

MARJORIE MERRIWEATHER POST: A TIMELINE, 1887-1973

1887

MARCH 15 Marjorie Merriweather Post is born in Springfield, Illinois, to Ella Merriweather and Charles William Post. She lives with her parents and grandparents in the midst of a large extended family.

DECEMBER The Post family – C.W., Ella, Marjorie, grandparents, and uncles – moves to Fort Worth, Texas, following business setbacks in Springfield.

1891

FEBRUARY C.W. Post travels to the Kellogg brothers' sanitarium in Battle Creek, Michigan, following a physical and emotional breakdown. Ella and Marjorie travel with him. After the Kellogg cure fails him, C.W. Post goes to a Christian Science healer whose cure succeeds. The family settles in Battle Creek and C.W. begins experimenting with coffee replacements.

1895

JANUARY 1 C.W. Post incorporates the Postum Cereal Company and begins mass production of Postum Cereal Coffee.

1898

JANUARY 1 C.W. Post begins mass production of Grape Nuts.

1902

SEPTEMBER Marjorie Merriweather Post enrolls in Mount Vernon Seminary, a college preparatory school for young women, in Washington, D.C. Founded in 1875 by Elizabeth Jane Eddy Somers, Mount Vernon Seminary was designed to accommodate, in Mrs. Somers' words, "those young ladies who wish to avoid the stress and strain of the four year college and yet feel the inadequacies of the high school curriculum to prepare them for life."

1904

MAY Marjorie Merriweather Post graduates from Mount Vernon Seminary.

OCTOBER 28 C.W. Post and Ella Merriweather Post divorce.

NOVEMBER 16 C.W. Post marries Leila Young.

1905

DECEMBER 5 Marjorie Merriweather Post marries Edward Bennett Close of Greenwich, Connecticut, at Street Thomas' Church, New York City. Close is five years older than she, a graduate of Columbia Law School. The couple live in Greenwich at The Boulders, a country house that C.W. Post builds and gives them as a wedding present.

Close opens a law practice in Manhattan; Marjorie Post Close takes art and architecture courses at a local private school, Rosemary Hall. Marjorie Post Close also begins volunteering for the local chapter of the Red Cross, as well as doing other charitable work in Greenwich.

1908

JULY 28 Adelaide Brevoort Close, Marjorie Merriweather Post's first daughter, is born at The Boulders.

1909

DECEMBER 3 Eleanor Post Close, Marjorie Merriweather Post's second daughter, is born at The Boulders.

Marjorie Post Close purchases Sir Thomas Lawrence's *Portrait of Mrs. Michel, nee Anne Fane* (acc. no. 51.14) from Edward R. Bacon, New York.

1912

OCTOBER 22 Ella Merriweather Post, Marjorie Merriweather Post's mother, dies in her sleep in Washington, D. C.

1914

MAY 9 C.W. Post, Marjorie Merriweather Post's father, commits suicide in Santa Barbara, California. He is buried, after a large public funeral, in Battle Creek. In his will, he divides the Postum Cereal Company between his daughter and his wife. Marjorie Post Close disputes the will, and in 1915 the two settle out of court. Leila Post surrenders her shares in the company in exchange for six million dollars. Marjorie Post Close thus inherits the entire company. Ed Close sits on the Board of Directors.

1916

Marjorie and Ed Close purchase a house at 2 East 92nd Street in New York City from the Burden family. They continue to spend time at The Boulders. Marjorie Post Close begins taking art classes at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She hires Mitchell Samuels of French and Company to help her decorate the Burden House, and begins to work with Sir Joseph Duveen, from whom she purchases two Beauvais tapestries.

1917

APRIL 6 The United States enters World War I.

MAY 29 The Boulders burns. Subsequently the Close family moves entirely to New York.

JULY 30 Marjorie Post Close equips a Red Cross Hospital in Savenay, France; materials sail on the SS Saratoga. The Saratoga is accidentally sunk in New York Harbor and all supplies are lost. Mrs. Close sends another ship of supplies, the SS Finland, the following week. Ed Close, who is an army officer, accompanies the supplies to France, where he remains until the end of the war. Meanwhile, in New York, Marjorie Post Close volunteers with the Red Cross, rolling bandages and raising money through teas and other events.

OCTOBER 25 Marjorie Post Close is part of a delegation of suffragists from New York state who meet with President Woodrow Wilson at the White House to lobby for a constitutional

amendment granting women the right to vote. Her work with the suffrage movement in New York is part of her interest in civic affairs.

1919

Marjorie Post Close and Ed Close divorce. Close resigns his seat on the Postum Company Board of Directors. Marjorie Post Close asks her friend Colby Chester to join Postum Company as assistant treasurer, in order to represent her interests.

1920

DECEMBER 5 Marjorie Post Close marries Edward Francis Hutton, a stockbroker, in New York City. He is twelve years her senior. He immediately joins the Postum board. The Huttons purchase an estate in Roslyn, on Long Island, called “Hillwood.” In Palm Beach, they purchase “Hogarcito” as a winter retreat. In Palm Beach, the Huttons and their friends hold a benefit to raise money to build a hospital in West Palm Beach. Marjorie Post Hutton will continue to raise money for the Good Samaritan Hospital for the next 50 years.

1921

The Huttons purchase Camp Hutridge, in Saranac, New York, in the Adirondacks, as a summer retreat.

1922

Postum Cereal Company becomes a publicly held company, with Marjorie Post Hutton retaining a majority of the shares.

Marjorie Post Hutton purchases Nattier’s painting *The Duchess of Parma and Her Daughter Isabelle* (acc. no. 51.4) from Wildenstein and Company, New York.

1923

DECEMBER 29 Nedenia Marjorie Hutton, Marjorie Merriweather Post’s third daughter, is born, New York City.

E. F. Hutton becomes Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Postum Cereal Company.

1924

The Huttons sell their home at 2 East 92nd Street to the George A. Fuller Construction Company, which tears it down, builds an apartment building, and recreates the Huttons’ home on the top three stories. There is a private entrance for the Huttons’ triplex at 2 East 92nd Street; the address of the apartment building is 1107 5th Avenue.

Marjorie Post Hutton commissions the first catalogue—never completed—of her collection of paintings, tapestries, and furniture.

1925

JANUARY Postum Cereal Company moves its headquarters to the Postum Building on East 47th Street in New York City.

Postum acquires Jell-O. In the remaining years of the 1920s, Postum will continue to expand its holdings, acquiring Swan's Down Cake Flour and Minute Tapioca in 1926, Baker's Chocolate, Baker & Co. Coconut Products, and Log Cabin Syrup in 1927, La France laundry products, Maxwell House Coffee, Sanka, and Calumet Baking Powder in 1928, and Certo Pectin, Hellman's Mayonnaise, and BirdsEye Frozen Foods in 1929.

1926

Marjorie Post Hutton purchases a commode with floral marquetry attributed to Jean-Henri Riesener (acc. no. 31.10) from Duveen Brothers in New York.

1927

JANUARY 19 Adelaide Brevoort Close marries Thomas Welles Durant in New York City.

MARCH The Huttons' new winter home in Palm Beach, Mar-a-Lago, is completed. Joseph Urban, a Viennese architect and Florenz Ziegfeld's set designer, is the designer and architect.

Marjorie Post Hutton acquires a roll-top desk (acc. no. 33.222) made by Abraham and David Roentgen from Symons Inc. in New York.

1928

APRIL 20 Marjorie Merriweather Durant, Marjorie Merriweather Post's first grandchild, is born to Adelaide and Tim Durant in Roslyn, New York.

JUNE 12 Eleanor Post Close is presented to King George V and Queen Mary at the Court of Street James's in London.

1929

JUNE 26 Marjorie Post Hutton is presented to King George V and Queen Mary at the Court of Street James's in London.

OCTOBER 30 The stock market crashes, precipitating a massive economic depression.

The Postum Cereal Company changes its name to General Foods.

1930

APRIL 12 Eleanor Post Close elopes with playwright Preston Sturges. The marriage is annulled in 1932. Eleanor Close marries and divorces twice more in the 1930s.

1931

NOVEMBER 19 The Marjorie Post Hutton Canteen opens at 455 10th Avenue, New York City. It will remain open, funded by Marjorie Hutton and operated by the Salvation Army, until at least 1936. The canteen provides breakfast, lunch, and dinner for destitute women and children; instead of waiting on the street and being served in a line, the women and children wait for their meals in a heated waiting room, and are served their meals in a dining room.

Marjorie Post Hutton is active in numerous charitable, philanthropic, fundraising activities during the early years of the Depression.

The Huttons' yacht, the *Hussar IV*, is finished at Kiel, Germany. It has four masts and measures 316 feet.

Marjorie Post Hutton acquires a pink Fabergé Easter egg (acc. no. 11.81.1-.2) as a gift from her daughter Eleanor.

1933

DECEMBER 12 Marjorie Post Hutton receives the Cross of Honor of the United States Flag Association in recognition of her work organizing the Women's National Council of the Flag Association in an anti-crime crusade. Eleanor Roosevelt bestows the award in a White House ceremony. This award signifies, in part, Marjorie Post Hutton's continued commitment to involvement in civic affairs.

1935

SEPTEMBER 7 Marjorie Post Hutton divorces E. F. Hutton.

DECEMBER 11 E. F. Hutton resigns as Chairman of the Board of General Foods.

DECEMBER 15 Marjorie Post Hutton marries Washington lawyer and lobbyist Joseph E. Davies in a private ceremony at 2 East 92nd Street, New York City. Davies is eleven years older than she. He has lived in Washington since 1912, when he moved from Wisconsin to work in the Woodrow Wilson administration. Since the 1920s, he has had a lucrative law practice; since Roosevelt's election, he has been an active Democratic lobbyist. The Davies spend the balance of the winter on the newly renamed *Hussar IV*, now the *Sea Cloud*, in the Caribbean, with friends and family.

1936

APRIL 9 Marjorie Post Davies joins General Foods Board of Directors. For the first time, she represents her own interests on the Board instead of being represented by her husband or other agent.

JULY 26 Adelaide Close marries Merrall MacNeille.

NOVEMBER 22 Joseph E. Davies sworn in as the second U.S. Ambassador to the USSR.

1937

JANUARY 19 Marjorie and Joseph E. Davies arrive in Moscow.

MARCH Marjorie and Joseph E. Davies receive permission to purchase liturgical objects and textiles (for example, a chasuble, or felon', acc. no. 44.34, and chalice, acc. no. 12.82) before they are destroyed. During her stay in Moscow, Marjorie Post Davies also purchases a chest of ebonized wood with lapis lazuli panels and bronze mounts (acc. no. 32.22), a porcelain vase made by the Imperial Porcelain Factory (acc. no. 25.348), and assorted other pieces.

APRIL Joseph E. Davies donates a collection of Russian socialist realist paintings and icons to his alma mater, the University of Wisconsin. Before traveling to Madison, the paintings are displayed in the East Room of the White House.

JUNE 4 Ellen Brevoort MacNeille, Marjorie Merriweather Post's second grandchild, is born to Adelaide Close MacNeille.

NOVEMBER 6 Marjorie Post Davies is in Washington, D.C. to receive a distinguished service medal from Mount Vernon Seminary, but is too ill to attend the ceremony. She has served as a fundraiser for the school for several years.

While vacationing in France, Marjorie Post Davies purchases a tapestry (acc. no. 42.8) depicting the Russian imperial coat of arms, surrounded by the coats of arms of the Russian provinces, and pieces from the Orlov porcelain service (acc. no. 25.236.1-.2; 25.232.1-.1; 25.233.1.-2 etc.) at the *Galerie d'Art Ancien*.

1938

JUNE 9 Madame Molotova, on behalf of the Soviet Government, gives Marjorie Post Davies a pair of vases from the Kuskovo Museum of Ceramics (acc. no. 25.324.1-.2).

JUNE Marjorie and Joseph E. Davies depart Moscow.

JULY 12 Marjorie and Joseph E. Davies take up their new embassy posting in Brussels.

1939

FEBRUARY 2 Melissa Merle MacNeille, Marjorie Merriweather Post's third grandchild, is born to Adelaide Close MacNeille.

NOVEMBER 22 Joseph E. Davies recalled to Washington from Belgium.

DECEMBER 14 Joseph E. Davies accepts position as special advisor to Secretary of State Cordell Hull.

1940

JANUARY Marjorie and Joseph E. Davies rent an estate at 1801 Foxhall Road in Northwest Washington, D.C.

MARCH Marjorie Post Davies awarded the Order of the House of Savoy of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg after helping Grand Duchess Charlotte, after the Nazi invasion, spirit her children out of Luxembourg to the United States, and giving the royal family shelter at her Long Island estate, Hillwood.

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER President Roosevelt appoints Joseph E. Davies chairman of his third Inaugural Committee.

Marjorie and Joseph E. Davies purchase the former Parmelee estate on Klinge Road in Northwest Washington, D.C., and rename it Tregaron, in honor of Davies' Welsh ancestors' home. They begin extensive renovations.

1941

MARCH President Roosevelt asks Joseph E. Davies to head the President's Committee for War Relief.

DECEMBER 7 Marjorie and Joseph E. Davies host their old friends and the new Soviet ambassador to the United States Maxim and Ivy Litvinov for Sunday lunch and listen to news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor together. The United States enters World War II.

DECEMBER *Mission to Moscow*, Joseph E. Davies' memoir of his time as ambassador to the U.S.S.R., is published and rapidly becomes a deeply controversial bestseller.

During World War II, Marjorie Post Davies leads American war relief efforts for the USSR, Belgium and Luxembourg. She advocates for Russian war relief in speeches to women's clubs and in radio interviews. She organizes fundraisers in Washington for the American Red Cross. She organizes a food parcels program for Belgium and Luxembourg.

1942

JANUARY 2 *Sea Cloud* leased to U.S. Navy. It serves during the war as a Coast Guard ship, commanded by Carlton Skinner; under Skinner's command, the USCG *Sea Cloud* crew is integrated. Painter Jacob Lawrence serves on the ship and documents life on board.

JANUARY 19 Marjorie and Joseph E. Davies host a large reception at their rented home on Foxhall Road in honor of Soviet Ambassador and Madame Litvinov. The reception is covered in *Life* magazine.

MARCH Renovations completed, Marjorie and Joseph E. Davies move into Tregaron.

APRIL 23 Eleanor Close and Jean DeBekessy married.

SEPTEMBER The Davies host a two-day "congress of American-Soviet friendship" at Tregaron to shore up the U.S. / Soviet alliance.

Marjorie Post Davies serves on the organizing committee for the National Symphony Orchestra's "Sunset Symphonies," which raise money for Army-Navy Relief.

1943

MAY Warner Brothers releases the film *Mission to Moscow* with Ann Harding and Walter Huston as Marjorie and Joseph E. Davies.

MAY 19 Marjorie and Joseph E. Davies lend Russian paintings, porcelains, and other imperial art treasures for an exhibition in Manhattan to benefit Russian War Relief.

JULY 14 Antal Post DeBekessy, Marjorie Merriweather Post's fourth grandchild, is born to Eleanor Close DeBekessy. When he is baptized the following March, Eleanor Roosevelt is his godmother.

Marjorie Post Davies purchases a vase (acc. no. 23.39.1-.2) made by the Imperial Glassworks in St. Petersburg in the 1830s-40s from A. Schmidt and Son through Fred Vogel.

1944

JULY Marjorie Post Davies organizes an exhibit of American nursery furniture to be sent to the U.S.S.R. under the auspices of the Women's Committee of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship.

NOVEMBER 4 USCG *Sea Cloud* is decommissioned and returned to the Davies.

1945

MAY 1 The Supreme Soviet awards Joseph E. Davies the Order of Lenin.

1946

MARCH 23 Nedenia Hutton marries Stanley Rumbough, Jr.

1947

APRIL Restoration of the *Sea Cloud* is completed.

MAY 24 Stanley Hutton Rumbough, Marjorie Merriweather Post's fifth grandchild, is born to Nedenia Hutton Rumbough.

Marjorie Post Hutton sells Hillwood, her estate in Roslyn, New York, to Long Island University. It becomes the C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University, opening its doors in 1954.

1948

MARCH 19 Marjorie Post Davies is chairman of the "New Look Ball" for the Everglades Club on behalf of the Good Samaritan Hospital in West Palm Beach. The event raises \$176,000 for the hospital.

1949

MAY Marjorie and Joseph E. Davies host their first annual garden party at Tregaron, Washington, D.C.

AUGUST 27 Eleanor Close marries Owen Denis de LaGarde Johnson.

SEPTEMBER 27 David Post Rumbough, Marjorie Merriweather Post's sixth grandchild, is born to Nedenia Hutton Rumbough.

Marjorie Post Davies purchases a blue Fabergé Easter egg (acc. no. 11.63) from Mrs. G. V. Berechielli.

1950

DECEMBER Joseph E. Davies gives Marjorie Post Davies the *Portrait of Catherine II* (acc. no. 51.56) for Christmas. After the Davies' divorce and Joseph E. Davies' death, Marjorie Merriweather Post buys the painting from the Davies estate.

1952

MARCH 7 Marjorie Post Davies purchases pieces from the Sèvres South American Bird Service (acc. no. 24.136.11-.13; 24.236.4) from Parke-Bernet, New York.

SEPTEMBER 30 Nedenia Colgate Rumbough, Marjorie Merriweather Post's seventh grandchild, is born to Nedenia Hutton Rumbough.

Marjorie Post Davies' portrait is painted by Douglas Chandor, who has also painted Queen Elizabeth, Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt, and Winston Churchill.

Joseph E. Davies gives Levitskii's *Portrait of Princess Dashkova* (acc. no. 51.66) to Marjorie Post Davies for Christmas.

Marjorie Post Davies acquires Franz Xavier Winterhalter's *Portrait of Empress Eugène* (acc. no. 51.11).

1953

Sea Cloud is sold.

1954

SEPTEMBER 2 Eleanor Close marries Leon Barzin.

DECEMBER Marjorie Post Davies purchases Arbremont, at 4155 Linnean Avenue NW, Washington, D.C., through a middleman for \$651,279.50. She changes the name of the estate to Hillwood, and hires New York architect Alexander McIlvaine to redesign and expand the mansion. McMillen, Inc. handles most of the interior decoration, with help from Mitchell Samuels of French and Company, Alavoine, Inc., and Frances Vogel. Renovations to the estate take over two years.

Already, Marjorie Post is planning that this estate will be not only a home but a museum in which her collections can be shared with the public. Renovations include the construction of two alcoves for displaying porcelain, with pull-out shelves that will contain written information about the collections on view. In addition, most of the public rooms of the mansion are designed with built-in and lit vitrines for exhibiting the collection.

Marjorie Post Davies is the chairman of the National Symphony Orchestra's first benefit ball.

1955

MARCH 8 Marjorie Post divorced from Joseph E. Davies. She reassumes her maiden name, Marjorie Merriweather Post.

Marjorie Merriweather Post agrees to sponsor the National Symphony Orchestra's Music for Young America, an annual spring series of free concerts for high school students visiting Washington, D.C. The series continues throughout the 1960s; ultimately, the concerts are broadcast on educational television. Hundreds of thousands of students hear their first symphony concert as a result of this program. Marjorie Merriweather Post's sponsorship of Music for Young America continues her commitment to improving the cultural life of Washington, D.C.

1956

Marjorie Merriweather Post purchases a clock made by the firm of Carl Fabergé (acc. no. 12.155) from Hammer Galleries in New York.

1957

JULY 4 Marjorie Merriweather Post hosts her first party at Hillwood.

OCTOBER 31 Marjorie Post receives French Legion of Honor in recognition of her "long demonstrated friendship towards France," from her sponsorship of the Red Cross Hospital at Savenay during World War I to her fundraising for the 1955 Versailles Exposition.

NOVEMBER 181 friends contribute to construction of Friendship Walk at Hillwood.

Marjorie Merriweather Post purchases a yellow Sèvres cup and saucer with rebus (acc. no. 21.127.1-.2) from Antique Porcelain Company in New York.

1958

APRIL Marjorie Merriweather Post submits favorable testimony to Senator Fulbright's hearings on the creation of a National Cultural Center. President Eisenhower signs Fulbright's legislation into law, and Mrs. Post continues to work enthusiastically for what will become the Kennedy Center. At the time, she is serving as First Vice President of the National Symphony Orchestra and Vice President of the Washington Ballet Guild.

MAY 3 Marjorie Merriweather Post hosts her first annual garden tea at Hillwood.

JUNE 18 Marjorie Post and Herbert A. May, a retired Pittsburgh businessman, marry.

Marjorie Post May retires from General Foods' Board of Directors. As Director Emerita, she continues to attend shareholders' meetings and to correspond with board members. She frequently entertains the board at Hillwood.

Marjorie Post May hires Marvin Ross, former curator at the Brooklyn Museum, the Walters Art Gallery, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, to catalogue her art collection at Hillwood.

1959

JANUARY Marjorie and Herbert A. May purchase a Viscount airplane, which they name the *Merriweather*.

1960

APRIL Marjorie Post May honored with a bronze plaque by the Boy Scouts of America for her contributions and support, including her donation of four hundred acres to the South Plains Area Council in Post, Texas, for a scout camp; financial contributions to the Boy Scout Council at Saranac Lake in New York, near her summer residence, Camp Topridge; and donation of tens of thousands of dollars to the National Capital Area Council for the construction of a new headquarters.

Marjorie Post May acquires pieces from a Dessert Service (acc. no. 24.119.15; 24.119.23; 24.119.10; 24.119.1) made by the Jacob Petit factory from J. Rochelle Thomas.

1962

OCTOBER 20 Staff, former staff, and friends gather at Hillwood to dedicate a flagpole in honor of Marjorie Post May's seventy-fifth birthday.

1963

Marjorie Post May purchases a commode with pastoral marquetry (acc. no. 31.11) attributed to Jean-Henri Riesener from Duveen Brothers, New York.

1964

AUGUST Marjorie Post divorces Herbert A. May. She again reassumes her maiden name.

1965

NOVEMBER *Life* magazine profiles Marjorie Merriweather Post, with photos of Mrs. Post and her homes taken by Alfred Eisenstaedt accompanying the article.

Marvin Ross's *Art of Karl Faberge and His Contemporaries*, based in large part on Ross's research into Mrs. Post's collection, is published by the University of Oklahoma Press.

Marjorie Merriweather Post acquires the Military Presentation Cup (acc. no. 11.42.1-.3) from Harry Winston, New York.

Marjorie Merriweather Post begins discussions with the Smithsonian Institution on transferring Hillwood to the Smithsonian to be preserved and maintained as a museum after her death. Foremost among Mrs. Post's concerns is that the house should not be used for entertaining, but should rather be maintained as a museum for the public to visit.

1966

DECEMBER 22 Nedenia Hutton, an actress professionally known as Dina Merrill, marries Cliff Robertson at Hillwood.

Marjorie Post purchases nuptial crown (acc. no. 17.63), worn by Empress Alexandra at her wedding to Nicholas II in 1894, through A La Vieille Russie in New York.

Marjorie Merriweather Post purchases a Fabergé music box (acc. no. 1.80.1-.2) from A La Vieille Russie in New York.

1967

Marjorie Post establishes the Marjorie Merriweather Post Foundation of the District of Columbia to provide funds to maintain Hillwood as a museum after her death if the arrangement with the Smithsonian does not succeed.

Buch Chalice (acc. no. 11.223) purchased for Hillwood through Smithsonian Institution in honor of Marjorie Merriweather Post's 80th birthday.

1968

Marvin Ross's *Russian Porcelains* is published by the University of Oklahoma Press.

Colonel Michael Paul, a friend of Marjorie Merriweather Post's, gives Konstantin Makovskii's *A Boyar Wedding Feast* (acc. no. 51.79) to Hillwood through the Smithsonian Institution.

1969

JANUARY The Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution ratifies the gift of Hillwood and its collections. Mrs. Post hosts a dinner at Hillwood to celebrate.

1973

SEPTEMBER 12 Marjorie Merriweather Post dies at Hillwood.

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Following Mrs. Post's death, the Smithsonian Institution expressed increasing uncertainty about the feasibility of turning Hillwood into a museum. Talk about returning the estate to the Marjorie Merriweather Foundation of the District of Columbia began in 1975; by April 1976, the Smithsonian had done just that. The Foundation opened Hillwood Museum & Gardens to the public in 1977.

SOURCES CONSULTED:

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