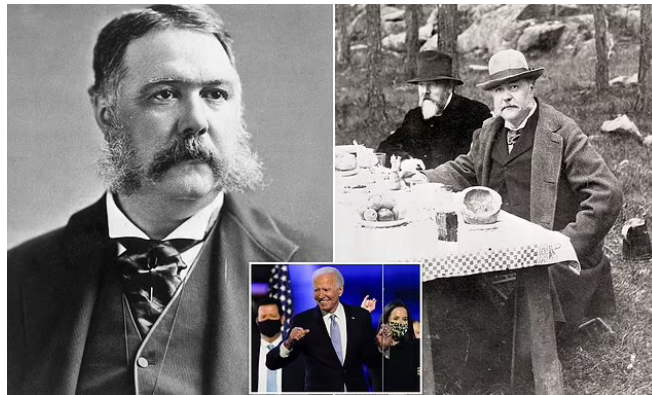


# Biden and the 140-year-old ghost of the last president to be denied the their party's nomination: Chester Arthur entered the White House after an assassination and didn't fight for a second term

By Sarah Ewall-Wice, Senior Political Reporter In Washington D.C. For Dailymail.com 09:50 EST 02 Mar 2024 , updated 09:50 EST 02 Mar 2024



Questions surrounding President [Joe Biden](#)'s age and mental fitness grow every day.

With eight months to go until his likely rematch with [Donald Trump](#), [Democratic party](#) officials have largely united behind the 81-year-old despite most Americans fearing he is too old to run again.

The incumbent also has 140 years of history on his side and will be hoping he doesn't meet the same fate of a little-known president who didn't get his party's backing for a second term.

While Biden is certain he [wants to run again](#) and firmly believes he will win, his predecessor who was pushed out more than a century ago didn't

fight for the job and likely knew he wouldn't live to see the end of his second term.

Political parties do not just deny sitting incumbents the nomination, at least not if they were previously elected as Biden was in 2020.

Only five sitting presidents have been denied their party's nominations for a second term in U.S. history, and the circumstances surrounding those nominations could not be more different.

The most recent sitting president to not receive the party nod was President Chester Arthur, who served from 1881 to 1885 and ended up in the White House entirely by accident.



Chester Arthur served as president from 1881 to 1885 after President Garfield was assassinated. At the time he was added to the ticket as the Republican vice presidential nominee, he had never held an elected office nor had he ever sought one.

Arthur was not even elected president for his first term and became the most powerful man in the U.S. having never even served in elected public office.

He ascended to the presidency when President James Garfield was assassinated less than a year after his inauguration.

'It was even a surprised [Arthur] was even placed on the ticket in 1880 and the reason that he ended up as the vice presidential nominee was because the [Republican Party](#) was trying to placate the boss of the Republican machine in New York State,' said biographer Scott Greenberger.

'He was an accidental nominee and then he became an accidental president when Garfield was shot,' Greenberger said. 'No one had any reason to believe that at a time of peace and with a very young, vigorous president, Arthur would get anywhere near the [White House](#).'

As vice president, Arthur had been loyal to his party boss, Roscoe Conkling, and openly opposed Garfield, so at the time there were people and newspapers that suggested the two had something to do with Garfield's assassination.

In another surprise twist, Arthur had a complete transformation once becoming president.

He championed civil service reform while disavowing the political machine politicians that made him, Greenberger noted.

However, when it came time to nominate a candidate in 1884, Arthur did not receive the nomination.

While he kept his name in the running for the nomination, there were questions about whether he truly wanted it.



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**He had upset the political machine during his term but reformers were still wary of him because of his background.**

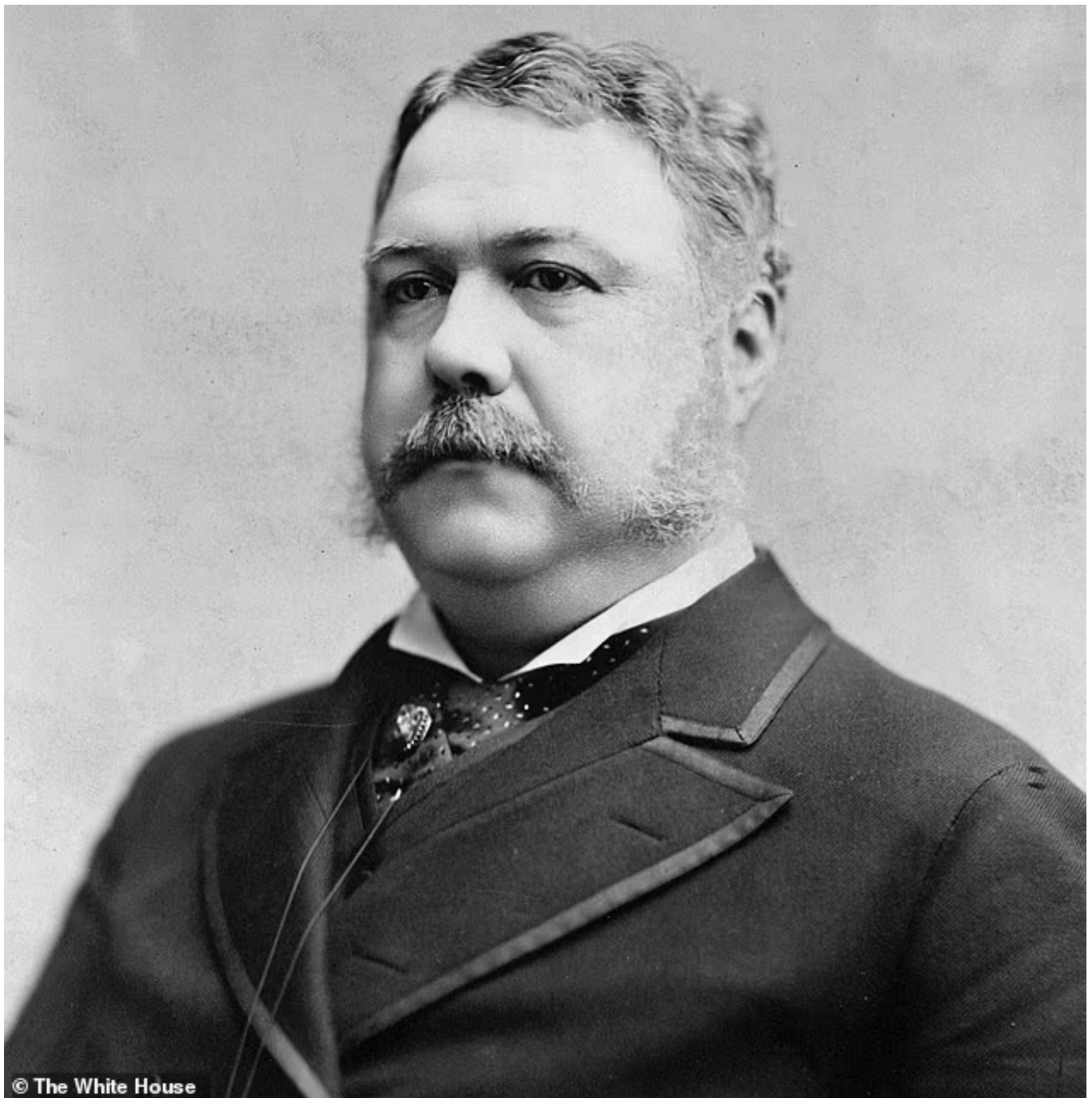
**The nomination process was different from what it is now with primaries instead deciding on the nominee at the convention, which in 1884 was in Chicago.**

**'I think he was conflicted about it, he certainly wanted the approval of the party and of his country and would have probably accepted the nomination if had given it to him, but he didn't do what he could have to get the nomination,' Greenberger said.**

'In fact his main lieutenant, that would be the Navy Secretary, was ready to go to Chicago where the convention was going to be and short of marshal the Arthur forces and help him to win the nomination,' Greenberger said. 'But Arthur said "no, I don't want you to do that."'

What was not publicly known at the time, was Arthur had Bright's diseases.

If he had been nominated and won, he would not have survived a second term. He died in 1886 from complications from the disease.



Arthur did not take his name out of contention for the nomination for a second term, but he did not do everything he could to help secure the nomination according to biographer Scott Greenberger. It was also not publicly known that he had a fatal kidney disease. He passed away in 1886 from complications in 1886 and would not have completed a second term should he have received the nomination and won

**Instead, the nomination went to former Maine Senator James Blaine on the fourth ballot at the convention.**

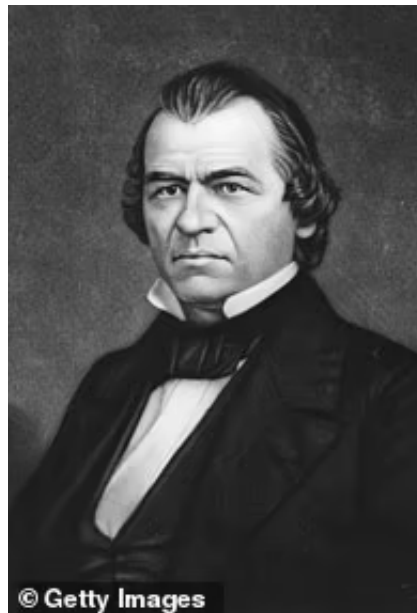
**He ended up losing the election to Democrat Grover Cleveland.**

**Since Arthur, no other sitting president who has kept his name in**

contention has ever been denied a nomination for a second term, though there have been primary challenges.

But even before Arthur, only four other sitting presidents have ever been denied their party nomination and three hadn't even been elected in their own right.

John Tyler, Millard Fillmore and Andrew Johnson all were vice presidents who took office upon the death of the president. The fourth was President Franklin Pierce who became embattled leading up to the Civil War with his support for the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which reopened the question of slavery in the west.



President Andrew Johnson

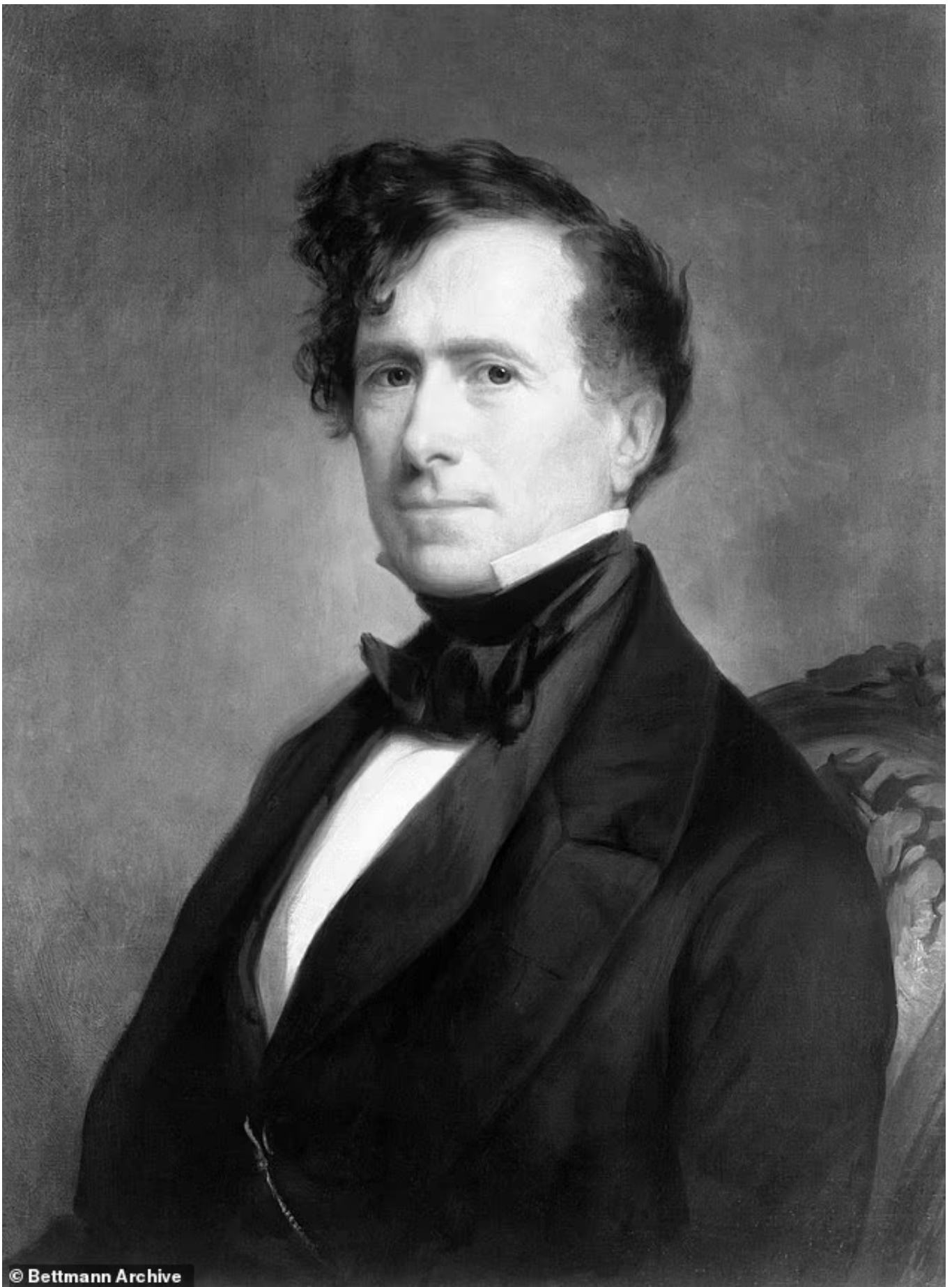




President John Tyler



President Millard Fillmore



Franklin Pierce served as 14th President of the United States from 1853 to 1857. He was denied the renomination for a second term. Democrats instead nominated James Buchanan

'The comparison is really one of eras, not individuals,' historian and professor David Greenberg told DailyMail.com by email. 'Until the 20th century, no president who ascended to the presidency from the vice presidency on the death of his predecessor... received so much as his party's nomination, let alone a full "second" term.' It just was not the norm.'

Greenberg pointed out President Theodore Roosevelt was the first president to break that mold. After he became president following the assassination of President William McKinley, he campaigned for a second term in 1904 and won.



Biden formally clinched the Democratic nomination for president in June 2020 after receiving the 1,991 delegates necessary to become the party nominee. In the end he received more than 50 percent of the vote in a primary that at one point had 25 candidates



Biden celebrating after being declared the winner of the 2020 presidential election over Trump on November 7, 2020. Biden received 306 Electoral College votes. He also won the popular vote with more than 81 million Americans casting ballots for him



Biden at 81-years-old is the oldest sitting president. Prior to his election the oldest serving president was Ronald Reagan who left office at 77-years-old

**There is no historical comparison one can point to as an example in the argument for Democrats denying Biden the nomination for a second term.**

**He was a former vice president and longtime senator who won the Democratic primary in 2020 against a crowded field of candidates.**

**There have been those who have [pointed out](#) Biden, the oldest serving president at 81, ran four years ago as a 'transitional' candidate, but in the end he never specifically said that would mean only four years.**