



# **A Pestilence on Pennsylvania Avenue: The Impact of Disease Upon the American Presidency**

*David R. Petriello*

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Scandals and cover-ups have been associated with Washington D.C. and the presidency since the earliest days of the republic. From the Whiskey Ring to Monica Lewinsky, these have usually centered on corruption or adultery. Yet a far deadlier and more pervasive influence has struck the White House time and time again—disease. Presidents, vice presidents, their families and their cabinets have been stricken by an assortment of ailments over the past 230 years. Some of these have caused personal issues, while others have driven national policy. A few have caused or ended wars, and others have led to enormous cover-ups that are just beginning to be revealed. *A Pestilence on Pennsylvania Avenue* explores all of the surprising ways in which illness has impacted not only the presidency, but through it, the entire nation and its history. From George Washington to Barack Obama, pestilence has indirectly ruled the People's House for over two centuries, an influence that will no doubt continue, despite science and the media, well into the future.

Chapters include Gelding the Stallion of the Potomac, Lobelia, Lead, and the Rise and Fall of Old Hickory, Bacterial Assassination, Presidential Cover-Ups, The First Female President, An Accessory to Assassination, A Medical Amendment, A Camelot of Contagion, My Kingdom for a Cure, Second in Line, First in Health, Illnesses of the First Ladies, First Family Maladies, and The First Citizen.

Endorsements:

"*A Pestilence on Pennsylvania Avenue* sheds a new light on the oft-written topic of presidential history in an exciting, intriguing, and provocative way. It provides a new lens for examining the effects of disease on our commanders-in-chief, and is a must-read for historians, students, and history buffs alike." - Reverend Joshua S. Goldfarb, Teacher of History and Civics

"*A Pestilence on Pennsylvania Avenue* is a thorough and fascinating account concerning the impact of disease on American history. Through the use of interesting cases and anecdotes, Dr Petriello sheds light on an area of inquiry that has heretofore been largely ignored. His fluid and approachable style makes the pages fly by. It is a great read." - Dr. Domenic Maffei, Chair, Department of History and Political Science, Caldwell University

"Dr. Petriello's journey through American history reveals the extraordinary impact that disease has had upon our nation and its leaders. As a history teacher, I consider this to be an amazing resource that my students will no doubt enjoy as much as I did." - Aruna Mathura, History Teacher

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