



September 2014

ZOOM

in on america

A Monthly Publication of the U.S. Consulate Krakow

Volume X. Issue 119



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Jacqueline Kennedy (AP Photo)

In this issue: American First Ladies

Zoom in on America

American First Ladies

The Office of the First Lady did not formally exist until the presidency of Jimmy Carter in the 1970s. First Ladies have, however, played a vital role since the founding of the United States. There have been 49 First Ladies in the history of the United States, and each has left an imprint on the presidency. With the passing of time, the role of the first Lady has risen in prominence. Along with women's emancipation and the equal rights movement, the role of the First Lady also has changed significantly. Below is a list of the women who acted as First Ladies since 1776. Not all of the First Ladies were wives of the presidents. In a few cases, U.S. presidents were widowers when they took office or became widowers during office. In such cases a female relative played the role of First Lady.

THE FIRST LADY	YEARS OF TENURE
Martha Dandridge Custis Washington (1731-1802), wife of George Washington	1789 - 1797
Abigail Smith Adams (1744 - 1818), wife of John Adams	1797 - 1801
Martha Jefferson Randolph (1772 - 1836), daughter of Thomas Jefferson	1801 - 1809
Dolley Payne Todd Madison(1794 - 1849), wife of James Madison	1809 - 1817
Elizabeth Kortright Monroe (1768 - 1835), wife of James Monroe	1817 - 1825
Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams (1775 - 1852), wife of John Quincy Adams	1825 - 1829
Emily Donelson (1807 - 1836), niece of Andrew Jackson	1829 - 1834
Sarah Jackson (1803 - 1887), daughter-in-law of Andrew Jackson	1834 - 1837
Angelica Van Buren (1818 - 1877), daughter-in-law of Martin Van Buren	1839 - 1841
Anna Tuthill Symmes Harrison (1775 - 1864), wife of William Henry Harrison	1841 - 1841
Letitia Christian Tyler(1790 - 1842), wife of John Tyler	1841 - 1842
Priscilla Tyler (1816 - 1889), daughter-in-law of John Tyler	1842 - 1844
Julia Gardiner Tyler(1820 - 1889), wife of John Tyler	1844 - 1845
Sarah Childress Polk (1803 - 1891), wife of James K. Polk	1845 - 1849
Margaret Mackall Smith Taylor (1788 - 1852), wife of Zachary Taylor	1849 - 1850
Abigail Powers Fillmore (1798 - 1853), wife of Millard Fillmore	1850 - 1853
Jane Means Pierce (1806 - 1863), wife of Franklin Pierce	1853 - 1857
Harriet Lane (1830 - 1903), niece of James Buchanan	1857 - 1861
Mary Todd Lincoln (1818 - 1882), wife of Abraham Lincoln	1861 - 1865
Eliza McCardle Johnson (1810 - 1876), wife of Andrew Johnson	1865 - 1869
Julia Grant (1826 - 1902), wife of Ulysses S. Grant	1869 - 1877
Lucy Hayes (1831 - 1889), wife of Rutherford B. Hayes	1877 - 1881
Lucretia Garfield (1832 - 1918), wife of James A. Garfield	1881 - 1881
Mary McElroy (1841 - 1917), sister of Chester A. Arthur	1881 - 1885
Rose Cleveland (1846 - 1918), sister of Grover Cleveland	1885 - 1886
Frances Folsom Cleveland (1864 - 1947), wife of Grover Cleveland	1886 - 1889
Caroline Harrison (1832 - 1892), wife of Benjamin Harrison	1889 - 1892
Mary McKee (1858 - 1930), daughter of Benjamin Harrison	1892 - 1893
Frances Folsom Cleveland (1864 - 1947), wife of Grover Cleveland	1893 - 1897
Ida McKinley (1847 - 1907), wife of William McKinley	1897 - 1901
Edith Kermit Carow Roosevelt (1861 - 1948), wife of Theodore Roosevelt	1901 - 1909
Helen Louise Taft (1861 - 1943), wife of William Howard Taft	1909 - 1913
Ellen Wilson (1860 - 1914), wife of Thomas Woodrow Wilson	1913 - 1914
Margaret Woodrow Wilson (1886 - 1944), daughter of Thomas Woodrow Wilson	1914 - 1915
Edith Wilson (1872 - 1961), wife of Thomas Woodrow Wilson	1915 - 1921
Florence Harding (1860 - 1924), wife of Warren G. Harding	1921 - 1923
Grace Anna Coolidge (1879 - 1957), wife of Calvin Coolidge	1923 - 1929
Lou Hoover (1874 - 1944), wife of Herbert Hoover	1929 - 1933
Anna Eleanor Roosevelt (1884 - 1962), wife of Franklin D. Roosevelt	1933 - 1945
Elizabeth "Bess" Truman (1885 - 1982), wife of Harry S. Truman	1945 - 1953
Mamie Geneva Doud Eisenhower (1896 - 1979), wife of Dwight D. Eisenhower	1953 - 1961
Jacqueline Kennedy (1929 - 1994), wife of John F. Kennedy	1961 - 1963
Claudia Taylor (Lady Bird) Johnson (1912 - 2007), wife of Lyndon B. Johnson	1963 - 1969
Thelma "Pat" Nixon (1912 - 1993), wife of Richard Nixon	1969 - 1974
Elizabeth Bloomer Ford (1918 - 2011), wife of Gerald Ford	1974 - 1977
Rosalynn Smith Carter (born 1927), wife of Jimmy Carter	1977 - 1981
Nancy Reagan (born 1921), wife of Ronald Reagan	1981 - 1989
Barbara Bush (born 1925), wife of George H. W. Bush	1989 - 1993
Hillary Rodham Clinton (born 1947), wife of Bill Clinton	1993 - 2001
Laura Bush (born 1946), wife of George W. Bush	2001 - 2009
Michelle Obama (born 1964), wife of Barack Obama	2009 - present

Many Roles to Play

One role of the First Lady that has changed little over the decades is to welcome guests at the White House. The guests include heads of state, members of the President's Cabinet, congressmen, and other VIPs. Through both formal and informal events at the White House, the First Lady can exert significant influence on the image of the White House and can also positively impress international diplomats and artists.

It is often the First Lady who sets the style for the White House. Some first ladies have applied their artistic skills directly in shaping the environment of the White House. Ellen Wilson, for example, painted her native New Hampshire landscapes. Ida McKinley made many pairs of slippers for charity. Caroline Harrison, who was an accomplished china painter, helped design state china decorated with images of goldenrod and corn native to the Harrisons' home state of Indiana. Jacqueline Kennedy designed Christmas cards, which were sold to raise funds for the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Several other First Ladies were noted for their artistic talents. Louisa Catherine Adams was a gifted musician. Caroline Harrison, in addition to painting china and watercolors, loved English literature, drama and music, in which she had a degree. Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams composed music, as well as verse, and played the harp. Priscilla Cooper Tyler, President Tyler's daughter-in-law, who assumed the role of the White House Hostess in place of the president's sick wife, was a trained actress and used her talents to entertain celebrities at the White House.

White House receptions give the host and hostess (the President and First Lady) a great opportunity to highlight American artists. White House performances have included opera, ballet, modern dance, theater, symphony, choral, gospel, folk, jazz, and R&B stars. Many First Ladies made artistic performances a central part of the White House events. Jacqueline Kennedy invited performers from the American Ballet Theatre, the American Shakespeare Festival, and the Metropolitan Opera Studio to the White House.

Making visitors to the White House feel really welcome is not always easy. It can require a lot of tact and diplomacy when diverse groups of people are seated at the same table. In 1870, Julia Grant was praised for a successful reception she hosted for Washington dignitaries and a delegation of Native Americans. Martha Washington organized weekly dinner parties and Friday evening receptions whose aim was to strengthen the respect for the new republic. Mary Lincoln hosted dinners and receptions to strengthen the presidency of Abraham Lincoln during the difficult time of the Civil War. No less demanding are visits by foreign heads of state. Sometimes these receptions end high-level summits take place in Washington. Such was the case for the state dinner

in honor of Mikhail Gorbachev after the signing of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 1987. Nancy Reagan, the hostess of this reception, participated in fifty-five state dinners in total.

Social issues have been an important area of engagement for the First Ladies since the beginning of the 20th century. Eleanor Roosevelt was an ardent advocate for New Deal social policies whose aims were to improve the living conditions of Americans during the Great Depression. People struck by its hardships wrote letters directly to her. Rosalynn Carter was the honorary chair of the President's Commission on Mental Health. Ellen Wilson got involved in a project to eliminate slum dwellings in Washington alleyways and was successful in having the Alley Dwelling Bill, known also as "Mrs. Wilson's Bill," passed by Congress in 1914. Laura Bush designed Ready to Read, Ready to Learn, a literacy and education project with the aim to help youth and children at risk. Hillary Clinton chaired the president's Task Force on National Health Care Reform. She was concerned with issues relating to families, women and children. Michelle Obama works to support military families and working mothers as well as to encourage public service. A very obvious role for the wife of presidents is to support them during their election campaigns. This role became very important in 1920 when women in the U.S. gained the right to vote. Beginning with Florence Harding, every candidate's wife has played an important part in his presidential campaign.

Some first ladies found it hard to always be in the limelight. Martha Washington did not enjoy the role of a presidential wife; she would "much rather be at home." Anna Tuthill Symmes Harrison reportedly said: "I wish that my husband's friends left him where he is, happy and contented in retirement." She did not go to Washington with him. Even though Letitia Tyler went to live at the White House, she did not take up the role of the First Lady, which was performed by her daughter-in-law.

Other First Ladies did enjoy the publicity and the central role they played during their tenure at the White House. Dolley Payne Todd Madison had a reputation as a gifted First Lady who could talk with the most difficult groups of visitors during the hard times of the War of 1812. The youngest First Lady, Frances Folsom Cleveland received enormous media attention. Jacqueline Kennedy became a star when she entered the White House. Her photographs appeared not only in mainstream newspapers but also in fashion magazines. Many American women followed her taste in fashion. Michelle Obama likewise is looked up as a positive role model by many girls and women.



Eleanor Roosevelt and Mrs. Clementine Churchill (AP Photo)



Pat Nixon, 1972 (AP Photo)



*Emily Donelson
(photo Smithsonian)*



*Grace Coolidge plays with
two dogs, 1924 (AP Photo)*



*Grace Coolidge
(photo Smithsonian)*



*Frances Folsom Cleve-
land , 1892 (AP Photo)*



*Portrait of Dolley Madison
by William Elwell (AP Photo)*



*Mary Todd Lincoln
(AP Photo)*



*Edith Kermit Roosevelt,
1895 (AP Photo)*



*President William McKinley
and Ida Saxton McKinley
(AP Photo)*



*President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt, 1934
(AP Photo)*



Jacqueline Kennedy, 1961 (AP Photo)



*Martha Washington
(photo Smithsonian)*



Letitia Tyler (photo Smithsonian)



Julia Tyler (photo Smithsonian)



*Mamie Eisenhower, 1954
(AP Photo)*



*Portrait of Lady Dolley
Madison by artist Gilbert
Stuart (AP Photo)*



*Pat Nixon with Mrs. Mami Eisenhower
(AP Photo)*



*Eleanor Roosevelt
(photo Smithsonian)*



*Mamie Doud Eisenhower
(photo Smithsonian)*



*Warren G. Harding, and Florence Kling
Harding, 1923 (AP Photo)*

First Ladies Quiz

Take the quiz. Choose the correct answer a.b or c. Sometimes more than one answer is correct.

1. The first First Lady to live in the White House was:

- a. Martha Washington
- b. Martha Jefferson Randolph
- c. Abigail Adams

2. The only First Lady to be born outside the United states was:

- a. Mary Lincoln
- b. Louisa Adams
- c. Eleonore Roosevelt

3. The first First Lady that got married while her husband was in office was:

- a. Julia Tyler
- b. Margaret Taylor
- c. Betty Ford

4. The first First Lady to hold a job after marriage was:

- a. Dolley Todd Madison
- b. Letitia Tyler
- c. Abigail Fillmore

5. This was the First Lady who obtained congressional funds in 1850 for the first official library in the Executive Mansion.

- a. Abigail Filmore
- b. Margaret Taylor
- c. Sarah Polk

6. The nickname "Lemonade Lucy " was given to this this president's wife because no alcoholic beverage was served during his presidency:

- a. Grover Cleveland
- b. Thomas Woodrow Wilson
- c. Rutherford B. Hayes

7. The first first lady to fly in an airplane was:

- a. Eleanor Roosevelt
- b. Lady Bird Johnson
- c. Mamie Eisenhower

8. The Firrst Lady who died while her husband was in office was:

- a. Letitia Tyler
- b. Caroline Harrison
- c. Ellen Wilson

9. Which First Lady saved the portrait of George Washington painted by Gilbert Stuart before the British troops set fire to the White House in the War of 1812:

- a. Elizabeth Monroe
- b. Dolley Madison
- c. Abigail Adams

10. The first First Lady to have a college degree was:

- a. Sarah Jackson
- b. Martha Jefferson Randolph
- c. Lucy Webb Hayes

11. The only First Lady to be married in a White House ceremony was:

- a. Frances Folsom Cleveland
- b. Edith Wilson
- c. Helen Louise Taft

12. The First Lady known for her fashion sense:

- a. Michelle Obama
- b. Jacqueline Kennedy
- c. Hannah van Buren

13. The First Lady who was not afraid to speak openly about personal issues including dealing with breast cancer:

- a. Betty Ford
- b. Ida McKinley
- c. Elizabeth Monroe

14. The First Lady who advocated nationalized health insurance and rights for women and children:

- a. Hillary Clinton
- b. Nancy Reagan
- c. Lady Bird Johnson

15. This First Lady took over decisions in matters of state when her husband was recuperating from a severe stroke:

- a. Edith Wilson
- b. Margaret Taylor
- c. Florence Harding

Activity Page

Win a Prize!
September 2014
CONTEST

Which First Lady was the first to live in the White House?

Send the answer
(with your home address) to:
KrakowAIRC@state.gov

Deadline: October 15

Win a Prize!
The answer to
the July-August
contest was:

DC stands for Detective
Comics

The winners are:

Bartosz from Czestochowa,
Anna from Koszalin and
Yanesa from Buenos Aires
CONGRATULATIONS!!!

The prizes will be sent to you
by mail.



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Exercise 1 ARTICLES

Supply the missing article in the blanks below. Sometimes no article is needed:

Martha Dandridge Custis Washington (1732-1802) received negligible education, as was typically offered to ... (1) girls in ... (2) 18th century.

She learned domestic skills and how to act in ... (3) social circles. George Washington was her second husband. She was praised for her hospitality and talents at entertaining guests. Martha lived in ... (4) age of unrest and fighting. During ... (5) Revolutionary War she organized wards for ... (6) sick and was looked at as an example to other officers' wives.

Abigail Adams (1744-1818) was ... (7) woman of fragile health, who never received formal education, but who had ... (8) natural talent for writing. She was also ... (9) practical person, able to cope with ... (10) difficulties. When her husband and future president, John Adams, was doing his duties for ... (11) country away from home, she stayed with their four children and managed to take care of ... (12) whole household single-handedly. She wrote ... (13) countless letters from France and from England, which show her great skill at vivid and brief description.

Dolley Payne Todd Madison (1768-1849) was called ... (14) Beauty of Philadelphia. Her second husband, James Madison, became ... (15) president in 1809. She had ... (16) reputation of being ... (17) good-tempered and good-humored woman, if a little too fond of gossiping. Yet, she is best remembered for ... (18) patriotic act of saving the Cabinet papers and Gilbert Stuarts' portrait of George Washington before ... (19) White House was burned during ... (20) British invasion of Washington D.C. in 1814.

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Michelle Obama (AP Photo)