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## *Introduction*

The catchy slogan “Tippecanoe and Tyler, Too” helped Tippecanoe’s war hero, William Henry Harrison, win the United States presidential election in 1840. A month into office Harrison died whereupon “. . . Tyler, Too” — John Tyler — became the tenth president of the United States. Tyler was the first vice president in American history to succeed to the presidency upon the death of a president, and in so doing he established the precedent for presidential succession that is still in use today in the United States.

Coming into office as he did, Tyler’s right to be president was challenged. Yet, despite the often severe criticism and other significant adversities he faced during his four years in office, Tyler maintained his claim to the office, held strong to his political beliefs, and persisted in attending to the responsibilities of the presidency. As a result, his administration accomplished several important objectives in domestic affairs and foreign relations, among the most important of which were the settlement of many festering disputes with Great Britain, the establishment of diplomatic relations with China, and the annexation of Texas.

The story of John Tyler is that of a nation wrestling with its own identity and attempting to answer profound moral, economic, and political questions as the country struggled to come of age. It is also the story of a man who stubbornly defended a vision of the American republic nurtured during his father’s generation, even as America pursued a different dream. The America which existed at the time of Tyler’s death in 1862 bore little resemblance to the country into which he was born in 1790. In essence, John Tyler’s life is the story of

America's adolescence. By understanding the forces of change that were unfolding in Tyler's time and the ways in which he reacted to them, we can better recognize and appreciate the contributions to America made by this remarkable gentleman from Virginia.