

President Zachary Taylor Was Commander at Fort Gibson

General Zachary Taylor was appointed commander at Fort Gibson in 1841. The fort's long-standing problem with diseases had prompted some to call for the abandonment of Fort Gibson, but the troubles brewing in Texas in the late 1830s had stirred up rumors of tribal unrest.

Mexico was promising Indians in Texas and Indian Territory money and land if they would side with Mexico against the Americans seeking Texas independence. Fort Gibson was seen as vital to keeping the tribes from entering into the fray.

By the time General Zachary Taylor assumed command at Fort Gibson, he had gained a reputation as an Indian fighter with nearly 40 years service in the military at posts all along the western frontier. Though his military service often required him to battle Indians, he also protected them from white settlers invading their lands.



Commanding Officer's Quarters near the Fort Gibson Historic Site

Taylor believed the best way to keep peace between Indians and the American settler was to maintain a strong military presence. He brought this view to Fort Gibson and under his command there, peace was, for the most part, maintained.

In 1844 Taylor was ordered to Fort Jessup, Louisiana as tensions were mounting between Mexico and the United States over disputed land along the southern border.

He was ordered to have his command ready to move toward Mexico as the annexation of Texas proceeded. In January, 1846, Taylor advanced toward the Rio Grande with a force of 6,000 men.

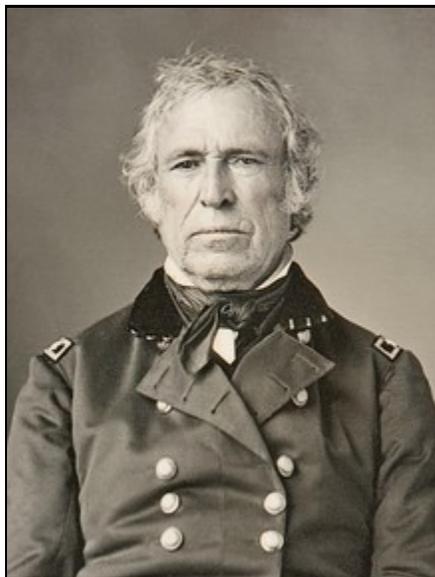
After winning two decisive encounters, Taylor triumphed despite overwhelming odds in a battle against the Mexican general Santa Anna at Buena Vista. His command had defeated a Mexican force of 20,000, and Zachary Taylor – nicknamed Old Rough and Ready – became a national hero.

Taylor had never expressed any political preferences or ambitions, but following his victory in Mexico, organizations formed quickly to nominate him for President. He was elected in 1848.

In February 1850 President Taylor held a conference with southern leaders who were threatening secession. He told them that if it became necessary to preserve the United States, he personally would lead the military and he would hang anyone "taken in rebellion against the Union." He never wavered from this position and talk of secession quieted while Taylor remained in office.

In July 1850, Taylor contracted a stomach ailment that may have been cholera. He died on July 9, and more than 100,000 people lined the funeral route to view their hero. His untimely death lessened his lasting impact on national politics and meant he would be unable to play a further role in preventing the Civil War.

President Taylor lived only briefly in Oklahoma, but his "rough and ready" philosophy made an impact on America for peace. From living among the Five Civilized Tribes of the western frontier to residing in the White House in Washington he was a soldier who knew an unwavering strength and was a formidable peacemaker.



General Zachary Taylor

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