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First Ladies: Lou Henry Hoover

Lead: Married to one of the most reviled and revered Presidents in U.S. history, Lou Henry Hoover considered it a privilege to stand in his shadow.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Lou Henry was a banker's daughter and met her husband the future President in the laboratory of their favorite Stanford Professor, geologist John Casper Branner. He was shy but they hit it off right away and shortly after he

graduated, Lou and Herb Hoover were informally engaged.

Hoover was a mining engineer whose growing reputation made possible his appointment as Chief Engineer to the Chinese Engineering and Mining Company with headquarters in Beijing. He cabled Lou his final proposal for marriage, she accepted, and after a quick ceremony in Monterey they set sail on their honeymoon, destination China. She accompanied Herb on many of his exploratory trips into the interior. When Chinese nationalists, called by some “Boxers,” began attacking foreigners and Chinese Christians in June 1900, she helped Hoover organize resistance in and around the

diplomatic compound in Tientsin during the long siege.

The Hoovers moved to London in 1901 and by the end of the decade he had established himself as one of the world's foremost mining consultants and had amassed a great fortune. World War I gave the couple their first taste of public service. They helped American tourists stranded by the War and got involved in Belgium Relief. Back in America Hoover became President Wilson's Food Administrator during the war emergency and served as Secretary of Commerce under Presidents Harding and Coolidge.

In the White House the Hoovers entertained lavishly but were never popular either with the executive staff or ultimately with the American public. Perhaps unfairly, they were considered aloof and unresponsive. After the White House years, Mrs. Hoover served as President of the Girl Scouts and, during World War II, assisted her husband in his work with the Red Cross. She died of a heart attack in January 1944.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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