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**From the Selected Works of Amy Wainwright**

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## Book Review of America's First Ladies

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Available at: <https://works.bepress.com/amywainwright/1/>

*America's First Ladies: A historical Encyclopedia and Primary Document Collection of the Remarkable Women of the White House.* By Nancy Hendricks. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2015. 408 pages. acid free \$100 (ISBN 978-1-61069-882-5). Ebook available (978-1-61069-883-2), call for pricing.

*America's First Ladies: A historical Encyclopedia and Primary Document Collection of the Remarkable Women of the White House*, by Nancy Hendricks is a complete history of the women who have often played a behind the scenes role during their time in the White House. This encyclopedia provides a thorough examination to the history of First Ladies and how they have changed since Martha Washington. In the introduction, Hendricks gives context to the position of the First Lady and includes detailed information such as when the title of First Lady was first used. Many First Ladies have been criticized, both for their lack of engagement as well as for being too engaged; this volume fills in the background of who these important women were and what they have meant to our country.

This encyclopedia distinguishes itself for two reasons. *America's First Ladies* includes primary source material in each entry. This important collection of letters written by the First Ladies, or people who knew them best, gives more insight into the lives of the women that have lived the closest to our Presidents. These writings, that are directly from the First Ladies, make this volume stand apart from other recent publications like *First Ladies : presidential historians on the lives of 45 iconic American women* (PublicAffairs, 2015). The editors were also able to get an early release of the data from the latest Siena Research Institute poll of the First Ladies Rankings. This data shows interesting changes from the previous rankings that were released in 2008.

*America's First Ladies* would make an excellent addition to most libraries that already have an extensive selection of Presidential material and are looking to expand the coverage of their collection. This complete history of First Ladies is a fascinating look at the women who have often been strong advocates for charitable causes and created entire support structures in the White House.

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