

The Roosevelt Wedding

Lead: In 1905 Franklin Delano Roosevelt married his cousin Eleanor. The guests almost ignored the bride and groom.

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

Content: Sara Roosevelt was a dominating mother. Hovering over her son, Franklin, Sara at nearly every stage attempted to rule his life with an iron hand. When Frank began his courtship of his cousin Eleanor, Sara put her foot down but her reasons were hard to argue. She could hardly

object to the girl on social grounds. As a distant member of the family, Eleanor was orphaned and lived with relatives Manhattan as part of one of first families of New York. If that were not enough, she was the favorite niece of another cousin, President Theodore Roosevelt. Her objections were to their relatively young ages. He was 21, she, 19, and MaMa extracted a promise that the engagement had to be kept secret for a year.

The year of waiting was Frank's last year at Harvard. His undergraduate record there was lackluster. His grades were average, and he was not made a part of the elite social clubs that had marked the Harvard career of his father and

cousin Teddy. In the end, the promise having been fulfilled, Sara relented and the wedding was planned for March 17, 1905. The President offered the White House but the family thought a home wedding would be more appropriate.

On the day of the wedding, two hundred guests assembled at the home on East Sixty-Second Street. The President gave away the bride and afterwards remarked in his usual exuberance, "there's nothing like keeping the name in the family." At the reception the guests divided their attention between Sara holding forth in one room and the President in the other. The newlyweds were pushed aside, a half-forgotten opening act to

the main show.

The couple left by train for Sara's home and a week of preparation for Franklin's final exams at Columbia Law School. They then left for a much-needed honeymoon. Probably to her disappointment, Sara was not invited along.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

Lightman, Marjorie and Joan Hoff-Wilson, Editors.
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Morgan, Ted. *FDR: A Biography.* New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1985.

Scharf, Lois. *Eleanor Roosevelt: First Lady of American Liberalism.* Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1987.

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