

U.S. Presidents William H. Harrison and John Tyler

William H. Harrison and John Tyler are two presidents who made history. Harrison died only 30 days after he took office. The day of his **inauguration**,¹ Harrison got a bad cold that developed into pneumonia. Harrison became the first U.S. president to die in office. Harrison's vice president, John Tyler, stepped up and became president. This was the first time a vice president had become president because of the death of a chief executive.

Americans were greatly disappointed by Harrison's death. They expected great things from their new leader. Harrison wanted to make government run more efficiently. Even in his bad health, he paid surprise visits at government meetings. He wanted to make sure people weren't wasting any time.

John Tyler's **transition**² into the presidency wasn't easy. Tyler was a Southern Democrat during most of his early political career. While running for office with Harrison, he left the Democrats. He became part of the Whig party instead. But when he became president, he disagreed with the Whigs on many issues. The Whigs wanted to create a national bank and new taxes. Tyler didn't think the federal government should have that kind of power. Tyler vetoed, or refused to sign into law, several Whig bills that had been passed by Congress. Angry Whigs stormed the White House. They threw rocks at the windows. They burned a likeness of Tyler in protest. They even tried to **impeach**³ him as president. But the soft-spoken Tyler stood firm in his beliefs.

As president, Tyler had many accomplishments. He signed a bill admitting Florida into the union. He created a bill to give settlers land if they built a cabin on the western frontier. The law got more people to settle in Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa. He also signed a treaty with China. It opened Asia to American traders for the first time.

Tyler was born in Charles City County, Virginia in 1790. His father was governor of Virginia. After attending William and Mary College in Virginia, Tyler became a lawyer and began his political career. At 21, he was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates. Later, he became governor of Virginia and served Congress as a senator and representative before becoming president. John Tyler died on January 18, 1862.

¹ **inauguration** – the ceremony of swearing in a public official

² **transition** – a change from one form, condition, or place to another

³ **impeach** – charge with wrongdoing