

*Edith Bolling Wilson*

A First Lady's Birthplace Museum



# **FIRST LADY'S PATCH ONLINE GIRL SCOUT PROGRAM**

**Edith Bolling Wilson Birthplace Foundation**

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## **A Note to Parents or Supervising Adult**

The Edith Bolling Wilson Birthplace Museum is the birthplace and childhood home of First Lady Edith Bolling Wilson, second wife of President Woodrow Wilson. Opened in 2008, the museum tells the story of Mrs. Wilson's journey "From Wytheville to The White House" by celebrating her life and legacy. Edith Bolling Wilson is the only Appalachian-born First Lady. The museum, located on Main Street in Wytheville, Virginia, serves thousands of visitors a year and offers interactive educational opportunities for students.

The museum offers several badges and patches for Girl Scouts and programs are available on demand through the museum. One of our most popular programs is the First Lady's Patch where girls learn about what life was like for young Edith - the 7th of 11 children. The family home had no electricity or indoor plumbing, and it was Edith's task to care for her grandmother's 26 canaries. Growing up in Wytheville, Virginia, young Edith never imagined that one day she would be First Lady of the United States.

The online First Lady's Patch is available in four components. Please follow the checklist provided for you, completing each section with the questions and activities. Please be aware of your child's internet use and monitor the online activities. We hope you and your Girl Scout enjoy this program and learning more about Edith and her life as a young girl in Wytheville and her role as First Lady of the United States.

## Patch Checklist

\_\_\_ Read the passage entitled, “What is a First Lady?” and complete the questions following the passage.

\_\_\_ Read the passage, entitled, “Edith Bolling Wilson” and watch the YouTube Video entitled, “Edith Bolling Wilson, From Wytheville to the White House,” then complete the questions following the video and the reading.

\_\_\_ Complete any of the selected activities, which are based on the information you have learned regarding Edith Bolling Wilson.

- \_ Coloring Page
- \_ Word Search
- \_ Map Activity

\_\_\_ Order your First Lady’s Patch (\$5 plus s/h) from the museum’s shop by calling the museum at 276-223-3484 or visiting our online store: (edithbollingwilson.org > Shop > Souvenirs > Patch or direct link: <https://squareup.com/store/ebwbf/item/patch>



## WHAT IS A FIRST LADY?

What is a First Lady? The First Lady of the United States is known as “FLOTUS,” which stands for **F**irst **L**ady **o**f the **U**nited **S**tates. The First Lady is usually the wife of the President. She has many duties and responsibilities, including entertaining representatives and leaders from around the world. The position of the First Lady is not an elected one and carries only ceremonial duties. Nonetheless, First Ladies have held a highly visible position in American society. There is no document to explain the duties of the First Lady; rather her duties have evolved over time and the office has been shaped by generations of women.

The role of the First Lady has traditionally been to serve as the hostess of the White House. This means she will entertain guests and plan events held at the White House. However, over the course of this nation’s history, the role of the First Lady has changed considerably. It has come to include involvement in political campaigns, management of the White House, work in social causes and to represent the President on occasion at ceremonial functions. Since the early 20th Century, the First Lady has been assisted by an official staff, now known as the Office of the First Lady and housed in the East Wing of the White House.

The position was first established on April 30, 1789 with Martha Washington becoming the inaugural First Lady. During Martha Washington’s lifetime she was often referred to as “Lady Washington.” Historically, if a President is not married, he typically will ask a relative or female friend to act as his hostess.



First Ladies now typically publish their experiences in a book, called a memoir or autobiography, and because they are often very independent in their own right, they may remain a focus of public interest long after their husband’s term is complete. They may even hold political office themselves.

There are currently five living **former** First Ladies: Rosalynn Carter, wife of President Jimmy Carter; Hillary Clinton, wife of President Bill Clinton; Laura Bush, wife of President George W. Bush; Michelle Obama, wife of President Barack Obama; and Melania Trump, wife of President Donald Trump. As of 2021, the only former First Lady to run for or hold political



office is Hillary Clinton. Mrs. Clinton was a Senator from the State of New York and former Secretary of State. She ran for President in 2016, but was not elected.

The current First Lady is Dr. Jill Biden, wife of President Joe Biden. She was born in New Jersey in 1951. She married Joe Biden in 1977, serving as the Second Lady of the United States when Joe became Vice President to President Barack Obama. Dr. Jill Biden is an educator and author. She is the first First Lady to balance her White House responsibilities with a full-time career, working as a professor of Writing at Northern Virginia Community College.



## QUESTIONS

- 1) What is the First Lady of the United States often called?
- 2) What are two duties of the First Lady?
- 3) Who was the inaugural or first First Lady?
- 4) Who is the current First Lady?
- 5) Who are the five living former First Ladies?

## ABOUT EDITH BOLLING WILSON

Edith Bolling became the First Lady of the United States in 1915 when she married President Woodrow Wilson. President Wilson was the third President to marry while in office and the twenty-eighth President of the United States.



Edith was born in Wytheville, Virginia and was a direct descendant of Pocahontas. Her family was not very wealthy and she was the seventh of eleven children. Everyone had chores and Edith's was to take care of her ailing Grandmother Bolling. Part of Edith's responsibilities included taking care of the twenty-six canaries that her grandmother brought with her. Edith only had two years of formal education and was homeschooled by her father and her grandmother. She moved to Washington, D.C. when she was eighteen years old to live for a period of time with her sister. It was there, several years later, that she met President Woodrow Wilson.

As First Lady during World War I, Edith Bolling Wilson observed "Gasless Sundays," "Meatless Mondays," and "Wheatless Wednesdays" to set an example for the federal war rationing effort. Similarly, the President and she set sheep to graze on the White House lawn rather than use manpower to mow it. They auctioned off or sold the wool from the sheep to the benefit of the American Red Cross.



To the newspapers, many of the things Mrs. Wilson did during wartime seemed important. She sewed uniforms for soldiers, promoted patriotism, and practiced rationing.

Edith Wilson devoted her life to assisting her husband in achieving his political dreams - she worked to keep him healthy because he was under tremendous stress and strain. She assisted and coached him on some of the day-to-day decisions of

the White House. She even learned to decode secret war messages during World War I. She also accompanied him across the Atlantic Ocean to Europe for the peace talks which helped end the war.

In 1917, Juliette Gordon Low named Mrs. Wilson the first Honorary President of the Girl Scouts. Since that time, the First Lady of the United States has continued to serve in that position.

In 1939, Mrs. Wilson wrote a book entitled *My Memoir*. In the book, she tells about her childhood and becoming the first woman in Washington D.C. to drive an electric car. She also talks about owning a prestigious jewelry business and role as First Lady.



## VIDEO

Click on the link below and watch the video provided. You may then answer the questions which follow the reading passage.

**[“Edith Bolling Wilson, From Wytheville to the White House”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LV42p1Mcu8)**

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LV42p1Mcu8>>

## QUESTIONS

1. Where was Edith Bolling born?
2. Edith was a direct descendant of what Indian Princess?
3. What were three things that Mrs. Wilson did for the war effort?
4. Why did the Wilsons keep a flock of sheep on the White House lawn?
5. What was Edith's position with the Girl Scouts?

## ACTIVITIES

### Coloring Sheet



Edith Bolling Galt Wilson (1872–1961) was the second wife of President Wilson, who married her over a year after Ellen Wilson's death. He had courted Edith persistently, sending flowers every day and setting up a private line between her house and the White House. Here Edith is pictured among sheep that occupied the White House lawn as part of the war effort during World War I. The sheep provided wool for clothing worn by American soldiers.

# Word Search

ELLEN AXSON WILSON

(1st wife; May 15, 1860–August 6, 1914)

EDITH BOLLING WILSON

(2nd wife; October 15, 1872–December 28, 1961)

*Ellen Wilson*  
 ALLEY Clearance Bill  
 ARCHDUKE Ferdinand shot (1914)  
 Samuel Edward AXSON (father and  
 Presbyterian preacher)  
 "CALM excellence of judgment"—  
 Treasury Sec. McAdoo about Ellen  
 Improved working CONDITIONS in  
 government offices  
 ELLEN Wilson Bill (slum clearance)  
 Margaret Wilson (daughter and  
 HOSTESS after Ellen's death)  
 Against INAUGURAL Ball  
 Politically INFORMED  
 "LIFE in the White House has no  
 attractions for me"—Ellen Wilson

Studied at Art Students League in  
 NEW York City  
 Accomplished PAINTER  
 Attended ROME Female College  
 SAVANNAH, Ga. (born)  
 THREE children  
 . . . . .  
*Edith Wilson*  
 INFLUENZA epidemic  
 JUDGE William Bolling (father)  
 Rode in President KENNEDY's  
 inaugural parade  
 Sinking of LUSITANIA (1915)  
 Attended MARTHA Washington  
 College  
 Authored *My MEMOIR* (1939)

First, First Lady to accompany  
 husband OVERSEAS  
 PROHIBITION amendment (1919)  
 Descendant of Pocahontas and John  
 ROLFE  
 Wilson's SECOND wife (1916)  
 Called "SECRET President" after  
 husband's stroke (1918)  
 SHEEP at White House  
 "Her STEWARDship" (her term for  
 her role in assuming presidential  
 powers)  
 Opposed women's SUFFRAGE  
 Wytheville, VIRGINIA (born)  
 Women gained right to VOTE (1920)

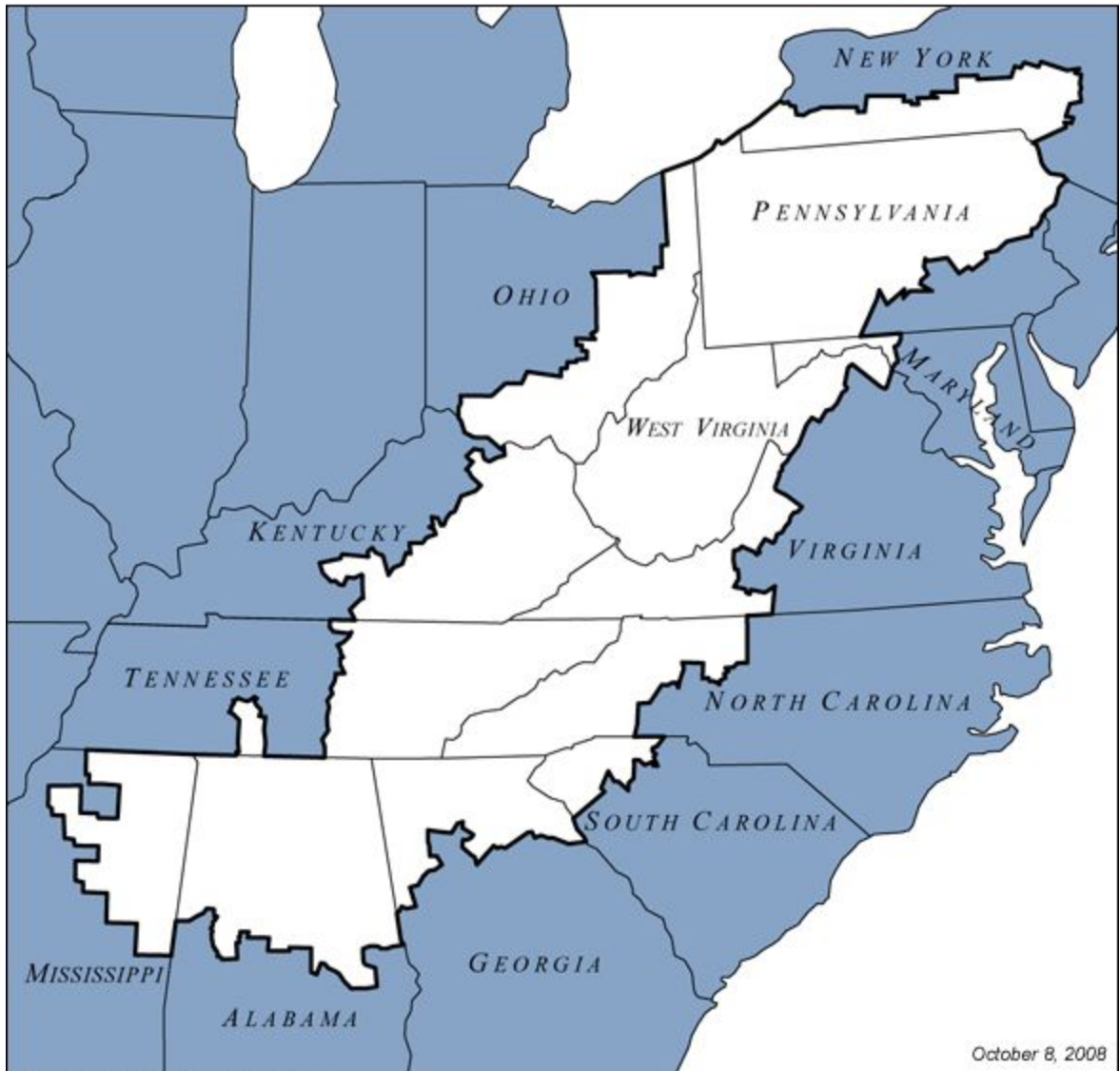
W L G R N R X S D R A W E T S  
 E V O O I V E I A S P L M O K  
 N M S O A O I G N E E E I F N  
 E X M R I I S R A F S C E F U  
 A E E A E N N S G R O R O H E  
 M T E L H T F A E I F R E N S  
 I E R L L U N L T T N F M V D  
 A R H E T E A I U I S I U E O  
 R C T Y F H C P A E S O A S D  
 C E G L T M L A C P N U H J S  
 H S O R K E N N E D Y Z L E N  
 D R A L A R U G U A N I A G E  
 U M X C O N D I T I O N S D L  
 K S A V A N N A H E T O V U L  
 E U N O I T I B I H O R P J E

## Map Activity

Study the maps provided for you below. The first map shows the Appalachian region and the states that make up the area. Remember, Edith Bolling is the only Appalachian-born First Lady. The second map shows the travel distance between Wytheville, Virginia, where Edith Bolling was born and Washington, D.C., where she lived in the White House.

1. Look at the maps and write a brief paragraph describing what you believe Edith's childhood was like growing up in the Appalachian Mountains. What kind of clothing do you think she wore? What games do you think she played and what do you believe were some of the greatest hardships she faced as a young girl?
2. Using the second map to see the distance between Wytheville, Virginia and Washington, D.C., how do you think Edith would have traveled from one place to the other? What type of transportation would she have used to get to Washington, D.C.?

Sometimes we need a map to help us decide where we are going or how to get there. Edith Bolling Wilson traveled to many places during her lifetime. She was born and raised in Wytheville, Virginia and spent most of her adult life in Washington, D.C. She traveled to countries in Europe and was the first First Lady to travel overseas with her husband.



October 8, 2008

Source: Appalachian Regional Commission



**305.6 miles from Wytheville, Virginia to Washington, D.C.**