

Ladies who became FIRST

Hannah Hoes & Angelica Singleton – the Eighth in a Series by Randall Priest

Hannah Hoes Van Buren **[Figure 1]** was born in 1783 in Kinderhook, New York, to Johannes Dircksen Hoes, a farmer, and Maria Quackenbush Hoes. Martin Van Buren **[Figure 2]** was also from the close-knit Dutch community of Kinderhook, and was, in fact, a first cousin once removed. It may be that Hannah and Martin were ‘childhood’ sweethearts, even though Martin left Kinderhook at the age of 20. It appears that the plan was to marry once Martin was established in his law-practice. The marriage took place in 1807 at the Hoxton House Inn in Catskill, New York. The newlyweds initially set up housekeeping in Kinderhook, but within a year moved to Hudson, a larger town. As Martin became more involved in Democratic politics, they finally moved to Albany, New York.



Figure 1

Not much is to be found about Hannah. Martin does not mention her at all in his autobiography. However, a niece remembers her ‘loving, gentle disposition’ and emphasized her ‘modest, even timid manner.’ Apparently, the marriage was a happy one. Hannah gave birth to six children in ten years, four of whom survived beyond childhood, all boys – Abraham, John, Martin and Scott.



Figure 2

Hannah never saw Martin reach the White House. She passed away in 1819 at the age of 35 after a long bout with consumption, now known as tuberculosis. She was initially interred at the Second Presbyterian Church cemetery in Albany, New York, and was later moved to the Kinderhook cemetery in Kinderhook, New York. Martin Van Buren never remarried. He became President in March, 1837, and for the first 20 months of his presidency, there was no First Lady.

This brings us to Angelica Singleton Van Buren **[Figure 3]**, a daughter-in-law.

Sarah Angelica Singleton was born in Wedgefield, South Carolina, to Richard Singleton, a prosperous planter, and Rebecca Travis Coles Singleton. She was a cousin of Dolley Madison. Angelica (as she preferred to be known) was well educated as her parents believed that young women should be educated beyond the traditional domestic arts. She even spent four years at a boarding school in Philadelphia, along with her sister Marion.

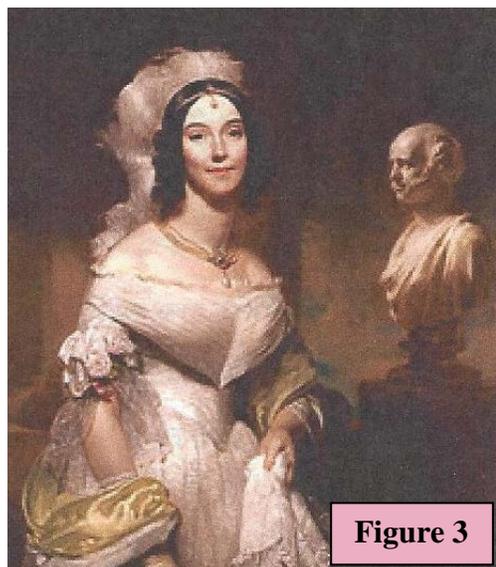


Figure 3

Angelica and her sister spent the 1837-1838 social season in the nation's capital with another first cousin of their mother, U.S. Senator William Campbell Preston. During this time Dolley Madison was living across the street from the White House. Angelica and Marion were invited to accompany Mrs. Madison to a private White House dinner in March 1838 with President Martin Van Buren and the three sons then living there with him, Abraham, Martin and Smith. Marion found the President's sons to be ‘pleasant, unpretentious, unpretending, civil amiable young men.’ Abraham, a graduate of West Point and the oldest son, became his father's secretary, along with his brothers.

Angelica's aristocratic manners, excellent education, and handsome face won Abraham's heart, and despite knowing each other briefly, he asked her to marry him and she readily accepted. They were married in November 1838. The following New Year's Day, Angelica assumed the duties of First Lady at the White House, with the help of some of the wives of Cabinet members. Raised in high society, Angelica brought an air of sophistication to the White House. In the spring of 1839 the couple took an extended 'honeymoon' trip through England and other European countries. When they returned that autumn, she resumed the duties of White House hostess for the rest of her father-in-law's presidency. Like her



Figure 4

cousin Dolley Madison, Angelica loved to entertain; unlike Dolley, however, her tastes ran toward the extravagant. Angelica, who loved to dress in royal purple, ultimately proved a part of President Van Buren's downfall. Van Buren appeared overly refined and the extravagant White House practices of his daughter-in-law became the focus of much negative attention. Van Buren lost his re-election bid to William Henry Harrison [Figure 4].

After leaving the White House, Angelica and Abraham settled in New York City, where she died in 1878 and is buried alongside her husband at the fashionable Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, New York.

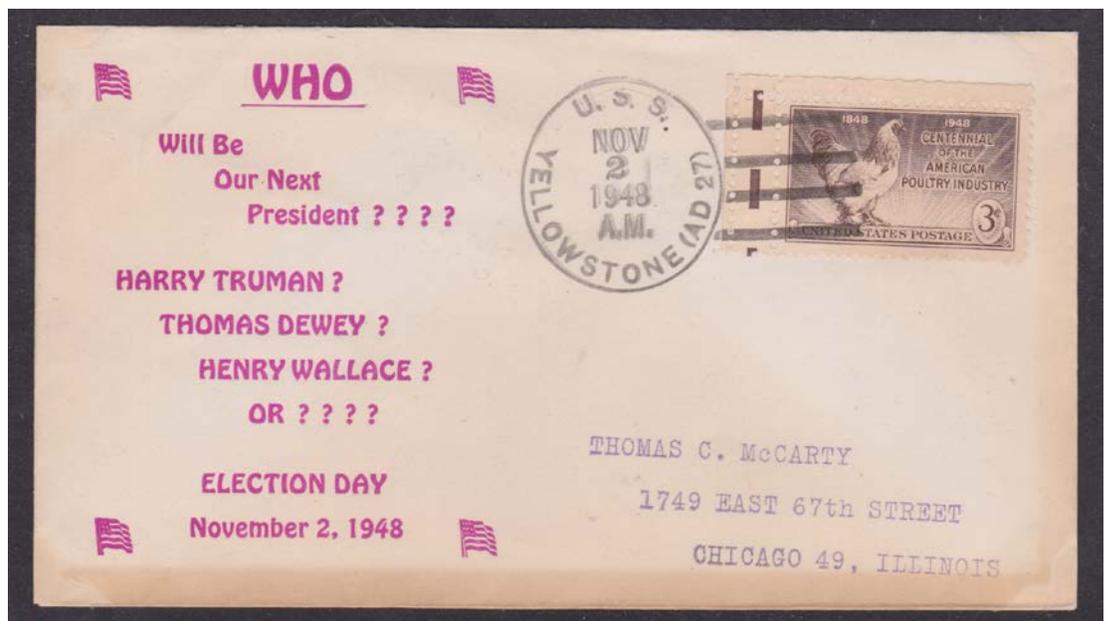
Reference:

Postal Commemorative Society // First Ladies of the White House by Nancy J. Skarmearns
The Presidents of the U.S. of A. by Frank Freidel // www.whitehouse.gov/1600/first-ladies

Who Will Be Our Next President? by Phil Fettig

Ok, right up front I promise not to support or criticize any modern candidate. I will observe however that a lot of people have expressed problems with all of them. I have heard others say that "I wish that (fill in your own choice) was still around to run".

Well, what about this trio? This election resulted in the famous photo of President Truman holding up the



newspaper with the huge "DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN" banner. The cover was canceled on the USS YELLOWSTONE (AD 27), a supply and repair ship that supported U.S. Navy Destroyers.