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Presidential Tidbits of Old: President Washington was greatly troubled by the inability of two of his most influential cabinet secretaries, Thomas Jefferson (Secretary of State) and Alexander Hamilton (Secretary of the Treasury), to agree on anything. When the national capital was still in New York, he took them in a rowboat to the middle of the Hudson River. A sudden squall made the river very choppy, and Jefferson became deathly ill. He reportedly said to his president, "Get me out of here, and I'll agree to anything." The armistice between him and Hamilton was short-lived, however.

William Henry Harrison, ninth president of the United States, died in April 1841, one month after his inauguration. His very unpopular vice president, John Tyler of Williamsburg, Virginia, was summoned to Washington and sworn in as president. The B & O Railroad arranged for a special funeral train to take Harrison's remains from the Capital to his home at North Bend, Ohio, near Cincinnati. A few months later, President Tyler sent one of his sons to see the president of the B & O and request a private train for his father. The request was refused, and the son inquired why. "If you will deliver your father in the same condition as President Harrison, he will have a special train" was the answer.

Thirty-seven-year-old Abraham Lincoln was running for a seat in Congress in 1846. One of his several opponents was the Evangelist Peter Cartwright, who freely mixed religion with politics. Cartwright was holding a prayer meeting in a packed tent, and part way through the meeting, Lincoln entered the tent and took a seat in the back row. As the religious fervor came to a high pitch, Cartwright exclaimed, "All who are going to heaven stand up!" All stood except Lincoln. "And where, Mr. Lincoln, are you going?" inquired the preacher. "I'm going to Congress" was the answer. Lincoln was elected, but he served only one term. More than ten years later, Cartwright's son was charged with murder. Lincoln was asked to defend him, and he won the case. The old Evangelist, with tears running down his cheeks, thanked the prairie lawyer with all his heart.

A hired hand named Jim worked for an Ohio farmer and slept in his barn. Jim fell for the farmer's daughter and asked for her hand in marriage. The farmer was furious and told Jim to get off his place and never come back. Many years later, people looking around the barn observed carvings on the interior rafters and joists. They came across the name, clearly notched in the wood: "James A. Garfield."

A man, unaccustomed to proper table manners when dining with presidents, was invited to the White House to have lunch with Franklin D. Roosevelt. The man's wife and others coached him on what to say and how to eat. "Never break up crackers and put them in your soup" was one of the instructions. As the visitor sat down next to the president, soup was served as the first thing on the menu. When crackers were passed, FDR immediately helped himself, broke them up, added them to his soup, and invited his guest to do the same.