

The Hermitage, home of Andrew and Rachel Jackson. (Image via Library of Congress)

triumph after the Battle of New Orleans in January, 1815.

Although Andrew's duty often took him from home, Rachel took little pleasure in traveling. By 1820 she was quite stout and often in ill health, and she came to resent Andrew's absences. In 1821 Andrew resigned his military commission and the governorship of Florida, planning to retire from public life. His friends, however, urged his candidacy for U.S. president. Rachel wrote a niece,

I do hope they will leave Mr. Jackson alone. . . . He has done his share for his country. How little time has he had to himself or his own interests in the thirty years of our wedded life. In all that time he has not spent one fourth of his days under his own roof.

Rachel hoped that she and Andrew would settle into a quiet life, enjoying the new brick mansion and formal garden they had built in 1819. From 1821 to 1823, Andrew was a gentleman farmer, and these were likely the couple's happiest days. Nevertheless, in October, 1823, Jackson left for Washington, D.C., as a U.S. senator, and he returned as a presidential candidate in June, 1824.

Presidency and First Ladyship

In November, 1824, Andrew learned that he had received more of the popular and electoral vote than the other candidates for president but had not gotten the majority needed for election. He and Rachel left for Washington, D.C., so he could be present as the House of Representatives chose the new president. They arrived in December. Andrew and his supporters were stunned when the House elected John Quincy Adams.

Margaret Taylor

Margaret Mackall Smith Taylor

Born: September 21, 1788
Calvert County, Maryland

Died: August 18, 1852
Pascagoula, Mississippi

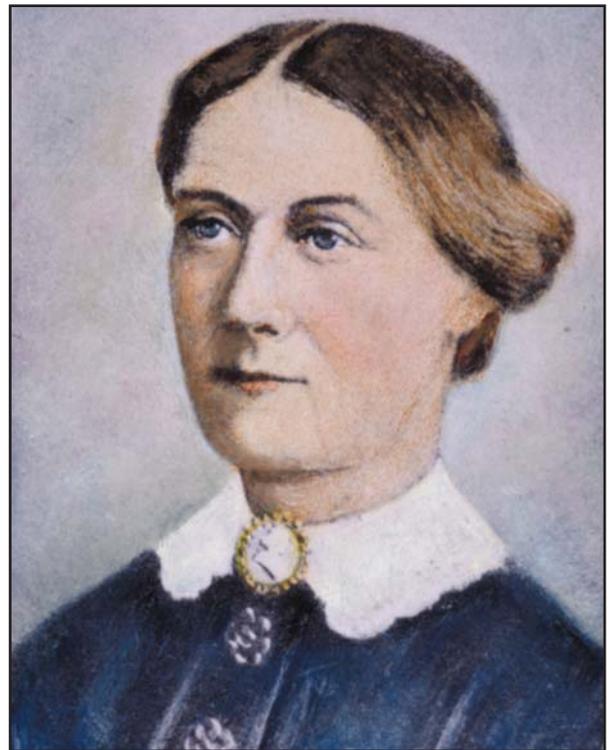
President: Zachary Taylor
1849-1850

Overview: Born and raised in Maryland plantation society, for thirty-five years Margaret Taylor followed her husband, Zachary Taylor, from one wilderness Army fort to another, making a comfortable home for her family wherever they lived. Just as the Taylors had begun planning their retirement to a southern plantation, Zachary's heroics in the Mexican War thrust him into the national spotlight and then the presidency. Margaret, who did not want to serve as First Lady, delegated her official duties to her daughter. When Zachary fell ill and died the year after entering the White House, the grief-stricken Margaret retired to Mississippi for the remaining two years of her life.

Early Life

Margaret Mackall Smith was born September 21, 1788, on a plantation near St. Leonard's, Maryland, in rural Calvert County between Chesapeake Bay and the Patuxent River. Peggy, as the family always called her, was the younger daughter of Major Walter Smith, a state militia commander during the American Revolution, and Ann Mackall Smith. The Smiths were members of the plantation gentry and enjoyed a comfortable social and economic position but were not among the grandes of planter society.

Little is known of Margaret's childhood or education, but they were probably similar to those of other southern planters' daughters: a grounding in the basics by an itinerant tutor or her mother, with a heavy emphasis on household and domestic management as well as the social



Margaret Taylor. (Image via Wikimedia Commons.)

graces, in preparation for her presumed future as a planter's wife. Eligible men in her neighborhood, however, must have been scarce or incompatible; the slender, attractive Peggy remained unmarried at the age of twenty-one.

college graduate among U.S. First Ladies, was a firm believer in higher education, often visiting schools and colleges but never making speeches. She followed Julia Grant's policy in allowing African American servants to take time off work to pursue an education. She did not support the cause of universal suffrage, though, and gave two reasons: first, because her husband did not, and second, because illiteracy among women was still high. What good would voting be, she reasoned, if a woman was denied a chance at an education and was even viewed as being incapable of reasoning? The more the suffrage activists pushed Lucy for a statement of support, the more she resisted; neither she nor her husband ever supported women's suffrage.

However, according to accounts written at the time, Lucy was loved and admired. She had the ability to make others feel cared for and valued. As she grew older, Lucy became more thoughtful, kinder, and more loving of those who needed her help, but by the same token, she grew less confrontational and more fearful of fights or arguments. The deaths of three children, the loss of her mother, and the election and its attacks on her husband had drained her of some of her earlier zest. With that went her championing of causes.

There is one exception, however. Her name is forever linked to the banning of alcohol from the White House, for which she earned the nickname of Lemonade Lucy, though she was never publicly referred to by that name in her lifetime. It must also be noted that Lucy herself did not ban alcoholic beverages—her husband did. He had made it a part of the Republican campaign platform. Rutherford B. Hayes had a broad reformer's streak in his nature, which led him not only to ban liquor from the White House but also to try to reform the hiring of federal employees. He wanted to eliminate a system of granting jobs in return for favors, believing that hires should instead be based on merit, no matter what party

one voted. As far as liquor was concerned, Lucy agreed wholeheartedly, for she had taken the temperance oath from her own grandfather when she was a girl. Lucy's temperance stance, however, was balanced by her own good sense and humanity. She felt that what people did in their own homes was their business. If the White House was to be her home, she was happy that no liquor would be served there.

As soon as the Hayeses announced their policy of banning alcohol, the State Department protested. The Grand Dukes Alexis and Constantine, sons of Czar Alexander II of Russia, one of the Union's allies in the Civil War, were expected at a White House reception in mid-April, 1877. Because the Grand Dukes and their staff would expect to be served wine, the president and his wife yielded. This was the only occasion upon which wine was served at the White House during the Hayes years.

Lucy's stand on liquor won her the support of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, which later donated a portrait of Mrs. Hayes in a red velvet dress to the White House. Others, however, were very unhappy with the ban. One of those who made a practice of secretly bringing flasks of whiskey in their coats was heard to say, "Water like wine flowed at the president's house." Cartoons were even drawn of Lucy, ridiculing her; yet she abided by her husband's wishes, which were in accordance with her own principles.

During Lucy's four years in the White House, there was an ever-increasing use of the title First Lady. While in earlier times it had been used to refer to her predecessors, including Mary Lincoln, its first consistent usage was in Lucy's time. Her charm, her expressive face, and even her childlike joy, which found expression in her jumping up and down, won even her husband's enemies to her. When a comment was made to the president about her influence, Hayes remarked, "Mrs. Hayes may not have much sway

Woodrow Wilson

Thomas Woodrow Wilson was born on December 28, 1856, in Staunton, Virginia, to Joseph Ruggles Wilson, a Presbyterian minister, and Jessie Woodrow Wilson. Wilson was named after his maternal grandfather. Wilson entered the College of New Jersey at Princeton in 1874. There, he was speaker of the Whig Society, founder of the Liberal Debating Club, and managing editor of the school newspaper. He read modern history, politics, and literature on his own. He graduated 38th in a class of 107 with a grade average of 90.3.

Though Wilson admired the Confederacy for taking up arms in the name of states' rights, he did not appreciate southern sectionalism and wanted the South to be a major player in national affairs. In 1883, he enrolled in Johns Hopkins University for graduate studies, where he studied American history, jurisprudence, constitutional history, German, and international law. By this time, Wilson had settled on a career as a statesman. He published his book *Congressional Government* in 1885, stating that the United States' constitutional system lacked responsible leadership.

Wilson returned to Princeton in 1890 to teach law. The school's board of trustees made him president of Princeton University, as it was now known, in 1902. In 1910, Wilson was elected governor of New Jersey; the office would serve as a springboard to the White House. He was elected president of the United States in 1912.

Wilson took office on March 4, 1913. He devoted his first term to progressive reforms, such as a lower tariff, and signed legislation that authorized the Federal Reserve Board. His wife, Ellen, died of Bright's disease on August 6, 1914, and around that time, the Archduke Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia, igniting World War I. Wilson remained neutral and won reelection in 1914 with the slogan "He kept us out of war."

The United States could not remain neutral, however, and declared war on Germany on April 7, 1917. During wartime, Wilson found time to work on the peace settlement that would follow the fighting. To that end, he went to Versailles, France, in 1918 to negotiate the peace treaty. That year he presented Congress with his plan, called the Fourteen Points, intended to foster a fair postwar settlement. Point Fourteen of the plan called for the establishment of an organization of nations whose goal would be to preserve world peace. The Senate rejected the Treaty of Versailles and voted against U.S. membership in the League of Nations, which was established in 1920. Wilson's vision of an organization of nations, including the United States, was ultimately realized with the creation of the United Nations during World War II.

Jersey in 1910. Ellen enjoyed public life and gave political advice to her husband. Joseph Tumulty, Woodrow's private secretary, said that Ellen was a better politician than her husband. When Woodrow became a Democratic candidate for president of the United States in 1912, Ellen went with him on a campaign train trip through Georgia that spring. Wilson was nominated on the forty-sixth ballot at the Democratic National Convention on July 2. He delivered his

acceptance speech from the porch of the Sea Girt, the governor's summer home, on August 7. Ellen and all three of their daughters were with him.

Woodrow faced Republican incumbent President William Howard Taft and Progressive Party candidate Theodore Roosevelt in the general election. Roosevelt's candidacy had split the Republican Party, and Wilson won the election on November 5, 1912. Taft sent Ellen a letter with the plans of the White House second floor, the



Jacqueline Kennedy childhood portrait. (Image via John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum)

when gossip columnist Igor Cassini named her “Queen Deb” of 1947. Cassini described the Vassar freshman as “a regal brunette who has classic features and the daintiness of Dresden porcelain.” Jackie was flirtatious yet prim; a breathy and little-girlish way of talking masked her intelligence. She received her bachelor’s degree in 1951, and the following year she was hired as the Washington *Times-Herald’s* “Inquiring Photographer.”

Marriage and Family

Jackie met Jack Kennedy in 1951 at a Washington, D.C., dinner party. The thirty-four-year-old congressman invited twenty-one-year-old Jackie for a drink. Over the next two years, they had “a very spasmodic courtship,” Jackie would recall. Jack spent half of each week in Massachusetts campaigning for the Senate. “He’d call me from

some oyster bar up there, with a great clinking of coins, to ask me out to the movies the following Wednesday in Washington.”

Jack was not about to woo Jackie, or anyone else, too ardently. “He’s not the candy-and-flowers type,” Jackie would say. Jack asked so many friends whether he should marry Jackie that one suggested he “put the matter before the Senate for a vote.” If Jackie was moodier than Jack would have liked, she was at least cultured and intelligent. If Jack was less romantic than Jackie would have liked, he was at least successful and sober. He had money, she had class, and both were Catholic.

About fourteen hundred guests attended the Kennedys’ wedding on September 12, 1953. This marriage was made in public. Jackie’s private life would be public fodder for the rest of her days. However, the marriage itself was no fairy tale. In their first two years together, Jackie had a miscarriage and Jack, suffering from Addison’s disease, had two spinal operations. He missed the entire 1955 Senate session. “The Deb” demonstrated a gritty resilience. She changed the bandages on Jack’s oozing wound, buoyed his spirits, and inspired him to write what became the Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Profiles in Courage* (1956).

However, Jackie resented her husband’s roving eye and single-minded ambition. The former career girl now dreamed of “a normal life with my husband coming home from work every day at five.” Jackie ran Jack’s errands, cooked his meals, and begged his secretary to “send” him home earlier.

In 1956 Jack dragged his pregnant wife to the Democratic National Convention, where he made an unsuccessful play for the vice presidential nod. Shortly thereafter, Jackie miscarried again. At the time, the senator was traveling in the Mediterranean.

The birth of their daughter, Caroline, in November, 1957, put an end to the rumors that the Kennedys’ marriage was doomed. The next year

Coming up Roses

Rosalynn Carter loved to work with flowers. While her husband, Jimmy Carter, was governor of Georgia, she arranged bouquets every day to decorate the governor's mansion. The grounds were full of flowering trees and formal gardens that were cared for by trustees. In addition to the formal gardens, Rosalynn had a small flower garden of her own, in which she planted pansies, tulips, begonias, and other blooms. At the governor's mansion, the First Lady found that she could work in the garden whenever she wanted: Digging in the dirt with her jeans on, she was not even recognized by tourists walking past.

campaign brochures. Jimmy Carter won the Democratic primary there. He lost the Massachusetts primary but won in Florida. The Carters found campaigning tiring and frustrating but also very exciting.

They gained enough votes from the primaries to be certain they could win the Democratic presidential nomination. The convention was to be held that year in New York City. A number of earlier contenders called to say they would release their delegates to cast their votes for Carter. The Democratic Convention was followed by three months of campaigning. Rosalynn campaigned on a schedule specifically laid out for her. She was accompanied by her secretary and usually flew in a chartered airplane. They traveled all over the United States. Again, Jimmy won

In the time between the election and the inauguration, Jimmy invited Democratic senators and representatives, potential cabinet members, and others to meet with him at his home in Plains. Jimmy met with them, but it was Rosalynn and her mother, her secretary, and two daughters-in-law who made stacks of sandwiches and pitchers of iced tea and lemonade for their guests.

Presidency and First Ladyship

On the day of Carter's inauguration, he rode in a limousine beside President Gerald R. Ford to the ceremony at the Capitol. Rosalynn and Betty Ford followed in the second car. Following the

inauguration and lunch at the Capitol, Jimmy, Rosalynn, and their children broke with tradition and, instead of riding back to the White House in automobiles, they got out and walked along the route. Holding hands, with Amy between them or dropping back to walk with Rosalynn's brothers, the Carters walked, waving and smiling at the cheering crowds. Their walk was broadcast all over the United States; it was the beginning of a new administration.

On that first day, after exploring the White House, Jimmy and Rosalynn attended seven inaugural balls and, during the next two days, a series of receptions. Rosalynn found it all exciting but also exhausting. Her hand throbbed from shaking so many people's hands, and her feet hurt. Finally, she slipped her shoes off while she was still standing in a reception line.

As they settled in at the White House, Rosalynn found that she had many things to discuss with her husband, such as decisions about White House guests, invitations, and answers to letters. Jimmy suggested that she arrange to have lunch with him one day a week; they could take up the matters at lunch, and he would not be faced with them at the end of a long working day, when he had to deal with weightier problems. Rosalynn and Jimmy continued to discuss matters of varied importance. She found that it was easier for her to learn about people's problems than it was for him. He was always surrounded by officials, while she could still meet and talk with

crucial element of his design, subject to considerable scrutiny before its approval, was his plan for the staircase extending from the second floor to the main entrance foyer serving the front door. The second-floor design, however, nearly replicated the original plan, with modifications made primarily to improve bathrooms and expand closet space. The biggest differences were largely hidden from public view. For example, Winslow added mezzanine levels, primarily housing service areas, at each end of the building. The contractor selected was John McShain, Inc., of Philadelphia. Furnishings for the project were contracted to B. Altman & Company, a Manhattan department store. At the height of the project, more than three hundred workers were known to be toiling feverishly to complete the task in time for President and Mrs. Truman to move back into the White House for Christmas of 1951.

Hence, during much of the Truman presidency, the Truman family lived across Pennsylvania Avenue in Blair House while the Executive Mansion underwent the extensive rebuilding of its interior. Throughout the time of the restoration work, the president and the White House staff continued to work in both the east and west wings of the mansion. The Oval Office itself never was directly affected by work on the project. Despite the Christmas, 1951, deadline, the Trumans were not able to return to residence in the White House until 6:20 p.m. on March 27, 1952.

Refurbishing and Redecorating

Over the years, First Ladies have played a variety of roles in managing White House refurbishing and redecorating efforts, varying according to their personalities, how they viewed the position of First Lady, what society expected from them at the time, and the expectations of their husbands, the presidents. Hence, the management efforts of

First Ladies ranged from being spectators to playing central roles.

While many First Ladies played either a limited role or no role whatsoever in managing White House renovations, they frequently were at the forefront in overseeing redecorating and managing day-to-day activities. Several First Ladies played prominent roles in restoring or refurbishing the White House during their husbands' presidencies. Particularly noteworthy were the efforts of Julia Tyler, Abigail Fillmore, Mary Lincoln, Julia Grant, Caroline Harrison, Edith Roosevelt, Bess Truman, and Jackie Kennedy.

In the 1840's, Julia Tyler made several improvements, both to dress up the building and to make it more livable. She began by acquiring several pieces of fine French furniture. In addition, she made improvements to the lighting and heating systems in the White House. While the Tylers themselves financed these improvements, the Fillmores in the early 1850's persuaded Congress to appropriate two thousand dollars to buy books to create the first White House library in the second-floor Oval Room. Abigail Fillmore also had installed in the White House plumbing and other improvements to the kitchen and bath areas, including an iron range and a bathtub.

However, the continuing extensive use of the White House increasingly strained the maintenance of the facility. By the time of Abraham Lincoln's presidency in the 1860's, Mary Lincoln sought primarily to dress up the decorative setting of the mansion rather than improve the facility structurally. She replaced many of the decorative furnishings in the White House. However, at the time her tastes were thought to be exceptionally expensive, and the private sources she found to finance the endeavor ignited a scandal and caused her husband political headaches.

Perhaps learning from the problems of the Lincolns, Julia Grant won congressional funding in the decade following the Civil War to