CSPAN/FIRST LADIES FRANCES CLEVELAND
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SUSAN SWAIN, HOST: Frances Folsom Cleveland was a celebrity first lady unlike almost any before her, and the mass production of her image to sell a variety of goods by the American consumer industry in the mid-1880s angered both her and her husband, President Grover Cleveland.

To help us understand the Frances Cleveland sensation sweeping the country, we begin our story inside 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue as a curious nation waited for the details of a 49-year-old bachelor president marrying his 21-year-old bride inside the White House for the first and only time in our country's history, launching Frances Cleveland into instant celebrity.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

WILLIAM ALLMAN, WHITE HOUSE CURATOR: You're standing in the cross hall of the modern White House. It's the same basic layout as it would have been on June 2, 1886, when President Grover Cleveland and his bride-to-be, Frances Folsom, came down what was then the large staircase to the family quarters at the west end of this corridor. They would have proceeded down the hallway. The music started up at the east side behind us here, where the United States Marine Band was assembled under the baton of the famous John Philip Sousa. They played the Wedding March as the happy couple came down the hallway.

So they would have passed through these doors, these very same mahogany doors. They would have come into the room. There was a different chandelier here. They stood under the center of the chandelier and did their wedding vows to the assembled group. It was an enormous amount of flowers in the room that had been brought from the White House conservatory. There was a large peer table where this sofa is now that was strewn with potted plants and there were potted plants underneath, and flowers were hung suspended from the moldings. The mantelpiece was covered with flowers.

The fireplace was filled, they said, with red begonias to give the feeling of flames in the fire. It was a very brief ceremony, at 7:00 p.m. It was an evening ceremony. The assembled throng then went down to the East Room for what they called a promenade, which I think was an opportunity for the bride to show off her dress, probably, to greater ease than could have been taken place in this room. And then they went down that same hallway that we were just in to a wedding dinner in the state dining room.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: Those are the strains of an 1890s recording of John Philip Sousa and the Marine Corps Band playing the Wedding March they performed at the White House nuptials of Frances and Grover Cleveland on June 2, 1886.

Good evening, and welcome to C-SPAN's "First Ladies: Influence and Image." Tonight, the story of Frances Folsom Cleveland, the youngest first lady ever to serve in that role. And to tell us about her, meet our guests for the evening. Annette Dunlap is the author of a biography on the first lady called "Frank: The Story of Frances Folsom Cleveland."

Well, let's start with the press and the coverage, because without that, there would be no celebrity, of course.

ANNETTE DUNLAP, AUTHOR: That's for sure.

SWAIN: So the press corps, describe what it was like for the nation in the 1880s and how this business of covering presidents was beginning to come into an age of its own.

DUNLAP: Well, if you think about the 1880s, it was probably what I would call the age of newspapers. Every major city had multiple newspapers, and every one of those newspapers was looking for a way to make money. And the best way to make money was to get the best story. So whoever could find out where Frances was saying, what she was wearing, what she was doing, what she looked like, who she was seeing, that was going to help sell papers. And it didn't hurt if they made a little bit of it up, either.

SWAIN: Well, it wasn't really quite a secret by the time June 2nd had come across. You tell a story in your book that the word was beginning to leak out and there were all sorts of investigations into who this young woman might be and what the circumstances could be. So they were really priming the pump, it sounds like.

DUNLAP: Absolutely. Well, from the time that Cleveland came into office in March of 1885, there was all of this speculation about who possibly could be his bride. And it would kind of waver between some of the women who would help his sister, Rose, with her receptions at the White House, and then there was sort of this kind of competition in the mind of the public between whether or not it was Frances or her mother, Emma. And so people were pretty convinced that there was no way he was going to marry Frances. She was way too young. It had to be Emma. And then, right about this time, what they used to call Decoration Day -- now we call it Memorial Day -- in 1886, Cleveland had sent out the wedding invitations. Frances, her mother, and her cousin came back from Europe, and at the Decoration Day Parade in New York City, Frances was sort of introduced, if you will, to the public.

SWAIN: Well, the president was not very fond of the press. We have one of many quotes about the ways that he described them. Here's one way that he would refer to them, "Oh, those ghouls of the press." And this view of the press as the enemy was something that Frances quickly picked up on.

Here's one thing he said. "I begin to fear that the pestilence of newspaper correspondence will find its way to our retreat. And Mrs. Cleveland's presence will, I presume, increase this probability." This is about their honeymoon.

Now, he had some naive concept that they'd be able to sneak away for a honeymoon on their own. How did it all turn out?

DUNLAP: Actually, that was what he wrote when they were going to take their first vacation at the end of the summer, but he thought that he had been able to outsmart the press, because they had arranged for a special two-car train. It was going to be on a side rail. And they figured that they could get up to an area around what is now Deep Creek, Maryland, on some privately owned property, but there was a telegraph agent who was able to be bribed and reveal what the destination of that train was.

And because it was pouring rain that night, and when they got to the train station, they then had to take a carriage from the statin to their actual honeymoon location. The carriage got bogged down in the mud, which gave the press even more time, and the press was actually staked out there by the time they got there.

SWAIN: It gave rise to a new term, "keyhole journalism"?

DUNLAP: Yes, absolutely. And it also tied with another term called Paul Pry journalism, which was actually associated with Joseph Pulitzer, which was the idea of looking in the keyhole and seeing what you could see, what was going on in people's private lives.

SWAIN: Now, I think in your book I read that they finally conceded -- or tried to concede somewhat and gave an interview during the honeymoon. How did that work to keep the interest tamped down a little bit?

DUNLAP: Cleveland sort of ranked the press. He had what he called the respectable papers and then the not-respectable papers. And I would presume the respectable papers were the people whose views coincided -- thought his views were good.

But what he did was he invited reporters from the so-called respectable papers to come in to the cabin where he and Frances were staying. They had stacked these telegrams from well-wishers on the table. They shared some of those. It was very nicely staged, very choreographed, but they allowed the press to see some of these papers, allowed them to see him and Frances kind of engaged in one another, and it was kind of a way to say, okay, boys, you've had your fun. Now would you leave us alone so that we can, you know, get about the business of being married?

SWAIN: This was not only the age of newspapers in America, but it was the beginning of age of consumer branding. And as we said in our introduction, there was widespread use of both the president and the first lady's image to sell all kinds of products. That's how you first learned, really, of this young first lady, looking back at the history of branding in America.

DUNLAP: That's right.

SWAIN: What -- today, if you were to use the president's image, you would quickly get calls from lawyers about doing that. Were there any rules whatsoever about the use of the first couple's image?

DUNLAP: No, and that's actually why all of these companies were allowed to get away with it. And there were several supporters of Cleveland in Congress who were trying to get that type of legislation passed, that you couldn't use someone's image without their permission, but Congress kind of didn't like Cleveland. The way that he would veto legislation was to edit it, and then he would veto it, and so he had enough detractors that even though they liked Frances personally, they didn't want to give him anything that he wanted. And so they couldn't get these laws passed.

SWAIN: Well, here's a bit of Frances Cleveland and a quote that she had about her frustration with being used in this way. She said, "These people sent me a box with their perfumes, for which I thanked them, and now they're advertising their face powder as being used by me, also. Can you have it taken out?" Where is this from?

DUNLAP: That is a letter that she wrote to Richard Watson Gilder, who was the editor of Century Magazine. And so he had run an ad for this company, and she had become friends with him, and so she asked him if he would please arrange for that to happen.

SWAIN: Well, we have to explain to people how this 49-year-old president and the 21-year-old bride ever became a couple, so tell us briefly this story of Grover and Frances Cleveland.

DUNLAP: Okay. Grover Cleveland was law partners and friends with Frances' father, Oscar Folsom, and when Oscar and his wife had Frances--Emma Folsom--, Cleveland supposedly gave them the first baby carriage and sort of became a fixture in the house. As Frances grew up, she started to call him Uncle Cleve. And then her father was tragically killed just a couple of days after her 11th birthday in a carriage accident.

And Oscar was not a good money manager. Some people who knew a little bit more about the family history said he was a little bit of a rogue or a rake. And he actually owed more money than he had in his estate. And Cleveland kind of stepped in as executor and money manager to help handle the

affairs and then sort of work with Emma to oversee Frances' education through high school and into college.

SWAIN: Now, my takeaway was that his interest -- I read all of these short biographies, and it tells the story that he became interested after he got into the White House on a visit from the mother and daughter. But your tale goes back farther. All of the time that she was in college, he was sending bucket-loads of flowers to her and writing letters constantly, so, in fact, did he have her eye on -- his eye on her for quite a while?

DUNLAP: I think he did. One of the things that's really interesting is people that know a little bit more of the history, grew up in the Wells College area, which is Frances' alma mater will tell you about the special train that came to the depot there so that Grover could come and visit her. He did write her letters. He did send her flowers. But she also accompanied him on campaign appearances when he ran for governor of New York in 1882. So, yes, it is definitely well pre-White House years.

SWAIN: You say that the family, her family was really very receptive of this relationship, but what was the public reception about the age difference between the two?

DUNLAP: You had some language that called them Beauty and the Beast, because they didn't like him and he was, you know, 47, or he -- or 49, he was portly, he wasn't necessarily the handsomest man in the world, and she was an absolute stunner, dark hair, blue eyes, tall for that age, very, very good-looking, and there were people that thought there was something a little strange about it. But for the most part, because they fell immediately in love with her, they kind of just accepted him as part of the package.

SWAIN: Gary Robinson on Twitter asks how they met, which we've just explained, and asked this question. Did she love him? You've spent a lot of time reading her voluminous correspondence. Can you answer that question?

DUNLAP: She loved him. I think she started out, as most people do early in a marriage, thinking that it was romantic, but the age difference was pretty significant. And over time, that love matured into a deep caring. So over time, I wouldn't say that it was a mushy-gushy kind of love, but I would say that it was the respectful and caring kind of love.

SWAIN: Also, Grover Cleveland had some very specific views of women in society and what he wanted from a wife.

DUNLAP: Yes.

SWAIN: Would you explain it?

DUNLAP: He pretty much -- in that time period, there was still this attitude of spheres of influence, where women were supposed to stay pure and take care of the home and take care of the children, and that's exactly where he wanted Frances to be. He didn't want her pretty little head upset with notions about being first lady or being affected by all of the demands from being in the White House or being the wife of the president. And he also didn't think that women should vote or work outside the home.

SWAIN: This program -- this series, if you've been watching us along the way, as you'll know -- is interactive and there's lots of ways to do that. You can send us a question on Facebook. There is already a chat that's been going on for a little while here about Frances Cleveland. And you can find C-SPAN's Facebook page and be part of that. Also, you can send us a tweet, and you have to use the hashtag #firstladies to do that, to get into our Twitter stream here.

And, finally, the good old-fashioned way, you can make a phone call, and here are the phone numbers. If you live in the Eastern or Central time zones, 202-585-3880. If you live out west, 202-585-3881. And we will be working your questions in throughout our 90 minutes on Frances Cleveland.

We also have something special for you tonight. We had an opportunity to go inside the Smithsonian's collection. And you are going to meet Lisa Kathleen Graddy, who is the first ladies curator at the Smithsonian, to go behind the scenes and look at some of the Frances Cleveland items that they have on storage here, not open to the public, so this is really special for you tonight. We're going to be taking you for our first of several looks at the Smithsonian collection right now.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

LISA KATHLEEN GRADDY, SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY: We're here at the political history storage room. The collection is simply too vast to all be on display at one time, so objects that are not currently on the floor are stored in here. And at any given point, they can be used, pulled for exhibition purposes, or lent to another institution.

This is Frances Cleveland's wedding dress. Frances Cleveland, of course, was an incredibly popular bride. She married the president in a White House ceremony, the only White House ceremony for a first lady. This is the bodice. It's filled in with a neck piece (inaudible) goes around it and creates a softening effect. And it was a long-sleeved dress.

And this wonderful long train. This is the underside trimmed in lace. Even the underside of these clothes that you don't see have this beautiful trim and this sweeping train.

The first ladies collection contains more than clothing. And for the Cleveland's wedding, we have both public pieces and personal pieces. One of my favorite things, I have to say, in the entire collection is this cake box. And each of the guests at the wedding were given a little satin covered box painted with the bride and groom's initials to hold a piece of wedding cake. And before the wedding, Grover Cleveland and Frances Folsom actually found time to sign a card for every cake box. You can see inside, wrapped in lace, would have been a piece of cake. And this particular cake box was given to the minister who performed the wedding. His name was Byron Sunderland, and he was the minister at the First Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C.

And attesting to the public's fascination with Frances Cleveland and this wedding, this is a piece of sheet music, "The Cleveland Wedding March," composed in honor of the wedding, because it was not the Wedding March played at the wedding. And you can see it's obviously decorated with pictures of Mr. and Mrs. Cleveland, and these are images -- the images of the Cleveland -- the Clevelands together will be part of popular culture for the next 12 years.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: And we're back to our set here. And I want to introduce our second guest for the evening, returning to us from an earlier first ladies program, Taylor Stoermer, who is a historian for Colonial Williamsburg, but very steeped in presidential and first ladies history. Welcome to the conversation.

TAYLOR STOERMER, HISTORIAN: Thank you.

SWAIN: So let's talk about the election, because anybody who thinks that there's hard-knuckle politics today, look at the election of 1884 that brought Grover Cleveland into the White House, pretty rough stuff going on at that time. What was it like?

STOERMER: Politics in the 1880s is brutal. I mean, we do think about earlier elections that in American history in which they're just taking swings at each other, like Jefferson and Adams, maybe, in the 1800 election, but politics in the 1880s, because of what you already talked about, with the growth of newspapers, is personal, it's visceral, and because of the way political parties have developed, they are able to take these swipes at each other that really, I think, we would find surprising today.

So in 1884, all of these things are coming out in the 1884 election, because you have two candidates who couldn't be more different from each other. You have Grover Cleveland on the one hand who probably has -- he has very little political experience of this sort. He was mayor of Buffalo and -- elected mayor of Buffalo in 1881. He was elected governor of New York in 1882. And two years later, he's the Democratic nominee for president. That's all the major political experience that he has.

But he has developed a reputation of being honest and trustworthy and a reformer, whereas on the other hand, you've got a guy named John Blaine, who probably...

SWAIN: James.

STOERMER: ... if anything -- James Blaine, James G. Blaine, the continental liar from Maine, who if anything has too much political experience. He's been speaker of the House. He's a senator from Maine. He's one of the major figures in the Republican Party. Yet he has a reputation for probably having private virtue, a good family man, but he's also tainted by public corruption and he's kind of an inside-the-beltway guy.

And so the whole -- and the whole campaign of 1884 ends up revolving around these things. So one of the first...

SWAIN: Personal politics.

STOERMER: Personal politics. And so if the greatest strength of Grover Cleveland, the greatest opportunity that the Democrats have since James Buchanan to actually get back the White House, is the reputation of Cleveland as being a man of public virtue, then, as any good political operative would point out, go right after it. And so they did. They went straight after probably his most weak point, which is the illegitimate child.

SWAIN: And the refrain for anybody who's studied history of the period that became popular was "Ma, ma, where's your pa? Gone to the White House, ha, ha, ha." So what was the story of this illegitimate child?

DUNLAP: Well, in 1874, a woman by the name of Maria Halpin gave birth to an illegitimate child in Buffalo, New York. And given the way Buffalo was at that time, which had a lot of breweries and a lot of immigrants and a lot of massive growth, having an illegitimate child wasn't necessarily all that unusual. Maria named him Oscar Folsom Cleveland. And Cleveland stepped up to the plate and said that he would take responsibility for her and for the child.

Maria apparently had problems with alcohol and was not taking care of him, and so an opportunity developed for Cleveland to be able to place the child in the home of a family. It was the family of Mr. and Mrs. James King. And so this young man, who started his life as Oscar Folsom Cleveland, became James King, Jr.

Well, it was all pretty quiet until, as Taylor has just said, they uncovered the dirt and found out that Cleveland had assumed responsibility for this child, therefore, the assumption that he also was the father of the child and there were some efforts initially to cover it up, and then the famous line that Cleveland says is, "Tell the truth."

SWAIN: And what have we learned about Cleveland from this?

STOERMER: Well, that he is a -- he understands the virtue of making a story a non-story. Go ahead and admit to it and move on. And this is sort of how it works, is that the stories go back-and-forth, though, about really why he does it. It's either he's telling the truth and it is his child, because all evidence -- or at least the scant evidence that we have is that there's at least a possibility that it's his child. It's also a possibility it's the child of Frances' father.

But the other part of it is, just go ahead, admit to it, make it a non-story, say that it's true, and move on to what's next. And that is, in essence, what happens.

SWAIN: Well, how did Frances' family -- her mother and Frances herself -- react to this? Because it affected Uncle Cleve, the man that she was eventually betrothed to...

STOERMER: Uncle Cleve.

SWAIN: ... or, at the same time, it could have been her father's child, with the middle name Folsom. So what was their reaction to this?

DUNLAP: Their reaction is kind of interesting, considering that, as we've been talking about, Cleveland was very obviously courting Frances at this point. It's 1884. She's been at Wells for a couple of years. She's been getting lots of flowers and going on lots of campaign trips. And apparently there is a story where one of her Wells classmates came into her dorm room and happened to see a picture of Cleveland there on the desk and wanted to know who it was. And Frances referred to him at that point as the mayor of Buffalo. I don't know it wasn't the governor of New York. But her comment was "a man more sinned against than sinning."

And Emma apparently wrote a letter to Frances saying that she hated to see Cleveland going through all of this trouble with the issues with this boy, but there's never any discussion in those letters about who they thought the real father was.

SWAIN: I'm going to take some calls and then come back and talk about what Cleveland's first administration and its significance in history, how he approached the presidency. Al is watching us in La Vale, Maryland. You're on. Good evening.

AL (ph): Thank you. First of all, I've been a viewer of C-SPAN from almost the beginning. You do a wonderful job across the board.

I live in Alleghany County, Maryland, which is one county east of Garrett County, Maryland, which is where the Clevelands honeymooned. And several years ago, I had to do some research on some of the presidents who visited this area, and I dug out my notes on the honeymoon of Grover Cleveland and Frances. And I wrote down a few notes here, just want to share it with you.

After the White House ceremony, apparently either late that night or the next morning, they boarded a private B&O railroad car and arrived in Deer Park, Maryland, which is in present-day Garrett County. They honeymooned here for about six days and stayed at the Deer Park Cottage, which has since been known as the Cleveland Cottage.

The press followed them up from Washington, and B&O railroad detectives had to surround their honeymoon cottage so the reporters would not bother them, but the reporters climbed trees, they tried to spy on the couple using binoculars from the trees. They would bribe the servants to try and get a story, what they were eating, where they were going.

According to local accounts, the Clevelands went trout fishing several times in a stream that is known as Deep Creek. And they caught almost 50 trout. They attended church together in downtown Oakland in what's since became known as the Church of the Presidents.

Upon their departure back to Washington, which I think was on June 8th, they left from the Deer Park B&O railroad station. It was then that the president met with reporters and some of the locals, and he said that their honeymoon exceeded their most optimistic expectations, that they never slept better, that the air and temperature are simply delicious, and they could not have found a more suitable retreat had they searched the entire United States.

SWAIN: Thank you, Al. I'm going to jump in, because you've added a few more details to the story we told at the beginning, and we thank you for that. Anything more to add to his description of their enjoyment of their honeymoon?

DUNLAP: No, he's done good research, and that pretty much lines up with everything that I have discovered, too.

SWAIN: Is the cottage still around today?

DUNLAP: That I don't know.

SWAIN: Interesting. It sounds like, from his description, that there is.

DUNLAP: It sounds -- yes, it does.

SWAIN: And next up is Joseph, Gary, Indiana. Hi, Joseph.

JOSEPH (ph): Hi, how are you?

SWAIN: Good evening.

JOSEPH (ph): It's an excellent series. And I just want to know, I read somewhere sometime ago that she, Frances, was always concerned about Grover Cleveland's weight. Is there anything you read that you have in your research that comes across, any documentation that she actually tried to get him to lose weight?

DUNLAP: Well, she makes a couple of comments about how when they had -- they bought a place outside of -- well, what's now part of the Cleveland Park section of Washington, D.C., Oak View. And they were the first president to actually purchase a private residence to have some place to go besides living in the White House during the year.

And so Frances in an interview talks about getting him to go out and walk around the farm, but more what she did was try to get him to dress in a way that didn't accentuate his weight.

SWAIN: Wasn't so worried about his size so much as how he looked?

DUNLAP: Exactly.

SWAIN: Next up is Paula in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania. Hi, Paula.

PAULA (ph): Yes, hello. Thank you for taking my call. I did have a question regarding the wedding dress. I really liked seeing that image. I just wanted to confirm, I'm assuming it was white in color?

SWAIN: Well, it looked to be more cream, dark cream color. Was that its original color?

DUNLAP: I think cream was the correct color, yes. Of course, it's yellowed with age, but, yes, I believe cream was more appropriate.

SWAIN: Any other questions, Paula?

PAULA (ph): Yes. And then I guess -- I don't know how to phrase this -- because of the age difference, if that were to maybe take place today, I guess, lack for a better term, would we call her a gold-digger in today's society for marrying someone with such a big age difference?

SWAIN: Well, who would be criticized? He or she?

DUNLAP: Well, he could have been criticized as robbing the cradle, so I guess you could cut it both ways.

SWAIN: Yeah, it is interesting to speculate, isn't it, what the media would do with such a match in this day. And also, the pursuit of her in the years beforehand.

DUNLAP: Yeah, absolutely.

SWAIN: In this age, when nothing seems to be held secret for a long time.

STOERMER: That's true. And if we -- I think that if the press knew then what we know now about his involvement with her from her birth -- I mean, he did buy her first baby carriage, he knew her from her entire life, then there would be people who would think this was a little creepy.

And then, moving on, I think that -- you're talking about modern (inaudible) people think about Donald Trump and you think about these kind of -- these kind of May-December relationships...

DUNLAP: Well, Hugh Hefner is marrying somebody how young?

STOERMER: So I think that depending upon what your moral basis is for understanding these relationships, then I think you're going to get into a similar kind of conversation.

SWAIN: So to the important serious politics of the age, you told us that Grover Cleveland successfully ended a 24-year GOP Republican run at holding the White House, but he was a fiscal conservative. Big issues of the time were the gold and silver standard, tariffs, and also corruption. So what was his approach to the presidency? Was he a strong executive?

STOERMER: He was an exceptionally strong executive. Now, that's not to say that he was a great constitutional thinker. Grover Cleveland was no James Madison. However, he did have a very clear idea, well, about almost everything, but certainly about what the role of the presidency was and also what the role of the federal government was. And he thought that his role as president was to really be the guardian of the federal government and do what he had done in Albany as governor of New York, or in mayor as governor of -- as mayor of -- in Buffalo, as mayor of Buffalo, to go ahead and make sure that Congress wasn't doing anything that was going to screw the country up, Congress wasn't going to engage in unnecessary social policy, it wasn't going to engage in unnecessary economic policy.

And so he was there to make -- to keep them honest and also to do what he had done -- also in these other positions and reform the broader system of patronage that he thought had undermined, really, the confidence that people had in their government.

SWAIN: And to do that, he employed the veto 304 times.

STOERMER: More than that, if you include -- and this is just for his first term. If you include pocket vetoes along with regular vetoes, he vetoed 414 pieces of legislation in his first term, which is more than all of the presidential vetoes combined before him. And these are bills like soldiers' pensions, things like that, because he thinks that this is just a way for guys in Congress -- for members of Congress to be able to curry some political favor among their friends back home.

And so he's vetoing these things left and right. And he has no problem whatsoever in doing it. But he also has no real understanding, given his experience, of how the legislative process works. He's not really about compromising with Congress. He's not interested in having discussions with them about these issues. He cares about tariff reform, making sure that tariffs are being lowered. He wants to make sure that they're maintaining the gold standard, because he thinks that's a sounder economic policy. Outside of that, he wants Congress to stay quiet.

DUNLAP: But the bad part about that is that we had reached a point in our economy where tariff reform was really important, because we still had tariffs that were way too high and it was actually impacting and affecting our trade and hurting us internationally. And probably some of the lack of that tariff reform is part of the reason why the depression that started during Benjamin Harrison's time and then really made Cleveland's second term so dismal probably was partly because they could not get tariff reform in place.

But as Taylor has said, Cleveland didn't know how to -- Cleveland was not a negotiator. He didn't know how to curry favor and work with groups and try to kind of get things to happen. He would sit, burn the midnight oil, and veto legislation.

SWAIN: Well, the answer might be self-evident, then, because in our many past first ladies, we often saw them practicing parlor politics, hosting dinners to bring warring factions together under one roof. He had quite an acrimonious Republican Senate. Did they use the White House to try and bring together any of the forces looking for compromise?

STOERMER: Less in this White House than probably in many of the previous White Houses. And Frances is involved in this in at least one occasion. Like we said, one of Grover Cleveland's -- perhaps his biggest issue was tariff reform, and she actually attends a Senate debate. She's sitting in the gallery over his major piece of legislation on tariff reform. So it's one of the only pieces of direct evidence that we have of her involvement in any kind of political influence.

But other than that, they're using the White House for very different kinds of things, and she's able to improve his standing in D.C. simply by standing next to him, because he has a reputation coming into the White House of being -- he likes poker, he likes hanging out with his guy friends, he likes smoking...

DUNLAP: Smoking cigars.

STOERMER: ... he likes hunting and fishing...

DUNLAP: Drinking bourbon.

STOERMER: ... drinking bourbon, right. And she socializes him and civilizes him almost immediately, which gives him some political cache. But then when you're talking about how the White House is being actually used in the ways that we've talked about in terms of other first ladies, she's doing things like getting involved in copyright legislation, to focus on intellectual property, that this is a woman's sphere, in order to be able to protect the arts, protect authors. And so she holds a -- she holds a reception at the White House for authors to bring attention to the need for intellectual property legislation.

DUNLAP: And just to kind of pick up on what Taylor is saying, part of the reason why you don't see the parlor politics is because Cleveland wouldn't have had it. He didn't see that as Frances' responsibility or Frances' role. He didn't want her engaged in or involved in anything that would have smacked of her showing a political view or a political opinion. She had political views and political opinions, but he didn't want to use her in that way or take advantage of what she probably could have very well done for him, I think, if...

STOERMER: Yeah, I think so, too. I think you're right.

DUNLAP: Yeah, if they -- if he had utilized her skill set much as we have -- you've talked in other shows about how first ladies have exercised parlor politics.

SWAIN: So this enormous publicity and a great public interest on this young first lady that people were very excited about having her in the White House, he had this great political chit or tool at his disposal, and elected not to use it?

DUNLAP: Absolutely.

STOERMER: And everybody else knows it, except -- everybody else seems to know it except for him, that -- the New York Times has editorials about this is his great card to play, is Frances Cleveland. And he's not going to play it. Instead, he's going to focus on vetoing as much legislation as possible, taking off as many people on the Hill as possible, which actually continues to undermine his political capacity.

SWAIN: But you write about the fact that he had very decided views of the roles of women. So was this framing his decision about not to use Frances as a political chit?

DUNLAP: Yeah, I mean, that's part of his view, is that he didn't want her involved in anything politically. And even the things that she got involved with, which were not necessarily political, when she starts getting active in the New York Kindergarten Association, you see in her letters to her friends that he is angry with her because of how much time she's spending with these organizations and not involved with things that he thinks that she should be involved in, mainly at home taking care of him.

SWAIN: Now, as you can see from all these wonderful photographs you're seeing on the screen, that we've now moved fully into the age of photography and we're able to show you so many more images. And also with the rise of media, many more illustrations that were done by the media. This is also the first time in this series that we have some video of one of the first ladies.

This is her later in her life, but we thought it would be interesting just to show you, as we talk about the media, what the first lady looked like later on in life. And we're going to watch that as we listen to a phone call from Matthew in Caldwell, New Jersey. Hi, Matthew, you're on.

MATTHEW (ph): Hey, how are you? I'm calling from the birthplace of Grover Cleveland. We had the Memorial Day Parade today, and I'm proud to say I got to play Grover Cleveland in the parade.

SWAIN: How about that?

MATTHEW (ph): It was a lot of fun.

SWAIN: Now, how did you get the role of Grover Cleveland?

MATTHEW (ph): I'm a member of the association and they talked me into it or I talked them into it.

STOERMER: How much padding did you have to wear?

SWAIN: Yeah, that's the question. How's your shape compared to the president's?

MATTHEW (ph): Well, I'm 230. I guess he was a little bit heavier. I'm 6'2". I think he was a little bit shorter.

SWAIN: That's right.

MATTHEW (ph): We have our big affair on the Fourth of July, and if I keep gaining weight, maybe I'll fit it then.

SWAIN: Well, we...

STOERMER: Henry Adams said that he was five feet tall and four feet wide.

DUNLAP: Four feet wide, yeah, exactly, and no neck.

STOERMER: And no neck.

SWAIN: Matthew, as someone who is interested and played the president, what's a question that you have for our guests tonight?

MATTHEW (ph): Good question. That is the question about veto, I guess I've been saying he was lucky, because Garfield before him and McKinley after him were assassinated, so it was a tough time to be a president of the United States from, you know, latter part of the 19th century. I just find him interesting. I'm proud as a Democrat that -- out of about 11 presidents in a row, he was the only Democrat, so I focus on that a little bit, that in the 50-year period, there was one Democrat and we got him.

SWAIN: All right. Thank you so much for calling from the president's birthplace. We talked about Frances while she was not being used politically. She certainly was -- and we talk about influence and image. On the image side of the equation, one that was carefully watched in the United States. We're going to return to the Smithsonian and look at some of the dresses that she chose, and then we'll learn about how she might have affected style in the country.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

LISA KATHLEEN GRADDY: The public's fascination with Frances Cleveland really extended to her clothes, and she was a real fashion icon. Women emulated her hairstyle. They emulated her clothing. She popularized everything that she had and did.

This is a dress from the second administration. And in a way, this is the most prized piece of all, because this is the inaugural gown. This was her inaugural gown from 1893, and it stayed in her family and became the family wedding dress.

The bottom of the dress is exactly the same. But the top has been remade. It originally had a satin top with large leg of mutton sleeves with bows on the shoulders. And lace from that original dress was used to recreate a new bodice to make it a more fashionable, modern wedding dress, and this was used by her granddaughters.

So that's a wedding dress and an inaugural dress, but let's look at some of her other clothes. Even Frances Cleveland's everyday clothes were very stylish. A lot of them look like something you could

wear now. This is a jacket, wonderful bolero jacket, black with this beautiful purple blue velvet. So it's definitely daywear.

This is a more evening appropriate piece. This is a bodice, would have had a matching skirt. You can see the beautiful lace and sequins, netting, beading. Slightly more ornate daytime vest. This would have a matching collar. And, again, you can wear this with a shirt waist and skirt.

For those who know the history of, the first ladies collection is 100 years old now. And one of the earlier dresses, the wedding dress was on display for many years. We changed the dresses around. And this dress was on display before even that.

This is a reception dress Mrs. Cleveland would have worn during the second administration. The 1890s are when sleeves become much larger and the puffs become a big facet of the clothes. This is a beautiful skirt and bodice, would have made a matching evening gown. So huge, these large puffed sleeves, trimmed in lace, and butterflies, and a description at the time talks about the butterflies looking as if they would alight from her shoulders.

But you can see the damage that light will do. This is why we rotate dresses. Velvet was originally this color and over the years of display, it's faded.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: So I'm curious about how this 21-year-old whose family finances were rather insecure after her father died when she was a youngster developed this sense of taste and style.

DUNLAP: Well, I think sometimes it's just innate, and she seemed to have had it. And there is some suggestion that her Folsom grandfather, who had lost all three of his adult children and, therefore, was able to -- or interested in taking care of his grandchildren provided money to pay for her trousseau.

And then Cleveland was not as wealthy as maybe some of the presidents -- earlier presidents who owned large amounts of land and who were slaveholders, but Cleveland was not a poor man, either. So once she married him, there was money for her to be able to purchase very nice clothing.

SWAIN: And did she set trends?

DUNLAP: She set some trends. The one that she is the most famous for, although it may not be a true story, but it certainly has gotten a lot of press, and that is getting rid of the bustle. And the bustle was a wire contraption that was on the back of your dress, and it was -- it had kind of gone out of fashion in the 1870s, and then a French couturier by the name of Charles Worth decided to bring it back, because he could sell more fabric, because you needed more fabric to be able to drape over this metal contraption that was from the waist and over the hips.

And so it was a slow news day in Washington. And some reporters were looking for a story, and they said, well, anything about Mrs. Cleveland sells. Let's say she's quit wearing the bustle. And it went out, and the whole public believed it, and all the women quit wearing bustles and had all their dresses remade. And when Frances came back from vacation and went shopping, she asked for a bustle, and they said, "But, Mrs. Cleveland, we heard that you've quit wearing them. And since we've heard that, and everybody's quit asking for them, we've moved them to the basement. But if you want one, we'll go down and get one of you."

And Frances was with her shopping companion and she just looked at her and said, "Well, if they say that I've stopped wearing the bustle, I guess I've just got to stop wearing the bustle." And she went and had all here clothes remade the next day.

STOERMER: Yeah, but that statement she makes is she must dress to suit the newspapers. Now, to go ahead and accept that, I think, is a remarkable reflection of exactly how important all that coverage is. And she also made that statement about they could use all of the extra ones as catcher's masks. One of the things I love about Frances, she's a baseball fan.

SWAIN: Well, we should make the point that women's dress reform was very political, because the clothing that women were wearing was very constrictive, and there was a moment along with the women's suffrage movement to release women from these very constrictive clothing. And it was a big battle of the conservative view versus the more liberal view.

Did Frances get involved in this at all?

DUNLAP: She didn't get involved in it directly, but it's very interesting, because if you look at photographs of her at their summer place called Buzzards Bay, she is dressed very, very -- what we would call casually. She is still wearing a dress, but she's in a bathing -- there are pictures of her and her mother in bathing costumes.

She is wearing what we would just call simple shift, just away from the corsets, the stays, the big puffy sleeves, all of the ornamentation, but when she was in public, she was going to dress in the way that she thought the public expected her to look.

SWAIN: Back to phone calls. Let's go to Judith in Marion, Massachusetts. Hi, Judith. You're on. Your question?

MARION (ph): Oh, hello. I'm just calling to say that my husband and I own the house that the Clevelands rented for two summers in Marion. And they came to Marion because Richard Watson Gilder had given a talk at Wells College and had met Mrs. Cleveland. And she thought that her husband was under a lot of stress, and when he found out that there was good fishing off of Marion, they came during the summer for four summers in between his two terms.

And they also have the only child that was born in the White House, Esther, and their oldest daughter, Ruth, the Baby Ruth was supposed to have been named after her, and their next daughter, Marion, which was born in 1895, was named after Marion, because they loved living here so much.

And they also had receptions here and were very accessible to the people of Marion. And so the people from Marion here are very, very fond of the memories of the Clevelands.

SWAIN: What is the house like today, Judith? Is it still in the style of the period? Or has it been renovated?

MARION (ph): Yes, it's been added on to. They lived in it when it was more like a farmhouse. And I actually have quite a few photographs of them sitting on the porch. Then, later on in 1891 or 1892, it was made into a much larger house of the shingles style that was very popular for houses on the water. And so it changed.

And actually, Grover Cleveland wanted to buy this house, but the owner then named a very high price, and so he decided -- he was a very frugal man. He decided not to buy it and went down to Bourne and bought a house there called Gray Gables.

SWAIN: Well, you may be getting some phone calls from our guests here to see some of those photographs at your house. Thank you so much for your call and sharing your own personal connection to the Cleveland history.

Well, we're going to quickly run out of time on this important first term of the Clevelands. How involved was she at all in any of the aspects, any of these big issues of his presidency?

DUNLAP: Well, the biggest issue probably of the time was the copyright that she was involved in. Would you agree with that?

STOERMER: I -- right, in terms of her direct political involvement, because she's -- she's going far beyond just the kind of parlor politics of having people over and talking -- and that kind of retail politics. She's even doing things like going to rallies to support this legislation. They were holding them at the First Presbyterian Church here in town, and so she would actually go there, unaccompanied by the president, and to make sure that she was being directly associated with this legislation.

SWAIN: Well...

DUNLAP: And there's also a connection between what was going on in Marion, Massachusetts, and this support of the copyright, because that was where Richard Watson Gilder, the owner of Century Magazine, and his wife, Helena de Kay Gilder, who was an artist and who had started the Art Students League, had salons, and that is also how Frances met the actor, Joseph Jefferson, and Mark Twain and several other well-known writers of that time period. And that is how she got involved in that whole milieu and then became very supportive of the copyright.

And I guess we should tell your viewers that the issue with the copyright is kind of the reverse of the tariff issue, because the issue with the copyright was that American writers were not able to get royalties if their works were sold abroad. And what the effort was, was to get these international protections for American authors so that they would be able to get royalties when their works were sold internationally.

STOERMER: And so when you're talking about -- and when you're talking about the major political issues of the day outside of the kind of things that Frances was directly involved in, like we said about tariffs reforms, the huge debate over the gold standard versus replacing it with something that is based -- with a standard that's based upon silver or with legislation regarding Native American land and assimilation, that any kind of legislation that's dealing with the massive increase of immigration into America, how America's really being transformed, she's really not involved in any of that, to any extent.

Because there's one particular story in -- and it happens during the first term in 1887. The New York Fire Department asks her to go ahead and come up to be a part of a -- to be a part of a public event. And she writes back, saying that she is not going to attend because it's her view of the role of the first lady is to not engage in these kind of public ceremonies without the presence of her husband.

But the head of the New York Fire Department gets a little ticked off about this and writes to the president, and so President Cleveland responds directly to him, saying, "Well, you know, I agree with her decision. However, it's up to her. And if this is her concept of what the role of a first lady is, I wholly support her."

DUNLAP: But, you know, I'm not exactly sure that was her decision. I'm kind of thinking that he told her that was her decision.

SWAIN: Did they travel during their first term?

STOERMER: Sure.

DUNLAP: Yes, they had a very, very successful -- it was called the western and southern tour. And...

STOERMER: And historically important.

DUNLAP: Yes, because this was really -- correct me if I'm wrong -- this was the first time since the end of the Civil War where a president embarked on this extensive of a tour to cover the South, as well as the West, which was, you know, gaining in population. And the crowds were -- Richard Watson Gilder writes letters to Frances saying, you know, get some bodyguards, get some protection, you're going to be crushed to death. And she writes letters back -- in fact, the letter she writes is, "We're finally on the way home. It's been a wonderful and terrific tour. I'm so thankful that nobody got killed and child got tramped, because the crowds were just enormous."

STOERMER: Yeah, and the people of St. Louis, they actually -- they actually made coins with her image on them to go ahead and hand out during her visit.

DUNLAP: Yeah, as mementoes of having -- of their having been there.

SWAIN: So we're up to the 1888 election, which pits Grover Cleveland, who stands for re-election against Benjamin Harrison of Indiana. And what were the big issues?

STOERMER: Well, the -- I think that the biggest issue at this point is -- the economy is really starting to -- is starting to teeter. But the -- but the major part of the issue is really about partisan politics, is really about making sure that -- so they can shift the -- shift Sherman -- they can shift the monetary standard to silver, that the Republicans were able to get back into the White House.

To do that, you've got to get back, you've got to get back New York. And so Benjamin Harrison ends up being this compromise candidate. He was a little bit of a cold fish, and the political cartoonists had their kind of way with him. They would always depict him in this huge overcoat and this old-fashioned hat to suggest that he's wearing his grandfather's clothes. And obviously, his grandfather was William Henry Harrison, the former president, and that he's just sort of riding that kind of connection into the White House.

But the important thing about the election, in terms of the -- of our understanding of it. There are really two things. The first thing is that it really is the first of the big money elections. This makes campaign finance history. The Republicans put $3 million into this race. And they forget about the popular vote. They really want to focus on the electoral vote. They want to focus on strategically applying this money to win New York, to win Indiana, and $3 million is an enormous amount of money, more than has ever gone into any kind of election up to that point.

And then there's -- and then the issue is really about, what are you going to do about Grover Cleveland's greatest card? A Republican once said at the time that it will be -- it's one thing to go ahead and go after Grover Cleveland. It's another thing to go after them -- to try to defeat them both.

And so what they do is that, again, we're back into this bare-knuckle kind of politics, in which they -- the Republicans bring up this story that he is, in fact -- that Grover Cleveland is, in fact, abusing Frances. I mean, they really just take it directly.

SWAIN: And so Portia Thomas asks, rumors of spousal abuse during this campaign. She asks this on Facebook, wants to know, true or untrue?

DUNLAP: Pretty much I'm convinced it's untrue. The way it got started was Frances loved to go to the theater. Grover loved to veto legislation.

STOERMER: Until 2 o'clock in the morning.

DUNLAP: Right, exactly. So he didn't always go with her. Of course, a woman didn't go unescorted, so a lot of times she went with a member of Congress or somebody who was on the White House staff who would take her.

And so the story is that a supporter from Congress, Senator Waterston, took her to a play, came back, had a nice chat with the president, said good evening, but that's allegedly when he beat her and beat her mother. And nobody really said anything initially.

There was a minister from Massachusetts, Reverend Pendleton, who started saying these vile things from the pulpit. And then much like the situation with the illegitimate child, kind of what we would now call today getting out in front of the story, Frances writes a letter that is sent to all the papers. And as we're talking about, you know, she's not supposed to be political and she's supposed to kind of stay in her sphere, but this letter goes out over her signature that says that I wish that all of the women of this country were as fortunate as I to have such a kind and caring husband.

But here's the interesting thing about that letter. Even though it's her signature, it's not her hand-- If you look at the actual letter in the Grover Cleveland papers, it's not her handwriting. It was written by Daniel Lamont, who was essentially the chief of staff.

SWAIN: So it was crafted within the administration?

DUNLAP: It was crafted within the administration, and it was their political way to deal with it.

SWAIN: Did -- sorry?

STOERMER: But some these contradictions are, when we're talking about Grover Cleveland and the kind of deployment of Frances in political ways. The way that the Democrats use her during the election, obviously, you've got to tamper down this particular issue, but this election is, in fact, the one election in which the image of the first lady is employed in direct political ways, more than any other election in American history.

Jessie Fremont had her image on one particular campaign piece in 1856. Lucy Hayes had her image on a poster. But in the '88 election, the Democratic Party is rolling out Frances Cleveland. And then there are the creation of the Frances Cleveland clubs.

SWAIN: Donald Blais writes, "I read that when she left the White House in 1889, she told the White House butler that she'd be back exactly four years from today. How was she so confident that President Cleveland would be re-elected after losing the '88 election?"

In fact, here's her quote: "I want you to take good care of the furniture and ornaments in the house, for I want to find everything just as it is now when we come back four years from today."

It sounds supremely confident.

DUNLAP: Sounds supremely confident. And to be honest with you, I think that the minute they hit New York, which is where they lived for the next four years, she started campaigning for him. She...

STOERMER: Well, and part of it is that he didn't lose the 1888 election.

(CROSSTALK)

STOERMER: He won the popular vote.

DUNLAP: ... New York electoral vote.

STOERMER: Right. I mean, his -- he actually outpaced Harrison by tens of thousands of votes. But he was swamped in the electoral system. And so he's -- he's the only president, other than FDR, to win more than two elections.

SWAIN: So what happened was that the Republicans were ahead of the Democrats in doing this Electoral College strategy in applying it...

STOERMER: Absolutely.

SWAIN: ... and it worked for them.

STOERMER: Absolutely. It's exactly what happened.

SWAIN: We have another Smithsonian video, and this will talk about the political partner and the roles that it played in the election that year.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

LISA KATHLEEN GRADDY: Frances Cleveland is just so popular, people are imitating her clothes, they're imitating her hairstyle, but they really just want a piece of Frances for themselves. They -- we've always felt as if we owned the first ladies, and she was someone we know, and so pictures of the first lady became extremely popular. You can purchase your own picture of Mrs. Cleveland to have in your home.

And based on these pictures, advertisers and manufacturers make an array of souvenirs that you can purchase and have Mrs. Cleveland in your house, in your home, so you can purchase a small painted glass portrait. You can have plates of Mrs. Cleveland. Mrs. Cleveland can convince you to buy a product, including -- this is Merrick Thread, binding the country and the first couple together.

And she's used in campaigns. So while we have Grover Cleveland running for president, we also have Mrs. Cleveland running for first lady. This is a set of campaign playing cards, where you're actually electing the president, the vice president, and the first lady.

This is Frances Cleveland in the second administration. She looks a little different now. She's not the young ingenue. She's a young mother, a confident matron, and this is just a pretty piece you could have in your home, a print of Frances Cleveland. Notice that the same image is used in this ribbon, so the Clevelands visited the World's Fair, and you can have a souvenir from the World's Fair that not only commemorates the fair, it also commemorates the Clevelands' visit to the fair.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: So they are moving to New York. Why do they choose New York City for their next stop in life?

DUNLAP: I think that that was probably just a good place for Frances with her interest in the arts and Cleveland got a job there.

SWAIN: And what did he do?

DUNLAP: He worked for a law firm, Francis Lynde Stetson, who was the attorney for JP Morgan and several other extremely well-known and financially well-off and influential people, but he was considered at counsel, so he wasn't actually practicing law as a practicing attorney as much as overseeing activities within the law firm.

SWAIN: But the suggestion was that it was an immediate bid to reclaim the White House.

STOERMER: Right. They sort of launched right back into it. I think that people were -- the fact of him winning the popular vote continues the Democrats in thinking that they're going to be able to recapture New York. There's some adjustments they can do in order to be able to get right back into the White House. I don't think there's very much -- there's very much question that Cleveland is going to be the candidate in the '92 election. And so what are the kind of steps that they really need to take to shore up their electoral vote so that they can -- so they can get right back there?

SWAIN: She also gives birth to the couple's first child, who is named Ruth, and there are a number of questions -- here's one from Holly Han -- wondering about the Baby Ruth candy bar being named after the Clevelands' first daughter. What's the story there?

DUNLAP: Story there is that Curtiss Candy Company developed this candy bar. I guess what we should say is that Ruth Cleveland tragically tied of diphtheria in January of 1904. So she would have been about 12, 12 1/2 years old at that point.

Baby Ruth candy bar, if my memory serves me correctly, came out in 1909. But there had been a lot of songs, as we may get to in the show in a little bit, songs, images. Just as they used Mr. and Mrs. Cleveland in the '88 election, they used Mr. and Mrs. Cleveland and Baby Ruth in the 1892 election. So the phrase had been out there, and the Curtiss Candy Company took that name and named the candy bar for her.

SWAIN: You referenced her interest in the kindergarten movement. The kindergarten movement was a big social movement in the country at the time, which was designed to do what?

DUNLAP: It was designed to help Americanize immigrant children and their mothers. It was the idea of being able to put children into a school setting in which you could begin to teach them their numbers, their letters, to speak English, American customs, American patriotism, and then it was also a tool with which, as the children were learning, that the mothers would learn along with it. And back in that sphere of influence, the mothers would take that knowledge back and bring it to the husband and to all of the children in the family.

SWAIN: Because we should say, about immigration in the country at this time, it was a critically important issue, and lots of waves of immigrants coming in.

STOERMER: Oh, it's extraordinary. It's the -- it's the greatest -- it's really the greatest period of mass immigration in American history in terms of the percentage of the population. It's 500,000 -- throughout the 1880s -- it's 500,000 people coming in every year. And they're Germans and they're Irish, there are a lot of Catholics. Of course, there are Eastern Europeans. And then the West Coast, there are a lot of people coming in from China who are working -- who are working out there.

But the demographic change that the American population is going through and the kind of challenges with the growth of the cities and this major movement from a mainly agrarian population to one that is really based in the cities and is focused more on manufacturing is having a major impact on American culture and on how you're relating to it, on this big question of, how do you assimilate these immigrants to make them good Americans? How do you deal with temperance as a political issue? Because you don't want to actually tick off people who will enjoy a pint or two at the end of the day.

So these kind of issues that are coming up are the kind of things that women like Frances are in their sphere really trying to tackle head on, especially when you're talking about what's going on in the city

of New York and in bigger cities in the Northeast, what you're doing with the people who have the least resources among them. And the kindergarten is really one way to get at it.

SWAIN: She remained interested in the kindergarten issue throughout her life. Is that correct?

DUNLAP: She did. She actually had a kindergarten for Ruth and for two of Ruth's playmates, who were daughters of cabinet -- well, Daniel Lamont was back again, sort of this chief of staff, and then Bissell was the postmaster general. Those men had had children about the same age as Ruth, so there was a kindergarten in the White House for the three of them. And then Frances was also very active in higher education, as well. She was instrumental in the founding of Douglass College, which was the women's college that's now part of Rutgers in New Jersey. And then she stayed very active with her alma mater, Wells College, for 40 years as a trustee.

SWAIN: The 1892 election was a rematch between Harrison and Cleveland. Let's just talk about it from the first family's perspective. First of all, the first lady, Mrs. Harrison, died just before the election. Is that correct?

STOERMER: Yes.

SWAIN: And how did that affect the election overall and the president's interest in campaigning?

STOERMER: How did that affect Benjamin Harrison's interest in campaigning? Benjamin Harrison was never terribly interested in campaigning, but this certainly does -- this certainly does put a -- it does put a little bit of a -- it really impacts him negatively in terms of pursuing with any kind of gusto what's going on.

But the major problem isn't necessarily what's going on with Harrison, but -- who has also suffered some major defeats during his presidency. The major issue is the economy is going to tank, and there isn't anything that he can really do about it, that and the Republican Party is splintering. There's still James G. Blaine, who's hanging around, who had been his secretary of state. He resigns right before the end of the Harrison presidency and or to see whether or not he can get one last bite at the nomination apple.

And so the Republicans are splintering among themselves, whereas the Democrats are finding a better recipe to go ahead and coalesce. And so the -- so the '92 election is really taking -- the backdrop to that is the crumbling economy and the crumbling Republican Party.

SWAIN: So in 1892, Frances' prediction becomes true. With this economic uncertainty in the country, President Cleveland is returned to office. But it is a tough second term that we're going to learn. And soon thereafter -- and this is one of the most fascinating presidential stories -- we should make the point -- and this is pretty obvious to presidential history -- that the only president in American history who has served two non-consecutive terms. So he was president number 22 and number 24. He gets two numbers in the line-up.

But soon after, they discover a spot in his mouth, this prodigious cigar smoker, and it leads to an interesting story of which Frances Cleveland is very much involved. Tell the story of his surgery.

DUNLAP: Okay. As you said, he found a soft spot in his mouth, and he called his doctors because it bothered him, and they decided that it was probably cancerous. Frances was pregnant at the time with their second child, who would be the only child to be born in the White House, as the caller mentioned earlier, Esther.

And the original plan was for them to go to a rental house that they had been renovating, again, in the Cleveland Park section. And then, all of a sudden, you get this announcement in the paper that they've

changed their plans, that Mrs. Cleveland wants to take her baby to Buzzards Bay -- this is their place in Massachusetts -- for the summer so that Ruth can enjoy the winds and the breeze. And so Frances and Ruth depart, and they go on a yacht of their friends, and they go up to Buzzards Bay. And then that same yacht, Commodore Benedict's yacht, comes back and Grover Cleveland gets on it.

In the meantime, to dispel some rumors that he may be losing weight and they're saying, well, he's losing weight because he's sick, they're saying that he's on this diet program and that he's kind of like the 1890 version of Weight Watchers, the Banting program. And so he gets on the yacht. They perform the surgery on the yacht. And he's basically gone for a month.

And so the press starts to say, what's going on? Where's the president? They're asking her questions, and she's kind of putting them off, and she's saying, oh, he's just having a good time fishing. He needs the rest. You know, things in the country have been terrible. He really needs this time away.

And finally, he arrives and they're sort of able to cover it up with the press. And then he has to go back for a kind of follow-up operation to get fitted with this rubber jaw, and, again, the press is looking.

There is a reporter who eventually broke the story. But the administration, unfortunately, discredited him, but she was very complicit in the cover-up. And there's one really good quote out of that, and that is she wrote to the Joseph Jeffersons, who were friends of theirs that were in on all of what was going on, she says, "This morning he had a peach. Wouldn't you think a child would have more sense than that, given everything he's just been through?"

SWAIN: They were worried about infection from eating any fruit.

DUNLAP: Absolutely.

SWAIN: This is really an incredible tale. The president off the coast of the United States being operated on for cancer surgery, having his entire upper jaw removed, later fitted with a prosthesis, and all of this essentially hidden from the press.

STOERMER: And very explicitly so, between somebody like Daniel Lamont, who -- he was the chief of staff and really amounted to his press secretary, and Frances being -- I mean, talking about -- he's just off on a fishing trip, really covering every step that they can, even though there are rumors that slip out...

SWAIN: But his motivation, as I understand it, was a fear that eh economy would tank further.

STOERMER: This is the issue, is that there is a bigger policy matter at stake in terms of what's going on into the American economy, that right then, that the markets are very jittery, the vice president, Adlai Stevenson, who was the grandfather of the later candidate Adlai Stevenson, was not somebody who was seen as being reliable when it came to the markets.

And so Cleveland and his supporters firmly believed that any kind of hint that the president was in danger at all in terms of his health would actually send the markets even further into the tank, all the Wall Street investors would go ahead and pull out and accelerate a panic that was already in full swing.

And so they had to maintain stability in the markets. And the only way that they could do that was to keep this completely secret. And we're not even just talking about a little secret, that they make sure that they do the surgery so there is no external scars, and he gives an interview to a reporter three days after his second operation.

SWAIN: With his rubber jaw?

STOERMER: With his rubber jaw.

DUNLAP: Right, to make it look and sound like he's perfectly okay and everything's normal.

SWAIN: It must have been a skill just to learn how to speak with that.

DUNLAP: Yeah.

SWAIN: Marvin, Los Angeles. Thanks for waiting. You're on.

MARVIN (ph): Yes, my question has to do with what Mrs. Cleveland did after she left office. The next Democratic first lady after leaving office, Mrs. Wilson, got very involved in international affairs and attended Democratic conventions and so forth. And, of course, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, the next Democratic president, also was involved after the White House. And, of course, Jacqueline Kennedy worked to save various places, like Grand Central Station. Did Frances Folsom Cleveland get involved in any way? Did she attend Democratic conventions? Did she use her influence in any political way?

SWAIN: Thanks, Marvin. And we will get to that story in just a couple minutes. Thanks for asking that question, because it's an important one to understand her influence over time.

Patricia, Gloucester, Massachusetts, your question?

PATRICIA (ph): Oh, hello, Susan. I never miss your fine Friday night program.

SWAIN: Thank you.

PATRICIA (ph): I've just written a book about my grandfather, William Woodward Baldwin of Baltimore, and there's the chapter that I've written about Grover Cleveland and Frances Folsom, because Cleveland appointed my grandfather an undersecretary of state in 1896. And his wife, Katherine Willard, was Frances Folsom's closest friend at Wells College in Aurora, and they often visited the Clevelands at the White House. And Frances Folsom was the godmother to my father in the White House, and I still have the long dress.

My question is this. Katherine Willard's aunt was another Frances, Frances Willard, head of the WCTU. So how did her friend, Frances Folsom, and Cleveland feel about the temperance movement? Thanks so much.

SWAIN: Thank you, Patricia. Some real interesting personal stories tonight. It sounds like you want to make that connection, as well.

DUNLAP: Well, yeah, I definitely want to make that connection, because I lost track of Katherine Willard and Wells College has lost track of Katherine Willard, and she and Frances were, indeed, very close friends. And Frances did introduce Katherine to Mr. Baldwin, by the way. Frances was the matchmaker.

Frances took a temperance vow when she -- probably about the time she joined the Presbyterian Church, which was at the age of 14, and she honored that up until the latter part of her life.

SWAIN: However, she, unlike the Hayeses, allowed...

DUNLAP: She allowed...

SWAIN: ... alcohol to be served in the White House.

DUNLAP: Absolutely. She served alcohol. She had some very fine wines served at some good state dinners. Cleveland, on the other hand, enjoyed his whiskey.

SWAIN: So the difference between her and the previous administration was she wasn't imposing her views through the White House.

STOERMER: Right, it's not a broader public policy issue for her. It's just a personal issue for her. And the Woman's Christian Temperance Union wasn't just about temperance. I mean, this was actually -- the WCTU were actually her biggest critics in the first term about the kind of clothes she was wearing.

DUNLAP: Yeah, they didn't like her sleeveless dresses or her low neckline. They said she was being immodest.

STOERMER: And she ignored them.

SWAIN: To look at her approach to her job as first lady during the second administration, we have this quote. "I find myself very busy with my social duties beginning again and two babies. I give so much time to the children because I won't be cheated of their babyhood by anything, much less not worthwhile things."

Whitney Zatskin asks on Twitter, "Frances Cleveland held weekly White House receptions on Saturdays for working women. Did she continue that during her second term?"

DUNLAP: No, she did not. She really scaled back the social calendar. She did what was absolutely necessary from a diplomatic standpoint during the typical Washington social season, and then they tried to actually get out of the White House to this rental house that they had in another part of Washington.

SWAIN: There was concern about the safety of the Cleveland children during that time. People were beginning to feel as though they were the nation's kids. How did the Clevelands approach this?

DUNLAP: Well, that is interesting, because that's also part of the reason why people decided they did not like her as much. And that, of course, then deflected to him, as well. She started closing the White House gates so that the public could not see the children or her when they were out on the grounds, ands he also uncovered a kidnap plot, which made her even more vigilant toward the children.

SWAIN: We have another video. This is on the Cleveland children from the Smithsonian.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

LISA KATHLEEN GRADDY: White House children have always been popular with the public. When Frances Cleveland became first lady, of course, she was a young bride, and she didn't have her first child until they had left the White House and were living in New York. And their first daughter was named Ruth.

When Cleveland successfully ran for president again in 1892, both Baby Ruth and the Harrison's grandchild, Baby McKee, were a part of the campaign. And this is a piece of sheet music. The lyrics talk about Baby Ruth and Baby McKee vying for who will be the next child in the White House.

During the second term, the Clevelands had their second child. Her name was Esther, another little girl, and this is a doll that belonged to Esther Cleveland. You can see she has eyes that open and close. The public was just so fascinated with them that every time they went outside, Mrs. Cleveland was afraid that people would actually try and pick up children, take them away from their nurse, pass them around, and wanting to play with them, kiss them, hug them. They felt as if the first children were -- belonged to them, in a way, just as the president and first lady did. They were a part of the extended American family.

It's one of the reasons that the Clevelands actually had a second home, and they only stayed in the White House during the social season and had a private residence the rest of the time to create some privacy for them and for their children.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: So her approach to protecting the children made her less popular with the American public. The economy continued to be very, very challenging. So by the time the Clevelands finished their second tour of duty in the White House, what was the American public's view of them.

STOERMER: Very dim, for the most part, especially of him. The economy was in the midst of the worst depression in American history up to that point. It lasted for five or six years, with unemployment above 10 percent. It raised -- it got as high as 18 percent. And he was seen as being able to do absolute nothing about it. And, in fact, he was able to do very little about it.

And then his great card that he had to play, Frances, was seen as being much more withdrawn. These questions about the security of the first family as being kind of owned by the American public creeps in for the very first time. There's a reporter who actually snips a lock off of Ruth's hair while they're out. And so there are really great concerns about the security.

The White House staff -- security staff goes from 4 to 27. And, again, they spend much more time outside of the White House. So she's seen as being much more aloof and -- from the American people. She's not the same first lady that they came to expect during the first term. So you combine these two things together, they can't wait to get out of the White House by the end of their first term -- second term.

SWAIN: Zara is watching is us in Maplewood, New Jersey. Hi, Zara, you're on.

ZARA (ph): Yes, I wonder if Cleveland is buried in Princeton, New Jersey, along with Ruth?

DUNLAP: Yes, and Frances.

SWAIN: Yes.

ZARA (ph): And it's just very plain. It says Cleveland and it says Ruth and it says Frances. And I had no idea, but I sort of figured it out.

SWAIN: Well, thanks for that question, because we're about to learn the story of their post-White House years. He was a New Jersey native, he was born there, but was raised in New York, was the governor of New York. After he left the White House for the second and final time, how did the family decide where they would live next?

STOERMER: Frances decided.

DUNLAP: Well, the story that's kind of interesting is that she said that they had -- because they couldn't go out and look for property on their own. They had agents going out and looking for them.

And then, finally, they -- the story is that they both came down for breakfast, and one of them said to the other one, well, I've had an idea about where we should locate, and the other one said, well, yes, I do, too, and they allegedly both at the same time said Princeton. And so Cleveland contacted the president of Princeton University, who then found the property that they purchased called Westlands.

SWAIN: And what was their life like there?

DUNLAP: It was probably the best from the time they got married. They were a real family unit. They got very active in Princeton University. As I mentioned earlier, Frances got involved with the growing number of women who had graduated college. She was involved with trying to get a college for women started. They adopted young men who were Princeton students who didn't have family close by or have money and provided -- you know, opened their home to them, provided support to them.

Cleveland worked with the Equitable Life Assurance Association. That was sort of his job. He wrote articles, worked on his letters.

SWAIN: And had more children.

DUNLAP: And they had more children. They had -- when they left the White House in 1897, Frances was pregnant with Richard, who was their first son and fourth child. And then in July of 1903, she gave birth to their last child, another son, Francis Grover Cleveland.

SWAIN: And how long after that did the president die?

DUNLAP: He died in June of 1908.

SWAIN: How did he die?

DUNLAP: He probably had cancer. It sounds like he probably had stomach cancer. And it was a slow, drawn-out, painful death. And they -- he died in the house there at Princeton.

SWAIN: There are a number of allusions drawn between this first lady and much later when Jacqueline Kennedy for her youth, the public's obsession with her, and also the fact that she -- when she became a widow, she remarried.

STOERMER: Right.

SWAIN: What's the story of her remarriage? I'm not sure if you know this better than Annette, but how long after his death did she remarry? And what was the public's view of this?

STOERMER: I think she married in 1913. It was about five years...

SWAIN: About five years?

DUNLAP: It was February 1913, yeah.

STOERMER: Right, to a professor at Princeton, a professor of...

DUNLAP: Well, he moved to Wells.

STOERMER: Well, he had moved to Wells, right.

DUNLAP: He went up to Wells, yeah.

STOERMER: He had moved to Wells from Princeton, but he was a professor of archeology. They had -- they were roughly the same age. They were only a couple of years apart from each other. His name was Thomas Preston. And they had a lot in common, whereas she made a point of saying a little bit earlier that she and the president had very little in common, and he found boring what she found interesting.

It's much different with Mr. Preston, that they had a lot in common in terms of their interest in traveling, their interest in the arts, their interest in sort of broader culture, the kind of things that really did bore Grover Cleveland, he found rather tiresome. There was a much different kind of relationship.

SWAIN: Well, Regina Crumkey on Twitter asks the important question. How public was Mrs. Cleveland's life after Grover Cleveland's death?

DUNLAP: Well, it was public in the sense that people were still very interested in her and she sort of had to manage the press. It waned over time, but she was always still a news item, and she got active during World War I. She was active with an organization called the Needlework Guild, which makes handmade garments and gives to other nonprofits for giving out in emergency disaster situations.

So people followed her. You could still read news items about her. But the obsession wasn't nearly as heightened as it had been during the White House years.

SWAIN: It's important to note that she continues to be against women's suffrage.

DUNLAP: She was the second vice president for the New Jersey Association of Anti-Suffrage from 1913 until women got the right to vote. And then she went ahead and voted, but she still didn't think that women needed the right to vote.

SWAIN: And what was the public's reaction to a first lady who was campaigning so vigorously against women's suffrage?

STOERMER: Well, in terms of the debate over women's suffrage, I mean, it's very interesting that there is this split even until the -- even until the amendments pass and way after, about whether or not it's necessary for women to have the right to vote, whether or not that really is an important part of a woman's role in life, and the fact that the Frances Cleveland, although she exercises her own right to vote, that she still is part of a way of thinking about women and their place in American society that develops in the 1870s, 1880s -- it's kind of first wave feminism -- about if you want to be the best woman you can possibly be, through education, through understanding of the world around you, that is by exercising authority within your own special sphere, that you're not interfering with what men are doing. It's very consistent with what Grover Cleveland is thinking about what women should be able to do.

So her opposing for the rest of her life women voting, thinking it's kind of a silly, unnecessary thing, and then also her language -- her involvement in World War I and what she's doing in terms of trying to be very active in supporting American patriotism. The kind of speeches she's giving throughout World War I are extraordinary pieces of rhetoric and the kind of things that you would suspect Grover Cleveland would have no truck with whatsoever. She becomes a very different woman after her marriage to Preston.

SWAIN: And on the personal front, she also helps to raise some of her grandchildren.

DUNLAP: She did. Richard's first wife was an alcoholic, and so there was a divorce, and so Frances felt that it was important for them to have a maternal figure, and she was involved in the lives of those children.

SWAIN: We have an opportunity to talk with one of the granddaughters that Mrs. Cleveland -- who was then Mrs. Preston -- helped to raise. Her name is Ann Cleveland Robertson, and here's just a bit of that phone interview that we had with her recently.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HOST: Mrs. Robertson, I understand your grandmother was very kind and even helped raise you, but that didn't keep you from getting a scolding from her when you missed a weekly family event?

ANN CLEVELAND ROBERTSON: That's true. That was the soul of my grandmother. Well, this one incident happened on a Sunday night in New Hampshire in Tamworth, where we go in the summer. And on Sunday nights, we used to get together. The Finley family, who introduced my grandmother and grandfather to Tamworth, and the Cleveland family, we would get together and sing hymns. And we all really enjoyed that.

But each person had their own favorite hymn. But one Sunday, I got together with a whole group and went bowling with my cousin and our square dancing friends and, you know, had a very good time. And I didn't think there was anything terribly malicious about that.

But Mrs. Finley was my godmother, also my grandmother's closest -- one of her closest friends, and she called my grandmother the next day and said, "Where was Ann during the hymn singing?" And so my grandmother called me to her desk, and she said, with a great big quiet smile, that she would like to have me back in the hymn singing for the rest of the summer.

But I think she really did do it only because my godmother, Mrs. Finley, who was a very dear lady, a very influential, quite famous lady, but she was very strict. So my grandmother was trying to be strict with me. But I appreciated that and, of course, obviously went back to sing hymns for the rest of the summer.

HOST: Now, we know your grandmother didn't drink, took a temperance pledge, but you also have a story about what happened when she was given some medicine?

ANN CLEVELAND ROBERTSON: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Well, one day, when my grandmother was older, and this was still -- and this was in Tamworth, as well -- and I stopped by. I loved to see her. And I stopped by. She had a little porch right off her bedroom, and it had a lovely view of the mountains. And she was having her breakfast, and she was also taking her medicine with the breakfast.

And announced with a laugh, she said what she was taking, her medicine that she was taking with her breakfast, that was supposed to be good for her heart, was whiskey. And the strange and funny thing was that, of course, Granny had always been a teetotaler. I think that she -- you know, she allowed, of course, alcohol to be served in the White House, naturally. But she herself had never had whiskey. And I can assure you she did not like it as a medicine.

So we thought that was very funny. She thought it was a joke on herself, and that was the way she was. She had such a wonderful sense of humor that she could laugh at herself, but she didn't appreciate the whiskey.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: That whole interview was about six minutes long with Ann Cleveland Robertson. She lives now in Baltimore. And we've posted all of it on C-SPAN's "First Ladies: Influence and Image"

website. You can find that easily by going to cspan.org.

All of the programs we've done so far and all of the videos attached to them are all there, so if you're really getting interested in first ladies, we're creating quite a repository there, with the assistance of our friends from the White House Historical Association, who have been our partners throughout this series.

We have just a short time left. I want to get Larry in from Frankfurt, Kentucky. Larry, what's your question?

LARRY (ph): Good evening. Question predominantly for Dr. Dunlap and backing up a bit to the White House years. Local history suggests that Eleanor Lindsay, who was the wife of Kentucky Senator William Lindsay, a fellow Gold Democrat of President Cleveland's, was a very close friend of Frances, because they were both younger women married to much older men.

So I wonder if Dr. Dunlap knows about this relationship, and more generally, what was Frances' relationship with the other Washington wives who were mostly much older? Thank you so much for taking my question.

DUNLAP: Well, I'm sorry to say I don't know anything about her relationship with Ms. Lindsay, but I can tell you that she did an excellent job of having friendships with some of the older Washington wives. And some of that was helped by the fact that one of those older wives, Flora Whitney, pretty much took Frances under her wing as soon as Frances came to Washington as a young bride. And that opened the doors. And Frances respected them, and they respected her, and they had a great relationship.

SWAIN: Sheldon Cooper on Twitter asks, "Did future presidents or first ladies ever invite Mrs. Cleveland back to the White House?"

DUNLAP: Yes, the Tafts actually the -- Thomas Preston and Frances Cleveland for an engagement party in January, right before they got married in February of 1913.

SWAIN: And the press took a good view of her remarriage?

STOERMER: Yeah, absolutely. There was only one criticism in which somebody was saying, well, she now has feet of clay. She really should have stayed unmarried, stayed a widow.

But for the most part, people embraced it, embraced her. She was back in Washington a number of times. She met Margaret Truman and Eisenhower, and so she -- people really did -- she maintained, really, her level of celebrity.

SWAIN: This is Annette Dunlap's biography. It's called "Frank," which was her given name or her nickname?

DUNLAP: It was originally a given name. Well, it was a nickname. It was the name she went by until she got baptized in the church and...

SWAIN: And what did Grover Cleveland call her?

DUNLAP: Frank.

SWAIN: Frank. So in your closing paragraphs of this, you make the case that she has been somewhat lost to history, but shouldn't be. Why?

DUNLAP: Well, because she was very strong in education, very strong in the arts, and those are things that we still think are very important today.

SWAIN: And how did she change the role of first lady?

DUNLAP: She changed it in terms of putting education in the forefront and getting involved with education and taking care of children. She was really concerned about how children were cared for, and that was something she definitely emphasized.

SWAIN: And, Taylor Stoermer, where would you put her in the pantheon of first ladies we've been learning about this year?

STOERMER: She's the first celebrity first lady, the first national celebrity first lady. And I think when we're talking about the development of our understanding of the institution of the first lady, then she is the first one in which we get to start thinking about what really are the uses of that celebrity in good ways and bad ways, because there are concerns that have developed about the first family being owned by the American public, but also how that can actually be a positive tool of the broader presidency, if only Grover Cleveland would have been able to see that.

SWAIN: And the story in that regard will continue. Thanks to both of you for being here this week. We appreciate it. And thanks to our viewers for your participation. It makes the program so much more interesting.

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