

The Cambridge Companion to
US First Ladies

First ladies have always received a great deal of attention and are among the most recognizable figures of any presidential administration. They're often treated as celebrities, making them some of the most prominent women of their eras. Yet many of their stories and contributions have been overlooked. Through a collection of thematic essays, *The Cambridge Companion to US First Ladies* provides a thorough and compelling examination of the development of the first lady institution, and the political, social, and cultural influence of the women who've served in this role. Topics covered include the evolution of various first lady roles, such as hostess, campaigner, surrogate, diplomat, social advocate, and trendsetter; how first ladies have been political assets and liabilities; the impact of first ladies' speeches and media usage; first ladies during wartime and presidential deaths; the contributions of first lady stand-ins; how presidential spouses have been represented in films; and how these women are memorialized and remembered – or forgotten.

LISA M. BURNS is Professor of Media Studies at Quinnipiac University. She is the editor of *Media Relations and the First Modern Lady: From Jacqueline Kennedy to Melania Trump* and author of *First Ladies and the Fourth Estate: Press Framing of Presidential Wives*.

TERI FINNEMAN is Associate Professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Kansas. She is the author of *Press Portrayals of Women Politicians* and coauthor of *Reviving Rural News*. She is the founder of *The First Ladies* podcast and the *Journalism History* podcast.

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US First Ladies

Edited by

LISA M. BURNS
Quinnipiac University

TERI FINNEMAN
University of Kansas



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Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

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The First Ladies *Podcast Episodes*

This podcast can be accessed at Apple Podcasts or Spotify and also at <https://cms.megaphone.fm/channel/thefirstladies>.

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Notes on Contributors

THOMAS J. BALCERSKI is an associate professor of history at Eastern Connecticut State University. He received a BA from Cornell University, an MA from Stony Brook University, and a PhD from Cornell University. He is the author of *Bosom Friends: The Intimate World of James Buchanan and William Rufus King* (2019). He has written pieces for the *Washington Post*, CNN, the White House Historical Association, and others. His current project explores the long history of the Democratic Party, America's oldest partisan institution.

SHANIECE B. BICKHAM, PHD, is an associate professor and the program coordinator for mass communication at Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana. In addition to first lady research, Dr. Bickham is engaged in Black press scholarship and also conducts research that examines credibility perceptions during crisis situations, factors that influence media content, and communication strategy employed in political arenas.

MARYANNE BORRELLI is the Susan Eckert Lynch '62 Professor of Government at Connecticut College. She is the author of *The Politics of the President's Wife* (2011) and *The President's Cabinet* (2002), the coeditor of *The Gendered Executive* (2016) and *The Other Elites* (1997), and a coauthor of *Understanding American Government* (2012). Her articles have appeared in *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, *Sex Roles*, and *Political Research Quarterly*. She has also authored book chapters, encyclopedia articles, and briefing papers and has been a scholarly resource for Agence France-Presse, CBS News, *The Hill*, *Jezebel*, *USA Today*, and the *Washington Post*.

LISA M. BURNS is a professor of media studies at Quinnipiac University. She holds a PhD in communication from the University of Maryland at College Park. She is the editor of *Media Relations and the Modern First Lady: From Jacqueline Kennedy to Melania Trump* (2020) and the author of *First Ladies and the Fourth Estate: Press Framing of Presidential Wives* (2008). She has also published multiple journal articles and book chapters on presidential spouses. She frequently serves as an invited guest speaker and media expert on topics including first ladies, women in politics, presidential campaign coverage, and political branding strategies.

COURTNEY CAUDLE TRAVERS is a senior lecturer in communication studies at Vanderbilt University. She has authored multiple conference papers on Jacqueline Kennedy and Michelle Obama, and her work on Kennedy won the Robert Gunderson Award for Public Address at the National Communication Association's annual conference. Recently quoted in Politico for her research on aesthetics of the presidency, Dr. Travers's current project examines Jacqueline Kennedy's visual rhetorical influence on the Kennedy administration's construction of presidential persona.

TERI FINNEMAN is an associate professor of journalism at the University of Kansas. She has a PhD in journalism from the Missouri School of Journalism. Her coedited collection *Social Justice, Activism and Diversity in U.S. Media History* came out in May 2023. She is also the author of *Press Portrayals of Women Politicians, 1870s–2000s* (2015) and has written book chapters and journal articles about Grace Coolidge, Sarah Polk, and Varina Davis, with research in progress on Mary Lincoln and Frances Cleveland. Her research interests include press coverage of women in politics, oral history, and local news. She often presents community lectures, webinars, convention keynotes, and guest lectures. Finneman is executive producer and founder of the *Journalism History* podcast.

SARAH FLING is a public historian based in Washington, DC. In her role as a historian at the White House Historical Association, Fling focuses on free and enslaved workers, the first ladies, and the

White House Collection. Fling's previous work experience includes historic sites such as George Washington's Mount Vernon and the Frick Pittsburgh. She received her bachelor's degree in history from the University of Pittsburgh and her master's in public history from American University.

JODI KANTER is a professor in the Theatre and Dance program at The George Washington University. She is the author of two books in the Theatre in the Americas series at Southern Illinois University Press, *Performing Loss* (2007) and *Presidential Libraries as Performance* (2016). She holds a PhD in Performance Studies from Northwestern University and an MA in Counseling from the Expressive Arts Therapies program at Lesley University.

MELODY LEHN is Associate Professor of Rhetoric and Women's and Gender Studies at Sewanee: The University of the South. Lehn's scholarship on US first ladies has appeared in *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, and several edited collections. Her coedited volume *One Hundred Years of Women Debating the Equal Rights Amendment: An Anthology, 1923–2023* (2024) features primary texts representing several first ladies.

KELLY MARINO is a historian of modern US history and US women, gender, and sexuality history. She is an associate teaching professor and coordinator of the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, CT. Dr. Marino has written several research articles and chapters about US women's history and has given talks throughout New England on women's social and political activism. Her work focuses especially on the woman suffrage movement. Her book *Votes for College Women* was published in 2024 by New York University Press. The project considers how college-educated women became important leaders in the modern women's rights campaign.

ELIZABETH J. NATALLE is a founding member of the First Ladies Association for Research and Education (FLARE) and serves on its board. She has a PhD in communication theory from Florida

State University and is now an associate professor emeritus of communication studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She is the coeditor of *Michelle Obama: First Lady, American Rhetor* (2015) and author of *Jacqueline Kennedy and the Architecture of First Lady Diplomacy* (2018). Her research focuses on the persuasive strategies unique to first lady communication that promote American civil society.

NEWLY PAUL is a media researcher and associate professor of journalism at the University of North Texas in Denton. Her research areas include intercultural communication, race and gender in politics, and entertainment studies through a gendered lens. She has taught various journalism classes such as principles of news, news reporting and writing, copyediting, political reporting, and minorities in media. Her research has won grants and awards and has been published in top journals in the field.

BARBARA A. PERRY is the J. Wilson Newman Professor and co-chair of the Presidential Oral History Program at The University of Virginia's Miller Center. She has interviewed more than 150 senior officials from the George H. W. Bush through Obama administrations. Dr. Perry has authored or edited seventeen books on presidents, first ladies, and the Supreme Court. She serves on the board of the White House Historical Association, founded by Jacqueline Kennedy.

MARY STOCKWELL holds a PhD in history and served as a professor of history and department chair at Lourdes University. She is the author of *Unlikely General: "Mad" Anthony Wayne and the Battle for America* (2018), *Interrupted Odyssey: Ulysses S. Grant and the American Indians* (2018), *The Other Trail of Tears: The Removal of the Ohio Indians* (2016), and *Woodrow Wilson: The Last Romantic* (2008). Her essays on first ladies include "Elizabeth Kortright Monroe: La Belle Americaine" and "Edith Wilson's *My Memoir*."

TAMMY R. VIGIL, PHD, is an associate professor and the senior associate dean of the College of Communication at Boston University. Her books include *Moms in Chief: The Rhetoric of Republican*

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Motherhood and the Spouses of Presidential Nominees, 1992–2016 (2019) and *Melania & Michelle: First Ladies in a New Era* (2019). Dr. Vigil's other publications focus on the rhetoric of Michelle Obama, Melania Trump, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and George W. Bush, and on national nominating conventions.

Chronology of US First Ladies

- 1789–1797 Martha Washington, wife to George Washington
1797–1801 Abigail Adams, wife to John Adams
1801–1809 Martha “Patsy” Jefferson Randolph, daughter to
Thomas Jefferson
1809–1817 Dolley Madison, wife to James Madison
1817–1825 Elizabeth Monroe, wife to James Monroe
1825–1829 Louisa Adams, wife to John Quincy Adams
1829–1834 Emily Donelson, niece to Andrew Jackson
1834–1837 Sarah Yorke Jackson, daughter-in-law to Andrew Jackson
1838–1841 Angelica Van Buren, daughter-in-law to Martin
Van Buren
1841 Anna Harrison, wife to William Henry Harrison
1841–1842 Letitia Tyler, wife to John Tyler*
1842–1844 Priscilla Cooper Tyler, daughter-in-law to John Tyler
1844–1845 Julia Tyler, second wife to John Tyler
1845–1849 Sarah Polk, wife to James K. Polk
1849–1850 Margaret Taylor, wife to Zachary Taylor**
1849–1850 Mary “Betty” Taylor Bliss, daughter to Zachary Taylor
1850–1853 Abigail Fillmore, wife to Millard Fillmore
1853–1857 Jane Pierce, wife to Franklin Pierce
1857–1861 Harriet Lane, niece to James Buchanan
1861–1865 Mary Lincoln, wife to Abraham Lincoln
1865–1869 Eliza Johnson, wife to Andrew Johnson**
1865–1869 Martha Johnson Patterson, daughter to Andrew Johnson
1869–1877 Julia Grant, wife to Ulysses S. Grant
1877–1881 Lucy Hayes, wife to Rutherford B. Hayes

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1881	Lucretia Garfield, wife to James Garfield
1881–1885	Mary Arthur McElroy, sister to Chester Arthur
1885–1886	Rose Cleveland, sister to Grover Cleveland
1886–1889	Frances Cleveland, wife to Grover Cleveland
1889–1892	Caroline Harrison, wife to Benjamin Harrison*
1892–1893	Mary McKee, daughter to Benjamin Harrison
1893–1897	Frances Cleveland, wife to Grover Cleveland
1897–1901	Ida McKinley, wife to William McKinley
1901–1909	Edith Roosevelt, wife to Theodore Roosevelt
1909–1913	Helen Taft, wife to William Howard Taft
1913–1914	Ellen Wilson, wife to Woodrow Wilson*
1914–1915	Margaret Wilson, daughter to Woodrow Wilson
1915–1921	Edith Wilson, second wife to Woodrow Wilson
1921–1923	Florence Harding, wife to Warren G. Harding
1923–1929	Grace Coolidge, wife to Calvin Coolidge
1929–1933	Lou Hoover, wife to Herbert Hoover
1933–1945	Eleanor Roosevelt, wife to Franklin D. Roosevelt
1945–1953	Bess Truman, wife to Harry S. Truman
1953–1961	Mamie Eisenhower, wife to Dwight D. Eisenhower
1961–1963	Jacqueline Kennedy, wife to John F. Kennedy
1963–1969	Claudia “Lady Bird” Johnson, wife to Lyndon B. Johnson
1969–1974	Thelma “Pat” Nixon, wife to Richard Nixon
1974–1977	Betty Ford, wife to Gerald Ford
1977–1981	Rosalynn Carter, wife to Jimmy Carter
1981–1989	Nancy Reagan, wife to Ronald Reagan
1989–1993	Barbara Bush, wife to George H. W. Bush
1993–2001	Hillary Clinton, wife to Bill Clinton
2001–2009	Laura Bush, wife to George W. Bush
2009–2017	Michelle Obama, wife to Barack Obama
2017–2021	Melania Trump, wife to Donald Trump
2021–2025	Jill Biden, wife to Joe Biden

*Died in office.

**Unable to perform formal duties.