

Harry S. Truman

President of the United States (1945-1953)
1884-1972

by Susan Jezak Ford

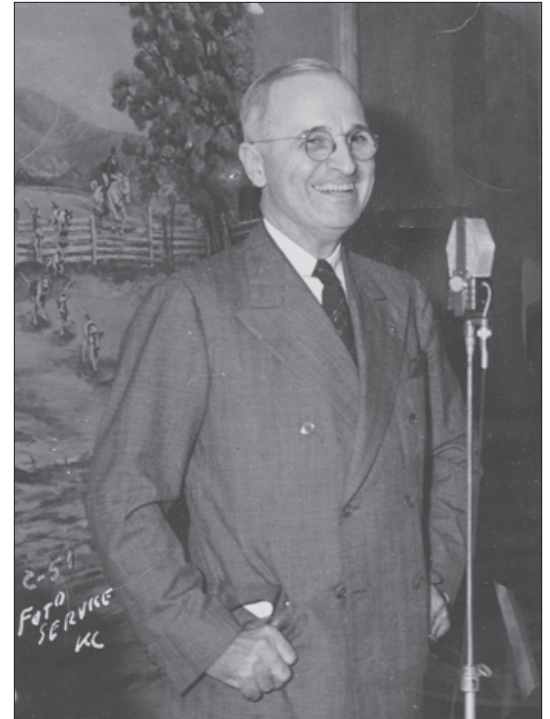
He will always be remembered as the man from Independence, Missouri, who became the country's 33rd president. Although Harry S. Truman held the highest office in the country, he was truly a Midwestern native. He never lost his Missouri twang or his earthy, stubborn and honest mixture of pride and humility.

Harry S. Truman was born in 1884 in Lamar, Missouri. He attended the Kansas City School of Law and worked briefly at *The Kansas City Star*. For a short while, he also farmed his acreage outside of Independence. After serving in World War I, he married Bess Wallace in 1919. He ran a downtown haberdashery that eventually went bankrupt.

Truman entered the thick of local politics when he served a Jackson County judgeship in the 1920s. He was elected U.S. Senator with a landslide vote and was sworn into office on January 3, 1935. Truman had established his record by improving county roads and overseeing the construction of the new Jackson County courthouse. His successful campaign undoubtedly benefited from the support of local political boss, Tom Pendergast. Although he was criticized for his association with Pendergast, Truman stated that Tom Pendergast never asked him to do a single dishonest act, and he never abandoned his friend.

Truman was selected as President Roosevelt's running mate in the 1944 presidential election. Upon Roosevelt's death in 1945, Truman was sworn in as President. Within a short time, he made what has been called "history's toughest decision," the dropping of the first atom bomb on Hiroshima and the second on Nagasaki. After World War II, Truman focused on post-war policies, inflation, and fighting the spread of communism.

Beating the predictions of political experts, Truman successfully campaigned for the presidency against Thomas Dewey in 1948. His campaign covered 22,000 miles and included 271 speeches. During his new term, his campaign against the spread of communism continued as the Korean War ignited in 1950.



Following the controversial war, Truman decided not to run for office again. He retired to the "Summer White House" in Independence and was frequently seen strolling the streets of his hometown. The Harry S. Truman Library opened and was dedicated in 1957 to house his papers, presidential memorabilia, and a replica of the Oval Office. Upon his death in 1972, he was buried in the courtyard of the library. His wife, Bess, was also buried there in 1982.

Sources

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