

0. PLOT TO KILL PRESIDENT GARFIELD - Story Preface

1. CHARLES GUITEAU: ERSTWHILE LAWYER

2. PLOT TO KILL PRESIDENT GARFIELD

3. ASSASSINATION of PRESIDENT GARFIELD

4. WHERE IS THE BULLET?

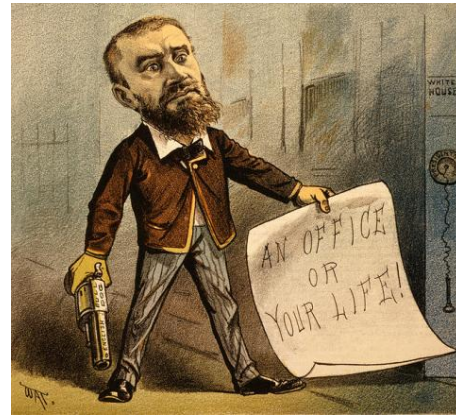
5. DEATH OF PRESIDENT GARFIELD

6. MURDER TRIAL of CHARLES GUITEAU

7. GUITEAU: WAS HE INSANE?

8. GUITEAU'S SENTENCE: DEATH

9. EXECUTION BY HANGING



Charles Guiteau believed he was due an appointment to public office, such as an ambassadorship to Paris, after President Garfield was elected. Individuals within the Garfield Administration disagreed. Despite his ongoing efforts to get his way, Guiteau was not appointed to any position. The Library of Congress maintains this illustration which appeared on the cover of *Puck* (July 13, 1881) and describes it with these words: "Cartoon showing Charles J. Guiteau holding pistol and paper reading, 'an office or your life!'"

In early June, 1881, Charles Guiteau bought a revolver with borrowed money (\$15) and began to stalk the president. He even checked out the jail where he would likely spend time - if his shots were successful - to make sure it was suitable for him.

His plan, he believed, was the product of divine inspiration. Previously institutionalized for mental issues, Guiteau explained the plot on 16 June 1881, in his "Address to the American People." It was three weeks before he aimed his new gun at James Garfield. Of course, he did not publish his "Address" at the time.

His words reflect the state of mind of this would-be assassin:

Washington June 16, 1881. To the American People: I conceived the idea of removing the President four weeks ago. Not a soul knew of my purpose. I conceived the idea myself and kept it to myself. I read the newspapers carefully, for and against the Administration, and gradually the convictions settled on me that the President's removal was a political necessity, because he proved a traitor to the men that made him, and thereby imperiled the life of the Republic.

What had the President done to so rile Charles Guiteau? Was it just the lack of his hoped-for position, or was it something more? According to his "Address," there was more:

In the President's madness he has wrecked the once grand old Republican party; and for this he dies.

Did Guiteau, the sometimes lawyer, view such actions as murder?

This is not murder. It is a political necessity.

On the morning of 2 July 1881, Guiteau went to the river's edge at Seventeenth Street to practice shooting his snub-nosed, forty-five caliber, English "Bulldog" revolver. From newspaper accounts, he knew Garfield planned to leave town around 9:30 that morning.

Guiteau was waiting for the President at the Baltimore & Potomac train station in Washington, D.C., the site where the National Gallery of Art now stands. The Chief Executive was scheduled to board a train bound for Massachusetts. Walking through the waiting room of the depot, minutes before his train was due, Garfield encountered Guiteau.

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