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# Secret Lives Of The First Ladies: What Your Teachers Never Told You About The Women Of The White House



## Synopsis

Scandals, Seduction, Addiction, Adultery, Horrific Fashions...And the White House?! Your high school history teachers never gave you a book like this one! *Secret Lives of the First Ladies* features outrageous and uncensored profiles of the women of the White House - complete with hundreds of little-known, politically incorrect, and downright wacko facts. You'll discover that: Dolley Madison loved to chew tobacco Mary Todd Lincoln conducted séances on a regular basis Eleanor Roosevelt and Ellen Wilson both carried guns. Jacqueline Kennedy spent \$121,000 on her wardrobe in a single year Betty Ford liked to chat on CB radios - her handle was "First Mama" Hillary Clinton dreamed of being an astronaut . With chapters on every woman who's ever made it to the White House, *Secret Lives of the First Ladies* tackles all of the tough questions that other history books are afraid to ask: How many of these women owned slaves? Which ones were cheating on their husbands? And why was Eleanor Roosevelt serving hot dogs to the King and Queen of England? American history was never this much fun in school!

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Recently a foreign journalist interviewing George W. Bush asked the President of the United States to turn out his pockets. What an interesting, humanizing thing to ask of the most powerful man on Earth. And exactly the kind of thing that never occurs in the burlesque of today's 24 hour electronic news cycle. The contents of our pockets, those little handy nooks that serve as contingency storage for our day-to-day indispensables, speak wonderful, accessible volumes about us as people. Show

me what you have in your pockets and, whether or not I know WHO you are, I get a glimpse what KIND of person you are. In *Secret Lives of the First Ladies*, Cormac O'Brien has politely turned out the pockets of the spouses of each of our presidents, and it's a neat-o treasure trove he uncovers. His style is neither lewd nor exploitative, though, to be sure, there's plenty of juicy stuff here. His project is a sort of cameo portraiture of some forty seven intriguing and often remarkable women. The only flattery in these portraits is a consistent, entertaining, and often astounding disclosure of each woman's individual humanity. It is tempting to read the book in little chunks (as I did at first) owing to its concise chaptering. However, it's a real pleasure go back and review long stretches, watching how the public appearance of the First Lady has evolved over time while her private role has remained remarkably consistent: she is the president's wife. Which is to say, sometimes she is a loving yet diminutive spousal anchor and sometimes she is a headstrong engine of scandal and outrage. Sometimes she is a fully enfranchised partner in even the weightiest decision-making at the executive mansion, including public policy.

This is a follow-up to O'Brien's previous book, *Secret Lives of the U.S. Presidents*, which, while a fascinating book, is a topic that has been covered many times. I have, in fact, two books on this topic, and they both illuminate the hidden idiosyncrasies, character flaws, shining moments of virtue and petty humanity of the 43 Commanders-in-Chief. It was Abigail Adams who exhorted her husband to, "Remember the ladies," and it seems that O'Brien has done just that. He's given us a nice concise look at the women of the White House, and it's a hell of a read. It's very easy to forget the First Ladies, and kind of pigeonhole them into the space that reads "President's wife," but to do so would be a great disservice to an amazing group of women. A lot of people remember Hillary Clinton as being a political powerhouse, a kind of "co-President." But she wasn't the first, by any means. When Woodrow Wilson suffered a debilitating stroke in 1919, all access to him was controlled by his wife, Edith. She would let no-one in to see him, on the grounds that he was very ill and needed absolute peace and quiet. So, when someone needed something signed by the President, Edith would take it, close the door, and come back a few minutes later with the signed document. The question very quickly arose: who's really the President? Helen Taft is another forgotten First Lady firebrand. Without her motivation, William Howard Taft might have been perfectly happy to be a judge, but that wasn't good enough for Helen. From her teenage years, she knew that she wanted to live in the White House, and she pushed her husband to make damn sure that she did.

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