

0. MURDER TRIAL of CHARLES GITEAU - Story Preface

1. CHARLES GITEAU: ERSTWHILE LAWYER

2. PLOT TO KILL PRESIDENT GARFIELD

3. ASSASSINATION of PRESIDENT GARFIELD

4. WHERE IS THE BULLET?

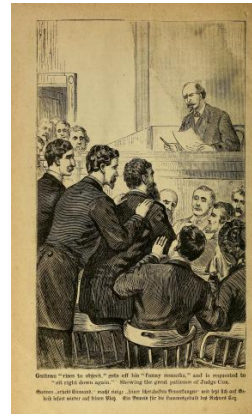
5. DEATH OF PRESIDENT GARFIELD

6. MURDER TRIAL of CHARLES GITEAU

7. GITEAU: WAS HE INSANE?

8. GITEAU'S SENTENCE: DEATH

9. EXECUTION BY HANGING



As Judge Cox conducted Guiteau's trial, the accused (who claimed to be a lawyer) frequently tried to make objections, then had to be restrained by his lawyers. This contemporary illustration is from *The Great Guiteau Trial: With Life of the Cowardly Assassin*. It appears to the left of page 30 in the book which was published in Philadelphia, during 1882, by Barclay & Co.

With the death of the President, Guiteau could be tried for murder. His lawyers faced a daunting task, complicated by their client's courtroom outbursts, as trial began on the 14th of November, 1881.

Demanding that he be part of the defense team, Guiteau's wild theories explain why he never made it as a lawyer. He claimed his actions were "an act of God." Guiteau even wrote a letter to the trial judge explaining that the doctors' actions (in probing the President's wound) had caused Garfield's death. He obviously forgot why the doctors' probing fingers were needed in the first place.

In jail, Guiteau enjoyed his status as a celebrity defendant. He signed all kinds of autographs. He even sent his jailer a card on New Year's Eve, 1881. Because he thought he had carried out God's will, Guiteau never believed he would be convicted of a crime. But that was before he met John K. Porter, a former judge who was part of the prosecution's team of lawyers.

Exploring the connections between the murder and Guiteau's claimed motive, Porter's trial cross examination demolished the defendant:

Q: Who bought the pistol, the Deity or you?

A: I say the Deity inspired the act and the Deity will take care of it.

Q: Were you inspired to buy that British bull-dog pistol?

A: I do not claim that I was to do the specific act; but I do claim that the Deity inspired me to remove the President, and I had to use my ordinary judgment as to the ways and means to accomplish the Deity's will.

Forgetting one of the Ten Commandments as he shot the President, Guiteau tried to square that obvious religious contradiction at trial:

Q: Did it occur to you that there was a commandment, "Thou shalt not kill?"

A: If it did, the divine authority overcame the written law.

(The Trial of the Assassin Guiteau, page 140.)

During part of the trial, guards had to physically restrain Guiteau as he jumped from his seat, shouting objections. Judge Walter Cox even threatened to gag Guiteau if he did not stop his outbursts:

If there is no other way of preventing this interruption you will have to be gagged; that is all there is about it. You must shut your mouth and not let us hear you again while this trial proceeds. I do not want to go to such an extremity, but it must be done if we can not find any other way to control you. (Trial, page 34.)

Guiteau, not surprisingly, disregarded the Court's admonitions. Fearing a mistrial, the Judge did little more than issue threats without action. And George Scoville, defending his brother-in-law, could not control his client.

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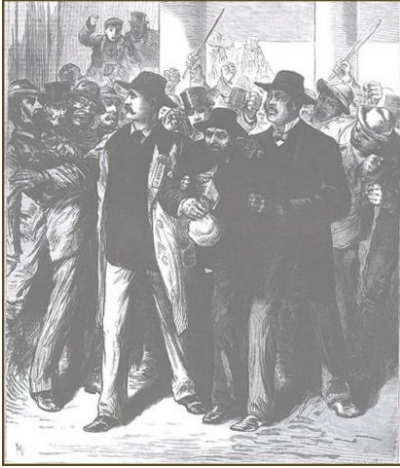


Illustration - Scene at Guiteau's Trial

Image online, courtesy U.S. Library of Congress.

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