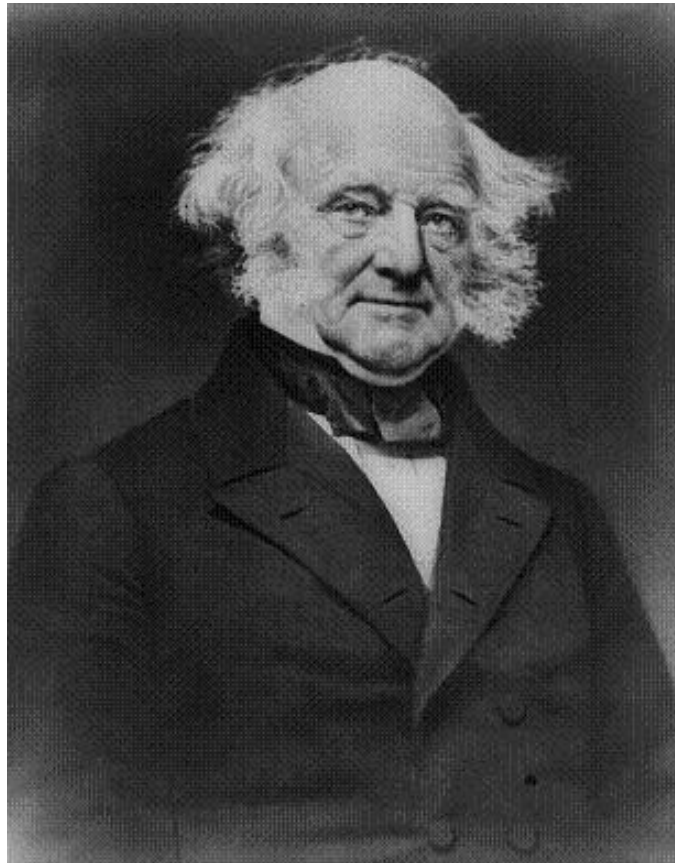


Martin Van Buren

Let's Go, Dutch
Eighth, 1837-1841



Nicknames: "Little Mat", "The Little Magician", "The Red Fox of Kinderhook", "Martin Van Ruin", "Petticoat Pet", "The Flying Dutchman", "Machiavellian Belshazzar"

Birth: December 5th, 1782, Kinderhook, New York

Death: July 24th, 1862, Kinderhook, New York

Significant Events During Van Buren's Term: John Muir born Scotland ... Cherokee Trail of Tears ... Aroostook War ... Richard Henry Dana's "Two Years Before the Mast" ... Number of States remains at twenty-six

Quotes: *"I must go into the Presidential chair the inflexible and uncompromising opponent of every attempt of the part of Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia against the wishes of the slaveholding States, and also with a determination equally decided to resist the slightest interference with it in the States where it exists."* -- Martin Van Buren, 1837

"The soul of man, the justice, the mercy that is the heart's heart in all men, from Maine to Georgia, does abhor this business...a crime is projected that confounds our understandings by its magnitude, a crime that really deprives us as well as the Cherokees of a country, for how could we call the conspiracy that should crush these poor Indians our government, or the land that was cursed by their parting and dying imprecations our country any more? You, sir, will bring down that renowned chair in which you sit into infamy if your seal is set to this instrument of perfidy; and the name of this nation, hitherto the sweet omen of religion and liberty, will stink to the world." -- Ralph Waldo Emerson, in an April 1838 open letter to Van Buren regarding the "Trail of Tears"

"It affords sincere pleasure to apprise the Congress of the entire removal of the Cherokee Nation of Indians to their new homes west of the Mississippi. The measures authorized by Congress at its last session have had the happiest effects." -- Martin Van Buren, December 1838

How his term ended: Van Buren lost his reelection bid to William Henry Harrison.

Other Professions: Delivery Boy, Lawyer

Worst Mistakes: Although not a slaveholder himself (he was a Northerner), Van Buren supported slavery during his presidency.

Following in the footsteps of his mentor and sponsor, Andrew Jackson, Van Buren was also instrumental in continuing the Indian Diaspora, especially as it affected the Cherokees (also known as The Trail of Tears). Instead of being ashamed of himself, as he should have been, he was downright giddy about it (see quotes above).

Saving Grace: As has been mentioned, Van Buren opposed abolition and pledged to resist interference with slavery in the South. In later life, though, he became more and more anti-slavery, even eventually becoming the Presidential candidate of the Free Soil Party, and thereafter supporting Lincoln and the Union cause in the Civil War.

Notes: The Presidential race of 1836 marked the first time that the candidates were not chosen by Congress.

Van Buren was the first President born an American citizen rather than a British subject (but he grew up speaking Dutch as his first language).

Although there was a great depression (the worst in the country up to that time) during his presidency (thus earning him the nickname "Martin Van Ruin"), Van Buren refused to spend any of the \$1.5 million federal surplus on public works.

Van Buren's Vice President, Richard Merton Johnson, fought under William Henry Harrison

at the Battle of the Thames in 1813, and claimed to have killed Shawnee leader Tecumseh there. Johnson had a common-law wife who was a slave, and raised and educated his children by her as free persons. Johnson's party, incensed at this, refused to nominate him as Vice President--but neither did they nominate anyone else.

The Aroostook War, which was alternatively called the Pork and Beans War, the Lumberjack's War, and the Northeastern Boundary Dispute, took place during Van Buren's term. It settled the precise location where the border between the U.S. And Canada lie at the points where the State of Maine and the Provinces of New Brunswick and Quebec meet.

The now nigh-universal phrase "OK" came from one of Van Buren's nicknames, "Old Kinderhook." Insiders would refer to him by these initials. The opposing party, though (anti-Jacksonians) claimed that O.K. was short for the way orthographically challenged Andrew Jackson spelled "all correct" ("oll korrekt"). Although that was not really the case, "OK" came to mean, in essence, just that: "all correct."

Van Buren was a distant relative of Theodore Roosevelt (#26). This, of course, makes him a distant relative of Franklin Roosevelt (#32), too, and others to whom they were related.