

SEX! POWER! MONEY!

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SCANDALOUS WASHINGTON



Every “gotcha!” headline since Nixon’s burglars at the Watergate has been affixed with a “-gate,” but Washington’s memory of kickbacks, sleaze, and dirty deeds goes back centuries further. Before there was Monica, there was Marilyn; before Marilyn, there was Carrie and Peggy and Nan. Most people are familiar with Whitewater, but what of the Star Route and Teapot Dome? The history of the United States is thick with plots, scams, and bad behavior. If walls could speak, then the White House, the Capitol, and even the IRS might tell us some very different stories than the ones we learned in school. Herewith, selections from Washington’s long and democratic history of scandal.

SEX!



Margaret "Peggy" Eaton

Cabinet wives shunned her, and the social stir of insult and offense all but shut down business at the White House for *two years*. In 1831, the Cabinet resigned en masse and Jackson was finally able to get some work done. As for Peggy? After Eaton's death, she sparked another scandal, by marrying her granddaughter's 19-year-old dance instructor. (*Location: Peggy Eaton is buried in Oak Hill Cemetery, 3001 R St. NW*)

Petticoat Tales

Ooh la la, whispered Washington's society matrons, when Andrew Jackson's War Secretary John Henry Eaton fell for Margaret "Peggy" Timberlake, a young widow he had known for years. Pretty, charming Peggy had a fast reputation for 1829, and soon rumors flew about the circumstances of her husband's death, the paternity of Peggy's two children, and Eaton. It was all idle gossip—until Eaton married Peggy, after which the other



Fanne Foxe

Naked Ambition

In 1974, Wilbur Mills spent his days chairing the House Ways and Means Committee—and his nights with a stripper known as "Fanne Fox, the Argentine Firecracker." A typical Capitol romance, until his car was stopped one night by police, and his lady friend leapt from the car and into the Tidal Basin, leaving a drunken Mills to his fate. Surprisingly, Mills' political career survived—until he appeared later that year, drunk, onstage with Fanne at a Boston burlesque. (*Location: Tidal Basin*)

Hail to the Cheat



Warren Harding

Bill Clinton was hardly the first and likely not the worst of the White House philanderers. That dubious honor may go to Warren Harding, a legendary Lothario who is purported to have carried on with paramours Carrie Phillips and Nan Britton (among others) in some unlikely places, including a White House closet. (When his wife Florence came by, a Secret

Service agent warned him with a discreet knock on the door.) Relative propriety in the 1920's press meant that any blue dresses remained unreported, but Harding may have left behind a more incriminating piece of evidence—an illegitimate daughter, Elizabeth Ann. (*Location: White House*)

POWER SCANDALS



Reporters Bob Woodward, left, and Carl Bernstein, whose reporting of the Watergate scandal won them a Pulitzer Prize, sit in the newsroom of the *Washington Post* in Washington on May 7, 1973.

He Really Bugs Me

The Big Kahuna of Washington scandals had humble beginnings, in the discovery of a taped-open door at the Watergate Hotel one night in June of 1972. The door led to burglars, on a mission to bug the Democratic National Committee, and the burglars led through the Republican party machine straight to the White House and President Richard “Tricky Dick” Nixon. Two young reporters, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, uncovered the most impossible-seeming story of the century, and their secret meetings with anonymous leaker “Deep Throat” are the stuff of legend. One of many fond memories of the moment when Washington lost America’s trust: Nixon’s immortal, and untruthful, declaration, “I am not a crook.” (Location: *Watergate Hotel, Virginia Ave., near 27th St. NW*)

From Ronald with Love



Two wrongs *can* make a right: a right-wing guerilla organization, that is. Ronald Reagan likened Nicaragua’s Contras to the Founding Fathers. Too bad funding the insurgent group was illegal. So was a secret deal the White House had made to sell arms to Iran. When it was discovered in 1986 that the cash from Iran had been funneled to the Contras, the Gipper had some explaining to do. Luckily for him, National Security Council aide Oliver North had a shredder, and he wasn’t afraid to use it. North’s secretary, Fawn Hall, took care of the rest by smuggling out remaining suspect documents in her boots and skirt. (Location: *Old Executive Office Building, 17th & F Streets NW*)

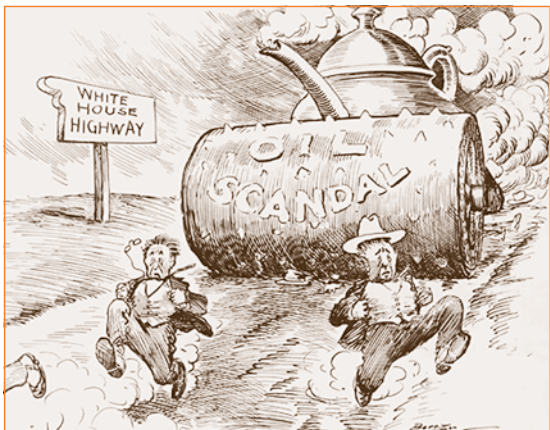


Former CIA officer Valerie Plame.

I Spy...

When Valerie Plame had her CIA cover blown in 2003—in print, by a syndicated columnist—Washington’s shady nexus of journalists, politicians, and sneaky leaks was, too. Who let the cat out of the bag, to whom, and most importantly, why? Vice President Dick Cheney’s chief aide, Lewis “Scooter” Libby, was convicted, but only of lying to investigators. If Plame was targeted because of her husband’s slapdown to the Bush Administration over the Iraq war, whoever targeted her got away with it.

MONEY SCANDALS

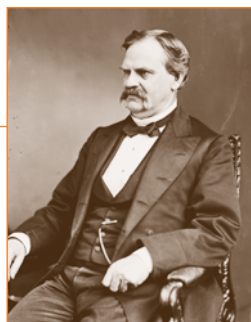


A Cozy Deal

It may seem old hat today—access to public resources awarded in a no-bid contract to cronies of someone in the president's inner circle—but in 1922 it was front-page news. Interior Secretary Albert Fall had authority over the Teapot Dome strategic oil reserve transferred from the Department of the Navy to Interior, and once he was in charge, he leased the land to Mammoth Oil. The deal was technically legal—what *wasn't* was the \$404,000 kickback he got for arranging it. Fall nearly succeeded in keeping his stake quiet, until he raised suspicions by having the office of the lead Senate investigator ransacked. (Location: Department of Interior, 1849 C St. NW)

Secretary of Shame

In 1872, the House of Representatives was so determined to remove War Secretary William Belknap that it voted to impeach him, even after he had already resigned. The high-living general was caught having awarded a lucrative military trading post appointment in exchange for kickbacks; the quarterly bribes he took came to ten times his official salary. The House's venom waxed poetic: legislators voted unanimously that the Secretary was "basely prostituting his high office to his lust for private gain." Belknap resigned in disgrace—and tears—and committed suicide in 1890. (Location: House of Representatives)



William Adams Richardson

Taxman to Axman

When Treasury Secretary William Richardson hired contractor-cum-bounty hunter John Sanborn 1872 to help the IRS collect taxes, the idea was simple. Sanborn chased down tax cheats, and was allowed to keep half of the take for his trouble. But when he ran out of tax evaders and went after honest companies, Richardson turned a blind eye—in exchange for his own cut.

The Sheik of Bribery

If Middle Eastern "businessmen" looking suspiciously like FBI agents offered you cash for favors, you might smell a rat—particularly if their business cards read "Abdul Enterprises." But in 1978, seven legislators gave just such men the benefit of the doubt, and had their trusting natures (and brazen avarice) rewarded with bribery convictions. Hint: Next time, guys, check the shiny shoes.

Washington, D.C.

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