Staff Dining Room Refresh

Updated: November 25, 2026

To better equip volunteers to answer questions and promote the refreshed staff dining room, this document is provided in advance of the reopening of the new installation. It includes the interpretive label text that visitors will encounter, as well as content from the audiovisual components – an iPad and a television screen – that will be part of the newly refreshed display. Thumbnail images included here are for reference only and do not appear on exhibition labels unless otherwise noted.

The refreshed staff dining room reopened to the public on Saturday, October 4, 2025.

Additional biographical information was added to the iPad on Monday, November 30, 2026. Please see pages 20 and 25-27 for the new text and images.

Title Panel

Staff Dining Room

Discover the behind-the-scenes story of the staff who worked for Marjorie Post at her three homes.

Introduction Panel

Staff Dining Room

This space served as the staff dining room from 1957 to 1973, Marjorie Merriweather Post's time at Hillwood. Staff ate three meals each day here, prepared by cooks working at Hillwood. While the food was not as formally presented as Post's, the ingredients were the same. The staff also took a 10 a.m. break here, complete with coffee and hot buns.

In addition to sharing a meal, staff could relax or chat in this room. Occasionally, as one staff member recalled, "[Post] would come down…and see if everything was all right. . .. Sometimes she would sit down and have a little something [to eat]."

This area was also a space the staff shared with their own children and younger members of Post's family, as well as tradespeople who came to Hillwood. "Anything from cookies to cake to whatever had been served the previous evening. . .. You'd open those wonderful refrigerators and poke your head in," recalled granddaughter Nina Rumbough. Great-grandson George Iverson added, "My brothers and I used to hang out here with the staff or watch TV. It was a place we could go and roughhouse and not get in trouble."

Hillwood's staff provided dedicated, professional service in every aspect of their employer's operations, from dinners and entertaining to upkeep of the residences and grounds. The displays in the staff dining room focus on the multifaceted relationship between Post and her staff that enabled the exceptional operation of her artful style of living.

Unless otherwise noted, objects on display were bequeathed to Hillwood by Marjorie Post in 1973. All images and archival documents are from Hillwood's Archives and Special Collections unless otherwise cited.

Panel Array on Platform


(Image on label)


(Image on label)


(Image on label)

Above left and right:
The staff dining room used to connect directly to the staff lounge, seen in these two photos taken in the 1960s. The staff lounge, which is no longer extant, was made comfortable with accessories that included a Zenith portable television, yellow curtains, flower vases, smoking accessories, paintings of nature scenes, and a pair of bookends, on display nearby.

Left:
This photo of the staff dining room was taken in the 1960s. The patterned floor is original.

Platform Label

Behind-the-Scenes Workspaces of the Staff

The images on the screen showcase behind-the-scenes locations in which staff from 1957 to 1973 did their work. These mansion areas are not regularly open to the public today due to safety and space constraints. Seeing them here helps us appreciate how staff worked on all floors of the mansion.

Photo credit: Connor Beaty, John Dean, and Erik Kvalsvik

Case Label



Pair of bookends
Anna V. Hyatt Huntington (American, 1876–1973)
New York, 1928
Bronze
(*14.55.1–2*)



Armchair
United States, 1900s
Wood, silk
(33.128)

Wall Panel

Staff at Hillwood

The Hillwood staff who worked in the mansion numbered sixteen to eighteen, including the butler, footmen, and maids, who received housing and meals as part of their compensation. Additionally, six security personnel worked rotating shifts. Some staff, such as butler Gus Modig, chose to live off the estate. Staff who worked outside, such as the twelve to fifteen gardeners, generally did not live on-site.

When Post renovated Hillwood from 1955 to 1957, she included in that scope of work the construction of new buildings and the transformation of existing structures for use as living spaces for staff. The outbuildings—separate structures not attached to the mansion—were built in brick, in keeping with the style and size of 1950s suburban homes. Most of these staff living quarters—whether buildings or rooms—are used today as staff offices.



(Image on label)
Tending to the lawn and chrysanthemums on the Lunar Lawn, 1964.
Alfred Eisenstaedt/The LIFE Picture Collection/Shutterstock



(Image on label)
Grounds staff in the motor court, 1964.
Alfred Eisenstaedt/The LIFE Picture Collection/Shutterstock



(Image on label)

Snow removal in the motor court,1957.



Locations of Staff Housing at Hillwood

Steward's house
Chauffeur's house and garage
Head gardener's house (where visitor center is today)
Female staff rooms (second and third floors of the mansion)
Butler's house
Male staff dormitory

Case Label


Staff Tableware
Furnivals Ltd.
(English, active 1913–68)

Burslem, Staffordshire, England, 1957–68
Earthenware
(27.43)

Staff used these dishes while dining in this room. Post chose a tableware design similar to the highly regarded Royal Copenhagen porcelain, which has been in production since 1775.



Bell push
Edward F. Caldwell & Company
(American, 1895–1959)
New York, 1900s
Gilt bronze, jade, ivory
(14.100)



Bell push
Edward F. Caldwell & Company
(American, 1895–1959)
New York, 1900s
Gilt bronze, enamel, glass, marble
(14.101)



Bell push
Norway, early 1900s
Silver gilt, enamel, cord
(2015.8.2)



Bell push
United States, early 1900s
Agate, metal
(21.151)

Opulent electric bell pushes like these were placed strategically around the mansion so Post could request assistance from staff. Other examples of the systems that Post and her staff used to communicate can be seen elsewhere in the mansion. Post's bedroom suite includes a rotary telephone as well as call buttons for the maid, social secretary, pressing room, and sewing room.



(Image on label)
Call buttons next to Post's bathtub in her bedroom suite on the second floor.

Quote on Wall

"I don't think that there were, at that time, many pieces of property, if any, the size of this that required the staff that we had. This was just her domestic staff."

—Donald Handelman, financial manager

Case Label

Men's Uniform

This uniform is a reproduction of one that male staff wore in the mansion. Post had staff uniforms personally tailored to each individual. Supplied seasonally, clothing included everyday work attire, formal outfits for events, and outdoor garments.

Gus Modig, head butler, recalled that in the later years of Post's tenure at Hillwood, butlers and footmen enjoyed a more "relaxed" approach in that they wore tuxedos with tails all day, in contrast to previous years, when they changed attire for each meal. "It was much easier for all of us [and] was very nice," said Modig.



Men's tailcoat, pants, and waistcoat
American, mid-20th century
Shirt and tie are props
(Reproduction of 2019.7.1.1-3)



(Image on label)
Head butler Oscar "Gus" Modig in the French drawing room, ca. 1957-73.

Wall Panel

Staffing Post's Homes

"I am blessed with a remarkably good staff who believe in working together as a team. Each individual has their own appointed job for which they are responsible, and they take pride in seeing that it is well done."

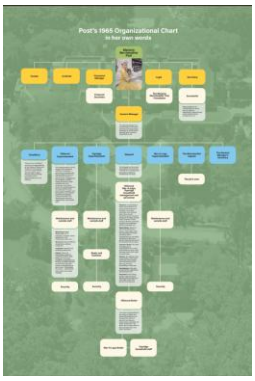
—Marjorie Post

Post was one of the very few people maintaining an amply staffed three-home estate—in the Gilded Age style—after the mid-twentieth century. As her grandson-in-law reminisced, "Now, she never had servants. She had 'staff.' . . . They did everything they could to please her. Not through fear, but through honest affection."

She employed between one hundred and three hundred people in full-time, part-time, and seasonal positions. The number varied depending on the year's activities. Some staff were locals, while others came from international placement agencies, creating a multicultural workplace of American, Cuban, German, Irish, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, and Scottish employees. The vast majority were white.

Post was a competitive employer. She provided the typical room and board for live-in staff—and also paid compensation up to 35 percent higher than average while offering generous perks, such as tailored work clothes and laundry service paid for by the estate. Live-in staff had their own maid service to keep their living quarters clean and tidy. She also took charge of critical-care medical expenses for staff, while providing health insurance in later years.

By the 1960s, Post had been running large estates for more than fifty years. When a *Life* correspondent asked her in 1964, "Do you ever get the feeling that having a large staff is really more trouble than it's worth?" the seventy-seven-year-old Post replied, "I have done this kind of thing since I was eighteen, and it rolls right off my back."



Post's 1965 Organizational Chart in her own words

Marjorie Merriweather Post

- **Curator**
- **Archivist**
- **Financial Manager**
  - **Financial Secretary**
- ***General Manager**
- **Legal**
  - **The Marjorie Merriweather Post Foundation**
- **Secretary**
  - **Secretariat:** Responsibility for all correspondence, liaison with the different departments, appointments, social activities, travel arrangements, etc.

***General Manager:** The General Manager is in overall charge of the entire operation and organization, excepting for the Financial Manager who is directly responsible to me.

- **Chauffeurs:** There are two chauffeurs and they are responsible for all the driving of Family and Guests, etc. For errands, we have a special driver, when a house is open, and he comes under the jurisdiction of the Superintendent and the Steward.
- **Hillwood Superintendent:** The Superintendent is in full charge of the gardening staff, and the gardens, grounds, and greenhouses. Responsibility for the care and work to be done in certain areas is delegated to his assistants and their crews, and when a major operation has to be undertaken they all join forces. The greenhouses are the responsibility of the Head Greenhouse Man and his assistant, and they also have the overseeing of cutting the garden. The Superintendent has the responsibility of all outside work.
  - **Maintenance and outside staff:**
    - **Maintenance man:** Responsible for all machinery, furnaces, house equipment, small "maintenance jobs," etc.
    - **Electrician:** Responsible for all electrical problems, wiring, etc.
    - **Carpenter:** Attends to all necessary repairs, etc.
    - **Painter:** There is a tremendous amount of continuous work to keep Hillwood in first-class condition, including the iron fencing. In addition, painted furniture from the other houses is brought here to be re-done – for example, this winter – all the dining room chairs from Camp Topridge.
  - **Security**
- **Topridge Superintendent**
  - **Maintenance and outside staff**
  - **Boats and boatman**
  - **Security**
- ***Steward**
- **Mar-A-Lago Superintendent**
  - **Maintenance and outside staff**

    - **Security**
- **The *Merriweather* Captain**
    - **The jet's crew**
- **The General Manager's Secretary**

***Steward:** The Steward has the overall responsibility for all houses and staff, and including food purchases and general maintenance of houses.

- **Hillwood, Mar-A-Lago, Topridge household management and personnel**
    - **Footmen:** One Footman is solely responsible for the care and maintenance of the Silver. One, when necessary, acts as Guest Valet. Generally, the Footmen's duties consist of serving at the table, serving meals to guests in their rooms, if desired, answering the door and telephones, relaying messages, etc.
    - **Parlor Maids:** There is a First Parlor Maid and a Second Parlor Maid. They are responsible for linens and laces, flower arrangements for the family dining room table, also – general cleaning and care of the downstairs front rooms.
    - **Chamber Maids:** The Head Chambermaid is responsible for the overall care of bed linens, etc., and the supervision of other chambermaids.
    - **Kitchen:** The Kitchen is the responsibility of the Head Cook who works closely with the Steward in the planning of meals, purchasing of foods, etc.
    - **Laundresses:** They take care of the fine table linens and bed linens, etc.
    - **Housemen:** Vacuuming, window cleaning, floors. Washing dishes, glass and silver after meals, and general cleaning work.
- **Hillwood Butler:** The Butler is responsible for the setting of tables and serving of meals and is in charge of the Pantry in General. The footmen, parlor maids, housemen are under his direction. The Butler also is responsible for the care of all China and Glass, and Silver.
- **Mar-A-Lago Butler**
- **Topridge household staff**

Quote on Wall

"She was always very good and kind to people, her guests and her employees. It channeled down through from the steward, from the caretaker, all the way. People looked out for each other, and they always had the interest of Mrs. Post in mind. But that was a sense of loyalty because she was so kind to everybody. It just gave a very good sense of being."

--- Lawrence Lester, Foreman, Camp Topridge

Wall Label



Two trunks
United States, 1955-73
Plywood, gilt metal
(2014.9.5; 2014.9.8)



***Secrétaire à linge* trunk (lingerie traveling desk trunk)**
Louis Vuitton
(French, 1854–present)
Paris, 1924
Leather, brass, fabric, metal
(2014.16.1)

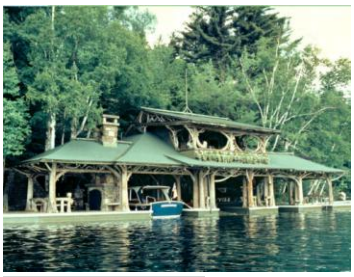
Staff used trunks labeled by room to store the fabric coverings that protected furniture when Post was not living at Hillwood. Post's daughter Dina Merrill Hartley recalled, "Every chair had its own little chintz cover that went over it and had a number. . .. Oh, it was something."

Staff also packed trunks for use when Post traveled between residences and abroad. Gardener Henry Rhyne would occasionally assist the staff in the mansion by gathering trunks from inside and transporting them to the train station or airport. He explained, "They had a trunk room [in the basement at Hillwood], and I'd go down there and find out what ones they wanted and go get them. . .. They had a trunk for shoes, a trunk for top clothes. . .. They had a trunk for each thing."



(Image on label)
Chair covers used when Post was not in residence.
Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens, photographed by John Dean

Wall Panel



(Image on label)
Camp Topridge
Adirondacks, NY



(Image on label)
Hillwood
Washington, DC
Maxwell Mackenzie



(Image on label)
Lady Bird Johnson (wearing yellow), First Lady of the United States from 1963 to 1969, with Mar-A-Lago staff, 1968.
Mar-A-Lago
Palm Beach, FL

Three Homes in One Calendar Year
By 1957, Post's annual routine ran with precision. She moved from one grand estate to another as the seasons changed—from Hillwood in the spring to Camp Topridge in the Adirondacks in the summer, back to Washington, DC, in the autumn, and then to Mar-A-Lago in Palm Beach for the winter.

Up to four chauffeurs, two secretaries, two personal maids, and a masseur traveled with her to each home, while a skeleton advance crew went ahead to open the property. After her departure from a home, another crew stayed behind to take care of closing the residence. They protected the furniture with custom covers and also recorded the location of small objects, such as picture frames, before putting them away.

A fleet of thirty-four vehicles and the *Merriweather*, her private turboprop plane, connected Post's residences. With perfectly timed air and ground transportation, Marjorie had orchids, congressional representatives, generals, ambassadors, staff, and grandchildren smoothly transported for long weekends and seasonal getaways.

Case Label

Contributions by Post's Staff to Her Collections

Marjorie Post's passion for collecting inspired the staff who worked for her, both while she was alive and after her passing. Staff members gave artworks to Post, and later to the museum, that are now a part of Hillwood's permanent collection. These objects are examples of such gifts.



Coffeepot and cups
Lomonosov State Porcelain Factory (Russian, 1925–1993)
Leningrad (today St. Petersburg), 1945–65
Porcelain
Gift of Marvin Ross, 1965 (25.423.1–2)



Fedor Chaliapin in the role of Boris Godunov
Lomonosov State Porcelain Factory (Russian, 1925–1993)
Iakov Troupianskii, designer (Ukrainian, active in the Russian Empire, 1878–1955)
Leningrad (today St. Petersburg), 1960
Porcelain
Gift to Marvin Ross from Lomonosov Factory, 1961 (25.422)

Post's curator Marvin Ross gave her the Chaliapin sculpture and coffee service pieces. The Lomonosov State Porcelain Factory, which made them, was the name during the Soviet period of what had previously been the Imperial Porcelain Manufactory.



Egg-shaped basket
Fabergé (Russian, 1842–1918)
Mikhail Perkhin, workmaster (Russian, 1860–1903)
St. Petersburg, 1886–98
Gold, rose quartz, diamonds, emerald, pearl
Gift of Oscar Modig, 1983 (11.240)

Post's husband Joseph Davies originally gifted the egg-shaped Fabergé basket to her, but he kept it as part of the divorce settlement. Footman Rudy Backman later purchased it at auction, and eventually head butler Oscar Modig, known as Gus, donated it to Hillwood, in 1983.



Plate, one of five
Gardner Porcelain Manufactory (Russian 1766–1892)
Verbilki, Russia, 1810–30
Gift of Oscar Modig, 1990 (25.529)



Miniature bread and salt dish
Alexander Fuld, silversmith (Russian, active 1862–1917)
Moscow, 1882
Silver gilt
Gift of Nettie Leitch Major, 1965 (12.173)

The bread and salt dish, which genealogist and archivist Nettie Leitch Major gave to Post, reflects the Russian tradition of presenting an important guest with a loaf of bread and salt by way of welcome.

Wall Panel



(Image on label)
Preparing the dining room table, 1964.
Alfred Eisenstaedt/The LIFE Picture Collection/Shutterstock



(Image on label)
Bringing out desserts at a Lunar Lawn garden party, 1964.
Alfred Eisenstaedt/The LIFE Picture Collection/Shutterstock

Caring for Staff's Needs

In addition to superior pay as well as room and board, Post extended numerous kindnesses to staff that were not required and often went unseen. Her personalized approach was exemplified by her sending telegrams of thanks, thinking-of-you letters, and gifts, including silver picture frames for wedding anniversaries, flowers for ailing spouses, and condolence cards for deceased pets. She also held jobs open for staff who needed to return to their home countries to care for ailing relatives.

Staff were extremely appreciative to be cared for and remembered outside the work they performed. In the late 1960s, former personal maid Helen Christie thanked Post for paying for her Christmas turkey: "It's perfectly wonderful to be thought of like that after fourteen years in retirement, and I can't find the words to thank you enough."

Because staff members working for Post felt valued for their work and professionalism, this translated into many working for her for long periods. At the time of Post's passing in 1973, one-third of the staff had worked for her for ten or more years, including six employees who had been with her for at least thirty years. Numerous others worked for equally extensive periods of time but retired prior to 1973.

Not only did some staff stay in Post's employ for a long time, but it was not uncommon that family members of staff sought employment at Hillwood. Henry Rhyne, one of the few Black employees, was a gardener in charge of Hillwood's lawn and vista from 1955 and continuing after Post's death until 1994. Three of his brothers, James, Jay Will, and Howard, also worked as horticultural staff. Jenny Mattson was employed as a cook and pastry chef at Hillwood, serving as such until Post's death in 1973 and then staying on as part of the museum staff. Her son Ray Mattson, a plumber, eventually oversaw maintenance at Hillwood.



(Image on label)
Pausing in the entry hall, 1960s.



(Image on label)
Dusting in the icon room, 1964.

Quote on Wall

"I think that to be honored by your employees is a very great compliment to you, as it shows an appreciation of your kindly and [beneficent] character."

—Estelle Hewlett, staff member

Wall Label


Hillwood
Julian Barrow (British, 1939–2013)
United States, 1967
Oil on canvas
(51.133)

This painting depicts the Lunar Lawn as seen from the south, with the gardens and trees in full bloom. The flagpole dedicated to Post by her current and former staff for her seventy-fifth birthday is seen at the far left. In the center distance, Post is walking her dog, Scampi.

Post used the lawn for philanthropic and social occasions, supporting groups like the National Symphony Orchestra, hosting annual garden parties, and welcoming veterans and soldiers returning from Vietnam.

Case Label

Sharing Post's Art Collection



Hillwood Post emblem pins
Plateria Mallorca (Spanish, active in the 1900s)
Palma, Majorca, Spain, ca. 1968
Gilt metal, enamel
(2013.7)

Post organized formal dinners and spring garden teas for hundreds of Washingtonians, and the parties at Hillwood offered guests the opportunity to peruse her art collection. Stationed guides, typically friends or young people, were on hand to answer questions about the art. Post issued pins, like these, with the family crest and a unique number on the back, for the collection guides to wear during events. A logbook was maintained to record who wore which pin, when it was returned, or whether the wearer could keep the emblem as a thank-you gift.

Today, hundreds of volunteers generously give their time to make Hillwood a welcoming place for all, and those volunteers are part of a tradition of service that began during Post's tenure.



(Image on label)

Curator Marvin Ross (left) and Post (right) with student guests in the French drawing room, 1960s.

Wall Panel


(Image on label)

Ceremony to dedicate the flagpole at Hillwood, October 20, 1962.

The Flagpole: Staff's Gift to Post

On October 20, 1962, Post's current and former staff, along with her family and closest friends, gathered on the Lunar Lawn at Hillwood to present her with "a token of our lasting esteem": a flagpole from which she could fly the American flag and the pennon of her yacht *Sea Cloud*. Charlie Cronk, a former security officer who worked for more than fifty years with Post, gave the dedication speech. The gift was in honor of Post's seventy-fifth birthday, and dozens of staff across her properties contributed to fund the cost of the flagpole. Post showed her deep appreciation for this gift by covering all expenses for out-of-town staff members, encouraging them to stay the weekend, and offering them tickets to the symphony. Post wrote, "I can't tell you how thrilled I am. . . . This is the one important item which has been missing at Hillwood."

The flagpole stands today on Hillwood's lawn, with eight bronze tablets around the base memorializing the names of those staff who contributed.



(Image on label)

This certificate was presented to "Commodore" Marjorie Post as part of the flagpole dedication ceremony in honor of her seventy-fifth birthday. It lists the names of the staff members who made donations for the purchase of the flagpole.

Wall Panel

Staff Biographies

Photo credits: Alex Braun; Alfred Eisenstaedt/The LIFE Picture Collection/Shutterstock

Television

Behind-the-Scenes Workspaces of the Staff



(Image on screen)

Fallout Shelter

In the 1960s, Marjorie Post built four fully equipped shelters.
They were part of preparations for possible radioactive fallout from a nuclear attack.



(Image on screen)

The shelters could accommodate sixty-seven people.
Staff regularly refreshed the supply of magazines, as well as food and water rations.



(Image on screen)

English Bedroom

Staff kept several bedrooms ready for Post's guests.



(Image on screen)

Snooze Room's Bathroom

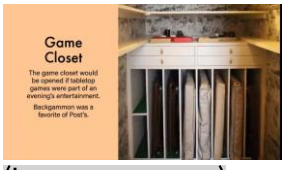
Each guest bedroom included a bathroom and closet as part of the suite.



(Image on screen)

Game Closet

The game closet would be opened if tabletop games were part of an evening's entertainment.
Backgammon was a favorite of Post's.



(Image on screen)

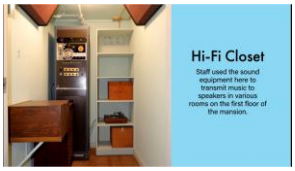
Whimsical Parisian-themed wallpaper covers the walls and ceilings.



(Image on screen)

Hi-Fi Closet

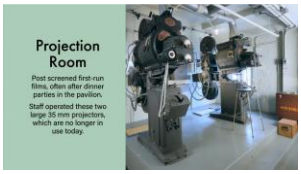
Staff used the sound equipment here to transmit music to speakers in various rooms on the first floor of the mansion.



(Image on screen)

Projection Room

Post screened first-run films, often after dinner parties in the pavilion.
Staff operated these two large 35 mm projectors, which are no longer in use today.



(Image on screen)

Balcony by Projection Room

These cushioned seats on the pavilion's balcony were where staff watched films.



(Image on screen)

Table Room

Staff stored folding tables in this basement room.
They could bring these tables upstairs for use at Post's parties.



(Image on screen)

Leaves of the magnificent stone mosaic dining room table are stored around a central pillar in this room.



(Image on screen)

Wooden cabinets along the wall in this room held pieces of Post's collection.



(Image on screen)

Trunk Room

Staff stored the trunks Post used to travel in this room.
Today, more than sixty trunks are still in the collection.



(Image on screen)

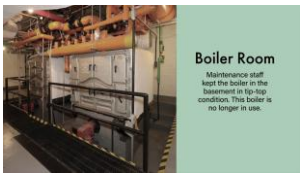
Most of the trunks are painted with Post's signature blue, white and yellow stripes, as well as initials and numbers. These markings helped her staff identify them, as Post traveled with many at a time.



(Image on screen)

Boiler Room

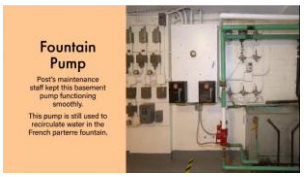
Maintenance staff kept the boiler in the basement in tip-top condition. This boiler is no longer in use.



(Image on screen)

Fountain Pump

Post's maintenance staff kept this basement pump functioning smoothly.
This pump is still used to recirculate water in the French parterre fountain.



(Image on screen)

iPad

(Home Screen)

Touch a name to learn more about some of Marjorie Post's long-tenured staff.

Commander
Clyde B. Ault
General Manager

Earl Loy
Superintendent of Gardens and Grounds
Oscar Gustav "Gus" Modig
Head Butler

Jenny Matilda Mattson
Kitchen Staff

Nettie Leitch Major Sayles
Researcher

Edith Wells
Personal Secretary

Marvin C. Ross
Curator

Sidney and Wendla Taylor
Head Butler and Parlor Maid

Margaret Latimer Voigt
Social Secretary

Commander Clyde B. Ault
General Manager

Commander Clyde B. Ault (1903–1979) was one of only two staff who worked both on *Sea Cloud* and at Hillwood. Post hired Ault in 1931 to be the first assistant engineer on her yacht *Hussar V*, and he was eventually promoted to chief engineer aboard the renamed *Sea Cloud*. Ault served in both the Navy and Naval Reserve, being promoted to commander before retiring from the service in 1954. After Post purchased Hillwood in 1955, she turned to Ault to manage the two years of renovations. He remained at Hillwood, eventually assuming responsibility for the operations of all of Post's properties, where almost nothing happened without his input or approval.


(Image on screen)
Commander Ault showing a retirement gift to financial secretary Helen Krotec and his wife Betty Marie, 1969.


(Image on screen)
Commander Ault and his wife Betty Marie, 1969.

BACK TO HOME

Earl Loy
Superintendent of Gardens and Grounds

Earl Loy (1922–2013) worked for Post for more than thirty years, beginning in 1940. Loy was employed initially at Tregaron, her first residence in Washington, D.C. At Hillwood, Loy became superintendent of gardens and grounds, with full responsibility for the gardening staff, gardens, grounds, and greenhouses. A typical day for Loy started at 7 a.m. He would arrive and create an arrangement of fresh flowers that would be taken to Post along with her breakfast. At 9:30 a.m., Loy would meet with Post to go over any plans for the gardens. He would then attend to his duties on the grounds, including trimming and cutting the Lunar Lawn and the Japanese-style garden.

During his retirement, he donated materials to the Hillwood archives and gave an invaluable oral history documenting his time working for Post.


(Image on screen)
Earl Loy, 1964.

BACK TO HOME

Jenny Matilda Mattson
Kitchen Staff

Jenny Matilda Mattson (1917–1995) began working for Post shortly after 1957. She started off as a kitchen maid, before going on to serve as a cook and pastry chef, positions she held until Post's death in 1973. Mattson returned to the newly opened Hillwood Museum in 1978 as a conservation assistant. Mattson's coworkers remembered her fondly for her professionalism and kindness, as well as her Swedish butter cookies and glögg (mulled wine).

Her son Ray Mattson (1944–2002), a professional plumber who grew up accompanying his mother to work, eventually became an indispensable member of the staff who oversaw maintenance at Hillwood.


(Image on screen)
Jenny Mattson in Hillwood's gardens.


(Image on screen)
An unidentified man, head butler Gus Modig, and Jenny Mattson in the Japanese-style garden, ca. 1975.


(Image on screen)
Gus Modig, an unidentified man, Jenny Mattson, and footman Rudy Backman, 1960s.

BACK TO HOME

Oscar Gustav "Gus" Modig
Head Butler

As head butler, **Oscar Gustav "Gus" Modig (1912–2003) was** one of Post's most trusted staff members, working for her from 1948 to 1973. After Post's death, in 1973, he worked at Hillwood until 1992. Modig was deeply involved in daily household operations, especially those related to planning Post's renowned parties. Post and Modig came to rely heavily on each other, as one Post family member remarked: "He was devoted to her and she was to him."

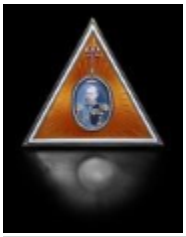
After he retired, Modig returned to Hillwood every year on Post's birthday to place flowers at her memorial in the rose garden. Hillwood staff continue this tradition today. In 2004, a plaque honoring Modig's long and devoted service was placed in the rose garden.



(Image on screen)
Gus Modig with Hillwood's greenhouses in the background.

BACK TO HOME

Oscar Gustav "Gus" Modig
Head Butler



(mage on screen)
The museum purchased this Fabergé frame (12.601) in 1992 in honor of Modig's retirement. Hillwood's Board of Trustees recognized him as "the embodiment of the transition [of Hillwood] from a beautiful and elegant home…to a museum."



(Image on screen)
Modig with Post's dog Scampi.



(Image on screen)
Rudy Backman, John Walton, and Gus Modig at Hillwood, 1960s.



(Image on screen)
Staff including Gus Modig relaxing together, 1960s

BACK TO HOME

Nettie Leitch Major Sayles
Researcher

In the late 1950s, Post hired **Nettie Leitch Major Sayles (1903–1984)**, a professional genealogist, to research her family's history. Sayles documented descent from a line of Posts who left Kent, England, and settled in Connecticut in the early 1600s. The College of Arms, London, subsequently granted Post an honorary family coat of arms in 1962, as a memorial to her father, C. W. Post. Sayles presented her genealogical research on the Posts in *The Hour and the Man*, her 1963 biography of C. W. Post. Sayles also vetted articles about Post for accuracy and assisted authors seeking to write about Hillwood and Post's other residences.



(Image on screen)
Nettie Sayles and husband Joe Major.



(Image on screen)
Bookplate with the Post coat of arms, 1963.

BACK TO HOME

Edith Wells
Personal Secretary

Born in Geneva, New York, **Edith Wells (1882–1968)** entered the employ of Marjorie Post in the 1930s as her personal secretary, a highly demanding position. She accompanied Post to the Soviet Union and Belgium during Post's time as wife of U.S. Ambassador Joseph E. Davies. By 1950, Wells had retired, returning to her hometown, where she lived for much of the remainder of her life. Wells often worked well beyond the typical forty-hour work week, and Post compensated her with a salary more than double the national average. As with many of her employees, Post enjoyed a close relationship with Wells. The two stayed in touch after Wells retired, with Post affectionately referring to her as "Woolsie." Edith Wells contributed toward both Hillwood's Friendship Walk and the flagpole on the Lunar Lawn, gifts to Post from friends and former employees.



(Image on screen)
Marjorie Post and husband Herbert May at the dedication of the Friendship Walk, 1957.

BACK TO HOME

Marvin C. Ross
Curator

Marvin C. Ross (1904–1977) was Marjorie Post's curator from 1958 until 1974, a year after Post had passed. Ross had a stellar career as a Byzantine and medieval scholar, and he held posts at several renowned institutions, including the Brooklyn Museum, what is now the Walters Art Museum, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. He served as a captain during World War II, seeing military action in the South Pacific. Transferred to Europe, in 1944, he became part of the unit that would come to be known as the "Monuments Men," locating and rescuing art treasures stolen by the Nazi regime.

During his tenure as Post's curator, Ross was responsible for organizing, researching, and writing about her collections. His research culminated in two books, on Russian porcelain and Fabergé, published in the 1960s. He also collaborated with Post in creating the beginnings of Hillwood's art reference library. Ross was responsible for giving tours of Post's collections, and he trained the initial docent cohort. After Post's death, Ross wrote several summaries of Post's collections that provide important historical information.



(Image on screen)
Marvin Ross giving a lecture, ca. 1960s. Courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

BACK TO HOME

Sidney and Wendla Taylor
Head Butler and Parlor Maid

Married couple **Sidney (1885–1959)** and **Wendla (1891–1981) Taylor** worked for many years as head butler and a parlor maid for Marjorie Post. They accompanied Post on her travels to the Soviet Union and Belgium in the late 1930s, returning with her to Washington, DC, where they were the first staff members to occupy Hillwood's butler's house. Sidney was succeeded by Oscar "Gus" Modig, Post's last head butler. After Sidney's passing, Wendla retired to Chicago; like many staff members, she kept in touch with Post and even contributed toward the gifting of Hillwood's flagpole to Post in honor of her seventy-fifth birthday.



(Image on screen)
Sidney Taylor, ca. 1910s



(Image on screen)
Wendla Taylor, ca. 1920s

BACK TO HOME

Margaret Latimer Voigt
Social Secretary

Margaret Latimer Voigt (1910–1973) worked as Marjorie Post's devoted chief social secretary from the 1940s until her passing. Voigt's duties included taking care of Post's mail and phone correspondence, coordinating travel arrangements, and managing Post's social schedule, invitations, and calendar. Voigt worked closely by Post's side and was especially relied upon in Post's later years when she began to lose her hearing. Post trusted her implicitly. Indeed, upon Voigt's death, the Washington Post described her as Post's "companion as well as her social secretary." Voigt passed away one month before Post, leaving many to remark that she had "gone ahead" to prepare things for her employer.



(Image on screen)
Margaret Voigt at Hillwood flagpole dedication ceremony, 1962.

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