

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

A MODEL OF THE MODERN INDEPENDENT WORKING  
WOMAN



# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

EARLY LIFE



# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

EARLY LIFE



Future First Lady Edith Bolling was born on October 15, 1872, in Wytheville, Virginia. Edith, was the seventh child out of eleven, and was born to parents William Holcombe Bolling and Sally White Bolling.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

## EARLY LIFE



Edith's birth came at a tough time for her family. Edith's parents, William and Sally, were raised to be members of the slaveholding, southern elite. The Bollings's way of life significantly changed after their slaves were freed as a result of the Civil War. However, William Bolling was lucky enough to have received a law degree from the University of Virginia. His work as a lawyer provided some financial support for his family as they no longer made money from the deeply unethical free labor provided by their enslaved population. The Bollings also lost their stately plantation, and resorted to moving to a small town in western Virginia.



# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

EARLY LIFE



On Wytheville's Main Street stood the Bolling family home where Edith was born and raised. Edith described this home as “shabby and inadequate.” The house was given to the Bolling family by a man who used the property to pay off a debt he owed her grandfather. This forgotten house would prove to be essential when her family was reeling from the transition from plantation aristocracy to working class life.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

## EARLY LIFE

Edith first attended school at a boarding school in Abington, Virginia. She would struggle at Martha Washington College, as the man who ran the school was quite cruel. Although, she did not name the man, she recounts stories of being starved and getting half-frozen because he refused to turn on the heat. Edith did not attend Martha Washington College for very long, as she became very ill and lost a lot of weight. Her parents thought it was best to keep her home so that Edith could recover. Once she regained her health, Edith was sent to Powell School, an institution she remembers fondly. Mr. Powell, the man in charge, was touted by Edith as a father figure, and she made many of her longest lasting friendships at Powell. Edith's schooling would be cut short, however. Her younger brothers' education took precedence over her own, and it was too much of an expense to have Edith and her brother in school, and so the Bollings took her out of Powell.



# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

TAKING ON DC



# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

TAKING ON DC

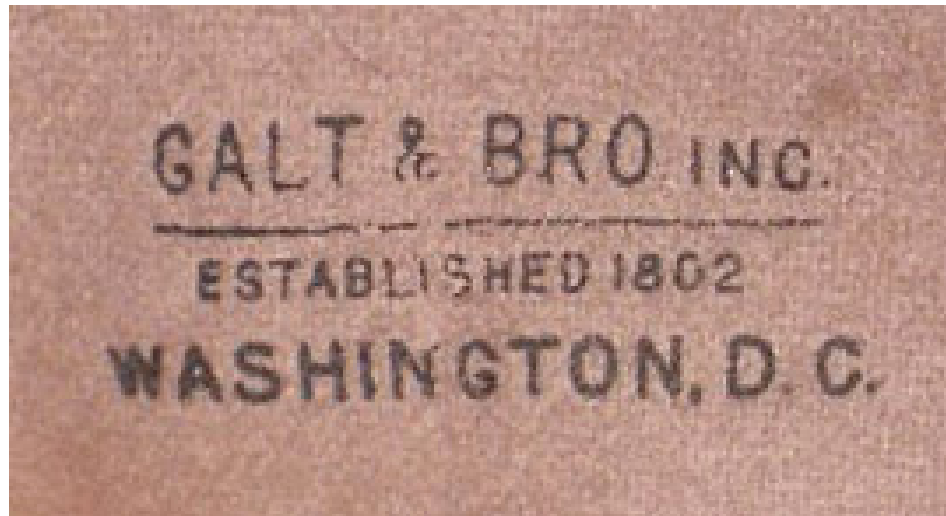


After her schooling, Edith Bolling began to enjoy her status as a well-to-do young woman. Her beauty and family background allowed her some freedom; however, it was expected that she would use this time to find a good husband. Edith found such a man in Norman Galt. She met Mr. Galt in Washington, DC through her older sister, who was married to his cousin. Norman Galt was nine years older than Edith, and took an immediate liking to the twenty year old Edith Bolling. She remembered how Norman sent her little gifts and candies, but she initially thought nothing of his affections. Edith was accustomed to this sort of flattery and attention as a Southerner, and the nearly ten year age gap between her and Norman led her to believe that the attention was nothing. Edith, finally becoming aware of his romantic intentions, agreed to marry him, writing “his patience and persistence overcame me.” Four years after they met, Edith Bolling and Norman Galt married on April 30, 1896.



# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

TAKING ON DC



Norman Galt came from a prosperous, successful background. He had inherited his family's business, Galt & Bro Jewelers. During his marriage with Edith, Galt & Bro was an established part of Washington, D.C. society with deep historical roots.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

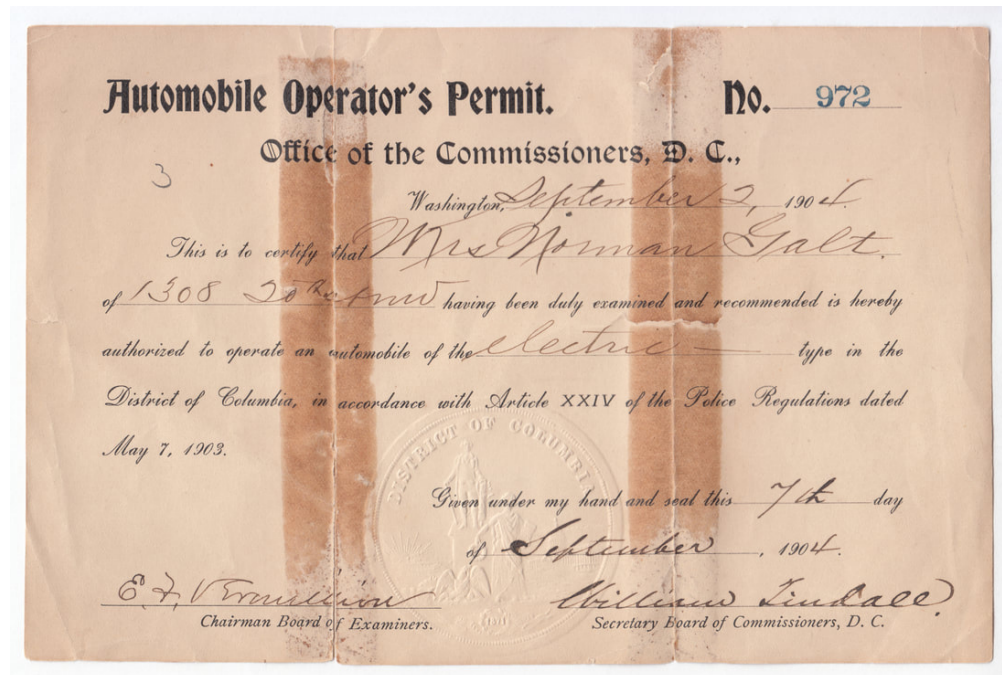
TAKING ON DC



Galt's jewelry shop had a long list of famous patrons. Notably, First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln, who can be seen on the left, wearing a necklace and bracelet set from the shop, was a frequent customer of Galt & Bro. The shop was close to the White House making it easy to transport Mrs. Lincoln's expensive purchases. When her husband, Abraham Lincoln, was assassinated in 1865, Mrs. Lincoln had amassed a staggering amount of debt, which was largely forgiven by the Galts.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

TAKING ON DC



The wealth of the Galt family allowed Edith to explore things that were not usually permitted for women without means. Edith became an avid motorist, becoming the first woman in Washington, D.C. to receive a driver's license.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

TAKING ON DC



Edith rode around Washington, D.C. in a Columbia Elberon Victoria Mark XXXI, an electric car that was marketed towards women. Her escapades made her well known among the residents of Washington as she zipped through the city streets in her fancy electric car.



# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

TAKING ON DC



Edith Bolling Galt was living a privileged life thanks to Norman Galt's wealth. Edith was brought up as a fallen aristocrat, and by her early twenties she was living a comfortable life with an electric car, elegant jewelry, and the security that her husband's success ensured. Edith's way of life would be threatened; however, in 1908, when Norman Galt died. The direction of Galt & Bro now fell to Edith. In the wake of her husband's death, Edith had to make a difficult decision. She had to decide whether to liquidate or take charge of the store herself. Both options posed a challenge to Edith. If she chose to liquidate Galt & Bro, she would lose her only income. Taking control of the shop would also be a tall order since Edith left school early. Edith even conceded that she was not educated enough to take on a business. Ultimately, Edith remained in control of Galt & Bro. She enlisted the help of Henry Christian Bergheimer, a long time employee of Galt's, and her lawyer, Nathaniel Wilson, to help her guide Galt & Bro through the storm. It was no easy task, as the shop had fallen into hard times, but Edith and her handpicked team were determined to turn her fortunes around. In the end, Edith, Bergheimer, and Wilson found a way to make Galt & Bro survive. Under Edith's watch, the shop recovered from its previous losses and its success returned. Although the main operations of Galt & Bro were carried out by Bergheimer and Wilson, Edith played an important role. Edith sat in on meetings where the future of the business was planned out; she made sure that every debt was paid in full and only took a small paycheck to ensure Galt & Bro's solvency. Eventually, the recovery efforts allowed Edith to embark on a European tour. Edith Bolling Galt, in the face of so many obstacles, was not only able to rebound after her husband's death, but also to exceed expectations by becoming a successful business woman.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

MEETING WOODROW WILSON



# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

MEETING WOODROW WILSON



Entering the world with a new sense of urgency, Edith Bolling Galt looked towards the future with hope. She defied the odds by taking up the helm of her late husband's, Norman Galt, family business and bringing it back to financial stability. Edith had full control over the path ahead. By 1915, the beautiful, vivacious, and young Edith still had so much life ahead of her.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

MEETING WOODROW WILSON

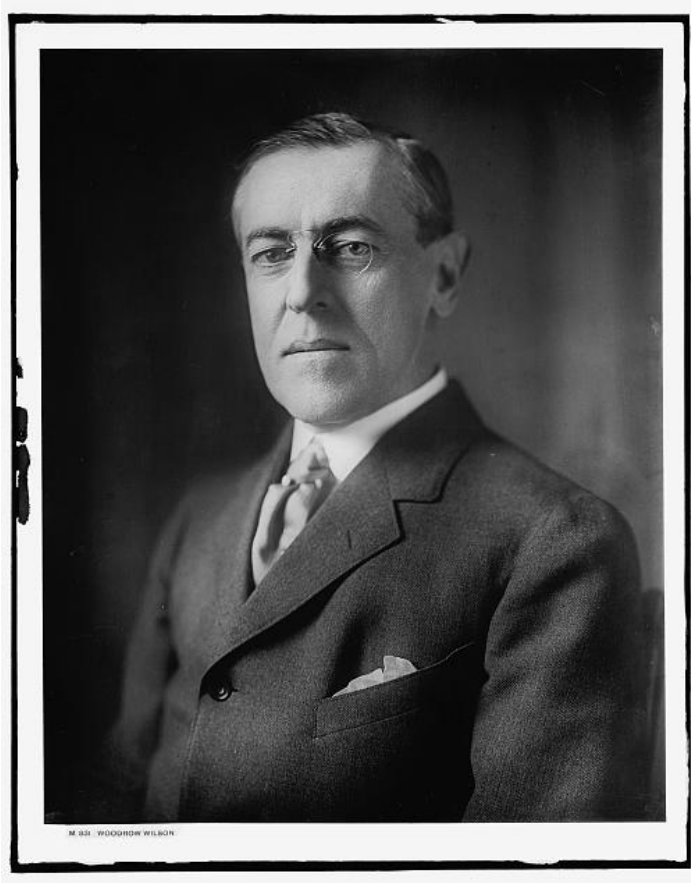


In 1914, another D.C. resident was faced with the death of a spouse. President Woodrow Wilson, elected in 1912, lost his wife, Ellen Wilson. President Wilson, now a widower, was left without a partner in the leadership of the nation.



# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

MEETING WOODROW WILSON



Edith was not keen on the politics of her day. Edith wrote about how her sister expressed great excitement about Wilson's presidential victory, as he was a Democrat who was born and raised in the South. Edith did not particularly care about any of those facts. She was busy with the operations of Galt & Bro and focusing on herself.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

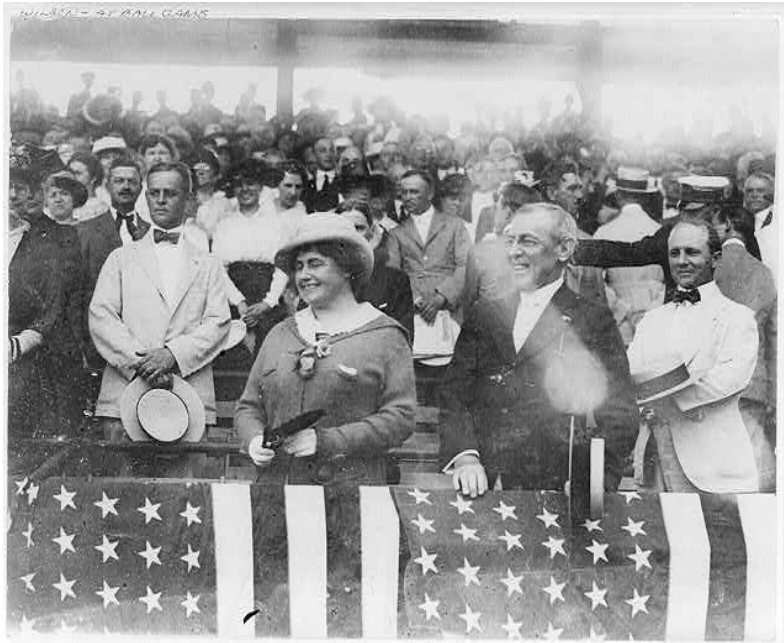
## MEETING WOODROW WILSON



This would change however, when Edith befriended Helen Wilson Bones in 1915. Helen Wilson Bones was President Wilson's cousin and worked as First Lady Ellen Wilson's private secretary before she died. Edith and Helen would go on walks through Rock Creek Park together, talking while walking through the trails. One day, Edith was dropping off Helen at her home, and she was invited inside. Edith was hesitant to enter Helen's home, as she lived with her cousin at the White House. Edith had mud on her boots and did not feel like she was presentable, believing that she would be "taken for a tramp." Much to Edith's horror, her fears came true when she entered the White House and was immediately confronted with the president himself, Woodrow Wilson. In an ironic fashion, Edith and Helen bumped into Wilson and his friend and physician, Dr. Grayson, when the elevator opened up and they were instantly face-to-face with the president. Edith's worries of looking like a "muddy tramp" vanished when she saw the equally-as muddy Wilson. The president had just gotten back from a golf excursion. The President and his friend were sporting a poorly tailored suit and were quite disheveled themselves. The two parties laughed at their plight, and Edith was invited to sit down and drink tea with Helen, Dr. Grayson, and most importantly, President Wilson.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

## MEETING WOODROW WILSON



Little did Edith or the president know that this encounter would lead to a loving marriage. Edith continued to visit her friend Helen at the White House, where her relationship with President Wilson grew. Edith went on vacations with Wilson and their group of mutual friends, and they always found time alone together. Their friendship quickly became something more, and it was well known amongst their friends and family that a courtship was occurring. Wilson was facing many challenges in 1915; the Great War across the Atlantic loomed heavily in his mind, as America's entrance into the war seemed to become inevitable. Wilson was also dealing with infighting in his own cabinet, particularly with William Jennings Bryan. Despite the weight of running the country, Wilson always found time for Edith. They would go on long car rides together, where Wilson talked about his apprehensions about the war and his growing frustration with his cabinet. Edith became more than a romantic partner, she was also a political confidante.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

## MEETING WOODROW WILSON



One person Edith immediately distrusted was William Jennings Bryan. Bryan served as Wilson's Secretary of State, a role whose importance was particularly strong as war was brewing. Bryan had taken a more pacifist view towards the growing international crisis, which went against Wilson's thinking. Edith perceived this disagreement as a slight against Wilson, and privately campaigned for Bryan to be removed. Ultimately, Bryan would resign in May, and Edith was happy that Wilson could act and think as he pleased without the pressure of Bryan's pacifism.



# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

## MEETING WOODROW WILSON



In only a few months, President Wilson proposed to Edith. She was initially unsure about marriage and turned his offer down. Wilson, by being president, was under constant public scrutiny. Wilson's wife had passed away just over a year prior to his proposal to Edith, and there were fears that his public image would be damaged with accusations that he was moving on too quickly. There was also anxiety over Wilson's image if the public were to believe that he was preoccupied with his courtship to Edith and not paying sufficient attention to the affairs of state and the growing threat of international war. Eventually, these fears subsided, and Edith finally agreed to marry him. Their ceremony was a private affair, far from the stage of the White House. On December 18th, 1915, with only a handful of friends and family in attendance, Edith Bolling Galt became First Lady Edith Wilson and exchanged vows with President Woodrow Wilson.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

WHITE HOUSE YEARS



# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

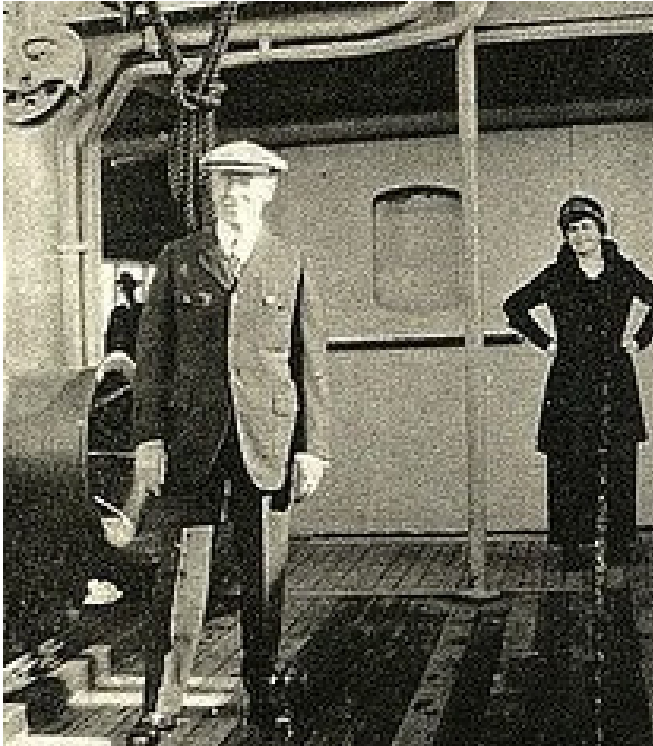
WHITE HOUSE YEARS



Newlyweds, President Woodrow Wilson and First Lady Edith Bolling Wilson were enjoying their honeymoon when they heard the news of the sinking of the SS Persia having been struck by a German torpedo. This escalation of the international conflict that is now known as World War I was one of many reasons that Wilson and the nation would be drawn into an international conflict that would define his presidency.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

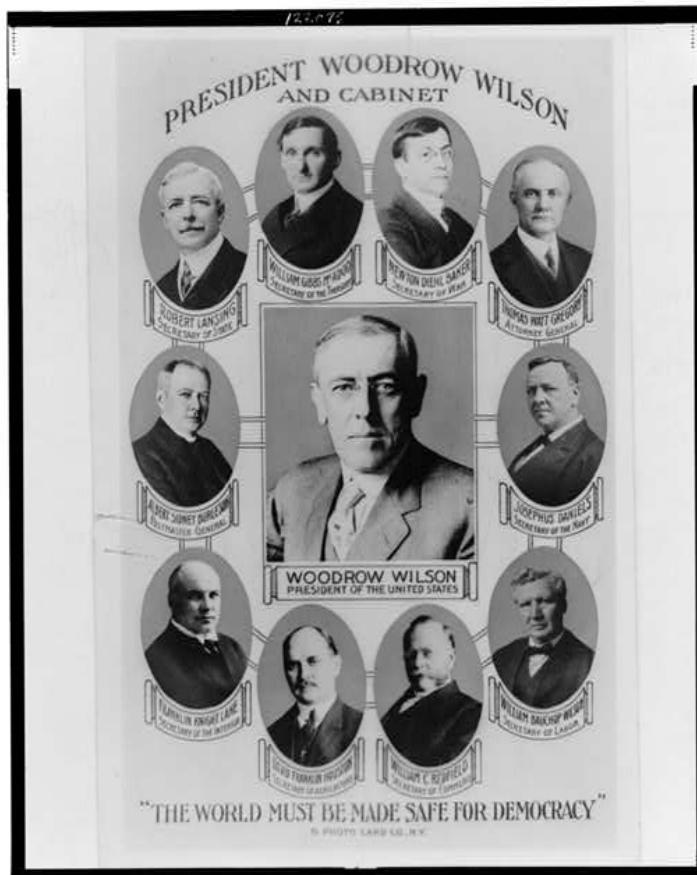
WHITE HOUSE YEARS



Now at her new home on 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Edith began to carve out a role for herself in the hustle and bustle of the executive branch. As First Lady, Edith transitioned from a private life to extremely public life very quickly. She was highly regarded by the American people, as her beauty and outgoing personality proved to be attractive by the people. Edith received letters from women across America with personal requests that she would bring up political causes, ranging from the war to suffrage, to her husband. Edith was thrust into the spotlight through official appearances at balls, banquets, and theatre events where crowds would marvel at the beautiful new bride of President Wilson.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

WHITE HOUSE YEARS

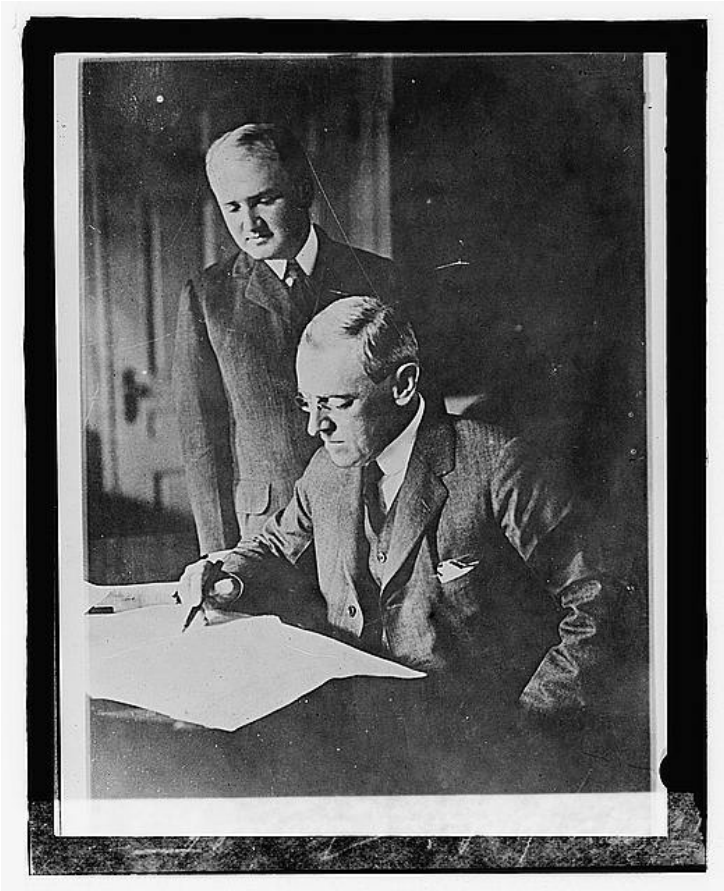


Edith became known for what people called her “omnipotent” presence in the White House. Edith did her best to be around Wilson as much as possible, going so far as to coordinate their daily schedules. Her constant companionship meant that she was often privy to high level and confidential information that passed through the hands of the president. This access to the president was unprecedented. Edith was able to use this access to be an influential force in Wilson’s political decisions. From the earliest days of their romance, Wilson had relied on Edith as a confidante. Her role as one of Wilson’s most trusted advisors only grew when she moved to the White House. Edith sat in on meetings between President Wilson and his cabinet, congress members, and diplomats.



# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

WHITE HOUSE YEARS



Edith wielded her influence with great power. Just as she had advocated against William Jennings Bryan before their marriage, Edith was very involved in controlling the people who had access to Wilson. Joseph P. Tumulty, Wilson's private secretary and long time political aide, felt the brunt of Edith's influence. Since she took over the role of scheduling for President Wilson, Tumulty's own power in the White House waned. Tumulty had enjoyed both a close working relationship with Wilson, but also a personal friendship. When Edith arrived in 1915, she, alongside another of Wilson's advisors, Colonel Edward House, actively worked to diminish Tumulty's prominence and eventually to remove him from the White House entirely. These actions were taken in large part because of Edith and House's anti-Catholic beliefs, and they proved to be an effective team. Tumulty would ultimately give in, handing his letter of resignation to Wilson not long after his marriage to Edith, but Wilson rejected it. Tumulty would serve Wilson for the rest of his presidency, but their relationship was forever tarnished.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

WHITE HOUSE YEARS



On April 6th, 1917, the United States officially declared war on Germany and took up arms in the war that had been festering since 1914. The United States has been helping French and British powers throughout the war, but never in combat. President Woodrow Wilson's request for Congress to declare war now meant that the nation had to join the front.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

WHITE HOUSE YEARS



Edith dutifully took up the cause of the war. As First Lady, she was a model for how to contribute to war efforts for women all across the United States. She embraced the cause by planting her own victory garden at the White House and by bringing a herd of sheep to keep the lawn in check to cut down on fuel use.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

WHITE HOUSE YEARS



While the war was raging abroad, a different sort of war was brewing on domestic turf. The women's suffrage movement reached its climax during the Wilson Administration. The effort to give women the right to vote started in the mid-1800s, but with the onset of World War I, the fact that women could not vote seemed even more alarming as they were a driving force in the war effort. President Wilson supported suffrage for women, as long it was implemented on a state level. This sentiment was only made public reluctantly, as Wilson was facing growing public pressure to give women the right to vote. Edith, although politically active in her own right, also believed that the question should be left for the states to decide.



# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

WHITE HOUSE YEARS



Edith saw the suffragist protestors outside of the White House as an affront to her husband and the war effort. She believed that the women who were routinely arrested were improper and unladylike. Those who chained themselves to the White House gates made the Wilsons even more disinclined to support a nationwide implementation of women's suffrage.



# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

WHITE HOUSE YEARS



The Wilsons' opinions about suffrage and suffragettes would change; however, once they met Helen Hamilton Gardener. Gardener, a woman hailing from an upper-class background. She met Edith and Wilson and assuaged some of their fears about the radical nature of the women's rights movement. By the end of Wilson's term in office, he was in full support of women's suffrage at the federal level, leading to the Nineteenth Amendment's passage in 1920. This amendment allowed for Edith to have the honor of being the first First Lady to cast a vote in a federal election.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

WHITE HOUSE YEARS



As the fight for women's suffrage was winding down on the home front, the war across the ocean in Europe was similarly fizzling out. November 11th, 1918, just over a year after the United States entered the war, an armistice was signed. Edith and President Wilson would soon be making their way overseas to Europe for the Paris Peace Treaty. Wilson was gearing up for the fight of his life, and he hoped that he would be able to win over other world leaders with his novel League of Nations plans.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

WHITE HOUSE YEARS



Edith would accompany President Wilson, and together they would embark on a monumental tour. The Wilsons were met by excited European crowds who were eager to welcome President Wilson's ambitious plans for a new world order. Edith, as she was when she entered the domestic scene through her marriage to Wilson, was admired in Europe. Edith, with her good looks and lively attitude, was a sensation wherever she was received.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

WHITE HOUSE YEARS



The Wilsons not only were invited to be guests of the most prestigious members of European society, like the British royal family, but also took the time to visit the front, where immense battles were waged and where American lives were lost.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

WHITE HOUSE YEARS



However, the Wilsons were not just in Europe to dazzle Londoners and Parisians; they were also on an important mission. As a part of his Fourteen Points, one of Wilson's main goals was to set up the League of Nations. He sought a global power structure that would serve as a preventative measure against future international wars. Wilson wielded an impressive amount of power at the Paris Peace Conference as a member of the Big Four, joining the ranks with Britain's Lloyd George, France's Georges Clemenceau, and Italy's Vittorio Emanuele Orlando.



# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

WHITE HOUSE YEARS



The Treaty of Versailles was signed in 1919, and the Wilsons departed Paris for Washington, DC soon after. Now Wilson had to sell his peace treaty and, most importantly, his League of Nations, to an American public resistant to the country joining the increasingly global world. The journey towards ratification would be an uphill battle. Isolationist sentiments ran rampant, and much of this effort was spearheaded by Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge. President Wilson, along with Edith, set off for a campaign across the nation to bolster support for the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

WHITE HOUSE YEARS

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## DOCTORS IN CONSULTATION CALL WILSON "A VERY SICK MAN"; SENATE KILLS 35 FALL AMENDMENTS; TEST VOTE, 30 TO 58; BELGIAN RULERS WELCOMED HERE IN NAME OF THE NATION

### VICE PRESIDENT AND CABINET MEMBERS MEET ROYAL PARTY

King Issues Declaration of His  
Own and Country's Grati-  
tude to America.

### CITY'S GREETINGS TODAY

Albert and Prince Resume In-  
cognito and Go for a Sight-  
seeing Tour of New York.

### QUEEN CARBED ALL IN WHITE

King Appears in General's Uniform

### Five on Berlin Labor Crowd; Troops Kill One, Wound Ten

BERLIN, Oct. 2. (Associated  
Press.)—Soldiers, in the course of  
a labor demonstration by 15,000  
persons in the Millerstrasse today,  
fired into the crowd, killing one  
civilian and wounding ten others.

### WHITE SOX AGAIN DEFEATED BY REDS

National Leaguers Take Sec-  
ond Game of World's Series  
by Score of 4 to 2.

### LOSERS OUTHIT WINNERS

Williams's Wildness Is Costly,  
All National League Players

### GARY WOULD HAVE NATION CONTROL CAPITAL AND LABOR

Steel Corporation Chairman  
Won't Consider Arbi-  
tration of Strike.

### WILL NOT MEET STRIKERS

Tells Senate Committee That He  
Believes Government Should  
License Corporations.

### PROBLEM UP TO COURTS

Says They Must Determine Right  
and Wrong of Controversy

### New Appeal for Recognition Made by the "Irish Republic"

Copyright, 1919, by The New York Times Company  
Special Cable to THE NEW YORK TIMES.  
PARIS, Oct. 2.—Flora's of the  
"Irish Republic" sent today to the  
Ministers of the nations represented  
in Paris a memorandum, asking re-  
cognition of the republic.

Accompanying the document was a  
letter saying that they had advance  
information that Great Britain was  
planning to force upon Ireland a  
finney, weak, and unsatisfactory  
form of home rule.

The letter concludes:  
"The reported British home rule  
scheme will keep Ireland under the  
iron heel of this foreign military  
autocracy. It will pour salt on an  
open wound. It will plunge the island  
into increased chaos and open revolt.  
It will please no one in the island,  
north or south.

"It is purely a tentative British  
scheme to arrest the rapidly growing  
trend of a world public opinion,  
sympathetic to Ireland, in her fight  
for independence along lines laid  
down by President Wilson."  
Neither the letter nor memorandum  
gives any details of the reported plan.

### DOANS TO TOWN BY

### AMENDMENTS FAIL IN ALL 8 VOTES TAKEN BY SENATE

17 Republicans and 41 Demo-  
crats Form Majority in  
Chief Roll Call.

### ONE DEMOCRAT IN MINORITY

Shantung Amendment Seems  
Likely to be Beaten by  
Majority of 26.

### NEW RESERVATIONS OFFERED

Senator Smith Introduces Seven  
More in the Course of a

### Text of Bulletins on the President's Condition as Issued by Dr. Grayson From White House

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.  
WASHINGTON, Oct. 2.—The following bulletin  
on the President's condition was issued at 10  
o'clock tonight by Rear Admiral Cary T. Grayson,  
the President's physician:

THE WHITE HOUSE, Oct. 2, 1919, 10 P. M.  
The President is a very sick man.  
His condition is less favorable today, and he  
has remained in bed throughout the day.

After a consultation with Dr. F. X. Darcum of  
Philadelphia, Drs. Sterling Ruffin, and E. R.  
Stitt of Washington, in which all agreed as to his  
condition, it was determined that absolute rest is  
essential for some time. GRAYSON.

Admiral Grayson issued this bulletin at 11  
A. M.:

The President had a fairly good night, but  
his condition is not at all good this morning.

Says President Passed "Very Unsatisfactory Day."  
PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 2.—Upon his return

### FIVE DOCTORS SEE PRESIDENT

Nerve Specialist From  
Philadelphia Among  
Those Grayson Called.

### FINDS HE NEEDS MIND REST

But Collapse Is Denied—Presi-  
dent Not Easily Diverted  
from His Big Problems.

### PATIENT IS KEPT IN BED

Will Not Leave Washington, but  
Can See No One Outside  
of His Family.

Wilson was on a train touring the western United States when he was suddenly struck by a debilitating stroke which left his entire left side of his body paralyzed, and he was forced to abandon his speaking tour and return to the White House. Edith was the one who found Wilson on the floor in the immediate aftermath, retrieved Dr. Grayson, who was also on board. With President Wilson largely incapacitated, Edith Wilson would find herself in an unprecedented new role.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

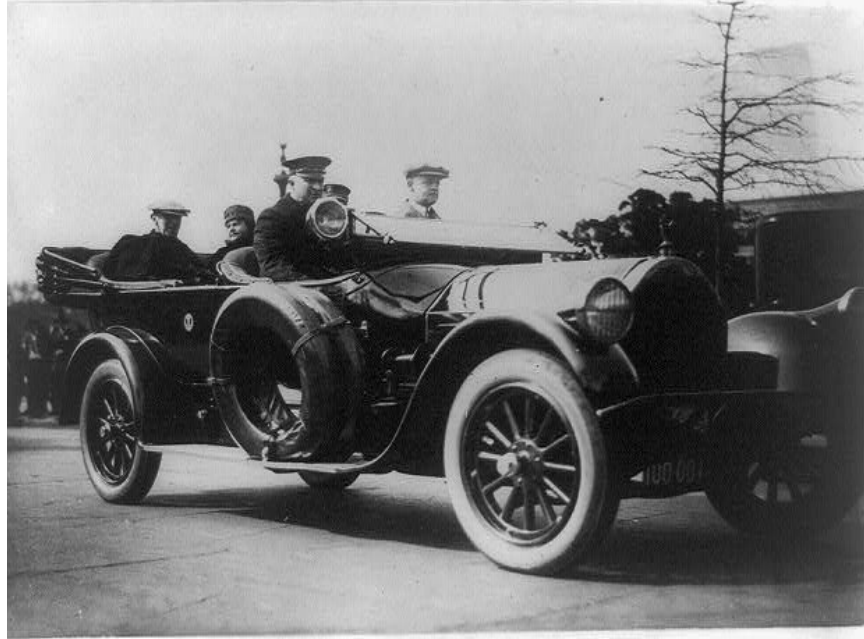
WHITE HOUSE YEARS



Perhaps what First Lady Edith Wilson is most known for is her “stewardship” of the closing years of President Woodrow Wilson’s presidency. Many have credited Edith as the first female president, a fact, although not entirely accurate, does carry some truth. Once the Wilsons and their entourage were back at the White House, Edith never left her husband’s side. Wilson was confined to his bed, unable to sit up straight, and was forced to relearn simple tasks. Edith’s control would ultimately lead to a cover-up. She wrote in her memoir that keeping Wilson’s incapacitation a secret was a “necessity.” Edith thought steps such as presenting guests to Wilson in dimly lit rooms to conceal his lame arm, were necessary to keep up his image as a major political power player. The Treaty of Versailles was still languishing in the ratification process in Congress, where Senator Lodge was leading the fight to strike down America’s role in the League of Nations, and if the public knew that the force behind the League was bedridden, it would be sure to fail.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

## WHITE HOUSE YEARS



Edith Wilson's influence over her husband had always been very strong. President Wilson relied on Edith as a political confidante since the earliest days of their relationship. Her role was greatly expanded after Wilson's stroke in 1919. Wilson would serve out the rest of his term with Edith guiding the way. Edith made herself the sole access point to Wilson. If anyone, congressmen, diplomats, cabinet members, and even his own vice president, wanted to speak with Wilson, they had to obtain permission through Edith. She was also in charge of facilitating information to Wilson. She controlled what he read, ranging from newspapers to confidential memos, again, exerting strong influence over her husband. Whoever controls the president's access to information, controls the president. The fact that Edith was involved in almost every part of the informational chain to her husband, with less than a handful of other advisors providing input, meant that she held the reins of the presidency.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

S STREET AND BEYOND





# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

S STREET AND BEYOND



First Lady Edith Wilson's stewardship was not enough, however. The League of Nations failed in congress, and Republicans ascended to the White House in 1920 after Wilson's presidency finished. The new president would be Warren G. Harding, a man who did not support the League of Nations. Edith and her husband would soon leave the White House and into private life, and found a grand home in the quiet Kalorama neighborhood in Washington, DC.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

S STREET AND BEYOND



The house on 2340 S Street would be the forever home for both Edith and Wilson. They moved into the house on the day of Harding's inauguration. The handsome Georgian Revival home became a refuge for the Wilsons. They filled their home with relics from their White House past. Gifts from foreign dignitaries and furniture from the Executive Mansion found a new home on S Street.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

S STREET AND BEYOND



Just under three years after leaving the White House, President Woodrow Wilson died on February 3rd, 1924 in his S Street home. He was laid to rest at the Washington National Cathedral, just a short drive from S Street.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

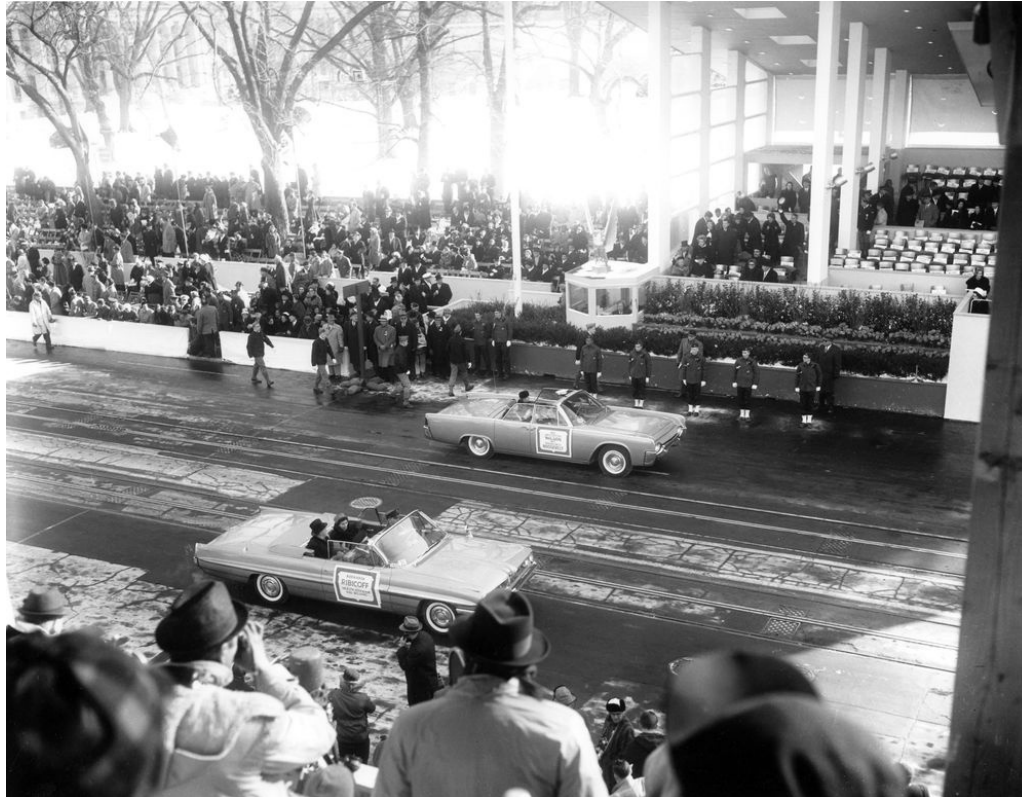
S STREET AND BEYOND



Edith Wilson would dedicate the rest of her life to preserving Woodrow Wilson's legacy. This preservation called for her to play an active role in politics. In 1924, the same year as her husband's death, she became the leader of the Women's National Democratic Club. Edith also became a mentor for First Ladies who came after her. She took on the role of an eternal First Lady advising Eleanor Roosevelt, Bess Truman, and Jacqueline Kennedy on how to support their president husbands' policies through independent action. In particular, Edith spent much of her time as an advisor with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Edith accompanied Eleanor to the Capitol Building in December of 1941, to serve as a portal to the past when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt asked Congress to declare war after the Pearl Harbor attacks. Edith's presence in the audience alongside the Roosevelts conjured up a sense of solidarity with Wilson's World War I legacy.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

S STREET AND BEYOND



Edith continued to fight for Wilson's legacy through the Great Depression, World War II, and into the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1930s and 1940s, she donated Wilson's personal papers as well as his library to the National Archives, entrusting them in their care. The last inauguration she attended was that of President John F. Kennedy, a man born just over a month after Wilson brought the country into World War I.



# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

S STREET AND BEYOND



In October, 1961, President Kennedy signed into law a bill that established the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Commission. In his statement to the press, President Kennedy said, “We have a continuing commitment, in the words of President Wilson, to the service of humanity. His life, his actions, and his ideals serve as an inspiration today to the achievement of the goals that he articulated so well more than 40 years ago. I hope the Commission will plan a memorial that expresses the faith in democracy and President Wilson's vision of peace and a dedication to international understanding that President Wilson himself did so much to advance.” At his side sat the 89 year-old former-First Lady Edith Wilson. She fought for over thirty five years to preserve Wilson’s legacy and ensure its longevity.

# EDITH BOLLING WILSON

S STREET AND BEYOND



In October, 1961, President Kennedy signed into law a bill that established the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Commission. In his statement to the press, President Kennedy said “We have a continuing commitment, in the words of President Wilson, to the service of humanity. His life, his actions, and his ideals serve as an inspiration today to the achievement of the goals that he articulated so well more than 40 years ago. I hope the Commission will plan a memorial that expresses the faith in democracy and President Wilson's vision of peace and a dedication to international understanding that President Wilson himself did so much to advance.” At his side sat the 89 year-old former-First Lady Edith Wilson. She fought for over thirty five years to preserve Wilson’s legacy and ensure its longevity.

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Edith Bolling Wilson passed away at her S Street home that she had shared with her husband. She too would be buried in the Washington National Cathedral, close to President Wilson. Throughout her life, Edith persevered through incredible hardship with her own ingenuity and determination. Edith defied all expectations after the death of her first husband, Norman Galt, by continuing his family's business and making it a financial success. As a disciplined businesswoman, she knew how to navigate the world independently. In 1915, her meteoric rise to prominence through her marriage to President Woodrow Wilson placed her in an unprecedented position of power. Edith's omnipotent presence in the White House secretly made her one of the most influential politicians of her era. For nearly forty years after the death of Woodrow Wilson, she maintained and boosted his reputation as a strong and imaginative leader. One of the last acts of her long life was gifting her cherished S Street home to the National Trust. In 1964, three years after her death, the President Woodrow Wilson House opened as a time capsule of a museum, providing a unique and intimate portrait of the life of Woodrow Wilson, and most importantly, a life of a powerful and influential First Lady, Edith Bolling Wilson.

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A MODEL OF THE MODERN INDEPENDENT WORKING  
WOMAN

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