



MARTHA WASHINGTON PLAYED A VITAL ROLE IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

## The Original

1789-1797

**NAME:** Martha Washington

**MARRIED TO:** George Washington, no party

**AGE ON ENTERING WHITE HOUSE:** 57

As the wife of the first president of the United States, Martha sacrificed her own hopes of a quiet life on a plantation in Virginia to support her second husband's campaign against the British, becoming a symbol of the patriots' cause during the American Revolution and fundraising for troops. She was first given the title "lady" (as in 'Lady Washington') by the press. Shockingly, like many other influential women of the time, she had nearly 300 slaves.

## The Socialite

1809-1817

**NAME:** Dolley Madison

**MARRIED TO:** James Madison, Democratic-Republican

**AGE ON ENTERING WHITE HOUSE:** 40

The first woman to be known as 'First Lady', despite being the wife of the fourth president, Dolley was charming and hospitable, and credited with contributing to her husband's popularity during his two terms. She worked with architect Benjamin Latrobe to furnish the White House; is the only First Lady to be given an honorary seat in Congress, and was the first American to respond to a telegraph message – sent by inventor Samuel Morse. She also urged Congress to keep Washington as the capital rather than Philadelphia.



FIRST LADY AND FIRST RECIPIENT OF A TELEGRAPH: DOLLEY MADISON

## The Public Face

1909-1913

**NAME:** Helen Taft

**MARRIED TO:** William Howard Taft, Republican

**AGE ON ENTERING WHITE HOUSE:** 47

It's generally believed that without 'Nellie' (as she was nicknamed) and her determined efforts and interest in politics, William would have never have been elected. She was the first president's wife to ride in her husband's inaugural parade, to own and drive a car and to publish her memoirs. She also supported women's suffrage, replaced the all-white ushers at the White House with African-Americans (perceived as progressive at the time), lifted the ban on divorcees visiting the president and lobbied for safety standards in federal workplaces. She opposed Prohibition and continued to serve visitors to the White House her famous champagne punch.



AS FIRST LADY, HELEN TAFT TURNED THE WHITE HOUSE INTO A SPEAKEASY



EDITH WILSON: FROM POCAHONTAS TO PRESIDENT'S WIFE

## The Secret President

1915-1921

**NAME:** Edith Wilson

**MARRIED TO:** Woodrow Wilson, Democrat

**AGE ON ENTERING WHITE HOUSE:** 43

Edith, who married Woodrow after they had both been widowed, was intelligent, charming, and a direct descendant of Pocahontas. She was the first to accompany a president on a trip to Europe (during the First World War in 1917). After her husband's debilitating stroke in 1919, she hid the severity of his condition from Congress and took over many of the details of government until the president was sufficiently recovered to run the country. When word got out, critics complained they were under a 'petticoat government' but today Edith is a hugely respected political figure.

## The Innovator

1921-1923

**NAME:** Florence Harding

**MARRIED TO:** Warren G Harding, Republican

**AGE ON ENTERING WHITE HOUSE:** 60

Since women were given the vote in 1920, Florence was the first president's wife to have voted for her husband. She was also the first to fly in an aeroplane, invite film stars to the White House and to regularly consult astrologers. A strong-willed woman, she penned many letters about how women could handle careers of their own (and be more successful than men – shocking!). When her husband died in August 1923 she refused an autopsy and destroyed his papers, fuelling rumours that she poisoned him, or he died in the arms of another.



FLORENCE HARDING WON CELEBRITY SUPPORT FOR HER HUSBAND

## The Integrator

1929-1933

**NAME:** Lou Hoover

**MARRIED TO:** Herbert Hoover, Republican

**AGE ON ENTERING WHITE HOUSE:** 54

Lou was one of the first American women to graduate with a geology degree – from Stanford University – and could speak Mandarin fluently having lived in China with her husband before he became president. Intelligent and forward-thinking, when she became First Lady she encouraged pregnant women to be seen in public (something that wasn't 'done' at the time) inviting them to visit the White House. She also invited Jessie DePriest – the wife of an African American congressman from Chicago – to a tea party for the spouses of members of Congress. The invitation made headline news, demonstrating the tempestuous nature of race relations in the US and making known the liberal beliefs of the Oval Office.



LOU HOOVER MADE IT OK FOR PREGNANT WOMEN TO LEAVE THE HOUSE

# THE FIRST LADIES' CLUB

As Michelle Obama settles into the White House for another four years, we take a look at the influence of the presidential wives...

## The Politician

1933-1945

**NAME:** Eleanor Roosevelt

**MARRIED TO:** Franklin Roosevelt, Democrat

**AGE ON ENTERING WHITE HOUSE:** 48

A civil rights advocate, women's rights campaigner, international speaker and politician, she hosted women-only press conferences and used mass media to publicise important issues. After her husband's death in 1945, she became delegate to the United Nations General Assembly and was involved in drafting and approving the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She was rumoured to have had a sexual relationship with journalist Lorena Hickok.



ONLY FEMALES WERE ALLOWED AT ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S PRESS CONFERENCES

## The Tastemaker

1961-1963

**NAME:** Jackie Kennedy

**MARRIED TO:** John F Kennedy, Democrat

**AGE ON ENTERING WHITE HOUSE:** 31

Jackie's stint as First Lady made her a fashion and cultural icon across the globe. She turned the White House into a museum of American history and decorative arts by hiring a curator, and recognised the importance of the media by employing a press secretary. She even won an honorary Emmy for her television tour of the White House. But it was her fashion choices that made her legendary. Tailored blazers and pillbox hats are still synonymous with Jackie. Her poise and courage when JFK was assassinated assured her place as America's sweetheart – a position she maintained until her death in 1994.



JACKIE KENNEDY: A VERY CHIC FIRST LADY

## The Feminist

1974-1977

**NAME:** Betty Ford

**MARRIED TO:** Gerald Ford, Republican

**AGE ON ENTERING WHITE HOUSE:** 56

Shortly after becoming First Lady, Betty was diagnosed with breast cancer and had a mastectomy. She talked openly about her illness, raising awareness and removing the stigma of breast cancer. The trained dancer and former model was also a passionate supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment and spoke candidly about her views on abortion (pro-choice) and her alcoholism. In 1982 she co-founded the Betty Ford Center for substance abuse.



BETTY FORD TURNED HER PERSONAL PROBLEMS INTO A LASTING LEGACY

## The Star

1981-1989

**NAME:** Nancy Reagan

**MARRIED TO:** Ronald Reagan, Republican

**AGE ON ENTERING WHITE HOUSE:** 59

As Nancy Davis, the future First Lady acted in 11 feature films, and met and fell for Ronald, then president of the Screen Actors Guild. While Ronald was Governor of California, Nancy started working with the Foster Grandparent Program, which inspired her 1982 book, *To Love A Child*. As First Lady she co-founded the 'Just Say No' drug campaign. She visited rehabilitation centres and even appeared in *Dynasty* as herself to promote the cause.



BEING FIRST LADY DIDN'T STOP NANCY REAGAN APPEARING IN DYNASTY

## The Game Changer

1993-2001

**NAME:** Hillary Clinton

**MARRIED TO:** Bill Clinton, Democrat

**AGE ON ENTERING WHITE HOUSE:** 45

Chairing the president's task force on National Health Care Reform, Hillary was a leading advocate of women's and children's rights during Bill's two terms. Her dignified response to her husband's infamous affair and resulting impeachment garnered her respect and admiration. Hillary is the only First Lady to be elected to the United States Senate and to seek presidency – she missed out on becoming the Democratic representative to Obama in 2008. She is currently the US Secretary of State.



HILLARY CLINTON IS THE ONLY FIRST LADY TO HAVE RUN FOR PRESIDENT

## The Power Player

2009-PRESENT

**NAME:** Michelle Obama

**MARRIED TO:** Barack Obama, Democrat

**AGE ON ENTERING WHITE HOUSE:** 45

A Harvard Law graduate, Michelle originally turned down her future husband's request for a date (he was an intern at her Chicago law firm). Her steely, no-nonsense approach to social issues, such as supporting military families, helping working women balance career and family, and tackling childhood obesity, have placed her on the world stage and acquired her many celebrity supporters, including Beyoncé – the face of her Let's Move! initiative.



EVER HER OWN WOMAN, MICHELLE OBAMA HAS BECOME A GLOBAL ICON