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## Remembering and Forgetting an American President: A Landscape History of the Harrison Tomb

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### Abstract

In the village of North Bend, Ohio rest the remains of little-known US President William Henry Harrison. After a long and distinguished military and political career and his election as president in 1840, Harrison earned the dubious distinction of the shortest term in presidential history after falling ill and dying after just one month in office. Following his wishes, Harrison was entombed in an inconspicuous crypt on his North Bend property. For decades afterward, the Harrison Tomb suffered from neglect and vandalism, an artifact that deteriorated along with the memory of this obscure president. There were numerous proposals to preserve the tomb, but nothing materialized. Shortly after World War I, new interest in preserving history and heritage arose, and the tomb received professional preservation and a monument. However, the tomb fell into disrepair again for several more decades until the Ohio Historical Society and a local non-profit restored the grounds and added enhancements to create a park and monumental setting in the 1990s. Through a landscape history approach, this paper traces the evolution of the Harrison Tomb from an austere crypt into a memorial landscape. An historical analysis and comparison to other presidential monuments shows an inequality in the way American society remembers its prominent leaders in the cultural landscape and attendant artifacts. I demonstrate that it was the knowledge and awareness of the Harrison Tomb's landscape and material culture that provided the impetus to restore it and create a monument for President Harrison after he was essentially forgotten. I argue that, by adopting a more expansive temporal context in which to study landscapes and sites, landscape history provides another perspective on historical research that geographers are well equipped to provide and that others often overlook, which allows historical geographers to enhance and add additional dimensions to the historical record through their specialized abilities in landscape interpretation and analysis.


### Keywords

landscape history; material culture; William Henry Harrison; presidential monuments; presidential history

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ninth President of the United States (1841), the oldest President to be elected at the time. On his 32nd day, he became the first to die in office, serving the shortest tenure in U.S. Presidential history. Buy the U.S. President William H. Harrison Portrait Photo Print for sale at The McMahan Photo Art Gallery and Archive. All Presidents American Presidents American History American Flag History Facts World History History Timeline Air Force One Presidential History. [infographicboard.com](#) - This website is for sale! - [infographicboard Resources and Information.](#)