

Washington Society Pattern Changes Its Thread But Never Its Color

LIVING FIRST LADIES—1889 TO 1937

AMERICA HAS ONLY ONE LIVING FORMER PRESIDENT, HERBERT HOOVER. Yet, happily, there are seven women alive who once were chateaux of the White House. Here are portraits of them as they appeared in that historic mansion. Top, left to right—Mrs. Benjamin Harrison, Mrs. Thomas Preston (the former Mrs. Grover Cleveland), Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt, and Mrs. William Howard Taft. Center—Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, Mrs. Calvin Coolidge, and Mrs. Herbert Hoover. Below—Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt.

PHOTOS BY THE WASHINGTON POST AND HARRIS & EVANS



Rank of Guests Always Hostess' Biggest Puzzle

Precedence Distinguishes Entertaining From That of Other Cities.

By Hope Ridings Miller

If there's any such thing as court society in America, it reaches full blossom in the Nation's Capital where envoys from many lands mingle with a town full of officials, and precedence with a capital "P" keeps parting far removed from the social scene in the typical metropolis or on Main street.

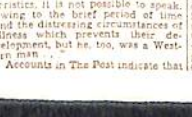
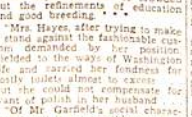
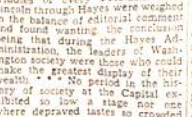
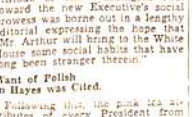
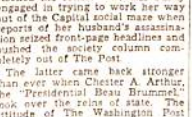
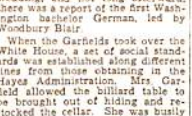
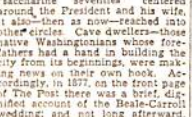
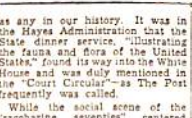
Washington society's pace has not changed greatly in six decades, but not far. Washington's social patterns have instances but never its color. So long as dinner lists continue to be reckoned on rank, the twin of democracy and aristocracy will meet in stipulated order of the Capital room, and like the arrangement.

The entire picture of Capital society from 1877 to 1937 is glimpsed in full frame in the files of The Washington Post where accounts of parties, weddings, travels and changes in social usage have been faithfully and completely recorded. Finding these pages from the past one finds problems of protocol have not changed greatly in six decades.

The modern hostess, planning a tonight party, is confronted with much the same puzzle as was the typical lady of the late seventies, who, bustling about encased in her corset and ready to sit a certain number of officials together and added a dash of diplomats with the hope her dinner lists would tell.

Mrs. Hayes First To Dominate Scene. Judging from accounts in the earliest edition of The Post, the first woman reported as dominating the social scene was Lucy Hayes, who appeared December 26, 1877 in an announcement of a silver wedding anniversary to be celebrated at the White House.

On New Year's Day, 1878, the story of the Hayes' anniversary made front page news, replete with adjectives, poetry and detailed descriptions down to the last strip of the smilax entwining pillars in the parlors.



as any in our history. It was in the Hayes Administration that the State dinner service, "illustrating the fauna and flora of the United States," found its way into the White House and was duly mentioned in the "Court Circular" as The Post frequently was called.

While the social scene of the "archaic" seventies centered around the President and his wife, it also—then as now—reached into other circles. Cave dwellers—the native Washingtonians whose forefathers had a hand in building the city from its beginnings, were making news on their own hook.

When the Garfield took over the White House, a set of social standards was established along different lines from those obtaining in the Hayes Administration. Mrs. Garfield allowed the billiard table to be brought out of hiding and restocked the cellar. She was busy engaged in trying to work her way out of the Capital social maze when reports of her husband's assassination seized front-page headlines and pushed the society column completely out of the Post.

The latter came back stronger than ever when Chester A. Arthur, the "Presidential Beau Brummel," took over the reins of state. The attitude of The Washington Post toward the new Executive's social prowess was borne out in a lengthy editorial expressing the hope that "Mr. Arthur will bring to the White House social habits that have long been stranger there."

Want of Polish in Hayes was Cited. Following this, the pink ink and black ink of every President from Lincoln through Hayes were weighed in the balance of editorial comment and found wanting. The conclusion being that during the Hayes Administration, the leaders of Washington society were those who could make the greatest display of their wealth.

concluding with "New Year's Day Elsewhere." The following day the society column was moved from page 1 page 2, and from there on was complemented with "Personal Intelligence" or "Bits of Local News."

Items appearing under these headings included such bits as "Mrs. Foster, of Pittsburgh, niece of Stephen C. Foster, the noted song writer, is visiting Mrs. Burns at 1214 J street," and "Many Washington ladies are reading Lord Tennyson's new book. It is said the author has accumulated a fortune of about 400,000 pounds."

Post files of this period reveal numerous locations such as "Mrs. Doctor White," "Mrs. Ex-Senator Blair," and "Mrs. Secretary Whitney." Incidentally, at about this time, members of the Diplomatic Corps begin to appear frequently in the social column. The British and French envoys seemed to have been the most popular, each being called then merely the English Minister or the French Minister.

On January 17, 1868, "A New Social Directory" was written up in The Post as follows: "A neatly printed and well bound little volume made its appearance yesterday. No names were mentioned in the account, but there was a concluding suggestion 'the venture is quite likely to prove a success'."

In this case, as in the ones before, the society column had no photographs to enliven it. So far as that goes, the entire paper carried no pictures except those used in the ubiquitous Lydia E. Pinkham advertisements. On Sundays, toward the close of the eighties, the column sometimes became two. Typical accounts of receptions about this time were written with a special eye to decoration, to those who made up the company, "the callers were of both low and high degree," one story averred, and the cat of silks and satins in which the feminine guests were attired.

Senator's wives are thinking of adopting the plan of the Cabinet ladies and returning their Thursday calls by card. It is extremely doubtful whether the Cabinet ladies can make this method altogether popular, while it is certainly a reasonable one; but it is evident, because of the emphasis of their position, will not be quickly given a wider circle. The requirements of social etiquette must be either well carried out or not at all, and if there is not a cheerful, pleasant interpretation of them, it is best not to attempt any.

Other D. C. Women Prominent in Fed. While the indefatigable Mrs. Cleveland followed out a social program that kept society writers plentifully supplied with copy, there were other Washington women whose names found their way into the society column. Mrs. William C. Whitney, wife of the Secretary of the Navy, was particularly prominent in annuals of the day.

Apparently, Mrs. Cleveland and Miss Annie C. Van Yuden were leaders of the latter group, but even they ceased entertaining a few weeks later, and The Post society column witnessed almost utter stagnation. In fact, from then until May when President Cleveland's marriage intentions appeared in The Post, nothing more exciting seems to have enlivened the Capital's social program than Post Alexander Graham Bell's card reception in mid-April.

Seven days later there is mention of Mrs. Cleveland's holding, with the President's consent, a grand reception on the 23rd of that month. It is an announcement of "no more receptions at the White House until the following few days after which a statement that Mrs. Cleveland has adopted Mrs. Cleveland's plan of receiving visitors on stating days and hours."

For the most part it seems, however, that Mrs. Cleveland never established close contact with the press, and news of her, except in connection with the biggest State functions, are scarce in The Post. The administrations of Benjamin Harrison, apparently along art social lines, with no novelties of note mentioned in The Post. Mrs. Harrison seems to have been an extraordinarily well-beloved chateaux, as all references to her are couched in highly complimentary terms.

Hayes' Parties First to Make Post Columns

The 'Water Flowed Like Champagne' Capital Wit Was Quoted.

society that got into the newspapers and the exclusive circles that, in these days, prided themselves on staying out. She was feted by New York and Newport society, was showered with attention when she made her tour of the Orient and ran away with the spotlight completely by meeting Nicholas Longworth in a White House ceremony that many people still remember as one of the most brilliant events in Washington's social history.

Both Mrs. Roosevelt and her daughter were favorites not only of society but of society writers. They were generous about giving even private dinner lists and went a step further by inserting column photos to make the stories more complete. Thus it was that from 1901 to 1909, what guests were become almost as important to guests were almost as society accounts.

A typical column description from a Post social column begins as follows: "She (Miss Constance Satterlee, daughter of the Bishop of Washington) wore a gorgeous evening gown of pink crepe de chine with quaint pullings. She continued to smile and a pink infatigable ruffle around the neck..."

Society writing in The Post at that time became a series of social notes, with White House happenings leading off, and smaller events following. From a single column, social reporting had expanded to a whole page, and a single column picture to a layout. Wedding accounts were given at length, and such vital statistics as births, changing of addresses and engagements were announced separately.

At about this time the arrival of news of the death of the late President was followed carefully in The Post. Among these were Mrs. John R. McLean, Gust Blair, Mrs. and Mrs. James W. Pinchot and their son, Gilford, and Mrs. William Howard Taft's journey in the White House was punctuated by a series of entertaining, judging by Post accounts during the years her husband was President. She continued Mrs. Roosevelt's precedent of giving even smaller dinner lists to the press, but so the society stories once again played up White House decorations rather than personal adornment.

Because of illness, death and the World War the Wilsons entertained little, and both Wilson and Harding canceled the Inaugural Ball. The Hardings, however, drew around them a small coterie of friends, and a series of formal entertainments was arranged at the White House and elsewhere.

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VEGETABLES

Baked Potatoe, Sour Cream & Butter	1.50
Broccoli, Lemon & Oil	2.00
Fresh Mushrooms Sauteed in Sherry Butter	2.00
Fresh Green Beans Almondine	1.50
Cauliflower Polonaise	1.50

SALADS

Tossed Green Salad	2.00
Greek Salad for One	5.95
For Two	10.95
Sliced Tomatoes & Red Onions	2.00
Spinach, Bacon & Mushroom Salad	2.75
Farmer's Salad, Tomatoes & Onions, Feta Cheese	3.25

DESSERTS

Berries in Season	
Cheese & Fruit	
New York Style Cheesecake	2.25
Carrot Cake	2.25
Deep Dish Dutch Apple Pie	2.25
Louis Sherry Ice Cream	1.75
Haagen Daas Ice Cream	2.50
Hot Fudge Ice Cream Cake	2.25
Strawberry Shortcake	2.25
Rum Cake	2.25
Baklava	2.25

Knickerbocker Grill

539 8th Street, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20003

546-7766

