

# The assassination of president garfield (document analysis assignment)

[History](#)



of Lecturer] History and Political Science, Research Paper Document Analysis

The Assassination of President Garfield Charles Julius Guiteau was born on September 8, 1841 at Freeport, Illinois and he died on June 30, 1882 at the age of 40 in Washington, D. C. Guiteau did not however die a natural death since he was executed by hanging for assassinating U. S. President James A. Garfield. 1 He was a renowned American preacher, lawyer, and writer. He was the fourth of Luther Wilson Guiteau's and Jane Howe's six children. They lived in modern day Grafton, Wisconsin between 1850 and 1855 after which they moved back to Freeport when his mother died. Since he was not good at firearms, he took a few weeks practicing with targets. The document under analysis was written in the context of Guiteau assassinating the president, an act he asserted was of political necessity. On the fateful day, July 2, 1881, Guiteau tracked the President to the then Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Station where he shot him. Guiteau immediately surrendered to authorities, saying he was the "The Stalwart of the Stalwarts." 2

Although he said that he was "Stalwart of the Stalwarts", it is evident that he was merely disgruntled as he states in his letter that "the President proved a traitor to those who made him president." 3 Stalwarts were a late 19th century group of Republicans under the leadership of one Roscoe Conkling who supported President Ulysses S. Grant (1869–1877) for a third term in office. This clique opposed the moderate Republicans who wanted civil reforms and often fought for the control of the Republican Party. Later, the opposing groups would settle on James A. Garfield for the Republican ticket at the Republican national convention in 1880. Guiteau arrived at his

decision to assassinate President Garfield arguing that the latter was ungrateful to the Stalwarts after allowing himself to be manipulated by the Secretary of State to plot to murder Senator Conkling and General Arthur Grant. It is widely believed that Guiteau's plot to assassinate the President originated from his belief that he was principally responsible for Garfield's victory and should have been rewarded with an ambassadorship for his vital help to the President. <sup>4</sup> The two postings he wanted for himself but were constantly rejected by the President and the Cabinet were Paris and Vienna. Without family, friends, and almost penniless, Guiteau grew increasingly isolated and depressed and decided that the President Garfield had to be removed.

That Guiteau was the only one obsessed with President Garfield and disgruntled with the latter's government to the point of assassinating him only points to the fact that he might have been insane. In fact, Guiteau's lawyer pleaded innocence on grounds of insanity but Guiteau insisted he was sane. Guiteau's insanity would later manifest when he insisted he was perfectly sane and that God Himself had sent him to kill the President. He thus believed he acted under Divine pressure. Guiteau also had the idea that with the president out of the way, everything would go fine for him and fellow Stalwarts might have given him the diplomatic job. <sup>5</sup> Guiteau's delusion that he had committed a noble act worth of praise from every one was not even dispelled by his trial, imprisonment, and the death sentence<sup>6</sup>. Guiteau's act and his subsequent trial made him serially infamous that songs, poems and novels have been created on his life.

#### Works Cited

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