

**RECOLLECTIONS OF  
THIRTEEN  
PRESIDENTS**

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Recollections of Thirteen Presidents by John S. Wise

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# Recollections of Thirteen Presidents

By

John S. Wise

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"The End of an Era,"

"Diomed," etc.

Illustrated



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READING ROOM

## INTRODUCTION

Since the adoption of the Constitution of the United States in 1789 twenty-six individuals have been Presidents in this country, of whom twenty-five were Presidents of the United States, and one of the Confederate States. Here they are:

1. Washington, from 1789 to 1797.
2. John Adams, from 1797 to 1801.
3. Thomas Jefferson, from 1801 to 1809.
4. James Madison, from 1809 to 1817.
5. James Monroe, from 1817 to 1825.
6. John Quincy Adams, from 1825 to 1829.
7. Andrew Jackson, from 1829 to 1837.
8. Martin Van Buren, from 1837 to 1841.
9. William Henry Harrison, from 1841 until his death.
10. John Tyler, from 1841 to 1845.
11. James K. Polk, from 1845 to 1849.
12. Zachary Taylor, from 1849 until his death.
13. Millard Fillmore, from 1850 to 1853.
14. Franklin Pierce, from 1853 to 1857.
15. James Buchanan, from 1857 to 1861.
16. Abraham Lincoln, from 1861 until his death.
17. Andrew Johnson, from 1865 to 1869.
18. Ulysses S. Grant, from 1869 to 1877.
19. Rutherford B. Hayes, from 1877 to 1881.
20. James A. Garfield, from 1881 until his death.
21. Chester A. Arthur, from 1881 to 1885.
22. Grover Cleveland, from 1885 to 1889 and 1893 to 1897.



23. Benjamin Harrison, from 1889 to 1893.
24. William McKinley, from 1897 until his death.
25. Theodore Roosevelt, from 1902 to date.
26. Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America, from 1861 to 1865.

The statement made by any man that he has personally known one-half of these statesmen is calculated to create the impression that he is old. Yet before I was fifty-five years old I had personal acquaintance with John Tyler, Franklin Pierce, James Buchanan, Jefferson Davis, Andrew Johnson, Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield, Chester A. Arthur, Grover Cleveland, Benjamin Harrison, William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt.

Believing that the following reminiscences and anecdotes of these men will prove interesting, they have been written with no ambitious purpose and perhaps originated in personal vanity. But even if that be so, it is hoped that they will nevertheless prove entertaining to that large class which is always interested in the personalities of prominent men.

The reader will catch glimpses of these great men quite different from their presentation by the ordinary historian or biographer, and may form some idea of how they looked and how they acted in everyday life, without seeing too much of their greatness or their plans of government.

He will be quick to discern also, the difference between the impressions made by the oldest upon a child, and those made in later years upon a man. Still later upon a contemporary—and lastly by a President who is younger than the writer.

Without more of introduction let us proceed with the description, after noting one single reflection. We often hear the term "accident" applied to men of great political prominence. There may be, and doubtless are, instances of such accidents; but none of the men who have attained to the Presidency of the United States, whether by election or succession, or to the Presidency of the dead Confederacy, were either "accidental" or ordinary men.

Every one of them has possessed individuality, strength of character, commanding personality and dominating force, which stamped him as far and away above mediocrity, and so marked him as a leader, that to refer to him as an ordinary man elevated to his position by accident, is grossly erroneous, or weakly invidious; for men do not attain positions of such importance by accident. Some great quality, whether of heroism or statesmanship or popularity or political management, leads to their preferment. No verse in poetry ever written expressed the truth more forcibly than the lines—

"The heights by great men reached and kept  
Were not attained by sudden flight,  
But they while their companions slept  
Were toiling upward in the night."

