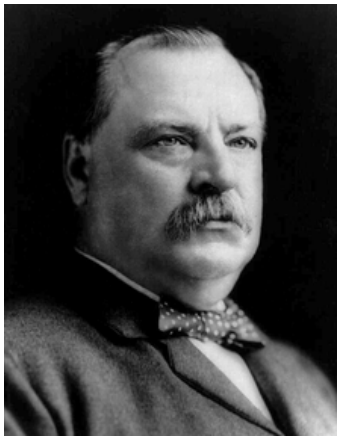

President	Grover Cleveland
Chronological Order	24
Life Span	1837-1908
Home State	New York
Elected	1892 (second term)
Political Party	Democratic
Vice President	Adlai E. Stevenson
First Lady	France Folsom Cleveland
Children	2 sons, 3 daughters
Physical Attributes	5'11" tall, 260 lbs., bull neck, thick torso, huge hands, mustache, brown hair, blue eyes
Undergraduate Education	None
Military Service	None
Profession	Attorney
Political Offices	Governor
Nickname	His Obstinancy or Uncle Jumbo
Family Lineage	English, Anglo-Irish, German
ReligiousAffiliation	Presbyterian

Biographical Notes

1. Cleveland's first term was a success, but his second term was not for several reasons. One month after his inauguration, the Panic of 1893 struck, and the country went into an economic depression that lasted almost four years. He did not cause the depression; the policies of the Harrison administration contributed strongly to that. He did take steps to try to get the country out of the depression, but some of his actions gave the impression that he was not sympathetic to the plight of the average American. For example, he and his administration displayed distaste for the efforts of the unemployed to march to Washington to seek congressional aid. In addition, he sent in federal troops to crush the Pullman strike and supported the use of an injunction to jail union leaders. Also, his administration did not use the Sherman Antitrust Act to reign in the trusts, as many hoped it would. In foreign policy, he was an anti-imperialist at a time when a significant portion of the American public was in favor of acquiring new territory.

2. After his defeat in 1888, Cleveland and his wife Frances moved to New York City and bought a brownstone on Madison Avenue next door to his friend E.C. Elias, a wealthy gas magnate. Cleveland associated himself with a New York law firm and became good friends with one of the firm's largest clients, the fabulously wealthy J.P. Morgan. As a result of his interaction with Morgan and other wealthy New Yorkers, Cleveland became more conservative.

3. in 1891, Cleveland argued a case involving municipal debt, *Peake v. New Orleans*, before the U.S. Supreme Court. He lost 6 to 3; two of the three justices who took his side were men he appointed. Cleveland is one of eight presidents to have argued before the Supreme Court (either before or after their presidencies). The others were: John Quincy Adams, James K. Polk, Abraham Lincoln, James A. Garfield, Benjamin Harrison, William H. Taft, and Richard Nixon.

4. The goal of the time between his two presidential terms, so far as Cleveland saw it, wasn't wealth, fame, or political relevance; it was the thing that had eluded him during all those years of backbreaking work: freedom. He no longer wanted to mix in political circles. Indeed, Grover was almost a ghost on the New York political scene, only keeping up with a few old friends acquired earlier in his career and explicitly steering

visitors to his office rather than his home so as not to intrude upon his private life. He did not want to function as a sort of monarch in exile. It's insufficient to say that Grover Cleveland was indifferent to the prospect of a political comeback. Indifference would have implied that he bothered to give it any thought.

He no longer wanted to be chained to a desk. His summer calendar at the law firm would be kept clear for extended hunting and fishing trips. Indeed, though long one of his favorite pastimes, fishing became an obsession during his first post-presidency. During his first term, the Clevelands had become friends with Richard Watson Gilder, the editor of *Century Magazine*. In Cleveland's first summer out of the White House, Gilder convinced him to vacation in a remote part of Barnstable County, MA, on the upper cape of Cape Cod. The setting was beautiful, and he caught so many fish that Grover and Frances would spend nearly every summer there for the next decade and a half, purchasing a home dubbed "Gray Gables" in the town of Bourne in 1891.

The intensity that Cleveland had once applied to his official duties was now transferred to rod and reel. Gilder would recall how when daydreaming while his line was in the water, he often heard the president boom out, "If you want to catch fish, attend strictly to business!" The elements could not even break Cleveland's focus. He fished through searing heat, thunderstorms, and while being pelted with hailstones. "This is the secret of 'Cleveland luck,'" Gilder observed; "it is hard work and no let up." When it was time to bring the boat in for the evening, Grover always asked for a few more minutes.

5. Initially, Cleveland was not interested in running for president in 1892. However, when New York Governor David B. Hill became the presumptive Democratic candidate, Cleveland was appalled. Where Cleveland had championed civil service reform, Hill was a machine politician without the slightest compunction about using patronage to his benefit. Where Cleveland wanted to lower tariffs, Hill, disinclined to tangle with protectionists, was content to return to something like the pre-McKinley Tariff status quo. Where Cleveland regarded the infusion of silver into the money supply as a potentially catastrophic risk, Hill straddled the issue to win over the West.

6. The success of Cleveland's 1892 presidential campaign was in many ways dependent on his failures in the 1888 election. That he had first taken up the tariff issue at a time when it cut against his political self-interest left no doubt about the sincerity of his convictions. Equally important, however, were the organizational lessons he had taken from the ramshackle operation that doomed his first attempt at reelection. This time, the campaign would operate with a level of efficiency and systemization unlike anything previously seen in his career.

Cleveland had inadvertently begun building this infrastructure by responding to every message he received after leaving the White House with a handwritten letter, which developed a large set of loyal admirers throughout the country. When shortly after leaving the White House, Cleveland enlisted George F. Parker to help distribute copies of his speeches to the press, the aide developed a nationwide network of correspondents who would push Cleveland's speeches and interviews to local media outlets, ensuring their distribution to nearby Democrats and mobilizing the party faithful in his support. The operation was decentralized, delegating authority to men sometimes thousands of miles away. By the time of the election, Cleveland had a nationwide organization entirely built from scratch, free from the influence of the national and state parties.

By the time the race began in earnest in the spring of 1892, this network stood ready to be harnessed by the campaign's high command. The reins were handed to William Whitney, Cleveland's secretary of the navy, who, unlike Cleveland's managers in 1888, was a trusted confidant of the president. In the months leading up to the 1892 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Whitney was able to absorb intelligence about Cleveland's prospects in virtually every state as quickly as the technology of the nineteenth century would allow – and, where necessary, to deploy the resources needed to bolster his candidate. At the convention, Cleveland won the nomination on the first ballot.

7. With New York State presumably still playing a pivotal role in the 1892 electoral college, Whitney arranged a dinner meeting between Cleveland and three Tammany Hall leaders, including Grand Sachem Richard Croker. Predictably, the Tammanyites insisted on a promise that a second Cleveland term would provide them with the kind of patronage benefits denied them by his first. In an equally predictable manner, Cleveland refused to make such a promise. It could have been a powder keg if not for the fact that Croker broke the tension by suggesting that Cleveland's insistence on refusing pledges was reasonable. Whitney quickly agreed. (Whitney and Croker had a close personal relationship; years earlier, Whitney had successfully defended Croker in a murder trial.) The upshot of the meeting was that Tammany Hall would not

stand in Cleveland's way.

8. In the election of 1892, several factors enabled Cleveland to defeat President Harrison. First, there was a series of strikes that the public held against the Republican Party. Second, Harrison had difficulties within his own party, stemming from his arbitrary treatment of party bosses and even rank-in-file supporters. His chilly demeanor, refusal to listen to advice, standoffish behavior, and insensitivity to style and convention alienated even members of his own cabinet. Third, in the West – where Republicans generally did extremely well – the Populist Party candidate for president, James B. Weaver, took votes away from Harrison. Cleveland received 277 electoral votes, Harrison 145, and Weaver 22. Weaver did very well for a third-party candidate; he won Nevada, Idaho, Colorado, Kansas, and North Dakota. Cleveland had coattails. The Democrats won the House and the Senate for the first time in thirty-five years.

9. One month after Cleveland took office, the Panic of 1893 hit the country. The depression that followed lasted almost four years and was, in some respects, the worst of the century. Many Democrats blamed the Republicans, indicting especially the McKinley Tariff of 1890, pointing out that it had rendered imports too expensive and produced a decline in customs revenue. Also, free silver agitation, which manifested itself in the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890, had damaged American credit abroad.

Distress was acute and widespread. About eight thousand businesses collapsed in six months, dozens of railroad lines went bankrupt, including the Northern Pacific, the Union Pacific, and the Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe. Approximately one-fifth of factory workers lost their jobs. Soup kitchens were set up for the unemployed, and gangs of hoboes tramped aimlessly about the country. Local charities did what they could, but Cleveland (like most politicians of the era) did not believe it was the place of the federal government to intervene directly to relieve the suffering of the masses. This attitude stands in stark contrast to the way Franklin Roosevelt responded to the Great Depression of the twentieth century.

10. Cleveland believed that prosperity could be restored if Americans once more had confidence in the backing of their paper money. He felt sure that their faith had been shaken by the Sherman Silver Purchase Act (SSPA). He maintained that basing the nation's currency on gold and silver, as the law provided, was draining away the nation's gold supply.

In particular, the SSPA required the government to buy almost all the silver produced domestically. The Treasury paid paper money for the silver bullion, and then, in many cases, the bearers of the paper money would use it to buy gold from the Treasury, which they would then hoard. Even some banks did this. Consequently, gold was being drained from the Treasury.

Cleveland believed, it turns out correctly, that the solution was to place the country on a gold standard, i.e., in having a currency based solely on gold. He pursued this conviction by persuading Congress to repeal the SSPA before the first year of his term was over.

11. The repeal of the SSPA only partially stopped the hemorrhaging of gold from the Treasury. Consequently, the gold reserve sank to a dismaying $41 million. The nation was in grave danger of going off the gold standard.

Early in 1895, Cleveland turned in desperation to his friend J.P. Morgan and a Wall Street syndicate for help, and the bankers agreed to lend the government $65 million in gold. They charged a commission fee of about $7 million, but they did make a significant concession by agreeing to obtain half the gold from abroad. The loan helped solve the gold crisis, but Cleveland's critics harped on his "collusion" with Big Business.

12. In June 1893, a tumor was discovered on the roof of Cleveland's mouth. Surgery was performed, removing the tumor, five teeth, and a large part of the president's upper left jawbone. The procedure was kept secret so as not to alarm the public that the president might have cancer. After the operation, Cleveland's speech was adversely affected, and his face looked somewhat different. During another surgery in mid-July, Cleveland was fitted with a hard rubber dental prosthesis that corrected his speech and restored his appearance.

13. The depression of 1893 caused labor unrest, with the worst being the Pullman Strike of 1894. Eugene V. Debs had helped organize the American Railway Union of about 150,000 members. The Pullman Palace Car Company, which maintained a model town near Chicago for its employees, was hit hard by the depression and cut wages by one-third. But it did not reduce the rent on the company houses. The workers finally struck – in some cases overturning Pullman cars – paralyzing railway traffic from Chicago to the Pacific Coast.

The uprising in Chicago was serious, but the Illinois governor felt that the local authorities could handle the

situation, i.e., that federal troops were not needed. However, Attorney General Richard Olney, an arch-conservative and an ex-railroad attorney, convinced Cleveland to send in federal troops. (Olney remained on retainer from the Chicago, Burlington,& Quincy Railroad even after being installed as attorney general.) Olney also told the railroads to file for a court order (an injunction) against the union that would prohibit it from striking. His legal grounds were that the strikers were interfering with the transit of the U.S. mail. Cleveland supported Olney strongly when he said, "If it takes the entire army and navy to deliver a postcard in Chicago, that postcard will be delivered."

To the delight of conservatives, the federal troops crushed the Pullman strike. Debs and his leading associates, who had defied the injunction, were sentenced to six months in prison for contempt of court. Embittered cries of "government by injunction" arose from labor. This was the first time such a weapon had been used to break a strike. It was all the more distasteful because labor organizers who were held in contempt could be imprisoned without a jury trial. Many people saw in this brutal Pullman episode further proof of an alliance between Big Business and the courts.

14. Cleveland continued his first-term effort to transform the civil service into a more professional, less partisan force. By the time he left office, civil service protections that prevented government employees from being removed for political reasons would extend to more than forty percent of the federal workforce. He even retained one of President Harrison's civil service commissioners: Republican Theodore Roosevelt. Cleveland trusted Roosevelt, having worked with him on civil service reform in New York.

15. In keeping with Cleveland's 1892 pledge, the Democrats tried to significantly lower the tariff with the Wilson Bill, which passed in the House easily. However, when the bill got to the Senate, it was pounced upon by the lobbyists for Big Business, and their senators added more than 600 amendments. Cleveland yielded to the amendments because he believed that when the bill went into the House-Senate conference committee, at least some of the lost ground would be regained. But he was wrong; the senators would not budge. As a result, the renamed Wilson-Gorman tariff only lowered the tariff rate from 48.4 percent to 41.3 percent. Cleveland was outraged that the rate wasn't lower, but since it was at least a little bit lower, he let the bill become law without his signature in 1894.

The act also provided, for the first time, for an income tax, which affected the rich more than the poor. However, the Supreme Court, by a narrow margin, declared this provision unconstitutional in 1895, because they felt it infringed upon a citizen's freedom. This decision added to the hostility felt by farmers and laborers towards Washington.

16. The halfhearted efforts of Attorney General Olney to enforce the Sherman Antitrust Act frustrated those in the working class who had hoped for a friendlier federal government. His weak presentation of the case against the Sugar Trust, which the Supreme Court dismissed in 1895, was seen widely as evidence that the administration was not interested in social justice. Cleveland never wholeheartedly agreed with Olney's relaxed attitude toward the trusts, but, being inclined to give his cabinet officers free rein, he supported and even defended Olney against the charge that he was derelict in his duty to uphold the law.

17. Beginning in the mid-1800s, the U.S. gradually came to regard the Hawaiian Islands as an extension of its coastline. The State Department, starting in the 1840s, sternly warned other powers to keep their hands off. The American grip was further tightened in 1875 by a commercial reciprocity agreement and in 1887 by a treaty with the native government guaranteeing the U.S. naval base rights at Pearl Harbor.

On January 17, 1893, a group of white planters and residents, mostly Americans, organized a coup d'état that overthrew Queen Liliuokalani. The Queen believed native Hawaiians should control the islands; the revolutionaries disagreed. The revolutionaries, a tiny minority of the population of the islands, were openly assisted by American troops, which landed under the unauthorized orders of the American minister to Hawaii, John Stevens. Stevens then extended U.S. recognition to the new provisional government.

The provisional government wanted the United States to annex Hawaii, and the lame-duck Harrison administration submitted an annexation treaty to the Senate. However, before it could be ratified, Cleveland replaced Harrison as president. To the chivalrous Cleveland, who set great store by "national honesty," it seemed that America had gravely wronged the deposed Hawaiian Queen.

Cleveland withdrew the treaty from the Senate and sent a special investigator to Hawaii. The subsequent probe revealed that the majority of Hawaiians did not favor annexation. But the white revolutionaries were firmly in charge, and Cleveland could not dislodge them without using armed force. American public opinion would not support using force, so a stalemate ensued for the rest of Cleveland's term.

Cleveland's successor, William McKinley, disagreed with him about Hawaii. McKinley felt it was important

to annex Hawaii in order to become more relevant internationally and provide access to Asian markets. During the Spanish-American War, the administration argued that the Hawaiian Islands were needed as a coaling and provisioning halfway station for sending supplies and reinforcements to Commodore Dewey in the Philippines. As a result, Congress passed a joint resolution that annexed Hawaii in July 1898. Hawaii achieved full territorial status in 1900 and became the fiftieth state in 1959.

18. The Cuban people, frightfully misgoverned, rose up against its Spanish government in 1895. Driven to desperation by economic hardship, the insurgents adopted a scorched-earth policy. They reasoned that if they did enough damage, Spain might be willing to move out. Or the U.S. might be willing to jump in and help the Cubans win their independence.

Things got worse with the arrival of the Spanish General Valeriano ("Butcher") Weyler. He undertook to crush the rebellion by herding many civilians into barbed-wire concentration camps, where they could not assist the armed insurgents. These enclosures turned into deadly pest holes in which victims died because they lacked proper sanitation.

An outraged American public wanted action, but Cleveland pursued a policy of neutrality. However, despite his disregard for public opinion, he appreciated the seriousness of the crisis. In April 1896, the administration sent a note to Spain, making it clear that the U.S. could not remain aloof indefinitely while the Cuban people suffered. Spain responded with a three-part reply: the problem was an internal Spanish matter, the rebellion would be crushed, and no aid could come to Cuba except through Spanish auspices.

The two countries were clearly on a collision course. Cleveland, in his last annual address to Congress in December 1896, noted that "the U.S. is not a nation to which peace is a necessity." However, since Cleveland was a lame duck, his successor would have to decide whether or not to go to war with Spain.

19. Cleveland's interference in the Venezuelan boundary dispute in 1895-1896 was his most controversial foreign policy decision. Great Britain, which had amassed holdings in British Guiana since the early nineteenth century, laid claim to the mouth of the Orinoco River and a significant part of eastern Venezuela. When Venezuela asked the United States to arbitrate the border dispute, Cleveland accepted. The British balked at U.S. involvement, leading Cleveland to invoke the Monroe Doctrine and write a "twenty-inch gun" message in which he threatened Britain with war if they did not agree to arbitration. To force the point, he sent U.S. naval vessels to confront British warships near Venezuela. After further negotiations, Great Britain agreed to accept American arbitration. Ironically, the final decision awarded the British the bulk of what they had claimed in the beginning.

20. By 1896, Cleveland was out-of-step with the mainstream of the Democratic Party, which favored a bimetal (gold and silver) approach to currency. He did not seek renomination.

21. Shortly before McKinley's inauguration in 1897, Cleveland invited the president-elect to the White House for an informal dinner. They already knew each other, and McKinley admired Cleveland greatly. Cleveland thought very highly of McKinley, and the two men both favored the gold standard approach to currency. As the evening wore on, the talk turned to foreign policy, and McKinley expressed his hope that peace with Spain would continue to hold. Later, Cleveland would recall the sober grimness of their conversation.

22. After leaving office in 1897, Grover, Frances, and the children moved to a spacious house in Princeton, New Jersey, where he was treated like royalty by the town's inhabitants. He received an honorary degree from Princeton University and became a university trustee. Cleveland wrote articles and essays on politics, hunting, and fishing for various magazines, including the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, and the *Atlantic*. He wrote a book, *Presidential Problems* (1904), which focused on some of his most controversial decisions, including the Venezuela affair, the Pullman strike, and his battles with the Senate. Cleveland also served on several corporate boards and gave public speeches.

The death of his oldest daughter Ruth (age twelve) from diphtheria in 1904 visibly aged the old Democrat. Some of his friends said that he never fully recovered, and he sold his beloved Gray Gables summer home because it reminded him of her. He died of a gastro-intestinal disease complicated by ailments of the heart and kidneys on June 24, 1908. His last words were, "I have tried so hard to do right." At his funeral service, a friend read William Wordsworth's poem, "Character of the Happy Warrior," whose central passage is:

> Who, if he rise to station of command,
> Rises by open means; and there will stand

On honourable terms, or else retire,
And in himself possess his own desire;
Who comprehends his trust, and to the same
Keeps faithful with a singleness of aim.

23. President McKinley was assassinated and succeeded by Theodore Roosevelt in 1901. Of all the well-wishes Roosevelt received, he said that the kindest words were from Grover Cleveland. The actual statement has been lost to history, but Roosevelt described it to Frances Cleveland as being "as if a senior had patted a freshman on the shoulder and assured him of his success."

See the next page for a list of references.

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