



First Wife: Ellen Axson Wilson



Ellen's ViewPoints

As a loyal Southerner, Ellen made a point of traveling back to her home in Georgia to make sure two of her three daughters were not born Yankees. While she never made a concrete statement of her view on women's suffrage, she did however state her belief that women should be involved and up to date on politics.

Get in touch

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An introduction to her work and views

Madeline Diechman

Background Knowledge

Ellen was born May 15, 1860, in Georgia. Her father was a Presbyterian minister who fought for the Confederacy.

She received an education alongside her brothers until they went off to college. But her education didn't stop there.

Before her marriage to Woodrow Wilson in 1885, she insisted that they finish their studies and then attended the Art Students League of New York, a rather radical school for the time with a mixed-gender student body.



Before the White House

Through Woodrow Wilson's Princeton University presidency and his New Jersey governorship, Ellen was prepared early on to be a First Lady. Besides entertaining she:

- Assisted with the creation of Princeton's Honor System
- Was the first leader of the Princeton's Ladies Auxiliary
- Took up the position of chairman of New Jersey's Charities Aid Society where she visited patients at state institutions
- Helped Woodrow write some of his best speeches

First Lady Ellen

Despite her short time as First Lady, Ellen was influential in the role. She even made the decision to not hold an inaugural ball. She accomplished a great deal in her position:

- Helped Woodrow strengthen political alliances through holding private dinners
- Worked with the National Civic Federation to improve the slums and alleyways of DC
- Promoted the passage of the Alley Bill right before her death

