



THE WHITE HOUSE  
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

## NEW Episode: *The White House 1600 Sessions* Podcast “Presidential Pets”

*White House Historical Association President Stewart McLaurin Discusses the Legacy and Impact of White House Pets with John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum Director Alan Price*

September 30, 2025 (Washington, D.C.) – The White House Historical Association released a [new episode of \*The White House 1600 Sessions\* podcast](#) today about presidential pets, some of the most beloved, popular, and devoted presidential companions. In the episode, Stewart McLaurin, president of the Association, visits Alan Price, director of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, to tour the library’s [Presidential Pets](#) exhibit and learn how these animals have taken on roles as sidekicks, trendsetters, and political symbols.

Around 66% of U.S. homes include at least one companion animal, and the White House is no exception. Over the course of two and a half centuries, first families have cared for a remarkable range of pets, from dogs and cats to ponies and raccoons.

“Some say that pets are what makes a house a home,” McLaurin said. “We can often think of the White House as a sterile building where government work is taking place, and sometimes we forget that a family lives there, as well. These families have children and pets and grandchildren and all kinds of family activity, and it really comes to life here.”

Pets have left their mark on the Executive Mansion, as evidenced by the dog treats President Kennedy kept in the Resolute Desk; the replica White House “kitty condo” built for President Bill Clinton’s cat, Socks; and First Lady Michelle Obama’s warm reflections on how her dogs, Bo and Sunny, made her family feel complete while living at the residence.

From President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s beloved Scottish terrier Fala—who doubled as a wartime icon and even a diplomatic decoy—to President Lyndon B. Johnson’s howling duets with his rescue dog, Yuki, the episode traces how animals have accentuated presidential history and shaped public perception.

“There’s no question that so many people understand history through the lens of presidential history, and then you put it through the lens of the pets that lived in the White House, it becomes so much more accessible,” said Price.

The exhibit also highlights the pets’ most notable hallmarks, from the White House-themed doghouse built for Rex, President Ronald Reagan’s dog, to *Millie’s Book* written by First Lady Barbara Bush that describes their English Springer Spaniel’s day in the life at the Executive Mansion.

McLaurin and Price also discuss the unique role of presidential pets in connecting the White House with the American public. Over the years, these pets have received thousands of letters from families, with their replies often sealed with a paw print.

The presence of animals at the White House has shifted from their original role as working livestock, including cows, sheep, and horses, to the companion pets common today. Notable stars of their time include President William Howard Taft's cow, Pauline Wayne, who grazed the Executive Mansion's lawns and provided milk, while President Woodrow Wilson's flock of sheep produced wool sold to raise funds for the Red Cross during World War I.

Developed in collaboration with Mount Vernon, the National Park Service, and presidential libraries, the Presidential Pets exhibit features rarely seen artifacts and interactive elements that the whole family can enjoy. Visitors can view the special exhibit through April 26, 2026.

The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum is open to the public daily from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and tickets may be purchased on site or in [advance online](#).

You can also learn more in the Association's *White House History Quarterly* issue, titled "[Animals at Work in White House History](#)," that contains articles on these companions and working animals.

*The White House 1600 Sessions* podcast is available on Apple Podcasts and Spotify.

The full video of this podcast episode is also available on the White House Historical Association's YouTube channel [here](#).

For more information, please contact [press@whha.org](mailto:press@whha.org).

### **The White House 1600 Sessions**

The White House Historical Association's President Stewart McLaurin is the host of *The White House 1600 Sessions*, the Association's official audio and video podcast devoted to exploring the history, cultural impact, untold stories, and personal accounts of America's most iconic residence and highest office.

### **About the White House Historical Association**

The White House Historical Association was founded in 1961 by First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy to support her vision to restore and preserve the Executive Mansion and its legacy for generations to come. Mrs. Kennedy sought to inspire Americans, especially children, to explore and engage with American history and its presidents. Supported entirely by private resources, the Association is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that has contributed more than \$115 million to the White House in fulfillment of its mission. To learn more about the White House Historical Association, please visit [WhiteHouseHistory.org](http://WhiteHouseHistory.org).

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