

Lincoln Love

Fall 1997



Number 1850
The Bulletin of
The Lincoln Museum

White House Style

Table of Contents

White House Style **2**

White House Style Credits **3**

America's First Ladies
Gerald J. Prokopowicz **4**

At The Lincoln Museum **15**



Lincoln Lore

is the quarterly bulletin of

The Lincoln Museum

The mission of The Lincoln Museum is to interpret and preserve the history and legacy of Abraham Lincoln through research, conservation, exhibtry, and education.

Editor:

Gerald J. Prokopowicz, Ph.D.
Historian/Director of Public Programs

Contributors:

Joan L. Flinspach, Director
Carolyn Texley, Director of Collections/Archivist
Guy Young, Director of Marketing and Development

For subscription information, contact The Lincoln Museum

200 East Berry, P. O. Box 7838
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801-7838
(219) 455-3864 Fax: (219) 455-6922
e-mail: TheLincolnMuseum@LNC.com
http://www.TheLincolnMuseum.org

© 1997 The Lincoln Museum
ISSN 0162-8615

*F*rom October 18, 1997

through January 4, 1998, The Lincoln Museum will present an original exhibit titled "White House Style: Formal Gowns of the First Ladies." In conjunction with the exhibit, this issue of Lincoln Lore surveys the changing historical role of the spouse of the President of the United States.

The gowns in the exhibit, which include nine original dresses and the Eisenhower Library's collection of twenty-four historical reproductions, show how First Ladies have both reflected and influenced the nation's manners, mores, fashion, and culture. When

Mary Todd Lincoln arrived in Washington in 1861, for

example, she felt the need to show Washington society that she deserved to be regarded as a great lady, not a cabin-dwelling frontier wife. One of the few avenues through which she could communicate her claim to membership in elite society was through the style of her clothing and domestic decor.

The formal gowns displayed in "White House Style" and pictured in the following pages make a dramatic and appealing display. More important, they provide insight into how the wives of the presidents have made their marks on American cultural history. We hope you enjoy them. — GJP



Mary Todd Lincoln, January 1862. Detail from photograph by Mathew Brady. (TLM#102)

(On the cover: Mary Todd Lincoln in her 1861 inaugural ball gown. Photograph by Mathew Brady. (TLM #105))



This exhibit was made possible by the generous support of

Marshall Field's

The Lincoln Museum also wishes to thank the following institutions for their loans of original formal gowns of these First Ladies:

| Gown of | Museum, Library, or Presidential Center |
|-------------------|--|
| Mary Todd Lincoln | Illinois State Historical Library , Springfield, Illinois |
| Mamie Eisenhower | Dwight D. Eisenhower Library/Museum , Abilene, Kansas |
| Lucy Hayes | Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center , Fremont, Ohio |
| Caroline Harrison | President Benjamin Harrison Memorial Home , Indianapolis, Indiana |
| Pat Nixon | Richard Nixon Estate , Yorba Linda, California |
| Betty Ford | Gerald R. Ford Museum , Grand Rapids, Michigan |
| Nancy Reagan | Ronald Reagan Library , Simi Valley, California |
| Barbara Bush | Bush Presidential Materials Project , College Station, Texas |
| Hillary Clinton | Harry S. Truman Library , Independence, Missouri |

Special thanks to the **Dwight D. Eisenhower Library/Museum**, Abilene, Kansas, for the use of reproductions of the original formal gowns at the Smithsonian Institution, Division of Political Science, First Ladies Collection. These reproductions, constructed largely from period fabrics, were used in the exhibit to represent the following First Ladies:

| | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Martha Washington | Mary Todd Lincoln | Florence Harding |
| Dolley Madison | Julia Grant | Grace Coolidge |
| Elizabeth Monroe | Lucretia Garfield | Lou Hoover |
| Louisa Adams | Frances Cleveland | Eleanor Roosevelt |
| Julia Tyler | Ida McKinley | Bess Truman |
| Sarah Polk | Edith Roosevelt | Jacqueline Kennedy |
| Abigail Fillmore | Helen Taft | Lady Bird Johnson |
| Jane Pierce | Ellen Wilson | Rosalynn Carter |

Photomurals of some of the First Ladies and inaugural events are on loan from the **Richard Nixon Library & Birthplace**, Yorba Linda, California.

Life-size photo cutouts of Martha Washington, Lou Hoover, Mamie Eisenhower, Barbara Bush, Mary Todd Lincoln, Lucy Hayes, and Lady Bird Johnson are on loan from the **Harry S. Truman Library**, Independence, Missouri.

The mannequins on which the First Ladies gowns are displayed have been graciously lent to The Lincoln Museum by institutions named above and by the **Northern Indiana Center for History**, South Bend, Indiana, and the **Museum of the Soldier**, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

"White House Style: Formal Gowns of the First Ladies" was designed and curated by Carolyn Texley, Director of Collections, The Lincoln Museum, with additional research and design by Cindy VanHorn, Jeff Johnston, Jan Shupert-Arick, and Gerald J. Prokopowicz.

America's First Ladies

By Gerald J. Prokopowicz



Another view of Mrs. Lincoln, also taken at her January 1862 sitting. (Detail from TLM#103)

The role of the First Lady is unique in American politics. The Constitution assigns no duties to the president's spouse, who is neither elected by the voters nor confirmed by the Senate. On paper, few First Ladies have been granted any governmental authority.

But in reality, few people have had more opportunity to exercise real power. Through their shared experiences, close emotional ties, and daily contacts with their husbands, many First Ladies have been able to leave their marks on public policy. At the same time, public interest in the presidents' wives has given them great influence over fashions in clothing, entertainment, and personal style.

Each First Lady has taken her own approach to the job. Some, like Julia Grant and Julia Tyler, have enjoyed the publicity; others like Bess Truman and Ellen Wilson hated it. Some have used the influence of the position openly, like Eleanor Roosevelt, while others like Helen Taft have counseled their husbands behind the scenes. Some disdained the role altogether, like Jane

Pierce, and remained secluded from the public. Others were crushed by its burdens, including three who died in the White House.

The formal gowns of the First Ladies shown here are examples of the continuing evolution of style in women's formal wear, from 1789 to the present. At the same time, they represent the ever-changing role of the president's spouse, a role that continues to be redefined by each person who fills it.

Martha Dandridge Custis Washington First Lady 1789-1797

The first ...

... wife of a President of the United States.

In her own words ...

"I live a very dull life here, I never go to any public place — indeed I think I am more like a state prisoner than anything else."

— From a letter to her niece. After managing the Washington plantation at Mt. Vernon for twenty years while George was away, Martha found the supporting role of presidential wife more confining.

Remembered for ...

... her skill in setting the social tone of the presidency. The First Couple's clothing, social events, and even their titles ("Mr. President" for him, "Lady Washington" for her) had to be formal enough to meet European expectations for heads of state, but not so fancy as to make them appear royal. Since Congress did not provide adequate funds, the Washingtons used their own money to entertain official guests in a simple but dignified manner.

Abigail Smith Adams First Lady 1797-1801

The first ...

... president's wife to live in Washington, D.C., and to occupy the presidential mansion, later known as the White House. She was also the only First Lady to have a son (John Quincy) gain the presidency.

In her own words ...

"By the way, in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for

you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put unlimited power into the hand of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could."

— To John Adams in 1776, before the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Remembered for ...

... her progressive ideas (such as her opposition to slavery and the oppression of women), expressed in more than 1,800 letters that have since been published. Although Mrs. Adams believed that "No man ever prospered in the world without the consent and cooperation of his wife," she also shared the prevailing view of her time that "However brilliant a woman's talents may be, she ought never to shine at the expense of her husband."

Dolley Payne Todd Madison First Lady 1809-1817

The first ...

... First Lady to preside over an inaugural ball in Washington, D.C.

At the White House ...

... Dolley and James had to flee their official residence in 1814 when it was seized and burned by the British. Just before leaving, Dolley took the famous Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington, and carried it to safety.

Remembered for ...

... her warm hospitality and wide popularity, which made her, for many years, the leader of Washington society. Before the eight years of her husband's presidency, she had been the unofficial First Lady during much of the administration of the widower Thomas Jefferson (1801-1809), when her husband was Secretary of State.

Elizabeth Kortright Monroe First Lady 1817-1825

The first ...

... First Lady to live in the Executive Mansion after it became known as "The White House." The building got its name from the fresh coat of white paint that covered the scorch marks left when it was burned by the British during the War of 1812.

At the White House ...

... Mrs. Monroe redecorated the newly restored mansion, importing from France the furniture, silver, and ornaments that today still form the heart of the White House collection.

Remembered for ...

... her aloof and distant style, so different from that of her popular predecessor Dolley Madison. She rarely made public appearances or hosted social events. Her behavior was in part due to the formal tastes and manners she acquired in Paris when her husband was the United States Minister to France, but another reason for hiding from the public may have been poor health; evidence suggests she suffered from epilepsy.

**Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams
First Lady 1825-1829**

The first ...

... and only First Lady born outside the United States. She met and married her husband in her native London, England.

In her own words ...

"That sense of inferiority which by nature and by law we are compelled to feel ... is worn by us with as much satisfaction as the badge of slavery generally."

— From a letter to John Quincy Adams. Louisa, a talented musician, gifted writer and astute politician, was frustrated by social conventions that limited women to domestic roles.

At the White House ...

... Louisa's hospitality and diplomatic skills made her much more popular than her stiff-necked and difficult husband.

Remembered for ...

... her career after she left the White House. While John Quincy served eight terms in Congress, Louisa found an outlet for her energies by campaigning for women's rights and the abolition of slavery.

Rachel Donelson Robards Jackson

Remembered for ...

... the personal attacks against her that surfaced during the 1828 presidential campaign. When she married Andrew Jackson in 1791, she was unaware that divorce from her first husband, was not complete; because of this, Andrew's political opponents labeled her a bigamist. Perhaps due in part to the abuse she received in the press, she suffered a heart attack and died in December,



Left to right: Reproductions of gowns worn by Lucretia Garfield, Mary Todd Lincoln, Rosalynn Carter, Caroline Harrison, Sarah Polk, and Helen Taft. (Dwight D. Eisenhower Library photograph)

1828, three months before her husband's inauguration, and never actually served as First Lady.

At the White House ...

... Rachel's niece, Emily Donelson, and the daughter of the President's adopted son, Sarah Yorke Jackson, served as official hostesses during the Jackson administration, 1829 to 1837.

**Angelica Singleton Van Buren
"First Lady" 1837-1841**

Remembered for ...

... serving as White House hostess from 1837 to 1841, on behalf of her father-in-law Martin Van Buren. His wife, Hannah Hoes Van Buren, had died of tuberculosis in 1819.

**Anna Symmes Harrison
First Lady 1841**

Remembered for ...

... the brevity of her husband's term. Mrs. Harrison had not even moved to Washington when William Henry died of pneumonia, after only one month in office.

The first ...

... and only First Lady to have a grandson reach the White House, when Benjamin Harrison became president in 1889.

**Letitia Christian Tyler
First Lady 1841-1842**

The first ...

... wife of a president to die in the White House. Mrs. Tyler had suffered a stroke in 1839, and after she became First Lady in 1841 she made only one public appearance, at her daughter's wedding. After a year and a half of living in

seclusion in the White House, she died on September 10, 1842.

**Julia Gardiner Tyler
First Lady 1844-1845**

The first ...

... woman to marry a president in office. Julia Gardiner and the widower John Tyler, thirty years her senior, were wed in New York on June 26, 1844.

At the White House ...

... Mrs. Tyler introduced the practice of having the Marine Band play "Hail to the Chief" when the President of the United States entered the room at official events.

In her own words ...

"I have commenced my auspicious reign and am in quiet possession of the Presidential Mansion."

Remembered for ...

... the energy and flamboyant style she brought to the White House. Only twenty-four years old when she became First Lady, Mrs. Tyler presided over many parties during her eight-month reign, surrounded by a court of maids-of-honor in matching dresses.

**Sarah Childress Polk
First Lady 1845-1849**

The first ...

... First Lady to work as the president's political secretary. As she had done throughout their marriage, Sarah provided James with advice, edited his speeches, copied his correspondence, attended meetings on his behalf, and scanned newspapers for relevant articles to bring to his attention.

In her own words ...

"... neither keep house nor make butter ..."

— Sarah Polk's promise as to what she would do if she and James ever lived in the White House.

Remembered for ...

... forbidding dancing, music, hard liquor and Sunday business at the White House. Although Mrs. Polk's rules, based on strict religious scruples, caused complaints among Washington society, her personal charm and political skill made her a popular First Lady.



Left to right: Reproductions of gowns worn by Lady Bird Johnson, Grace Coolidge, and Rosalynn Carter. (Dwight D. Eisenhower Library photograph)

Margaret Smith Taylor
First Lady 1849-1850

In her own words ...

"... a plot to deprive [me] of his society, and to shorten his life by unnecessary care and responsibility."
— Mrs. Taylor's description of the idea of Zachary running for president. Her words were prophetic, as he died two years after taking office.

At the White House ...

... Mrs. Taylor took no part in official functions, leaving her daughter Mary Elizabeth Taylor "Betty" Bliss to serve as hostess.

Abigail Powers Fillmore
First Lady 1850-1853

The first ...

... First Lady to have held a job outside the home. Abigail Powers earned a living as a schoolteacher for seven years before she married Millard Fillmore.

Remembered for ...

... bringing books to the White House. Although she survived for only one month after the end of her husband's term as president, she left a permanent legacy by establishing a library in the White House.

Jane Means Appleton Pierce
First Lady 1853-1857

Remembered for ...

... the tragedies that followed her through life. After she lost a baby in 1842, she convinced her husband to leave the Senate and return to New Hampshire. Back home, they lost their second son to typhoid two years later, leaving only one boy, Benjamin. Jane wanted nothing more to do with politics. In 1852, when she heard that the Democratic party had chosen her husband to run for the presidency, she fainted.

Quote ...

"I hope he won't be elected for I should not like to be in Washington and I know you would not either."
— Eleven-year old Benjamin Pierce to his mother, after the nomination of Franklin Pierce. He died in a railroad accident in January, 1853, shortly after his father was elected.

At the White House ...

... Because of Benjamin's death, Mrs. Pierce did not attend her husband's inauguration, and no ball was held. The president hired a hotel keeper to run the White House, and Mrs. Pierce, the "shadow in the White House," remained in secluded mourning throughout her years as First Lady.

Harriet Lane
"First Lady" 1857-1861

Remembered for ...

... serving as White House hostess during the administration of her uncle James Buchanan, the only bachelor president.

Mary Ann Todd Lincoln
First Lady 1861-1865

The first ...

... president's wife to be widely referred to as the "First Lady."

At the White House ...

... Mrs. Lincoln felt pressured to demonstrate that she and her husband were not crude frontier settlers. One way to do so was to redecorate the run-down White House, using the finest Brussels carpets, Parisian wallcloth, and Swiss lace curtains. When she overspent her budget, Abraham insisted he would pay for the rest himself: "It would stink in the nostrils of the American people to have it said that the President of the United States had approved a bill overrunning an appropriation of \$20,000 for *flub dubs*, for this damned old house, when the soldiers cannot have blankets."

Remembered for ...

... her sharp temper, extravagant style, and mental and emotional breakdowns, brought on by the strains of war, abuse from the press, and the loss of three of her four sons and her husband.

Her dislike for Abraham's law partner William Herndon and secretary John Hay led both of them to portray her unfavorably in their widely-read writings on Abraham Lincoln. Her better qualities, including her keen wit, intense loyalty, and wide knowledge of politics, have been largely forgotten.

Eliza McCordle Johnson
First Lady 1865-1869

At the White House ...

... ill health prevented her from carrying out her social obligations as First Lady. Her daughter, Martha Johnson Patterson, served as official hostess.

In her own words ...

"[I]ts all very well for those who like it — but I do not like this public life at all."
— Spoken to presidential bodyguard W.H. Crook, on one of the two occasions when Mrs. Johnson attended a White House social event.

Julia Boggs Dent Grant
First Lady 1869-1877

In her own words ...

"[T]he light of his glorious fame still reaches out to me, falls upon me, and warms me."
— A memorial to her husband Ulysses from her memoirs, which remained unknown until their publication in 1975.

At the White House ...

... Mrs. Grant threw lavish parties and dressed in high style, helping to set the tone for the Gilded Age that followed the Civil War years.

Remembered for ...

... her pride in being First Lady. After enduring many years of near-poverty as the wife of a low-ranking military officer and

Overleaf: *Ladies of the White House*, a Thomas Devereaux and Company lithograph published in 1903. It pictures most of the women who had served as First Lady or White House hostess from the Washington administration through Theodore Roosevelt's presidency.

Back Row (left to right): Martha Washington, Martha Jefferson Randolph, Rachel Jackson, Angelica Van Buren, Letitia Tyler, Harriet Lane, Mary Lincoln, Eliza Johnson, Martha Patterson, Julia Grant, Lucretia Garfield, Edith Roosevelt, and Mary Arthur McElroy.

Front Row (left to right): Abigail Adams, Louisa Adams, Sarah Polk, Dolley Madison, Abigail Fillmore, Frances Cleveland, Lucy Hayes, Caroline Harrison, and Ida McKinley.



Lancet, London, Number 1830



Lancet, London, Number 1830

unsuccessful farmer and businessman, Mrs. Grant reveled in living in the White House when her husband became President of the United States.

Lucy Ware Webb Hayes
First Lady 1877-1881

The first ...

... woman to enter the White House as a college graduate.

At the White House ...

... Mrs. Hayes brought the popular children's Easter egg-rolling party, once held on the Capitol grounds, to the South Lawn of the presidential mansion. She also saw to the completion of a permanent running-water system in the White House and the installation of the home's first telephone.

Remembered for ...

... the nickname "Lemonade Lucy," for her ban on liquor at official functions. Her strong religious beliefs, rigid morality, and interest in human welfare led her to become a highly visible supporter of the temperance movement.



For this photograph, made during the elaborate January 1862 sitting at the Brady studio, Mrs. Lincoln changed into a different gown from that worn in the photo on page 2. (TLM#106)

Lucretia Rudolph Garfield
First Lady 1881

Remembered for ...

... using her brief time as First Lady to focus attention on literature and fine arts by inviting authors, artists, poets, and sculptors to the White House. She became gravely ill with malaria just two months after her husband took office and was still recovering in July, 1881, when he was shot. He died three months later.

Mary Arthur McElroy
"First Lady" 1881-1885

Remembered for ...

... serving as White House hostess for her brother, Chester A. Arthur, whose wife Ellen Herndon Arthur had died in 1880.

Rose Cleveland
"First Lady" 1885-1886

Remembered for ...

... hosting social events for her brother Grover until his marriage to Frances Folsom in 1886.

Frances Folsom Cleveland Preston
First Lady 1886-1889, 1893-1897

The first ...

... First Lady to be married in the White House. Frances Folsom was only twenty-one when she married President Grover Cleveland in 1886, making her the youngest First Lady as well.

In her own words ...

"We are coming back just four years from today."

— Mrs. Cleveland to the doorman at the White House, on March 4, 1889, as she left at the end of her husband's first term. Her words came true in 1893 when the Cleveland family returned.

At the White House ...

... Frances held a series of Saturday receptions, to allow working women to visit the Executive Mansion.

Remembered for ...

... rescuing her new husband's reputation. Grover had long been rumored to have fathered a child out of wedlock by

another woman, but after he married the young and attractive Frances, the press shifted its attention to her. Her first child (born in New York in 1893) became known to the entire nation as "Baby Ruth."

Caroline Lavinia Scott Harrison
First Lady 1889-1892

The first ...

... First Lady to arrange official weekly "photo opportunities" for the press, which eagerly sought pictures of the First Family.

In her own words ...

"While I am here I hope to get the present building put into good condition." — To reporters in 1889, describing plans to rebuild her new home. The Harrisons needed the room; her father, her niece, and her daughter's family (including a baby grandson) all lived in the White House.

At the White House ...

... Mrs. Harrison's elaborate proposals to enlarge the presidential mansion were rejected by Congress, but her efforts drew attention to the need to repair the deteriorating building. She also started the official collection of historic White House china, and set up the first Christmas tree in the White House.

Remembered for ...

... taking an active role in public affairs. She was the first president of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and used her prestige to persuade the Johns Hopkins University Medical School to admit women. Mrs. Harrison died in the White House in October 1892, of tuberculosis.

Ida Saxton McKinley
First Lady 1897-1901

At the White House ...

... epilepsy and other ailments sharply limited her activities as First Lady. It was not considered proper to discuss, or even acknowledge, Mrs. McKinley's frequent seizures; if one occurred during a reception, her husband would apply a sedative-soaked handkerchief to her face without interrupting his conversation with his guests.

Remembered for ...

... permitting ragtime to be played in the White House. She also loved to crochet,

and made thousands of pairs of slippers to be auctioned for charity.

Edith Kermit Carow Roosevelt **First Lady 1901-1909**

The first ...

... person to hang the portraits of all previous First Ladies in the White House. She was also the first to travel abroad as First Lady.

Quote ...

"Aunt Edith managed TR very cleverly without his being conscious of it — no slight achievement."
— Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

At the White House ...

... the completion of the West Wing for presidential offices allowed Mrs. Roosevelt to divide the working areas of the house from its private quarters. She reclaimed the entire upstairs for her family.

Remembered for ...

... energetically presiding over her boisterous family of six children and one impulsive husband, while performing a growing range of official duties. Mrs. Roosevelt was the first First Lady to receive government funding for her office staff.



Left to right: Reproductions of gowns worn by Pat Nixon, Sarah Polk, and Mary Todd Lincoln. (Dwight D. Eisenhower Library photograph)

Helen Herron Taft **First Lady 1909-1913**

The first ...

... woman to ride with her husband in his inaugural parade.

At the White House ...

... the Tafts were the last First Family to keep a cow on the White House lawn. Due to Helen's lobbying, they were also the first for whom Congress appropriated funds for an official presidential automobile.

Remembered for ...

... the cherry trees of Washington. Inspired by the years she spent in the Far East, Mrs. Taft arranged for the planting of cherry trees along the Potomac River as part of her effort to beautify the District of Columbia. Mrs. Taft's program led to a gift from the government of Japan of the 5,000 additional cherry trees that today are a Washington landmark.

Ellen Louise Axson Wilson **First Lady 1913-1914**

The first ...

... First Lady to tour the slums of the nation's capital. Her efforts on behalf of Washington's workers led Congress to pass a bill to begin improving housing and working conditions.

In her own words ...

"I am naturally the most unambitious of women and life in the White House has no attractions for me."
— to outgoing President William Howard Taft, in 1913.

At the White House ...

... Mrs. Wilson installed a studio with a skylight in the attic so she could practice her painting.

Remembered for ...

... her social activism, including her interest in truancy laws, child labor, care of the mentally ill and drug addicts, adult education, open-air recreation at schools, public baths, and community recreation

areas. She died in the White House on August 6, 1914, from Bright's disease.

Edith Bolling Galt Wilson **First Lady 1915-1921**

Remembered for ...

... being the first woman to assume (unofficially) the duties of the presidency. After President Wilson suffered a series of strokes in 1919, Mrs. Wilson and the president's doctor kept his weakened condition hidden from the public. Historians continue to speculate as to the role Edith played in making presidential decisions on behalf of her incapacitated husband.

In her own words ...

"The only decision that was mine was what was important and what was not, and the very important decision of when to present matters to my husband."
— From her memoirs, explaining the role she played during the president's illness.



Left to right: Reproductions of gowns worn by Sarah Polk, Lucy Hayes, and Mary Todd Lincoln. (Dwight D. Eisenhower Library photograph)

The first ...

... presidential wife to accompany her husband to and from his swearing-in ceremony.

At the White House ...

... social activities were suspended after the United States entered World War I in 1917.

**Florence Kling De Wolfe Harding
First Lady 1921-1923**

The first ...

... First Lady to hold the constitutional right to vote. The Nineteenth Amendment, guaranteeing women the right to vote, was adopted in 1920.

In her own words ...

"I know what's best for the President, I put him in the White House."

— Mrs. Harding held informal press conferences on a regular basis to discuss political and social issues, including her belief that women

should have "complete equality in politics, the home, and the workplace."

At the White House ...

... Florence revived the Easter Egg Roll and weekly Marine Band concerts, suspended since World War I, and hosted massive garden parties for wounded veterans. The Hardings also held private poker parties for their friends in the White House library, where they served liquor in spite of Prohibition.

Remembered for ...

... burning her husband's papers after his sudden death in 1923. These documents might have revealed more about the many scandals that involved the Harding administration.

**Grace Anna Goodhue Coolidge
First Lady 1923-1929**

In her own words ...

"Well, I thought I would get him to enjoy life and have fun, but he was not

very easy to instruct in that way."

— Explaining to a friend why she had married "Silent Cal" Coolidge.

At the White House ...

... Grace kept dogs, cats, canaries, and even a raccoon. Her enthusiasm for animals, sports, music, movies, and fashion contrasted strongly with Calvin's Yankee reserve.

Remembered for ...

... charming the public and press with her free spirit. Her popularity, which softened the image of the First Couple, was a valuable political asset to her staid husband. In 1935 Mrs. Coolidge became president of Clark School for the Deaf, where she had once taught.

**Lou Henry Hoover
First Lady 1929-1933**

The first ...

... First Lady to make a radio broadcast from the White House. She was also the first woman to earn a degree in geology from Stanford University; she and Herbert later produced the first English translation of the sixteenth century Latin mineralogy classic *De Re Metallica*.

In her own words ...

"Women should get into politics. They should take a more active part in civic affairs."

At the White House ...

... Mrs. Hoover initiated a comprehensive project to document the objects belonging to the mansion. The catalogue that resulted remains a useful source for identifying White House furnishings.

Remembered for ...

... breaking a tradition of segregation at the White House that had persisted since the visit of Booker T. Washington in 1901, by issuing an invitation to Mrs. Oscar DePriest, wife of an African-American Congressman. Mrs. Hoover was also a president of the Girl Scouts of America.

**Anna Eleanor Roosevelt Roosevelt
First Lady 1933-1945**

The first ...

... First Lady to hold formal press conferences, write a regular newspaper column, and travel extensively, making her

by far the most visible president's wife of the pre-television era.

In her own words ...

"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing which you think you cannot do."

At the White House ...

... Mrs. Roosevelt used her role as hostess to political advantage, inviting people without regard to the traditional rules of Washington society. The White House itself was remodeled to improve accessibility for the president's wheelchair, and central air conditioning was added.

Remembered for ...

... her unprecedented activism. Mrs. Roosevelt traveled and spoke out more frequently than any previous First Lady, on behalf of civil rights and humanitarian causes, as well as her husband's New Deal economic policies. After leaving the White House, she served as a delegate to the United Nations.

Elizabeth Virginia Wallace
"Bess" Truman
First Lady 1945-1953

In her own words ...

"I am not the one elected ... I have nothing to say to the public."

Remembered for ...

... her fierce commitment to her family's privacy. When her husband became president in 1945, she said of the White House, "I just dread moving over there." Mrs. Truman consistently avoided public expression of her strong opinions, but Harry wrote that he never made a decision, "whether to fight in Korea, whether to use the atom bomb, whether to initiate the Marshall Plan" without consulting her.

At the White House ...

... Mrs. Truman played a key role in saving the building. After an architectural review showed that the structure was near collapse, she worked to see that the house was gutted and rebuilt from within, leaving the original exterior walls intact. The Trumans lived in the nearby Blair House from 1948 to 1952.

Mary Geneva Doud
"Mamie" Eisenhower
First Lady 1953-1961

At the White House ...

... Mrs. Eisenhower drew a sharp line between family life and her husband's business; she entered the Oval Office only four times in eight years.

In her own words ...

"Being a wife is the best career that life has to offer a woman."

— During her husband's long Army career she packed and unpacked their household twenty-seven times.

Remembered for ...

... her favorite color, pink, which she used to decorate the family quarters of

the White House. "Mamie pink" became a national fashion.

Jacqueline Lee Bouvier
Kennedy Onassis
First Lady 1961-1963

The first ...

... First Lady of the television era. In the White House, the young, attractive, wealthy, and well-educated First Couple and their children, Caroline and John Jr., were presented to the public as part of a larger-than-life "Camelot" image.

At the White House ...

... Mrs. Kennedy began a major historical restoration project, helped

Who's More Powerful?

The First Lady

The First Lady has had office space in the White House since the administration of Theodore Roosevelt.

The First Lady has no Constitutional authority.

The First Lady often represents the President at ceremonial occasions.

First Ladies who have openly tried to exercise the influence associated with their position have received public criticism; examples include Abigail Adams, Edith Wilson, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Hillary Clinton.

The First Lady controls social access to the White House, where she lives and works.

"I am the person closest to the President of the United States" — *Rosalynn Carter, First Lady 1977-1981*

The Vice-President

The first Vice-President to have an office even as close as next door to the White House was Lyndon Johnson, who got an office in the Executive Office Building in 1961. No Vice-President had an office in the White House until 1977.

The Vice-President presides over the Senate, and casts the deciding vote in case of ties. The Vice-President assumes the presidency if the President is unable to fulfill the duties of the office.

The Vice-President often represents the President at ceremonial occasions.

Vice-Presidents have not had any apparent influence associated with their position; historical examples of public criticism of unduly strong Vice-Presidents are difficult to find.

The Vice-President is occasionally invited to social events at the White House.

"[This office] is not worth a pitcher of warm spit" — *John Nance Garner, Vice-President 1933-1941*

establish the White House Historical Association, worked to have the building officially designated as a museum, and later conducted a widely-viewed televised tour of the newly restored mansion.

Remembered for ...

... the sudden end of the "Camelot" era. In spite of her many accomplishments, such as raising Washington's cultural level by inviting artists, musicians, and writers to the White House, public memory of Mrs. Kennedy inevitably focuses on the photographic images of her courage in the aftermath of her husband's assassination.

Claudia Alta Taylor "Lady Bird" Johnson First Lady 1963-1969

The first ...

... presidential wife to campaign independently; in 1964 she defended her husband's civil rights policies to audiences across the South, travelling 1,600 miles in her train, "The Lady Bird Special."

In her own words ...

"Well, what did you do for women today?"

— To Lyndon, at the end of each day in the White House.

At the White House ...

... she secured funding for a museum curator to preserve the historic White House collections.

Remembered for ...

... her "America the Beautiful" highway beautification project. Since then, many First Ladies have followed her example by using their influence to promote important but non-controversial public causes.

Thelma Catherine Ryan "Pat" Nixon First Lady 1969-1974

The first ...

... president's wife to enter a combat zone. During a 1969 visit to South Vietnam she flew over battlefields in an open helicopter.

At the White House ...

... in 1969, she worked with the White House curator to refurbish the mansion and add hundreds of pieces of art and antique American furniture to the

collection. Mrs. Nixon also arranged the first White House tours for sight-impaired and hearing-impaired visitors, as well as evening candlelight tours to accommodate people who worked during the day.

Remembered for ...

... her support of volunteerism, her personal diplomacy on trips throughout the world (including the historic presidential visit to China in 1972), and her stoic public support of her husband during the Watergate crisis that led to his resignation.



Mary Todd Lincoln, seated in the same chair as on page 2, but wearing a different gown. (Brady photograph, January 1862) (TLM#104)

Elizabeth Ann Bloomer Warren "Betty" Ford First Lady 1974-1977

The first ...

... wife of a president to be mentioned by her husband in his inaugural address.

Remembered for ...

... her outspoken candor. Where recent First Ladies had adopted relatively non-controversial causes, Mrs. Ford addressed sensitive political and social topics, including the Equal Rights Amendment (which she supported and her husband opposed), abortion rights, and family issues. By speaking openly of her experience with breast cancer and urging women to be aware of the disease, she was credited with saving thousands of lives. She later helped establish the Betty Ford Center to treat drug and alcohol dependency.

Eleanor Rosalynn Smith Carter First Lady 1977-1981

The first ...

... First Lady to have her own office in the East Wing of the White House; previous First Ladies had worked out of the building's private quarters.

In her own words ...

"A First Lady is in a position to know the needs of the country and do something about them It would be a shame not to take full advantage of that power."

Remembered for ...

... expanding the role of the First Lady into open policy-making, by serving as the president's personal emissary to Latin America and chair of the President's Commission on Mental Health. By exercising her political authority openly, rather than behind the scenes, Mrs. Carter exposed the growing ambiguity of the First Lady's position; though not an elected or appointed official, Mrs. Carter acknowledged that she held considerable power by virtue of being "the person closest to the President of the United States."

Anne Frances Robbins Davis "Nancy" Reagan First Lady 1981-1989

In her own words ...

"Just say no!"

— Mrs. Reagan's reply to a student who asked what to do if pressured to try illegal drugs. The statement became the slogan of her widely-publicized anti-drug abuse campaign.

At the White House ...

... the former actress brought glamour and formal elegance to the presidency, but her purchase of expensive china for the White House sparked controversy.

Remembered for ...

... the continuing debate over her political influence. Although she did not openly engage in politics, she feuded with her husband's chief of staff, and critics charged that she made policy decisions behind the scenes as well.

Barbara Pierce Bush
First Lady 1989-1993

In her own words ...

"Somewhere out in this audience may even be someone who will one day follow in my footsteps, and preside over the White House as the president's spouse. I wish him well."

— from her 1990 Wellesley College commencement address.

At the White House ...

... the Hollywood look of the Reagan years was replaced by a family atmosphere generated by the many Bush children and grandchildren, and Mrs. Bush's dog, Millie.

Remembered for ...

... being "everybody's grandmother." Her warm, simple style, characterized by her self-effacing sense of humor and trademark string of pearls, made her one of the most popular First Ladies of the 20th century. Her tenure in the White House remained relatively free of controversy, in contrast to those of the First Ladies who came immediately before and after her. Her interest in reading to her grandchildren led her to campaign actively to end illiteracy.

Hillary Diane Rodham Clinton
First Lady 1993-

The first ...

... First Lady to hold a law degree.

In her own words ...

"I suppose I could have stayed home and baked cookies and had teas. What I decided to do is fulfill my profession."

— Response to a reporter's question during the 1992 presidential campaign about her legal career.

At the White House ...

... Mrs. Clinton was the first First Lady to maintain an office in the West Wing of the White House, near the Oval Office.

Remembered for ...

... her high political profile, rivaled among First Ladies only by Eleanor Roosevelt. Mrs. Clinton's activism, particularly her leadership of her husband's campaign for health care reform, coupled with continuing accusations of scandal, aroused intense public sentiment both in opposition and support.

Special Events:

All events are at The Lincoln Museum




Grand Presidential Ball and Gala

Saturday, October 18, 1997 — 8 p.m.


Celebrate the opening of "White House Style: Formal Gowns of the First Ladies," with an unforgettable evening of waltzes, quadrilles, and reels, gently taught to all by Cathy Stephens, historical dance expert.

The Queen's Quickstep and Quadrille Society will provide live music. Refreshments. Formal attire; 19th century dress optional.

\$100/couple for Museum members (\$150/couple for non-members). Proceeds of the event benefit the educational programs of The Lincoln Museum. 


First Ladies: Political Role and Public Image

Sunday, October 19, 1997 — 2 p.m. Lincoln Museum Auditorium

Hear Edith Mayo, curator emeritus of Political Collections at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, discuss the unique historical role played by the wives of the presidents. Copies of her recent book, *First Ladies: Political Role and Public Image*, will be available for sale and signing. \$3 for Museum members (\$5 for non-members). 


From Martha to Mamie

Saturday, October 25, 1997 — 10 a.m. Lincoln Museum Auditorium

Katherine Gnagey, historical costume expert, highlights the First Ladies' individual expressions of style within the evolution of American fashion from the 1780s to 1950s. Continental breakfast served. \$8 for Museum members (\$10 for non-members). 

The Finest of Fashions


Tuesday, November 4, 1997 — 5:30 p.m. Lower Lobby and Temporary Exhibit Gallery

An informal gallery talk by Katherine Gnagey, historical costume expert. Refreshments and cash bar. \$8 for Museum members (\$10 for non-members). 

To make reservations for the above events, please call (219) 455-1832.

America's First Ladies: Who Were They Really?

Sunday, December 14, 1997 — 2 p.m. Lincoln Museum Auditorium

As part of the Museum's annual "Victorian Holidays" celebration, guest lecturer Marty Burger will present little-known anecdotes of the women who lived in the White House. Free with Museum admission. 

White House Style

is generously underwritten by

Marshall Field's

Host Sponsor

LINCOLN NATIONAL CORPORATION

Sustaining Sponsor

NORTH AMERICAN VAN LINES

Transport Sponsor

FORT WAYNE HILTON HOTEL

Hospitality Sponsor

AMERICAN AIRLINES and AMERICAN EAGLE

Airline Sponsors

FORT WAYNE PRINTING COMPANY

Printing Sponsor

WHIRLWIND PICTURES, INC.

Media Production Sponsor

FORT WAYNE ALLEN COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

GREATER FORT WAYNE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

GRAND WAYNE CENTER

THE SUMMIT CLUB

WINDOW GARDEN CAFE

Promotional Sponsors