, or Wounded: 16%
 - b) Mexican:
 - (1) Killed: 594 men
 - (2) Wounded: 1,039 men
 - (3) Missing: 1854 men
 - (a) Taken Prisoner: 321 men
 - (b) Deserted: 1,533 men
 - (4) Percent of Army Killed, Missing, or Wounded: 20%
16. Mexicans retreat on the morning of the 23rd, 1847
17. Taylor leaves command to Scott, and he returns to the States- spends time with his family, and looks into Harvard as a school for his son Richard in the future

IV. The Presidency

- A. Taylor has great potential for political power because many war heroes become leaders so he looks into politics
- B. Taylor is nominated by the Whig party (southern slave holder/landowner representatives) June 8th, 1848
- C. Nov. 7th, 1848- Taylor is elected president
 1. Taylor's daughter, Mary Elizabeth, served as the official White house hostess as his wife was in poor health and shunned public appearances- shy
- D. Taylor failed to put many of his supporters into congress, so his ideas were not supported very well in the House or in the Senate
- E. Taylor had trouble with the slavery issue: he wanted slavery where it already was but not anywhere else, and with annexing other land as states: Should he annex certain areas of land? Some wanted them to be slave and others wanted free, he also thought that he should handle foreign problems, but the legislative branch should handle domestic affairs

- F. Taylor had trouble with California and New Mexico, which both wanted to be annexed as free states, but the southern slave holders wanted at least one of the states to be a slave state. Taylor thought that if these states wanted to prohibit slavery, that would be fine- it is not congress's choice, but the southerners argued that the Missouri Compromise of 1820 granted slavery to anyplace below the 36°30' north latitude; regardless, without supporters in Congress, Taylor's ideas about the situation were not given a chance to be argued
1. the southerners talked of seceding from the Union and Taylor said he would personally lead an army against any state that tried to secede
 2. Taylor tries to be a partisan leader, but he realizes that without supporting the Whigs as the party that nominated him, he faces disunion; the north- because they are democrats, and the south because they feel neglected; also both sides are upset about the slavery issue: which states should be slave and which free?
- G. Foreign policy
1. He was against expansionism (the spread of the United States into Latin America), so he signed the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty with Great Britain to guarantee that Latin America would remain neutral, plans for a canal through Nicaragua
 2. He also had a problem with Cuba- many people thought Cuba should be annexed, so there was a group of men that tried to sail to Cuba and take it over, but Taylor didn't reinforce them and when they came back from battle, weary and beat up asking for help, Taylor turned them over to the Cuban Military and they were sentenced for piracy
- H. Thursday, the fourth of July, a sunny, hot, and humid day, Taylor was at the Washington monument listening to Senator Henry S. Foote deliver a speech. Taylor spent all day there until 4:00pm. He was very hungry and ate and drank freely. However all that he ate that day were foods and drinks that he was discouraged to eat by his doctor for fear of Asiatic cholera epidemic which was sweeping the nation spreading into the White House
- I. Dr. Alexander S. Wotherspoon diagnosed Taylor's Dysentery and Diarrhea as cholera morbus, an intestinal ailment, not related to Asiatic cholera- media reported it as a small sickness resulting from something he had eaten- nothing worth worrying about
- J. Taylor goes home, but on the 7th, the media says he's fine, but he was really declining fast in health
- K. Taylor had many fevers, and was so thirsty he ate big chunks of ice- on the eighth, another doctor arrives, but is not worried; however, the president is despondent and predicted that "in two days I shall be a dead man"
- L. On the 9th, Taylor told his doctors, "You have fought a good fight, but you cannot make a stand" the rest of the day he struggled to stay conscious.

- M. The Senate and House adjourn, and meet the Taylors in the White House.
- N. 10:00pm- Taylor calls for his wife and told her not to cry and then said, "I have always done my duty. I am ready to die. My only regret is the friends I leave behind me."
- O. Shortly after 10:00pm, Zachary Taylor lost consciousness and died soon after 10:30pm on July 9th, 1850