CSPAN/FIRST LADIES LUCRETIA GARFIELD AND MARY ARTHUR MCELROY
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(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HISTORIAN: It's only really in recent years that a lot of scholarship has focused on the fact of just how rocky her marriage was, particularly in its early phase.

HISTORIAN: In the early years, I think James found her a little bit distant and cold, but as the years went by, she had a tremendous influence on him.

HISTORIAN: James and Lucretia spent a lot of time with their children. They felt that education was an emancipating factor and that that led to the key to success. Mrs. Garfield adored her time at the exhibition, but she's specifically interested in the latest sciences and technologies of the day.

HISTORIAN: After James Garfield's death, a number of prominent citizens raised about $350,000 that was turned over to Lucretia Garfield. In today's dollars, that would equate to somewhere around $8 million.

HISTORIAN: Her character was exceedingly strong. She had a rectitude that was invulnerable.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SUSAN SWAIN, HOST: Lucretia Garfield was born in Ohio in 1832. Her life spans antebellum America to the progressive era of the early 20th century. A supporter of women's rights and deeply interested in partisan politics, she and President James Garfield entered the White House on March 4, 1881, after a very close election. However, what plans she had as first lady were soon cut short by an assassin's bullet.

Good evening, and welcome to C-SPAN's series "First Ladies: Influence and Image." Tonight we'll learn about Lucretia Garfield. And after the assassination, the next person to come into the White House, Chester Arthur, who did so without a first lady, and we'll learn how he handled that.

To help us understand this interesting period in American history, Carl Anthony, who is the historian at the National First Ladies Library in Canton, Ohio, he's also the author of "America's First Families."

Well, Carl Anthony, the circumstances of the Garfields' election in 1880 really helped to seal the president's fate. So tell us the story of where the party politics were at that time.

CARL SFERRAZZA ANTHONY, AUTHOR, "AMERICA'S FIRST FAMILIES": Well, you know, so many of the large issues that had continued in post-Civil War era were really in large measure put to rest. You know, the Transcontinental Railroad had by this time, of course, been completed. The troops had been removed from the South during reconstruction. A lot of focus was basically on power and money. And that struggle within the Republican Party for who would control the party, which meant who would control the positions that were appointed position that were, you know, at the discretion of people in power, ended up being a power struggle within the party between an Ohio-based party, which is James Garfield's party -- also Rutherford Hayes was from the same -- not only the same part of Ohio, but the same kind of thinking -- and what were called the Stalwarts, which were New York-based.

And, you know, you see certain states really emerge throughout history with -- holding on to power within a particular party. And then in New York, that was really headed by a man by the name of Roscoe Conkling, who became a United States senator. So this is -- this is the struggle, and you see then, of course, the person who ends up shooting President Garfield, deranged, of course, Charles Guiteau, but proudly screaming with the gun in his hand, "I'm a Stalwart. Now Arthur is president." And that was a reference to the fact that Vice President Arthur elected with Garfield was of the New York wing of the party.

SWAIN: Well, Garfield himself was a compromise candidate after many, many ballots at the Republican convention. So when they came to the White House, were they accepted?

ANTHONY: They were largely accepted. There was a lot of -- but -- and this is where Lucretia played a vital role. A lot was a matter of cobbling together a cabinet where everybody would be happy, that the New York wing would be happy, that Garfield now, as leader of the party and the country, would be satisfied, and so you had Lucretia Garfield playing kind of a little bit of an espionage role in the post-election, pre-inauguration, where she goes to New York under the alias of Mrs. Greenfield and is really there to deal with this guy she doesn't like, Roscoe Conkling, in negotiating members of the cabinet of who would be appointed and who wouldn't.

SWAIN: The actual vote was very close, one of the closest elections in history, and Crete Garfield, after winning, said this: "It is a terrible responsibility to come to him and to me." So what were her -- did she want to become first lady?

ANTHONY: She didn't really want to become first lady for herself. She very strongly believed in her husband, and, you know, they had really been through everything. You know, they lost two children. They'd had marital troubles. And by the time he has run in 1880, they are very clear and very square on the same page in terms of their values, and they both shared a lot of intellectual and literary pursuits -- that was a mutual passion, which I think during the tough times kept them together.

But she was -- at the time she got the news that he had won the nomination, she was in an old bonnet scrubbing the floor. She didn't want to pose for photographs. She was very reluctant. And she did. And, of course, her image is the first that we start to see being used in paraphernalia sold during the campaign. She wrote a private letter to some friends and she said, "You know, the truth is, I really don't want to go to that place, but I really believe that my husband is the right man to lead the country."

SWAIN: Well, throughout this program, we'll be taking you to the Garfield's home in Mentor, Ohio, Lawnfield, and it is available for you to visit, run by the National Park Service. So if you're ever in that part of the state, near Cleveland, please make a point of visiting it. We're going to show you as much as we can tonight. And here's what it looks like right now. That front porch became very famous that we're looking at on camera right now because it was the first front porch campaign. How did the front porch campaign come about?

ANTHONY: Well, you know what? I don't know 100 percent of the details, except that they, at the time where they lived, it was relatively rural, and groups of people really just coming to hear the candidate speak.

SWAIN: So they came to him.

ANTHONY: They came to him.

SWAIN: It wasn't an orchestrated...

ANTHONY: Yeah, and that is the sort of the whole thing that these -- these front porch campaigns. And interestingly enough, most of them took place -- all of them took place in the Midwest. You know, Lincoln's in Springfield, Harding's and McKinley's in Ohio, just like Garfield's. And, of course, for Lucretia Garfield, what was interesting was that because it was technically the property of her private home, she -- her being seen by the voters, by the people coming in on horse and buggies to hear Garfield speak didn't find anything at all unusual about the presence of his wife at what was a campaign rally, because it was also her home.

SWAIN: We're going to learn more about the front porch campaign in this first video from the Garfield's home in Mentor, Ohio.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TODD ARRINGTON, JAMES A. GARFIELD NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, CHIEF OF INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION: This is the site of the nation's very first front porch presidential campaign. So James Garfield would come out here, give a lot of speeches from the front porch to people that had gathered here in the front part of the property. Lucretia's role, however, was more concentrated on the inside of the home.

So standing in the front hallway here of the Garfield home probably seems like kind of a strange place to start talking about James A. Garfield's widely hailed front porch campaign of 1880, but, in fact, this is the part of the house where Lucretia Garfield spent a lot of her time during the 1880 campaign.

Now, of course, James A. Garfield went to Chicago to nominate someone else for president. He wasn't expecting to be a candidate. So, of course, Lucretia Garfield had no expectation that over the next five months somewhere between 17,000 and 20,000 people would show up at her home and at her property here in Mentor, Ohio.

When these people started to show up here on the property, that many people, obviously, unexpected, uninvited, started to cause a lot of damage to the outside of the property. They were traipsing all over the property, killing the crops, yanking things out of the ground to take home as souvenirs. And Lucretia Garfield was very, very concerned that the same thing that was happening on the outside of the property not happen here on the inside of the family home. So she spent a lot of time in this front hallway basically keeping an eye on the front door. She was the gatekeeper, if you will, making sure that no one that she didn't want in the house was able to get into the house.

You see the front steps here of the house. James A. Garfield's office was actually at the top of these steps. He would spend a lot of time up in that office and at some point during the day a lot of times would come down these steps and then go right out the front door to stand on the front porch, talk to people that were gathered out there, and eventually give speeches as part of this front porch campaign.

And I kind of like to imagine Lucretia basically kind of following right behind him and locking that door as he went outside, because she was so adamant that people not get inside the home. They, of course, had a young family that they were very concerned about. They also had just finished a major renovation to the house, and Lucretia had really just kind of gotten the house exactly the way she wanted it, so she didn't want people coming and causing the same kind of damage inside that she saw going on, on the outside of the property.

We know that Lucretia Garfield was a very gracious host to people that did come into the home that were invited in. She very often would greet them here in the front hallway and offer them during the campaign what she called standing refreshment, which basically meant she was very gracious. She'd

talk to them for a few moments, offer them a cold glass of water or lemonade, but conspicuously no chair to sit in, because, of course, she didn't want them to overstay their welcome.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: One thing I want to tell you that is great about these programs is your involvement in it. We have a phone line set aside for you to call in, and we'll put the numbers on the screen. We're get to those calls in just a couple of minutes.

And you can tweet us. Use the hashtag #firstladies, and we're already having a great conversation with lots of historical questions on our Facebook page. And here's one of those. R.J. Wilson writes, "I visited the Garfield house in Ohio and saw that James admired and looked up to previous presidents, even had framed images of all the previous presidents. Did Lucretia feel that way? Or did she have others who inspired her?"

ANTHONY: Really great question, because we have a lot of bits of evidence that cumulatively show us that Lucretia Garfield was perhaps the first first lady to really have a strong conscientiousness about being part of a historical tradition of first ladies.

In her diary, to my knowledge, the only diary kept by a first lady, she records an incident where one of her guests comes in and tells her about the night of the fall of Richmond and being with Mary Lincoln. And she writes in her diary that these little sorts of stories are the kinds of things she begins to accumulate and feels that there's some ghosts, so to speak, of the house, but -- and we will see when we will talk more about her later life, she has sort of an affinity, a real strong sense of sorority with many of the first ladies who'd come after her.

SWAIN: Regina Crumkey asks on Twitter, did Lucretia consider this house her home or did she think of it as a political center?

ANTHONY: She thought of it as her home. In fact, later on, when a well was being built in the back, and -- I can't remember, there was another structure -- and she actually studied the engineering plans and she -- you know, she was just an incredibly -- interested in so much and, you know, just absorbed things and taught herself.
And she said something like, I have built a home on my own. I have -- you know, I have -- I have done it all, and I know what's going on, and I can get this, you know, this structure out back built quicker and less expensively than is being done right now.

So she later on changed what was essentially a farmhouse into a Victorian mansion. But, again, that's in the years of her widowhood and, of course, had another home, a beautiful home still standing in Pasadena, California.

SWAIN: Which was very forward-thinking for the time. We'll talk about that later on. Here's something that James Garfield thought about her as they were political partners in the White House. He said, "She is unstampedable." That's a great word, unstampedable. "There has not been one solitary instance of my public career when I suffered in the smallest degree for any remark she ever made." So tell us a bit more about that unstampedable character that she brought to this job.

ANTHONY: Well, you know, it didn't come easy. She was one of those people who spent a lot of time thinking, and she always tried to be highly rational in her opinions when she formed them and in her concepts of people and just ideas and subjects, whatever it might be, current events, history.

You know, she -- and this was a little bit of a problem early on when they were courting and then even in their marriage, because a lot of people, including her husband, felt that she was not emotionally expressive. But it was when she had given something a lot of thought and she was clear

about how she felt, then she would express herself. And her letters, I might add, are beautiful. I mean, you know, this -- this is a real self-motivated woman who realized that education was going to be the key to not only her success, but her happiness.

SWAIN: Well, one of the very first decisions that she had to make was about temperance and whether or not she and the president would follow the no-alcohol policy set by the Hayes, which we learned about last week. Will you tell us about that decision that she made and the Garfields themselves made and how significant it was politically?

ANTHONY: Well, it ended up -- true to what she said -- not having a very significant impact politically. But the threat was made to her by a woman who came and said, "You know, you must continue the no-alcohol policy of the Hayes." And Lucretia Garfield said, you know, "Thanks, but no thanks. I sort of feel that by my doing this one little thing, by not serving, you know, alcohol to my guests, it will take on enormous importance in the press and give it far more attention than it needs."

She herself drank wine. She writes about that in a letter to her husband. And then this woman threatened, said, "Well, you know, this is going to affect the Republican Party." And Mrs. Garfield very politely sort of said, "I don't think it really is."

SWAIN: Well, this whole decision and the pressure for it came around the arrival of the official portrait of Lucy Hayes. We've got a picture of it. We talked about it in the last program. There was a big story about the money being raised to create this portrait. How much press attention was there on the arrival of this portrait and the ultimate decision that the Garfields would make?

ANTHONY: Well, you know, it was sort of presented to the White House as a fait accompli. I mean, it was -- you know, the White House wasn't going to deny it, nor did they think, of course, that it would be, you know, wise in terms of public relations to, you know, deny the portrait of their most immediate predecessor, the wife of their most immediate predecessor.

But the controversy, as you know, was the fact that -- Mrs. Hayes was herself upset because a percentage of the money that they claimed they were raising to get the portrait done was being spent for WCTU, Woman's Christian Temperance Union, other projects, and so, you know, it had a slight taint of scandal, odd as it sounds to say about a painting celebrating no drinking.

SWAIN: Well, Cathy Robinson on Twitter wants to know, how popular was Lucretia in comparison to Lucy Hayes?

ANTHONY: There was very little time for Lucretia Garfield to actually become popular, in the sense of functioning as a first lady the way we think of. The inauguration was March 4th. By the end of April, she's contracted malaria. And so -- and by May, through early May, there's even a fear that she might die in the White House.

And President Garfield, you know, just president for three months, writes of how he was unable to work with fear that, you know, this was going to be a -- that something would happen to his wife. It's only after he's shot in July that the press really begins to focus on Lucretia Garfield, and she becomes not just a national, but an international heroine for her behavior and her calmness and her control as the president is attempting recuperation for two months.

SWAIN: First call is from Robert watching us in Chicago. Hi, Robert, you're on.

ROBERT (ph): Good evening. I have one simple question to ask. By the time Garfield became president, his salary was $50,000. I was just wondering if Mrs. Garfield received the balance of the salary after he had passed on?

ANTHONY: Yes, she did. She also received his pension as a former member of Congress, and she received, as Susan mentioned, that large amount of public funds that were raised. And she also received, you know, a presidential widow's pension. So she had quite a bit of income coming from several directions.

SWAIN: Next is a call from Bill, watching us in Columbus, Ohio. Hi, Bill.

BILL (ph): Hi.

SWAIN: Your question, sir?

BILL (ph): Yes, I grew up in Mentor, Ohio, where the Garfield estate is, and I remember -- I passed it all the time, and I remember there being a log cabin on the property that purportedly he grew up in. Is it still there?

ANTHONY: That I don't know.

SWAIN: And what can you tell people about -- have you ever visited the place, Bill?

BILL (ph): I'm sorry?

SWAIN: Have you visited the house, besides driving by?

BILL (ph): You know, I -- surprisingly, I never did, and I lived there. I'm amazed.

SWAIN: That's actually something that happens to so many of us when we have historic sites in our own communities not taking the time. But thanks for calling. Sorry we couldn't answer your question.

Talking about her involvement in the selection of her cabinet, we said earlier that she was deeply involved and interested in partisan politics and had a keen political sense. Very briefly, where did she develop that keen political sense? And how did she use it to advise the president on his cabinet?

ANTHONY: She really started developing that once they actually moved to Washington, D.C., when he was a member of Congress. You know, they'd had -- as I said, they lost their first child, a girl. They lost their last born, a little boy. They had a lot of tough times. And when he was -- served during the Civil War.

They came to Washington, and they were separated again, and they -- she finally said, "I'm just not going to put up with this." So they decided to build a home here in Washington. And when she came to Washington as a congressional wife, she began attending debates on Capitol Hill. She was there during the 1876 election dispute commission.

And she -- and her husband belonged to a literary society, but she really took -- this is really her political education began during those congressional years. And she also put a room, I should say, aside just for herself to paint and read in the house they built here in Washington. But politics really became one of -- I wouldn't say it was her primary interest -- was one of several primary interests. I mean, she was interested in everything.

The cabinet -- the issue of the cabinet really circles around the controversial appointment of the secretary of state, James G. Blaine, and she -- Mrs. Garfield is really the advocate for him. And in fact, Blaine himself writes to Garfield that "the knowledge that Mrs. Garfield wants me in the cabinet is just as important to me as knowing that you, the president, want me in the cabinet."

SWAIN: Yeah, and here's the quote exactly. "I wish you would say to Mrs. Garfield," said James Blaine, "that the knowledge that she desires me in your cabinet is more valuable to me than even the desire of the president-elect himself." That says something about her influence, at least on the president.

ANTHONY: Absolutely. And I would say also that, again, partisanship and these little splinter things within parties, she was not a policy person. She was not somebody who was looking at policy and saying, "You should support this or not support that." She was really looking at members of the cabinet who, of course, were supposed to be running the government, but from a point of partisan political loyalty. Were these people -- you know, there's that saying, keep your enemies -- keep your friends close, keep your enemies closer. She was always looking at, how were these men going to potentially affect her husband's career?

SWAIN: But in the end, it seems as though they decided to mix the cabinet with both Half-Breeds and Stalwarts and satisfied no one.

ANTHONY: That's -- yes. Well, to a degree. I mean, by the time, of course, of Garfield's assassination, there's a great sense of remorse because this guy who shot him, you know, did it openly out of political partisanship. And it was sort of horrifying to people. And that also involved Vice President Arthur, who was sort of representative of the wing that the assassin claimed to be associated with.

SWAIN: And we should be really specific about this. The brief tenure of this presidency, President Garfield was in office 186 days in total. And because of his lengthy decline -- and we'll tell that story later, which is so interesting -- he was actually only functional for 121 days of that. So this is a really brief time, not much time to establish opinions in the public at large.

Now, you mentioned earlier -- well, let's answer this first. David Murdock is asking on Twitter, and it seems that you've just underscored how the answer would be yes, did James look to his wife for political guidance?

ANTHONY: Absolutely, political in the sense of dealing with people and appointments, that sort of thing, not -- we don't have evidence -- because there is no record, really -- of him coming to her with weighty legislative decisions.

SWAIN: Now, you mentioned earlier that civil service reform was becoming a very important issue. People who saw the movie "Lincoln" will see how patronage jobs...

ANTHONY: Yeah.

SWAIN: ... were used to help influence the president's policy program. So what was the bubbling controversy over patronage? And what was the reform that people wanted to employ?

ANTHONY: Well, we get a little bit ahead of the story, because you have this -- with Garfield's assassination and death, you have this man come into the White House, everyone is like, oh, my gosh, this is the worst -- you know, talk about a man who has benefited from political patronage. Chester Alan Arthur has never been elected to any office. He was the collector of the Port of New York. And, you know, he had a high position in New York state during the Civil War, quartermaster, but it was all political patronage.

And Roscoe Conkling, who was sort of the kingmaker of the Stalwarts in New York, thinks, a-ha, now the doors will open and we'll get all the political plums, and President Arthur says, no, I'm going to change my stripes and we're going to be honest. And Chester Arthur is the man who initiates the first civil service reform.

SWAIN: Well, we're going to learn that Charles Guiteau is always described as a frustrated office-seeker, but you told us earlier that it was also tied in with his big allegiance to the other fraction of the GOP, Arthur's faction of it. But his example of coming to the White House and looking for jobs, how did that process work in the 1880s?

ANTHONY: It's extraordinary to think that even not 20 years after the assassination of President Lincoln that there could be such relatively lax security at the White House, but as -- you know -- I'm sure many of the viewers know that the way the White House was set up at the time, there was the ground floor, where there were no really restored rooms yet. They were basically functioning as kitchen and sort of places to keep china and this sort of thing.

Then there's that main floor, also familiar, the state floor. But then, you know, with the East Room and the Green Room, the Red Room, and the state dining room. The floor above that at the time was -- there's three sort of hallways. And the hallway that's at the furthest west end is where the family rooms were. The middle section and the east end were the presidential offices.

And so people -- members, you know, of the public, who had some vague, you know, connection from a senator or a congressman, and even if they didn't, would be able to go up the stairs, you know, check in with the doorkeeper, and wait in this hallway with, you know, spittoons and, you know, filled with cigar smoke, and hope to see one of the president's secretaries, pressing their case, usually with letters of introduction, claiming how, you know, great and wonderful they were, and how they deserved some kind of a minor federal position.

I mean, we're not talking about people coming in there to be cabinet members. Postmaster of this or paymaster of that. So this is the kind of stuff that a president was sort of having to deal with while he was in his office or the private secretaries in the -- at the far end were trying to deal with, and these guys -- these kinds of characters were always sort of, you know, shifting around in the hallway. And Guiteau was one of them. And he never got to press his case, and he took it personally.

SWAIN: Clearly.

ANTHONY: Yes.

SWAIN: To the ultimate degree. The Garfields brought to the White House a big and happy family. In our next visit to their home in Mentor, Ohio, we'll learn more about the Garfield family.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MARY LINTERN, JAMES A. GARFIELD NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE PARK RANGER: This is the parlor. This is the way it looked during James A. Garfield's 1880 campaign. This was, indeed, both the formal parlor and family room; it served as both. James and Lucretia spent a lot of time with their children. They both, of course, adored their children very much. They had lost two children to infancy, Eliza Arabella and Edward. Those children died before the family moved here.

James and Lucretia's five children -- Hal, Jimmy, Molly, Irvin and Abram -- all had the benefit of having two very intelligent parents who strongly believed in education. They felt that education was an emancipating factor and that that led to the key to success.

Their children also took dance lessons, piano lessons. Over on the other side of the room, we have Molly's piano, which was a gift to her on her 13th birthday in 1880. She, more than the boys, practiced the piano, and that was a reward.

Here in the family parlor, like almost every room in the house, you see a lot of books. Books are very important to James and Lucretia, and their children loved to read, as well. Some of their favorite authors were Dickens, and there's several volumes of his works here, and also William Shakespeare.

The family would sit by the fireplace and read to one another oftentimes out loud in the evenings. That was one of their favorite activities. We're in the family dining room. And in the center of the table is this very interesting art piece. It's called the Barge of Venus, and it actually won an award at the Philadelphia Centennial.

Mrs. Garfield absolutely adored her time at the exhibition. She visited all the tents, the art tents, the science tents, the technology tents, but she's specifically interested in the latest sciences and technologies of the day, and she would write pages and pages of what she saw at the site. So a lot of people think of Mrs. Garfield as this very artistic lady. She was also very, very intelligent, loved the sciences.

Like most families, dinnertime was a very important time of the day. It was a time for them all to get together and talk about what they were all doing. The Garfields also would use this time, again, to educate the children. They would play games with the children. Sometimes Garfield would bring a book to the table, words that were oftentimes mispronounced or misspelled, and quiz the children. James and Lucretia made everything an educational experience.

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SWAIN: So in that we learn about the kind of parents they were, but tell the story of how they met.

ANTHONY: Well, it's really quite fascinating, because, again, there are so many modern chords in it. There's this sense of equality to them. And even though they were, you know, mid-19th century people, both of them, I think, very much saw each other as equals.

You know, Lucretia Garfield was the great-granddaughter of a German immigrant. Her parents were very religious. They were members of the Disciple of Christ. Her father was one of the founders of the Eclectic Institute, and they very strongly believed in education of women.

And this is kind of a fascinating phenomenon in Ohio. You see this with all of the presidents wives, born and raised in Ohio, equal education for women, and they're all highly educated. And Lucretia Garfield went through grade school, but then went to the Eclectic Institute. She studied the classics. She learned how to speak Greek and Latin. She learned how to speak French and German. She studied science, biology, mathematics, history, philosophy.

And right away, there was -- if you can think of passion coming through the world of ideas, there was a real passion struck between the two of them. James Garfield came from a very poor family. He was orphaned, you know, never knew his father and, you know, had been a canal boy. One of the -- one of those young guys who would, you know, walk the mules along, that would pull the canal boats. And so, you know, everything they got, I think they, you know, greatly appreciated. And, again, he felt like she did, education was the answer.

So their courtship -- he was a -- he was her teacher at the Eclectic Institute. He then went to Williams College, and they began a correspondence. And that's really where you begin, in a funny way, it's the world of ideas that begin to separate them and bring them together. It's not necessarily incidents that are occurring. It's that they sort of argue over ideas.

But one of those ideas was the fact that there was another woman that he -- that she met at his graduation from Williams College, and that, you know, became a point of contention between the two of them.

SWAIN: Well, we have a sense of that with a letter that Lucretia wrote to James Garfield about their relationship. Here's what she writes: "Jamie, I should not blame my heart if it lost all faith in you. I shall not be forever telling you I love you when there is evidently no more desire for it on your part than present manifestations indicate." So it was touch-and-go there for a while.

ANTHONY: It was touch-and-go. But what's really interested about Lucretia is, even though she very much loves him, she has also looked out for herself. She set a course, and she's going to become a teacher. And she determined that she would work and earn her own salary. She didn't want to be a burden on her father or, if she never got married, you know, have to depend on anyone else.

And she not only becomes a teacher, but an interest in art is born in her, and she pursues this on her own and then becomes an art teacher. She sort of shifts the topics that she teaches, and this is all right before she gets married. He has another affair. I mean, the earlier one was just a love situation before they were married. He has a full-blown affair with a woman by the name of Lucia Calhoun in New York, and that, you know, really nearly does in the marriage.

SWAIN: Stanley is watching us in Mingo Junction, Ohio. What's your question, Stanley?

STANLEY (ph): Yes, thank you for C-SPAN. I really do like the presidential series that you're doing. I visited the home here about six days ago and was really impressed with the furnishings in the home. Did Mrs. Garfield furnish that home and build that library herself before the president died or was it afterwards?

ANTHONY: You know, in a word, yes. The way it looks, the interiors was by her hand, but most importantly, in answering your question, is that she had built onto it after his death that fireproof safe which is now part of the house, specifically to house and protect and preserve his letters and papers, because she actually had been planning on writing a biography about him herself. She never lived to do that, but later those letters were published before being donated to the Library of Congress.

And I had one important thing that just struck me, because I know in the show so often they've spoken about -- we've spoken about first ladies who burned papers. Lucretia Garfield had such a sense of history that she kept papers, even the ones that might proof embarrassing or personal that related to her marriage. So, you know, she had a sense of herself and her husband beyond their own lives as historical figures.

SWAIN: Let's hear James Garfield's side of the story with the back and forth of their relationships. He wrote to her, "I hear pray used to be still ready to bear with me if at any future moment my heart should for a time go down again into the deeps." Well, they eventually do get married, but in the early days of their marriage, I saw a statistic that she estimated they were together for six weeks out of six years.

ANTHONY: Yes.

SWAIN: His tenure in the Civil War, followed by his election to Congress and moving to Washington, how did this marriage eventually get to the point where they were functioning as a couple?

ANTHONY: She moved to Washington.

SWAIN: And also the death of the child?

ANTHONY: And the -- well, it was -- the first child died, it was a little girl, and then they -- she gave birth seven times, and then their last child, a little boy, died. And so they -- through that, it brought them to together, but really I believe it was her physical presence in coming to Washington,

with the family, and they built a house on -- no longer standing -- here on 13th Street, but as I think I mentioned, what I think is fascinating about her, in building this house, she created a room for herself, because even though she was a devoted mother, there is a couple of letters where she says, you know, it really gets, you know, on your nerves and it hurts your ego sometimes to think that your whole life after this education is being spent -- you know, I can't remember the word she used, it was sort of funny, like these little terrors, you know, are all that occupy her time.

So she really began to develop her passion for art and painting, for reading and for writing. She was quite an essayist, none of it for publication, but she had this room in their place in Washington. And they also, of course, join the Burns Literary Society.

SWAIN: David is listening in Chicago, and you're up next, David. Go ahead.

DAVID (ph): Thank you. Mr. Anthony, President Arthur, knowing that he was dying from Bright's disease after he left the White House, you just mentioned this, burned his personal papers, along with his White House papers. And yet he got so little publicity on this action versus Florence Harding, who burned only a small fraction of President Harding's papers and is still being vilified today. Why the difference between the two?

And I just wanted to say thank you. I really enjoyed your book on Mrs. Harding and Mrs. Taft, and I'm looking forward to your book on Ida McKinley this spring, and great blog. Thank you.

ANTHONY: Thank you very much. Thank you. President Arthur -- there's some indication that it was actually his son, Alan -- or it was pronounced "Alan" Arthur -- may have had more of a hand in that. Arthur himself did feel very intensely about protecting his privacy, his family life. And we're going to be talking a little bit about the Arthurs, but -- so I won't get too far into that.

But I think also the issue was, in terms of the Hardings, was just the air of suspicion coming on the heels of the various scandals, the political scandals, and so the action that Mrs. Harding took, while it might have been well intentioned to, as she said, protect Warren's memory, the suggestion of it at that particular time, after those -- as those scandals were breaking, you know, suggested some kind of malfeasance that wasn't the case in the Arthurs.

SWAIN: Back to the story of Lucretia Garfield, we learned about how often her husband was away, leaving her with all those children to raise on her own. And next we're going to see a letter that she wrote that talks about the frustration of being the one that has to make all the decisions in the family.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)
MARY LINTERN: "My darling, I cannot conceive of any possible reason why he should be such a trial to my life, nor do I believe it was possible for you to know what a very worrying child he is. I cannot be patient with him any more than I could submit with patience to some extreme physical torture. What he will ever become I don't know, and I'm almost afraid to think of his future."

"It is horrible to be a man, but the grinding misery of being a woman between the upper and nether (ph) milestone of household cares and training children, is almost as bad. To be half-civilized with some aspirations for enlightenment and obliged to spend the largest part of the time the victim of young barbarians keeps one in perpetual ferment."

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: Somehow they made it all work and brought all those children to the White House, where they had a very involved and active family. We've got a photograph of the family in the White House. It was a brief tenure, as we've said so many times, but what was family life like in the White House for these people?

ANTHONY: It was healthy. It was funny. It was humorous. And there was no sort of, you know, treacly sentiment. There was -- even though it was the Victorian age, you know, nobody was trying to use them as examples of, you know, good living and that sort of thing. They were just a very close family.

Now, the two older boys were to be going to college, but they were so close that they actually remained in the house and they studied there. There were two little boys who were kind of terrors, Abram and Irwin, and then a very beautiful -- just a very open-hearted daughter, Molly, who kept a little diary when she was in the White House, and it's a very poignant document because it talks about her father's assassination. Very sad.

The grandmother was also there, Garfield's mother. Lucretia's father was actually still alive. He lived until 95. But it was Garfield's mother who came to live there. And, you know, I think it was -- you know, she was sort of -- sort of, of the thought that, you know, she had raised her son to be president. And even when Mrs. Garfield was ill and there was some speculation about whether she'd be able to return as hostess, there were sort of suggestions in the press that maybe old Mrs. Garfield, Mother Garfield, they called her, would come to the White House and take over. And, you know, there's some suggestion within the family that really didn't -- the idea didn't go over too well.

SWAIN: Joey on Twitter asks, "A lot of first ladies had a cause of their own. Did Mrs. Garfield in her brief time in D.C. have a cause?" Well, in fact, her cause became restoring the White House.

ANTHONY: Really interesting. Two -- well, there's one suggestion, and it's written in a letter by one of the first people in the United States, a woman, who was both blind and deaf, who had achieved higher education, and was in touch with Mrs. Garfield. So there's some suggestion that Mrs. Garfield was interested in perhaps working with people who were sight-impaired or hearing-impaired and potentially developing educational, you know, outlets for them.

But the one project we know about, again, from her diary is going to the Library of Congress to do research on the history of the White House, with the idea of not necessarily historically restoring the house, but bringing a sense of history there.

Again, the people now at this point, you know, 80 years, the White House has been standing, and these -- all these families back to the Adamses had lived there. And so now you're having one and two and three generations' worth of stories that she's starting to hear, and she really has a sense of history and the history of the house. I might also really quickly add, in her papers is a fascinating list of artists and writers that she intended to invite to the White House.

SWAIN: Next is Thomas in Greece, New York. You're on, Thomas.

THOMAS (ph): Hello. Can you hear me?

SWAIN: Yes.

THOMAS (ph): Yeah, can you hear me?

SWAIN: Yes, Thomas, we can. Your question?

THOMAS (ph): Yeah, yeah, can you hear me?

SWAIN: All right, Thomas, I'm sorry, but you have to turn that TV volume down. So we will move on to one other quick video which talks about her artistic ability and also some of the decisions she made about things like the White House china. Let's watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MARY LINTERN: Here in the family dining room at the Mentor farm, we have the family's china, which was actually the china that they used at the White House. And I'll just take one out. It's a tableau lamoche (ph), and it has the G monogram on it.

Now, the Garfields were not rich people, and they did not purchase a specific set for the purpose of the White House, so they just brought their best stuff with them. They would have used this china at home and also at the White House, so this would have been their formal dinnerware.

The White House probably has several pieces of the china, but as you can see, we have quite a collection here of the china that still exists, so it was a pretty impressive set.

China painting was very popular in the 19th century; it was a very popular hobby for ladies. The very top row of Garfield's china were hand-painted by Lucretia, we believe. Mrs. Garfield was very up on the latest trends and styles of the day, and she had a very good eye for art and beauty.

She taught painting for a while. Around the fire place are hand-painted tiles. That was a family project done in 1880. Mrs. Garfield, we believe, painted the two top corner tiles. The other tiles were painted by the children and at least one family friend. James A. Garfield once said that his wife had faultless tastes. And just looking around the home, you could see that she chose her wallpapers, her colors, her furnitures very carefully.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: And G. Robinson on Twitter asks us, "Did Lucretia have the opportunity to host any events at the White House? We saw her china.

ANTHONY: She hosted regular receptions, and it's fascinating that at one of those, a man by the name of Charles Guiteau, who would shoot the president two months later, met her and recorded having a very pleasant conversation with her and really liking her. And then, of course, she gets malaria, there's fear that she might die. As she's recovering, it's thought that she would do better at the Jersey Shore, to -- with the salt air. And Guiteau, again, ready to shoot the president, comes in -- is waiting for him at the railroad station, and he sees him escorting Mrs. Garfield and he can't bring himself to shoot the president.

SWAIN: That's in June.

ANTHONY: In June.

SWAIN: And so I want to pause for dramatic effect here, because just a short while later, July 2, 1881, he gets a second chance. Tell us that story of the assassination.

ANTHONY: Well, the president is on his way to Elberon, New Jersey, to join his wife. And he is then going to go up to Williams College in Massachusetts. Two of the boys are back in Ohio with their grandmother. Molly, the president's daughter, is with her mother. And Guiteau shoots the president.

He -- right away, he sees Harriet Blaine, the wife of James Blaine, who Lucretia Garfield was so strongly in favor of having, and he tells her to please immediately -- immediately wire Crete. And Mrs. Garfield comes down, she's overwhelmed, of course, at first. She almost faints and has to be, you know, held up by two men on either side of her and composes herself and says to the doctors,

what will it take to make sure he's cured? And they said a miracle. And she said, without any sentiment, "Well, then, that's what will happen. It will be a miracle."

SWAIN: This was July in Washington, D.C. Now, she contracted malaria, because Washington still had not drained its swamps and was a muggy, hot, dangerous place for health in the summertime. So here is this mortally wounded president taken back to a hot, damp White House. How does this affect his care?

ANTHONY: Well, I could almost say, what care? I mean, you know, he is -- they know he's got a bullet in him. You know, it's beastly hot. There's a rudimentary sort of air conditioning kind of system to try and pump cool air up from the ground floor.

SWAIN: And they do that specifically because they're asking help from the public on inventions that could help cool the president's chamber.

ANTHONY: Yes. And with that, not only did ideas for inventions come, but all kinds of kooky recipes and potions and things like this were being sent to Mrs. Garfield.

Now, Mrs. Garfield was fantastic in that she was able to compartmentalize what were her very personal fears and the real care and the wear on her emotionally from the possibility of losing her husband, and then the wherewithal to sort of put out this word that everything was fine, that the president was in charge.

And this was a very important thing. She was -- seemed to -- ask that everything written about him be sent to her for review. Vice President Arthur made no rumblings about assuming any presidential duties. He kind of respected her. And so you began to see generated first in the country and then around the world the most amazing articles about this woman's courage, this woman's intelligence, her fortitude, her strength, her calm, and how it was pervading the White House, and cheering up, so to speak, the president, the patient.

Then there were -- the technology of the day permitted the pen sketches, so you began to actually see visual images of Mrs. Garfield, you know, with their daughter at his bedside or her down in the kitchen, you know, preparing food for him. So, you know, it was a little bit of hyperbole, because, of course, it was, in fact, a desperate situation.

And as we had spoken about earlier, Alexander Graham Bell offered to bring in sort of a new-fangled magnetic -- electromagnetic machine to try and find the bullet and asked that any metal springs in the bed be removed, and they weren't. So...

SWAIN: So he was trying to trace a metal bullet and, in fact, the machine saw all the bed springs.

ANTHONY: That's correct.

SWAIN: And it didn't help. Pam Tapscott is asking, "Is it true that President Garfield died not from the gunshot, but from bacteria from dirty instruments used by the doctors?"

ANTHONY: Well, you know, it's a little bit yes, but also, you know, the bullet was dirty. It was a foreign object that was in him, and so it did, of course -- he might have eventually died. It's just a circumstantial situation. Of course, it's also ignorance at the time.

I will say he had one woman doctor, Dr. Susan Edson, and after the federal government had paid those doctors, they paid that woman doctor half the amount. And Mrs. Garfield wrote a letter and was outraged and called it -- used the word "discrimination." And the woman doctor received the same amount as the male doctors.

SWAIN: Lorraine watching in Tallahassee, hi, Lorraine, you're on.

LORRAINE (ph): Hi. My question is -- and thank you, C-SPAN, for the program -- my question is, during that timeframe, would they have known the Rockefellers and, like, the Vanderbilts of those days?

ANTHONY: That -- you know, the Arthurs -- Chester Arthur and his wife did, right after them, but the Garfields really did not at the time they're in the White House. In later years, Mrs. Garfield, you know, was quite well respected and well known in the country, and I wouldn't doubt that she would have had contact with them.

SWAIN: And next up is Kerry watching us in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Hi, Kerry.

KERRY (ph): Hi, thank you. Was there a big age difference between the president and Mrs. Garfield?

ANTHONY: I don't recall. I just -- I think it was five years or less, but I don't remember their specific birth dates.

SWAIN: But not a large...

(CROSSTALK)

ANTHONY: Not a large at all, no.

SWAIN: So the president was shot, again, July 2nd, and he lingered until September. The decision is made at some point to move him to the Jersey Shore.

ANTHONY: Yes, to the very place where she had been -- where he had been headed to see her and join her, and that is where he dies in her presence. And what's very interesting is that, among the many, many letters that she receives, she gets one from a former first lady, Julia Tyler, who not only sends a telegram, as does former First Lady Sarah Polk, but then Mrs. Tyler writes her a letter and says, you know, I felt -- I wanted to emphasize that you -- and she used the word "a sister" in talking about this sort of idea of a sort of almost sorority of presidential spouses.

SWAIN: And the funeral, 250,000 people came. Set the stage for us on this Victorian Era -- High Victorian Era funeral and what it was like.

ANTHONY: Well, to me, the -- one of the -- what says it all is the way the White House itself looked. There were photographs that show it trimmed in the most intricate patterns of black mourning crape, and Mrs. Garfield was strong throughout it. There was -- she did not break down, unlike Mary Lincoln and Peggy Taylor, who were unable to emotionally withstand the whole public display of this.

Mrs. Garfield was seen. She also, in a very practical way, began designing and working with the ideas of what his tomb would be like in Cleveland, Ohio.

SWAIN: Which for other first ladies in later years also have husbands felled by assassins' bullets -- thinking of Jacqueline Kennedy, thinking about Ida McKinley -- also took that model and became very much involved in the planning of the funeral process and on the memorial.

ANTHONY: Yes. And then, with that, in that same thought, the legacy of what their husbands would be like. She -- Lucretia Garfield, we mentioned the papers that she was preserving, but, you know,

she approved statues, busts of him. You know, she was really hands-on whenever it had anything to do with him.

SWAIN: Cynthia Saber (ph) on Facebook wants to know, how did their children react to the father's assassination? And how old were they when it happened?

ANTHONY: Gosh, I don't remember the ages, and they were not all there when he died. As I mentioned, two of the boys were young, and two of the other -- there were two older boys, college age. Molly I think was about 13 or 14 years old, and then there were the two younger boys.

SWAIN: Now, the amazing thing is that there's a fund drive for the Garfield family. And we used this figure before, but somewhere between $350,000-$360,000 in 1880 dollars was raid for this family. Would have been like $8 million today?

ANTHONY: It's extraordinary, yeah.

SWAIN: And did it come internationally? Were people sending money from all over the place?

ANTHONY: It was a financier by the name of Cyrus Field who started this in the newspapers, and it really caught on. You know, she really captured people's imagination. We forget it now. It was a brief moment in our history, but it was so different from the way people reacted to Mary Lincoln.

But, in fact, I should mention that because of Mrs. Garfield getting -- and then not only that, but then being awarded almost immediately by Congress a presidential widow's pension of $5,000 a year, that also benefited the other surviving presidential widows -- Sarah Polk, Julia Tyler, and Mary Lincoln -- and true to form, you know, Mrs. Lincoln's reaction was, I'm sure somebody is going to put the kibosh on that and I won't ever get my money, and Julia Tyler wrote an anonymous letter to the press saying, "You know, this is wonderful, but I think it should be double that amount."

SWAIN: Scott in Garfield Heights, Ohio.

SCOTT (ph): Hi, C-SPAN. Thanks for the series. Me and my son, Keith, really love it. I grew up not far from Garrettsville, which is next -- Hiram, where Garfield was the president of the university. We were watching "CBS Sunday Morning" one morning, and they had a trivia question, saying who is the only president buried above ground? Well, I mean, we didn't know, and then they said Garfield at Lake View Cemetery, so we (inaudible) in the car and we drove up there.

There's his, you know, monument, and it sits up, and it's (inaudible) and you walk down, and you look in, and it's got like sealed bars and (inaudible) caskets of Garfield and his wife with the American flag draped over it, and just a real beautiful bronze statue of him upstairs, and I just highly recommend it. It's a beautiful place.

SWAIN: Well, thanks for the recommendation. I don't know that he's the only president buried -- the Adamses are buried above ground...

ANTHONY: Yeah, McKinley.

SWAIN: And McKinley and...

ANTHONY: You know...

SWAIN: We can -- and Grant.

ANTHONY: And Harding. I mean, most of them are...

SWAIN: But thanks for the recommendation. That's one of the things we're trying to do is interest people in learning more about American history and getting out on the road and seeing some of this, as your interest begins to wax.

So another view. And this is returning to the Mentor, Ohio, home of the Garfields. And in this we'll learn about how Lucretia began to preserve her husband's memory.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TODD ARRINGTON: Well, after James Garfield's death, Lucretia Garfield came back here to Mentor, Ohio, started to make her life and her family's life again here in this house and on this property. And she started to make a lot of changes to the property eventually.

For example, the summer bedroom, she stopped using that, turned it into other things, started using the upstairs bedroom a lot more frequently. She converted the downstairs kitchen into an open reception room and had the kitchen moved into the back part of the house. Most significantly, of course, was the construction of the presidential memorial library in 1885 and '86.

So she started to make a lot of changes to the property. But I think just as important as the changes that she made to the property are the ones that she didn't make.

And I'm standing now in the room that James A. Garfield used as an office for the years that he was alive and living here in the house. Lucretia Garfield sort of lovingly called this the general's snuggery. So this room today really does pretty much look like it did when Lucretia Garfield came back to the home and really found the room in the condition that it was in the day James Garfield walked out to go become president of the United States.

She did make a few minor changes in here, the most significant of those is right here over the fireplace. You see the words "In Memoriam" carved into the wood. This, of course, has, you know, a very special meaning to her in memory of James Garfield, "In Memoriam" refers to that.

However, it does have kind of an interesting double meaning, in that "In Memoriam" was also the title of James and Lucretia Garfield's favorite poem. In late 1863, James A. Garfield went to Washington, became a first-time member of the U.S. House of Representatives. On December 1, 1863, their first-born child, a daughter named Eliza, who they lovingly had nicknamed Trot, died. She was only two or three years old.

This was, of course, very tragic for them and really kind of brought them much closer together than they had ever been up to that point since they had been married. But James Garfield wrote this very sort of compassionate, impassioned letter to his wife from Washington, D.C., just about two weeks or so after the daughter's death. And he told Lucretia in the letter that he'd been reading this poem "In Memoriam" written by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, and that it was offering him great comfort as he tried to do deal with the death of their daughter.

And he suggested that Lucretia read the poem, as well. He hoped it would bring as much comfort to her as it had brought to him. And he kind of suggested that this really become sort of their poem. And it did.

So when Lucretia Garfield had "In Memoriam" carved into the wood here in her husband's office after his death, she really was kind of acknowledging not only his tragic death at a very young age, only 49 when he was assassinated, but also this love of literature that they had and this very special relationship they had with the Tennyson poem, "In Memoriam."

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: And later on in our program, we'll come back to the years after the White House for Lucretia Garfield. But with the assassination of her husband and his death in September, Chester Arthur, the man who was really a political opponent -- he was in the opposite side of the Republican Party -- and it was an effort to unite the party that had them both on the ticket -- suddenly found himself president. He was a man without a wife. He was a widower and also he had no vice president, so what was the transition like? And what was the state of the country after the assassination?

ANTHONY: Well, of course, the focus really remained for so long September and well into October, November, on President Garfield and his family. Chester Arthur -- lived his permanent home was in New York City on Lexington Avenue. And he himself was still in a state of very deep mourning, very deeply depressed, because his wife, Ellen, Ellen Herndon Arthur, had died only in January of 1880.

So it wasn't yet two years that he had lost his wife. She had come from a very powerful well-connected Virginia family. She grew up in Washington, D.C. She knew Dolley Madison when she was a little girl. They went to St. John's Church on Lafayette Square. And for about five years between the time she was 5 and 10 years old, she knew Dolley Madison.

Her father was a very famous naval commodore who took a commercial ship, the Central America, on a commercial trip. It went down, but it was a great act of bravery, because he made sure that all of the passengers who were onboard got off first. And so his widow and his daughter, Ellen, who was an only child, then living in New York City, were given all sorts of honors, awards. It was a place -- a monument to him at Annapolis Naval Academy.

And Ellen Arthur is a really interesting -- you know, she doesn't become first lady, but she influences the administration, very similar to Rachel Jackson, the way sort of the ghost, the memory of her. Chester Arthur made several appointments for -- at least that we know of -- specifically of people who had known his wife. One was a cousin in the -- the Office of the Attorney General, was made assistant attorney general. Another, I think, was Treasury. But it was very controversial that he named the sort of -- you know, what were called superintendent of the Naval Academy for -- he appointed a friend of theirs, somebody who had been a childhood friend of his wife's.

And then he kind of created a political problem with the Senate, which liked the prerogative of appointing the role of -- sort of -- before Washington, D.C., had mayors -- and it was kind of a ceremonial role that played out in the White House -- but Arthur insisted on making that appointment, because it was somebody who was a friend of his and Ellen's.

So he kept her picture on the wall, fresh flowers. He had a stained-glass window put in at St. John's Church so he could see it from his window, in the bedroom window in the White House. And there was some remorse, perhaps, because, you know, he had gotten very -- he was quite married to his career and his political advancement, and Mrs. Arthur, who was an accomplished singer, died of pneumonia while he was out up in Albany on political business.

So you have them coming without a wife, without a vice president. His 10-year-old daughter is living with his sister, Molly, up in Albany. There's -- it's sort of -- sort of a loose end. And the press at the time begins speculating in a series of articles who will be lady of the White House.

SWAIN: Well, you look at the man, and he was wealthy. He was very stylish. He lived quite a life in New York City. And he had this tragedy of being a widower, so you can see that there would be a storyline developed that the press would be very interested in.

ANTHONY: Absolutely. And it got a little, you know -- I don't know what the right word is -- it was a little unseemly, because there were a lot of wealthy women or women who wanted to be wealthy

who began, you know, sort of flirtatiously appearing wherever President Arthur did. And, you know, he no interest whatsoever in remarrying. I mean, he really became depressed.

And he functioned -- he basically said, I'm not going to have a first lady. Nobody is going to take the role of my wife. And so he starts sort of having these things, these social events once the social season begins again, once Congress comes back into session, and it's sort of like, you know, first lady for a day kind of thing. I mean, he has these events where it's a cabinet wife, it's a Senate wife, it's -- none of it's really quite working.

And the following year, 1883, New Years Day, his sister from Albany comes down. Now, part of that -- somebody mentioned Bright's disease. There's an indication that he knew he had a terminal illness. He wanted to be close again to his little daughter, so his daughter, Nell, came down from New York and, at the time, was being taken care of by her aunt, Mary Arthur McElroy...

SWAIN: Nicknamed Molly.

ANTHONY: Molly.

SWAIN: So we'll hear references to Mary Arthur and Molly, and that's the same person. And Becky Robinson asks on Twitter, "Did Mary Arthur McElroy live in the White House with her brother? Or did she keep house elsewhere in D.C.?"

ANTHONY: She lived in the White House with her brother.

SWAIN: And how protective were they of the little girl?

ANTHONY: Extremely protective. In fact, part of the whole reason Arthur kept her away from the White House for nearly a year, making sure she lived either at her home, which was his home, in New York City. Then he was having that remodeled, so then she went to live with her aunt. And there were two other girls, Molly McElroy's daughters, Jessie and May, a little older than their cousin, but these girls came to live with their mother in the White House.

SWAIN: Chris is watching us in Hartford, Connecticut. What's your question?

CHRIS (ph): Hi, my question is, if President Garfield had been shot in recent times with our modern medical technology, do you think he would have survived?

ANTHONY: You know, not being a medical historian, I wouldn't want to say too much on that, except to just venture a guess by saying yes, in the sense that the simple removal of a bullet, one would be today able to detect where that was in his system.

SWAIN: Now, he may have -- he, Chester Arthur, Chet Arthur, may have been severely depressed by his loss of his wife and the assassination of the president, but they entertained lavishly in the White House and he undertook an amazing redecoration of the White House that was done by Louis Tiffany. And anybody at home who thinks of a Tiffany lamp, with all the glass and all the colors, think of that applied to the White House, as we know it. What did it look like when it was done?

ANTHONY: Well, you know, the thing you cannot ignore, the elephant in the room, so to speak, was this wall of Tiffany glass. This wall was put up in what is the main hall, the central hall of the state floor. So you come in from the main entrance, the north entrance of the White House into technically the lobby, the entrance lobby, and today you'll see white columns and it'll open up and the doors to the Blue Room immediately, the Red Room, the Green Room.

But in those days, the draft was so bad, so people were sort of complaining about that. Arthur put up this wall of garish Victorian, you know, Tiffany glass.

SWAIN: Now, that's garish by 2013 tastes, but it was high style at the time, wasn't it?

ANTHONY: It was high style. But, you know, I looked into this. It didn't last but 20 years. You know, Teddy Roosevelt's famous words were, "Smash that wall to bits."

SWAIN: And was it preserved?

ANTHONY: It was not.

SWAIN: It really was smashed to bits?

ANTHONY: It was -- I don't know if it was smashed to bits, but that's what Roosevelt said.

SWAIN: Wow.

ANTHONY: Yeah.

SWAIN: But it was also a very busy time in the country, this period. And we have just a couple of the highlights of the administration, of some of the issues that the Arthur administration was dealing with, again, without a vice president in office. 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act, then the vice -- then the president vetoes the so-called Carriage of Passengers at Sea bill. There was the River and Harbors Acts. And most importantly, 1883, Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act, and we talked earlier about civil service reform being the key issue of the time, so what happened with that in this administration?

ANTHONY: Well, it was a first step. And, you know, just sort of like Social Security or, you know, certain degree of -- to some degree, civil rights, you know, things come in increments. And so Arthur's, you know, support of that and -- you know, ended up being the very first major piece of legislation that started to, you know, make the first real prevention of the spoil system, of basically the political system.

Remember, federal employees could be fired. People who, you know, worked in the Treasury building, people who, you know, we think of today as career, you know, bureaucrats or, you know, people working as federal employees could all be fired. And whoever was in power would then, you know, appoint who -- it was, you know, whoever they wanted. It was not only unfair, it was inefficient.

And so Arthur really takes the first steps. He also, I should say, puts the first, you know, efforts in, in terms of building up a modern U.S. Navy. And while the Chinese Exclusionary Act was really an awful thing in terms of, you know, just outright act of bigotry, Arthur had supported something that was far less strict than -- which passed. I mean, there were -- there was a worse proposal out there. And so, you know, Arthur I think gets a bad rap sometimes.

SWAIN: A couple quick questions. Dave Murdock, Twitter. Did Arthur keep Garfield's cabinet? And who was his most important adviser?

ANTHONY: I do not recall -- he did initially through the new year, meaning 1882, but I can't recall specifically the individual members of his cabinet that continued on. Of course, when you speak of the Garfield administration, you're really talking more about the Arthur administration.

SWAIN: Rachel Davidson Schmoyer on Facebook, what measures were taken to ensure the Arthur family's safety after the assassination?

ANTHONY: None.

SWAIN: None?

ANTHONY: None. There were no -- there were guards at the front door. But it still had the sort of lazy, you know, sort of old hotel quality to it. I mean, even with Arthur's restoration -- I won't say restore -- redecoration, it was one reason why he was very protective of his daughter. In fact, it isn't until the 1886 New Years Day reception -- this is two months before he leaves -- that he allows his daughter to publicly appear.

SWAIN: Brian watching us in Ketchikan, Alaska. Welcome to the conversation.

BRIAN (ph): Hi, thank you very much. This is a great show. I heard something many years ago, and I don't know if it's true, but Garfield had this ability to take a pen in each hand, one in the right, one in the left, and simultaneously write the same thing in Greek and Latin. Is this true?

ANTHONY: From all I have learned, yes, that was true.

SWAIN: Wow, what a talent.

ANTHONY: Ambidextrous.

SWAIN: So were Ellen or Mary's style as progressive as Chester?

ANTHONY: Say -- was Ellen...

SWAIN: Ellen or Molly as progressive in their own style as Chester?

ANTHONY: Certainly Ellen was. Ellen Arthur was very fashionable, very rich, largely through the wealth of her mother, and very ambitious. There's a lot of stories about how, you know, she really got behind -- I mean, she really didn't like that politics kept him away from the home so often, but on the other hand, she was a very socially ambitious and ambitious for his career.

In fact, even though she was a southerner and even though one of her very close first cousins -- because she was an only child, so she was very, very close to what were double cousins, you know, her -- her parents, siblings had married each other, so she had double cousins. And during the Civil War, Chester Arthur was able to secure the release from Union prisons of one of her cousins.

But she went to Abraham Lincoln's 1865 inaugural. She attended the White House wedding of Nellie Grant. She knew the parents of Theodore Roosevelt in New York City. So she bought at the best stores. They took summers in, you know, Cooperstown, New York, and Newport. Molly Arthur was a little bit more -- I would not use the word pedestrian, but she was not interested in being stylish.

SWAIN: Last question on the Arthur administration and Mary Arthur McElroy, the sister. She had a very strong opinion against women's suffrage. How influential was she in this non-official White House hostess role to...

ANTHONY: It's very interesting situation, because it really showed us that the country had come to expect a female presence, whether it was a wife or a sister or a daughter, and she was -- really walked a fine line, because she didn't -- she took -- she made public appearances, sometimes on her own, but then sometimes only with him.

And so -- and I think he almost kind of was ambivalent about how public a role she should take. Her support of the anti-suffrage movement occurred, however, after she left the White House. So while there was some press coverage of it, it wasn't widely known.

I will add, though, that she was also a great advocate of civil rights. And in her home in Albany, she not only welcomed as a dinner guest, but as an overnight guest Booker T. Washington.

SWAIN: We have 12 minutes left. And as the Arthur administration gets its sea legs and finishes out its three years, Lucretia Garfield is establishing herself as a widow, enormously popular first lady. How does she do that? We've got a lot of people very curious about her move to Pasadena, California. How did that all come about?

ANTHONY: Well, because she couldn't take the cold winters in Ohio anymore. She also maintained a home in Washington as a presidential widow. And...

SWAIN: And the house in Mentor, Ohio, which she continued to work on.

ANTHONY: Right, but she also -- there were times that she leased the house or the property for -- because it was just more feasible. Now, she had her brother -- I think it was Joe -- who was sort of the manager of the house, but, you know, California was, you know, 1880s, 1890s, a really sort of opening up as the sort of promised land of sunshine, and a lot of California was settled by wealthy Midwesterners.

So she went out to Pasadena in 1900. And she was distantly related to these two famous architects, Greene and Greene, who were sort of known for what's called the California craftsman's style architecture. She had a great interest, as you know, in architecture.

And so she worked very closely with them in designing this extraordinary arts and crafts -- California arts and crafts mansion, which is still standing, a private home. And it really became kind of a showplace. And she was -- even in one of the -- in one of the carriages of VIPs in the early Pasadena Rose Parade. You know, so she -- she had a very full life in California.

SWAIN: You've said -- made the point many times that she was interested in so much. One of our viewers on Facebook, J.Y. Vered, says, "She" -- that's Lucretia Garfield -- "always struck me as wonderfully progressive, and not just because of the air conditioning she had them make for the New Jersey house. At the Renwick, I saw a silver and ebony teapot she bought for the White House from Dominick and Haff in New York. And she lived in a Greene and Greene house in south Pasadena," which we just saw, "which was hyper modern for the time. The teapot is fantastically modern for 1881. What do you think of all this and her taste?"

ANTHONY: Well, I'm probably not the best person to ask about taste, but I would just say this. Along those lines, she was also an advocate for women's suffrage. She believed completely in it.

Now, she didn't come out publicly. Just like the issue of temperance, she thought it would make a lot more of a controversy than need be. But her daughter also affirmed that her mother truly believed in the equality of the genders. And you also see her, when former President Theodore Roosevelt in 1912 is mounting a campaign against the incumbent Republican president, she supports Theodore Roosevelt. She comes out -- while he makes an appearance in Los Angeles, she comes to that event.

SWAIN: Tony in Pleasantville, New York, good evening.

TONY (ph): Hi, Susan, how are you today?

SWAIN: Great, thanks.

TONY (ph): Thanks to Book TV, one of the best books I ever read was "Destiny of the Republic" by Candice Millard. And in that book, so many facts, but the three that caught my attention tonight were Abraham Lincoln's son, Tad, involvement in three presidential assassinations, not necessarily being involved in the assassinations, but being in the area of them. And you showed an artist's sketch of the railroad car that carried President Garfield to the house where he passed away. I wonder if Mr. Anthony could tell the story of how that car got there.

And lastly, there's a park up in that area -- I believe it's called Seven Presidents Park -- maybe they might have to make that eight presidents, now that President Obama visited under different circumstances -- why so many presidents went to the Jersey Shore.

SWAIN: Okay. Well, we have very little time, so the...

ANTHONY: It was fashionable. The salt air was thought to be recuperative. And in order to reach that house, they had to lay extra track, so it went -- so the train could go right up to the house.

SWAIN: And he mentioned all the presidents. And during the years of the Arthur administration, these are the first ladies who were alive -- Julia Tyler, Sarah Polk, Harriet Lane, Mary Lincoln, Julia Grant, Lucy Hayes, and, of course, Lucretia Garfield. Today we see a bonding that crosses policy parties among women who served in the White House. Was that happening at this time?

ANTHONY: You know, if we could credit good, old Molly McElroy, who's basically forgotten in history with anything, it's bringing them together. She invited to the White House Julia Tyler and Harriet Lane to publicly receive with her as sort of co-hostesses. And because of the pension issue, Mrs. Lincoln and Mrs. Tyler were, again, in the news, along with Mrs. Garfield, and with Molly McElroy leaving the role of substitute first lady and handing it over to Cleveland, who's a bachelor at the time, whose sister, Rose Cleveland, will be assuming that role, there was a lot of press about these two sisters, sort of passing it on.

At the same time, in conjunction with all this, the very first book is written on the history of first ladies, and it is a collective biography, and it is called "Ladies of the White House" by -- and her name just escaped me, but it's a very famous book, and it came out in many editions.

SWAIN: Lucretia Garfield, or Crete Garfield, outlived her husband by 37 years. And we talked about how she spent much of that time trying to catalog and preserve her husband's history. Well, we're going to return one last time to the house in Mentor, Ohio, and learn a bit more about how she did that.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TODD ARRINGTON: If James A. Garfield were to walk into this house right now, he actually would not recognize this room, because when he was alive and living here in the home, this was actually the kitchen. After his death, Lucretia Garfield started to make some major changes to the property. This room was converted from the kitchen into this sort of open reception room. The most significant change that she made after his death was the construction of the nation's very first presidential Memorial Library.

okay, now as we get to the top of the steps here, before we go into the Memorial Library, we come first to the memorial landing. And it's here that we find one of Lucretia Garfield's favorite portraits of her husband. This portrait was done by Carolyn Ransom (ph), who was a good friend of the Garfields. And it shows James A. Garfield as a major general during the American Civil War.

This is the room that Lucretia Garfield came up with in her mind as a place really to memorialize her husband, to keep his memory alive for herself, for their children, and really, by extension for the country, as well. All over the room, you see books. These are all books that belong to James A. Garfield. This is a beautiful piece that was actually sent to Mrs. Garfield completely unsolicited by someone from -- in Italy. It's a beautiful memorial piece that has an image of James Garfield in the middle surrounded by flowers. This is all actually made with small stones pressed together, and it was one of Mrs. Garfield's favorite pieces.

We have a very beautiful marble bust of James A. Garfield. This was also sculpted by an Italian sculptor and given to Mrs. Garfield around 1883 about two years after her husband's death. And then here we have what Lucretia called the memory room. This is the room that she had constructed along with the library in 1885 and '86, in which she stored her husband's official papers and documents.

So it was in this room that she had his papers organized, catalogued, and then bound up and stored, really, to keep them for posterity. A lot of very interesting items in here. Most significantly is the wreath, I think, up on the -- up on the shelf there in the frame. That wreath was actually lying on Garfield's casket while he was lying in state in the Capitol building in Washington, D.C. The wreath was sent to Mrs. Garfield via the British delegation from Queen Victoria, along with a nice handwritten note of sympathy from the queen.

Something that's really interesting about this room is the fact that the Garfields used this room a lot. It wasn't one of those, you know, sort of beautiful rooms that you can't actually go into or touch anything. You see Lucretia's writing desk here. She spent a lot of time here writing letters. You'll see here that she did use black-bordered stationary. She actually used that for the rest of her life, just to kind of denote lifelong mourning for her husband.

Here in front of the large windows on kind of a happier note, two of the Garfield children actually got married in 1888. There was a double wedding ceremony here, where Harry Garfield, the oldest Garfield son, and Molly Garfield, the only surviving Garfield daughter, both married their respective fiances in a double wedding ceremony right here in front of the windows in the library.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: Well, Lucretia Garfield made it into the new century. She died in 1918 at the ripe old age of 85. How did she live those post-White House years? And what should -- where should we put her in the pantheon of first ladies?

ANTHONY: Well, unfortunately, her tenure was so brief, but we can say this. She was the first to be self-conscious enough to not destroy her papers. She was the first to keep a diary of her White House days. And she might best be thought of as a former first lady, in a sense, in terms of her career.

I think there is a lot of similarities between her and Jacquelyn Kennedy, both in terms of committing to the legacy of their husbands, and yet also not allowing their lives or the lives of their children to be weighed down by the grief.

SWAIN: We're looking at some photographs of the large family. Do you know if any of the Garfield family members went into politics?

ANTHONY: Well, one of her sons was in Theodore Roosevelt's cabinet. And another son was in Woodrow Wilson's cabinet, as fuel administrator. She died right, you know, at the very beginning, a year into World War I, and she was actually herself doing work as a volunteer with the Red Cross in Pasadena when she died. But there's some suggestion that she decided to go from Republican to a progressive to slightly Democratic, because President Wilson gave her son a job in the cabinet.

SWAIN: Well, and on that note, we will say thank you. You know, we've talked about the fact that you've spent your historical career, historian's career focusing on the first ladies. As we close here, we've got lots of first ladies ahead of us. How did you get interested? And why do you think it's interesting for people to learn about first ladies?

ANTHONY: Because they have a natural influence on the thinking of their husbands. And their intelligence and their wisdom -- and sometimes their ability to even see sort of a larger picture that they, the husbands themselves, can't, was for so many years neglected. You know, they were always just sort of written off as mannequins for clothing who had, you know, nice dishes. And in fact, you know, their intelligence and their efforts and conscientiousness helped their husbands reach the presidency.

SWAIN: Here's one of Carl Anthony's books, "First Ladies: The Saga of the President's Wives and their Power, 1789-1961." It's available, as are his other books, wherever you buy your books.

As we're closing out here, I say this each week, we are working with the historical sites, and thanks to the folks at the Garfield home in Mentor, Ohio, for their help tonight, but also with the White House Historical Association who are our partners in this series all year long.

We have this biography book that they have published for many years. We got a special edition of it. For those of you who wanted to read more of the biographies, you can find it on our website, selling it at cost, just with the idea here that you can learn more history if you're interested. Thanks for being with us tonight on our first ladies program on the Garfield and Arthur administrations.

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