

Grover Cleveland

22nd and 24th U.S. President (1837 – 1908)



Poet JOHN FINLEY with Cleveland. Cleveland built a house for Finley and his family in his orchard, there being no houses for rent in that part of Princeton. When it was nearly finished Finley discovered water in the basement and with some hesitation brought it to Cleveland's attention, to which he replied, "My dear fellow, what do you expect for the rent you are paying? Champagne?"



Cleveland is the only President to serve two non-consecutive terms (1885–1889 and 1893–1897) and therefore is the only individual to be counted twice in the numbering of the presidents. He was the winner of the popular vote for President three times — in 1884, 1888, and 1892. He was admired for his honesty, independence, and integrity.

Cleveland was prevented from going to college by the need to support his mother. He clerked in a law office in Buffalo for four years and was admitted to the bar in 1859. In 1881 he was elected mayor of Buffalo after running on a reform platform, and won the governor's race in 1882. He was not the front runner for the 1884 Democratic nomination but when SAMUEL TILDEN declined to run because of health reasons, Cleveland got the nomination. He defeated James Blaine, whose candidacy had been dogged by corruption.

Cleveland entered the White house as a bachelor, but did not remain one for long. On June 2, 1886, he married Wells College student Frances Folsom, the daughter of a friend. He is the only President to have a wedding in the White House. The Clevelands had five children: Baby Ruth, the first born, died in 1904 of diphtheria at the age of 13; in 1921 the Curtiss company named a candy bar after her. Esther; Marion; RICHARD FOLSOM; and Francis Grover soon followed.

In 1888, he won a plurality in the general election, but lost to Benjamin Harrison. In 1892, he was nominated again and defeated Harrison for the Presidency. His second term was stormy on both the domestic and foreign fronts and he was not helped by the financial panic of 1893. That year, his first two nominees to the Supreme Court, WILLIAM B. HORNBLOWER and WHEELER HAZARD PECKHAM, were rejected. However, when another Court vacancy occurred, Cleveland nominated Peckham's brother, RUFUS WHEELER PECKHAM, who was confirmed easily.

In 1896, Cleveland declined to run for a third term and retired to Princeton, New Jersey, where he died in 1908.