

# James Abram Garfield

(1831-1881)

A U.S. representative from Ohio and 20th president of the United States, James Abram Garfield was born near Orange, Ohio. Before entering political life, Garfield was a professor at Western Reserve Eclectic Institute (now Hiram College) and served as its president from 1857 to 1861. Elected to the Ohio senate as a Republican in 1859, he gained popularity as a persuasive speaker in support of abolition. During the Civil War, Garfield joined the Union army, performed courageously in battle, and rose to the rank of major general before resigning in 1863. He then served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1863 to 1880. An opponent of currency inflation and excessive tariffs, Garfield was chosen House minority leader in 1876. The following year he played a key role in the election of President Rutherford B. Hayes by serving on the electoral commission that ruled on contested ballots from several states.

Although elected to the U.S. Senate in 1880, Garfield never took his seat. Following a lengthy deadlock at the Republican convention, he was unanimously nominated for the presidency as a compromise candidate. He won the election but served as president for only four months. Garfield was fatally shot at the Pennsylvania Railroad depot in Washington, D.C., by Charles Guiteau, a disappointed office seeker. Public outrage over the loss of President Garfield, who lingered for 11 weeks before dying, led to the creation of the Civil Service system to manage U.S. government employment more effectively.

**The full-length statue of President Garfield by Charles Niehaus is located in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol.**

(National Statuary Hall Collection, Architect of the Capitol)

In 1965 Marie J. Niehaus, daughter of sculptor Charles Niehaus, bequeathed her father's bust of President James Garfield to the United States. She asked that the piece be displayed in the President's Room of the U.S. Capitol, along with the bust of President William McKinley, already in the room. The Joint Committee on the Library accepted the Garfield bust as a gift from the Niehaus estate.

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, and trained in his home state and at Munich's Royal Academy, Niehaus was Cincinnati's logical choice to create the city's memorial to the slain president following Garfield's death in 1881. The resulting standing figure of Garfield, modeled in 1883 as Niehaus's first commission, led immediately to commissions for Ohio's two contributions to the National Statuary Hall Collection in the U.S.

Capitol: Garfield and former governor William Allen.

Marie Niehaus stated that her father executed the Senate's bust of Garfield at the same time as his full-length sculptures of the president. Lucretia Garfield, the widowed first lady, is said to have consulted on the modeling of the works.

After the Garfield commissions, Niehaus primarily worked abroad in a Rome studio. In 1892 he executed a particularly noteworthy pair of bronze relief doors for New York City's Trinity Church, and in 1893 he exhibited with distinction at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Niehaus is represented today by 10 sculptural pieces in the U.S. Capitol; the Senate's busts of Garfield and Vice President Daniel D. Tompkins (p. 368) are among them. His public sculptures are located in numerous cities in the United States.



*James A. Garfield*

**Charles Henry Niehaus (1855-1935)**

Marble, ca. 1885

30 ¼ x 24 ¾ x 18 ¼ inches (76.8 x 61.9 x 46.4 cm)

Unsigned

Bequest of Marie J. Niehaus (daughter of the sculptor), 1965

Accepted by the Joint Committee on the Library, 1965

Cat. no. 21.00011



In 1883 a Tiffany and Company representative wrote to Secretary of State Frederick T. Frelinghuysen on behalf of Antonio Salviati, a well-known Venetian maker of mosaics and art glass. The letter stated that Salviati wished to donate a specially made mosaic memorial portrait of President Garfield to the United States. The portrait had been designed as a companion piece to an existing portrait of Abraham Lincoln (p. 260), which was given to Congress in 1866 by the same firm. Following temporary exhibition in Boston at an arts and industries fair, the Garfield mosaic was formally accepted by a concurrent resolution in May 1884.

Salviati, whose manufacturing company was largely responsible for the rebirth of Venetian glasswork during the late 1800s, created mosaics in a medieval style that found favor among designers of buildings and memorials. In London, Salviati's mosaic murals were installed in the Albert Memorial at Kensington Gardens, and in the cupola of St. Paul's Cathedral. In the United States, Salviati mosaics decorate the church and the museum on the campus of Stanford University in California.

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**The mosaic portraits of James Garfield, left, and Abraham Lincoln, right, hung for many years on the third floor of the Senate wing of the Capitol, 1974.**

(Architect of the Capitol)

*James A. Garfield*

**Antonio Salviati (1816-1890)**

Enamel mosaic, 1882

25 x 23 inches (oval) (63.5 x 58.4 cm)

Signed and dated (on right side, above subject's shoulder):

Dr. A. SALVIATI / VENEZIA 1882

Gift of the artist, 1884

Accepted by concurrent resolution

dated May 19, 1884

Cat. no. 39.00002

