

A White House

The Story of Nelly Grant

Weaving

WHEN ULYSSES S. GRANT WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT IN 1868, HE BROUGHT WITH HIM A FAMILY OF LIVELY CHILDREN WHO INVIGORATED THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE WHITE HOUSE AFTER YEARS OF POLITICAL UPHEAVAL, DEATH, AND QUIET GLOOM. THE HISTORIC HOUSE BECAME A REAL HOME AGAIN AS THE PRESIDENT'S THREE SONS, ULYSSES JR., FRED, AND JESSE, AND ONLY DAUGHTER, NELLY, FILLED ITS HALLS WITH LAUGHTER AND PLAYFUL CHATTER. NELLY GRANT, SWEET, LOVING, BEAUTIFUL, AND PRECOCIOUS, RELISHED HER ROLE AS FIRST DAUGHTER. SHE WAS THIRTEEN WHEN HER FATHER WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT. BY FIFTEEN, SHE WAS ATTENDING ALL THE EXCLUSIVE PARTIES OF THE WASHINGTON ELITE. THIS, IN TURN, CREATED A MINOR SCANDAL AMONG THOSE WHO FELT THAT THE PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER WAS SPENDING TOO MUCH TIME AT COTILLIONS AND NOT ENOUGH TIME LEARNING THE WAYS OF A PROPER VICTORIAN YOUNG WOMAN. NELLY'S PARENTS PAID LITTLE ATTENTION TO THE WAGGING TONGUES. THEY WERE MORE CONCERNED WITH THE PROCESSION OF YOUNG SUITORS WHO BEGAN TO APPEAR. HER BEAUTY AND SOCIAL POSITION MADE NELLY A PRIME TARGET FOR WASHINGTON'S ELIGIBLE MEN.

by *Christopher Gordon*

In 1872, a decision was made to enhance Nelly's education by sending her on a grand tour of Europe. Experiencing the historic cities of Europe was considered a must for any respectable young woman's education in the late nineteenth century. Nelly, whose education was mediocre at best, lagged behind most girls of her social class. She briefly attended a girls' academy but pleaded with her parents to bring her home shortly after her arrival. The Grants gave in easily. When her parents learned that old family friend and for-

mer secretary of the navy Adolphe Borie was planning a trip to Europe with his family, the president requested that they take Nelly along.

In Europe, Nelly was received as the closest thing to an American princess. Although the trip was designed to broaden her education and expose her to high European culture, she could not escape the balls and garden parties given in her honor. At each of the capitals to which she traveled, the American ambassadors and ministers feted her visit. In London, Queen Victoria received her at Buckingham Palace and the American consul general

The President and Mrs. Grant,
request the pleasure of your company
at the marriage of their daughter
at the Executives Mansion
on Thursday May 21st.
at eleven o'clock A. M.

Invitation to the wedding of Nelly Grant and Algernon Sartoris on May 21, 1874, issued by Ulysses H. Grant and Julia Dent to Anna Barnes. Anna Barnes Heath Papers, MHS Archives.

was amazed to see the nation's aristocracy bow and curtsy before Nelly as they would a member of royalty. It was an extraordinary welcome for a girl who had been born in a log home in the distant wilds of Missouri.

With the summer coming to a close, it was time to return home. Passage for Nelly's return trip to America was booked aboard the Cunard Line's luxurious steamship *Russia*. On board, Nelly was still reeling from her brush with royalty when she met Algernon Sartoris. Meeting a young, handsome English gentleman from a notable family seemed like a fitting end to the trip. Nelly was smitten, and, according to her mother, she returned a changed girl. Julia Grant wrote in her memoir that Nelly was "no longer a nestling, but a young woman equipped and ready for the battle of life."

Algernon Sartoris was a British officer newly assigned to the British legation in Washington in 1872. He was not well known in his own right but came from a respected family of entertainers and politicians. He was the son of Edward Sartoris, a member of Parliament, and Adelaide Kemble Sartoris, who was considered the greatest opera singer in Europe. His grandfather, Charles Kemble, was a giant of the British theater, as was his aunt, Fanny Kemble, who was celebrated across the world for her talent as a stage actress. Nineteenth-century celebrities frequented the Sartoris home. Edward once counted composer Felix Mendelssohn among his dearest friends, and the renowned pianist Frédéric Chopin convalesced at the Sartoris estate shortly before his death.

Algy, as his family called him, did not pursue a career on the stage as his mother and grandfather had before him. He, like many sons of England's minor gentry, chose life as an officer in the British army. At first glance, he appeared as a dashing, twenty-two-year-old officer with a bright future, but the reality was already growing dim. Despite his youth, he was struggling with alcoholism. He could be arrogant, boastful, crude, and obnoxious. There were those who suggested that he had received these attributes from his father, whom the author Henry James described as "the perfect ideal of an ill-mannered Englishman." Nevertheless, Algy could also be quite charming.

Nelly and Algy developed a courtship by correspondence. They exchanged letters through the winter of 1872 and into the spring of the following year. As the summer of 1873 unfolded, it became apparent that the two were getting serious, and it caught the attention of the president. U. S. Grant was not thrilled at the prospect of his only daughter marrying a British subject.

The thought of her leaving the family was bad enough, but to have her leave the country altogether was unbearable. The president saw her as only a child and not as a woman ready for marriage. While staying at his home in Long Branch, New Jersey, the president put pen to paper and wrote Algy's father. He stated that Nelly had shown him a letter from Algy that spelled out the young man's affections and intentions. Grant wrote, "Much to my astonishment an attachment seems to have sprung up between the two young people; to my astonishment because I had only looked upon my daughter as a child, with a good home which I did not think of her wishing to quit for years yet."

Begging that the letter be kept in strict confidence and apologizing for the forwardness of the questions, Grant asked Edward Sartoris about his son's "habits, character, and prospects." He continued by inquiring if Algy might become a citizen of the United States if the young couple decided to marry. "During my life my desire is to see my children, and my children's children, remain honored and respected citizens of it."

Whatever Edward's opinion was on this matter, it was of little consequence to his son. Algernon had made his mind up to marry the president's daughter, and she was ready to say yes to his proposal. The imposing President Grant was an even more imposing father to approach about such a matter. Adam Badeau, the president's friend, noted that it was truly an act of courage on Algy Sartoris's part to personally meet with Grant and ask his permission. Algy's sincerity must have made an impression since Grant reluctantly agreed to bestow his blessings. It was a truly difficult decision for Grant, considering that Algy made no secret of planning to return to England after the marriage. Julia was not so easily convinced and approached Nelly. She asked the young girl if she preferred to leave the comforts of home to take up life with a complete stranger. Nelly's response was persuasive. "Why, yes, Mamma. I am sure that is just what you did when you married papa and left grandpa."

Nelly's statement ended the argument. Young Ulysses and his sweetheart, Julia Dent, had faced a similar dilemma. Julia's father disapproved of her engagement to Grant because the young man did not seem to be going anywhere in his life. Now the same situation stared back at the president and first lady. They understood that refusing the young couple's request would be hypocritical. The wedding was set for May 21, 1874, at the White House. It would be the first wedding to grace the home since the marriage of President Tyler's daughter thirty years earlier.

The Washington gossip mill did not ignore the president's reservations about his daughter's impending marriage. Nelly's sheltered life and Algy's sometimes public displays of boorish behavior had people taking bets as to how long the marriage would last. There were those who predicted divorce within months of the wedding. Algy, said some, often spoke mockingly of Nelly's intelligence and lack of refinement. Others pointed to his love of sport and the fact that he preferred to spend idle time at the barracks rather than working. Even the press questioned why the "first unmarried lady of America," who was loved and coddled so deeply by her parents and the American public, would put her happiness in jeopardy by leaving the land of her birth to live in a country where she would be just another gentleman's wife.

The White House staff was placed in charge of planning, organizing, and decorating for a function that had all of Washington society and the American public bristling with anticipation. The city's elite naturally felt that such an occasion would call for an extravagant ceremony with thousands of guests, but they quickly learned otherwise. General Orville Babcock, the first lady's private secretary, sent only 250 invitations and soon became a magnet for hostility. The guest list was limited to only the Grant family's relatives, close personal friends, and the top officials of the government. Foreign ambassadors and ministers were outraged when only the British ambassador, Sir Edward Thornton, and his wife were invited from the diplomatic corps. It was only natural for Thornton, as British ambassador, to be invited, but he was also playing more than just a diplomatic role in the wedding.

Thornton, who was already acting as Algy's sponsor in Washington, would represent the Sartoris family for the occasion in lieu of Algy's parents. Seven months before the wedding, tragedy had struck the family. Algy's

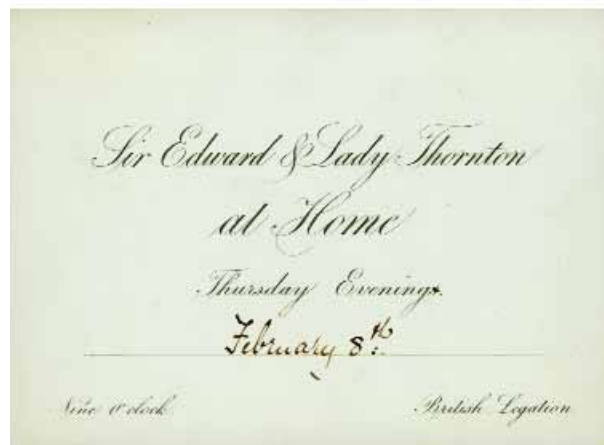
older brother Greville had been kicked in the head by a horse during a fall from his mount. Edward and Adelaide Sartoris were crushed by his death several days later. It was no secret that Greville had been the favorite son. The Sartorises saw great potential in him. He was well educated and, although a young man, quite skilled in international diplomacy. The couple fell into mourning and announced that they would not attend their younger son's wedding.

Oddly enough, had it not been for a strange political twist, Sir Edward Thornton's role as family representative would not have been required. Algy's aunt Fanny, who

lived only hours away in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, could have easily made the trip to Washington, D.C., to attend the wedding, but her personal disapproval of President Grant's politics held her back. This was ironic considering that she had been a fervent abolitionist in the years leading up to the Civil War. It was Grant's handling of Reconstruction that Fanny found most distressing. She had a personal connection to slavery, resulting from her marriage to a wealthy Southern plantation owner. Her husband had kept his slave-owning practices from her

until after their marriage. It was not until he brought Fanny to live on his Georgia plantation that she saw slavery in all its brutality.

Aghast at the conditions and treatment of the slaves, Fanny published literature calling for emancipation. Her abolitionist views tore the southern family apart. Fanny's two daughters remained faithful to their father and the Southern cause during the war. However, when Algy announced his engagement to Nelly, Fanny's daughter Fan was flattered to be associated with the first family. While Fanny the abolitionist derided Algy for associating with the president and his family, her formerly secessionist daughter defended Grant. None could persuade Fanny



Card of Sir Edward and Lady Thornton, British Ambassador to the United States, 1867–1881. Thornton was Algernon Sartoris's sponsor in Washington and represented his absent parents at the wedding. Anna Barnes Heath Papers, MHS Archives.

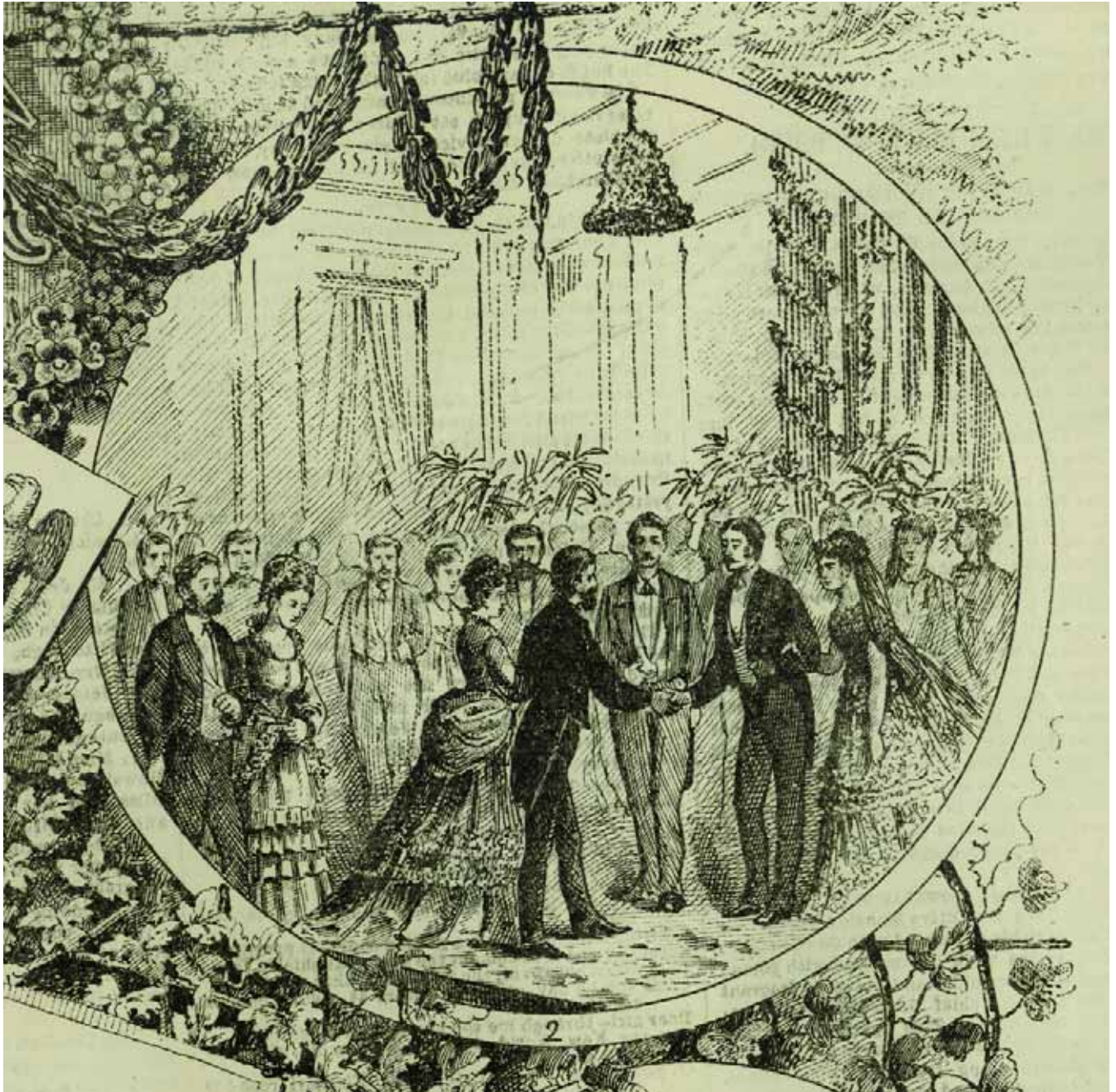
Long Branch, N.J.
August 5th 1874

My Dear Mr. Barnes,

My Mr. Grant
& I have the pleasure
of yours and Miss Anna's
company at dinner to-day
at three o'clock.

Respectfully,
Ulysses S. Grant

Letter written by Ulysses S. Grant inviting Joseph K. Barnes and daughter Anna to dinner, August 5, 1874. Anna Barnes lived across the street from the White House, was a close friend of Nelly's, and served as her maid of honor. Anna Barnes Heath Papers, MHS Archives.



The Reception. Wood engraving by F. H. Taylor, 1874. Anna Barnes Heath Papers, MHS Archives.

differently, and she distanced herself from the entire affair.

Meanwhile, back in Washington, General Babcock continued to make enemies when he announced that members of the press were not allowed to attend the wedding. The ceremony was scheduled for Thursday morn-

ing, May 21, but a press ban was issued for three days, beginning on Wednesday. The press howled that Babcock was ruling the affair with an iron fist. One paper declared that Babcock “had set down his foot and his arrangements should not be altered, no matter what might be done or wished for by others.” They labeled him

as impetuous and rude and mocked him for guarding the “interior of the castle ... with all his forces.”

Despite the small number of guests, the family was sparing no expense to make it a wedding fit for the daughter of the commander in chief. A private Pullman car was reserved to take Nelly and Julia to New York City. There they met with dressmakers who would supply Nelly with a gown that the press reported cost between \$1,500 and \$4,000 dollars. This price did not include the bride's other gowns, bridesmaids' dresses, shoes, hats, and other accessories necessary for the ceremony.

Nelly selected her friends to be bridesmaids, many of whom were the daughters of men in her father's administration. Anna Barnes was selected as first bridesmaid. She was the daughter of Surgeon General Joseph K. Barnes, an old friend of the president's and a neighbor. The Barnes family lived across the street from the White House, and Nelly and Anna had become best friends. The list of family names of the successive bridesmaids reads like a who's who of Grant-era politics: Edith Fish, daughter of Secretary of State Hamilton Fish; Lizzie Porter, daughter of Admiral David Porter; Minnie Sherman, daughter of William Tecumseh Sherman; Bessie Conkling, daughter of Senator Roscoe Conkling of New York; Sally Frelinghuysen, daughter of Senator Frederick Frelinghuysen of New Jersey; Fannie Drexel, daughter of Philadelphia banker A. J. Drexel; and Maggie Dent, Nelly's cousin and daughter of General Fred T. Dent.

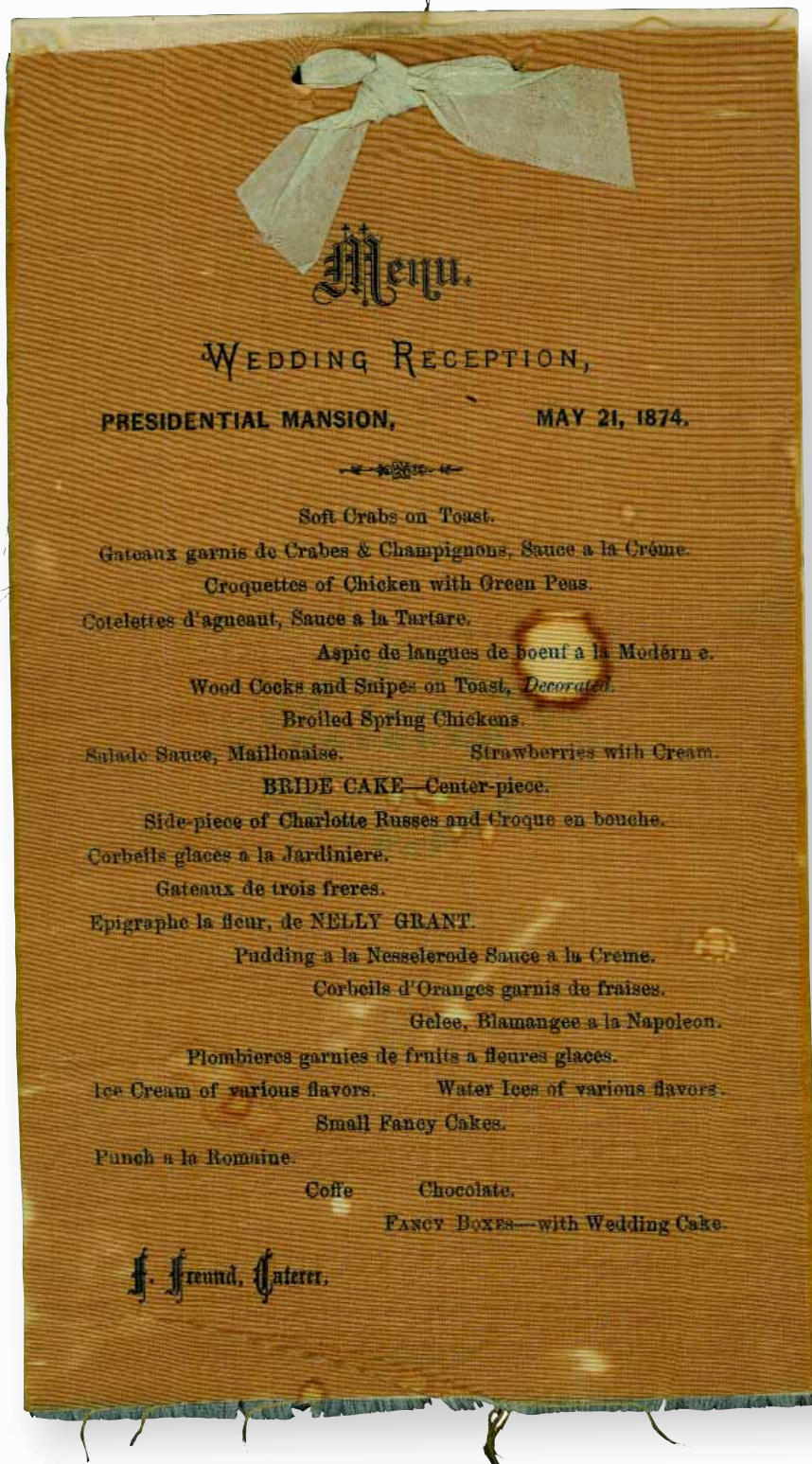
As wedding gifts poured into the White House, desperate reporters sought to find out all they could about the presents. Bailey and Company of Philadelphia was chosen as the wedding's jeweler. The firm sold \$15,000 worth of jewelry as presents for the couple. One of the firm's partners and two assistants were charged with bringing the gifts to Washington. Reporters saw them enter the White House. When the three men returned to the Arlington Hotel to dine for the evening, they were besieged by reporters, who plied them with drinks. The reporters failed in their efforts to discover any usable facts, but they succeeded in making the two assistants so inebriated that the two spent the night in the local drunk tank.

When the big day arrived, the press gathered outside the White House to await any news of the nuptials. The staff was ordered to keep the drapes drawn throughout the ceremony and reception breakfast. General Babcock

did not want to tempt any reporters who might want to peer through the windows. Inside the house, the rooms were festively adorned with flowers. Hundreds of candles were used to light the rooms that were made dark by the closed curtains. A mountain of gifts awaited the couple. Well-wishers sent jewelry such as a Roman bracelet and diamond rings; silk fans; glove boxes; laces; tea and coffee services; seven dozen knives, forks, and spoons; and nearly a dozen punch bowls. For his gift, Walt Whitman wrote a poem for the occasion. The White House staff presented Nelly with an elegant silver Tiffany fruit bowl. The press estimated the total cost of the gifts at over \$100,000, equivalent to approximately \$1.6 million in 2005.

The wedding took place on a beautiful, clear spring morning. The guests took their seats in the lavishly decorated East Room. Flowers and tropical plants lined the room. A platform covered by a Persian rug presented as gift by the sultan of Turkey acted as an altar. Two columns wrapped with white roses stood below the middle windows of the room, and above the altar was suspended a large wedding bell also covered in white flowers. At the outer edge of the platform stood two green marriage wreaths arranged with the initials of the bride and the groom. Rev. Dr. Tiffany of the Metropolitan Church of Washington, a Methodist minister, was chosen to officiate. The ceremony began with a procession of the groom and the Grant family. Algy and his best man, Fred Grant, the bride's older brother, led the way into the room, followed by Julia and Jesse. Then the eight bridesmaids entered, two by two, and formed a crescent around the dais. As the Marine Band played the “Wedding March,” Nelly walked slowly into the room. The president escorted his only daughter down the aisle to the waiting bridal party. As he stood with the group, his son Jesse observed that the president stood “silent, tense, with tears upon his cheeks that he made no movement to brush away.” The ceremony was quick, and after the vows were exchanged, the bridesmaids approached Nelly to offer their congratulations. Nelly turned to her father and embraced him.

As was the tradition, the guests were treated to a wedding breakfast immediately after the ceremony. Menus printed with gold on silk were presented to the guests as wedding favors. The selection of food was a nineteenth-century gourmet's delight. The spread



Menu.

WEDDING RECEPTION,

PRESIDENTIAL MANSION, MAY 21, 1874.



Soft Crabs on Toast.

Gateaux garnis de Crabes & Champignons, Sauce a la Crème.

Croquettes of Chicken with Green Peas.

Cotelettes d'agneau, Sauce a la Tartare.

Aspic de langues de boeuf a la Modern e.

Wood Cocks and Snipes on Toast, Decorated.

Broiled Spring Chickens.

Salade Sauce, Maillonnaise.

Strawberries with Cream.

BRIDE CAKE—Center-piece.

Side-piece of Charlotte Russes and Croque en bouche.

Corbells glaces a la Jardiniere.

Gateaux de trois freres.

Epigraphe la fleur, de NELLY GRANT.

Pudding a la Nesseleroide Sauce a la Creme.

Corbells d'Oranges garnis de fraises.

Gelee, Blamangee a la Napoleon.

Plombieres garnies de fruits a fleurs glaces.

Ice Cream of various flavors.

Water Ices of various flavors.

Small Fancy Cakes.

Punch a la Romaine.

Coffe

Chocolate.

FANCY BOXES—with Wedding Cake.

J. Freund, Caterer.

Menus for the wedding reception were printed with gold on silk and presented to guests as wedding favors. Anna Barnes Heath Papers, MHS Archives.

included woodcock and snipes on toast; soft crabs on toast; aspic de langues de boeuf; decorated broiled chickens; chicken croquettes with peas; sauces and salads; innumerable desserts, ice creams, and ices; punch; and fancy boxes of wedding cake.

With the wedding ceremony and reception complete, the couple hurried to leave for a night in New York before embarking for Great Britain. Arrangements were made to take the newlyweds by special train to Baltimore, Maryland, where their private car would be hooked to the regular train bound for New York. In a scene similar to royal weddings, the streets of Washington were lined with cheering admirers as Algy and Nelly rode past in a luxury carriage. The bells of the Metropolitan Church rang out the “Wedding March” and “Hail Columbia” along with “God Save the Queen” in reverence to Algy. At 1:40 P.M., the special train left the station. Nelly was off on her own for the first time in her life.

The newspapers scrambled for details. The telegraph lines buzzed furiously as each reporter wired the story back to the home office. The *St. Louis Republican* had sent its own reporters, who wired home the news for eager readers back at the president’s old homestead. Newer, faster telegraph technology allowed for quicker transmission of the news, and better printing techniques created tabloids with better pictures. The *New York Daily Graphic* boasted, “Thursday’s paper contained every item of interest in relation to the wedding, spread before our readers within three hours of its occurrence.” The public clamored for any information available. The paper responded with an unprecedented eighteen-page supplement filled with illustrations and stories covering all aspects of the wedding. “Our presses have failed to keep up with demand for copies,” the *Daily Graphic* exclaimed, “and still there comes a cry for more both from the neighborhood and other cities.”

The next day in New York, well-wishers created a mob

scene as they crowded outside the couple’s Fifth Avenue hotel. A carriage whisked them off to the docks where the steamship *Baltic* of the White Star Line awaited to transport Mr. and Mrs. Sartoris to their home in England. The bride’s parents, who had taken an overnight train to New York, arrived along with Anna Barnes and members of the president’s cabinet. Nelly’s brothers Jesse and Fred were also present. It was a difficult transition for a family that had always been so close. In a reminiscence written

decades later, Jesse Grant expressed his feeling that “Nelly’s [wedding] overwhelmed me in a mist of bewildering emotions from which I have never entirely emerged.” Young Jesse, who was most likely bored with the wedding, paid little attention to what was going on around him during the preparations and ceremony, but Nelly’s departure was clearly noticeable. “I recall a throng of indistinguishable faces,” he recalled, “a mist of white that was Nelly—a strange Nelly.... And then Nelly was gone, the White House strangely empty.” The words of good-bye exchanged between the girl and her family are not recorded. One can only imagine that the president was trying his best to keep up a dignified air befitting the nation’s leader.

On board the *Baltic*, the ship’s captain gave up his own cabin on deck for use by the new couple. This was an honor considering the prestige of the ship itself. The *Baltic* was the third of the original

“Big Four” White Star Line luxury liners that preceded such legendary ships as the *Titanic*. As if the festivities at the White House had not been enough, more activities would continue on board the ship as one of the staterooms had been secured for a reception area. Stateroom No. 1 was completely refitted for the occasion with walnut furniture, sofas, card tables, a liquor cabinet, and decorative statues. The couple greeted guests and entertained them in this elaborate setting. The *Baltic*’s passengers in turn entertained the Sartorises by performing various programs



Within a few years of the wedding, Nelly and Algernon Sartoris’s relationship had badly deteriorated and togetherness was rare. Photograph by Alexander Bassano, London, 1875. Portraits, MHS Photographs and Prints.

for them each night of the voyage excluding Sunday. Eight days after leaving New York, the *Baltic* sailed into the harbor at Queenstown, Cork, Ireland. From there, the couple traveled to Warsash House, the Sartoris family estate in Hampshire.

Upon arriving at her new home, Nelly's in-laws greeted her with open arms. Adelaide Sartoris was taken by Nelly's sweet disposition but disappointed in the young girl's lack of education. Nelly's neglected schooling was painfully noticeable to Adelaide's friends, who admired the elder Sartoris for her intelligent and witty conversations. When Henry James came to visit, he commented that Adelaide's talk was "first rate" but lamented "poor little Nelly Grant sits speechless on the sofa, understanding neither head nor tail of such a high discourse and exciting one's compassion for her incongruous lot in life."

The marriage seemed to progress well enough at first. The couple moved into a cottage on the Sartoris estate. By the end of 1874, Nelly was expecting. Adam Badeau wrote the president to say that he had visited Nelly and found her in good spirits. Other visitors conveyed the same message to the Grants. The young couple traveled with Algy's parents on trips to Italy and then to America, where their first child, Grant Greville, was born at Long Branch. Tragically, little Grant died of convulsions the following year, but soon Nelly was pregnant again.

In 1877, the Grants left the White House. The family retired from the city and shortly thereafter toured Europe. They arrived in London, where the queen respectfully received them. The Grants visited their daughter and grandchildren at Warsash House but stayed only a week before continuing their tour of the continent.

On both sides of the Atlantic, rumors were circulating about the Sartorises' marriage. When President and

Mrs. Grant returned home to New Jersey, they issued a statement meant to dispel any gossip that Nelly was desperately homesick and lonely. The reality of the situation was quite different. Algy was drinking more heavily and appeared bored with Nelly. Any hopes he might have had of gaining in stature from his union with the daughter of the president of the United States did not seem to materialize.

By 1880, two more children had been born to Algy and Nelly, but he was spending a great deal of time away from home. Algy had purchased a large farm near Green Bay, Wisconsin, and stayed there during the spring and summer months. Nelly remained in England with the children. The arrangement broke into scandal in 1883 when, shortly after his arrival at the farm, he was seen in the company of another woman. Mrs. Bush, a young English widow, had rented a home near Algy's farm. Local residents reported seeing a man matching Algy's description entering the home in the dark of midnight and leaving in the hours before dawn. It became even more scandalous when Mrs. Bush did not pay her bills and the local sheriff came to seize her furniture and other property. When the story was printed in the *Chicago Tribune*, Algy fled to New York and denied any illicit involvement with Mrs. Bush. "Let them say what they please: it can't hurt me when I know that is it

utterly without foundation," he told the *New York Times*.

Despite all the denials, the evidence did not point to a happy union. In 1885, President Grant was in the last stages of throat cancer. Nelly was determined to come home and be by his side before his passing. She rushed to make plans for a return to New York, where the president resided. It was her intention to take the children with her to see their grandparents, but Algy refused to allow the children to go. She sailed alone and arrived in time to



After Algernon's death in 1893, Nelly returned to America with her children and married Frank Hatch Jones. She lived until 1922. Photograph, ca. 1920. Portraits, MHS Photographs and Prints.

spend the remaining days with her father. After his death, Nelly requested that the children be sent to America. This was denied, and she was asked to return home. She had spent five months away from her children. An enraged *St. Louis Republic* later reported, "Her children were held as hostages for her return."

When Nelly arrived home in England, she found that Algy had removed himself from their residence and moved into one of his father's estates. It was difficult to hide such arrangements, and the rumors of a dead marriage persisted. When Edward Sartoris died, he left Nelly a residence, but rumors persisted that it was Nelly's brothers who were paying her bills and not her husband. Still, the family denied the accusations. Julia Grant, it was reported in the *New York Times*, was "greatly grieved and pained by the public discussion of the domestic affairs of her daughter." All reports of Nelly's desire to seek a divorce "are entirely without foundation." The truth of the matter was that Algy had denied her a divorce.

The whole sad affair came to an end in February 1893 when Algy, while living in a hotel on the isle of Capri, Italy, died of pneumonia at age forty-two. No details of his last days were published in the papers. When word reached the United States, the newspapers reported the story of his death with no mercy for the man who had abused their favorite daughter. Of Algy's death, the *St. Louis Republic* wrote, "The death of Algernon Sartoris, the husband of Nelly Grant, at Capri, Italy, created no other feeling here than of complacency. Sartoris was one of the most unpopular men who ever came to this country, and he probably left more enemies when he returned to Europe than any foreigner before or since that time."

After his death, Nelly remained in England until the autumn of 1894. Algy and both of his parents were deceased. There was no one to deny her return home. She returned to America with her children and took up residence in Washington, D.C. Eighteen years after Algy's death, she married Frank Hatch Jones. Sadly, circumstances did not allow her to fully enjoy her second marriage. The couple moved to Chicago, Illinois, where Nelly suffered a disabling stroke. Paralyzed, she remained an invalid until her death in 1922.

The White House wedding of Nelly Grant captured the attention of an American public eager to embrace something positive in the bleak years following the Civil

War and Reconstruction. Even the stories of impending doom could not dampen the spirits of those who sought escape in America's "royal" wedding. The media seized the opportunity to bring the event into everyone's home, thereby setting a precedent that lives on today with supermarket tabloids and popular magazines featuring celebrity weddings. The tragic circumstances of the marriage did not succeed in tarnishing the memories of that happy occasion, and it still remains as one of the great events in the history of the White House. ■

References

- Anna Barnes Heath Papers. Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.
- Blainey, Ann. *Fanny & Adelaide: The Remarkable Lives of the Kemble Sisters*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001.
- Grant, Jesse. *In the Days of My Father, General Grant*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1925.
- McFeely, William. *Grant: A Biography*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004.
- New York Daily Graphic*. "The White House Wedding." May 23, 1874.
- New York Times*. "The Bewitching Mrs. Bush." June 28, 1883.
- . "Mr. Sartoris Speaks." July 2, 1883.
- Othfors, Daniel, and Henrik Ljungstrom. *The Great Ocean Liners*. <http://www.greatoceanliners.net>.
- Ross, Ishbel. *The General's Wife: The Life of Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1959.
- Simon, John Y., ed. *The Papers of U. S. Grant*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 2000.
- . *The Personal Memoirs of Julia Dent Grant*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1975.
- St. Louis Republican*. "Arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Sartoris in Europe." June 1, 1874.
- St. Louis Republican*. "Poor Nellie Grant. Her Story Recalled by the Death of Her Husband" February 8, 1893.
- St. Louis Republican*. "Preparation for the Sartoris-Grant Nuptials." May, 20, 1874.
- Truman, Margaret. *The President's House: 1800 to the Present*. New York: Random House, 2003.

Christopher Gordon is archivist for the Missouri Historical Society. He grew up near Springfield, Missouri, and received a master of arts in history from Southwest Missouri State University in 1999. Gordon became familiar with the Grant-Sartoris wedding after working with wedding mementos from the famous occasion in the Missouri Historical Society Archives. He has written articles on a number of historical topics and is currently researching the life of notorious New Orleans, Louisiana, madwoman Madame Lalaurie.