

Presented To The Court Of St. James

by Lynne Belluscio

If you are a Downton Abbey fan, you will remember the scene where Rose is presented to King George V and Queen Mary at the Court of St. James in England in 1923.

As I looked at Rose's gown and veil, it reminded me of this photograph that we have in the Woodward collection. I have assumed that this was a photograph of Eleanor Woodward Vietor, the oldest daughter of Orator Woodward. She was born June 13, 1889 - the fourth of the six Woodward children.

Not much is known about Eleanor. In her wedding announcement, it was mentioned that "the bride is a charming girl of the American type that loves the great outdoors. She is a splendid horsewoman, drives a motor skillfully, plays tennis and golf and is a most interesting conversationalist. She had given freely of her time and means to an intelligent practice of charity and in that good homely expression which the latter generation of society editors has tabooed as being too plebian, she knows how to keep house."

Eleanor married Dr. John A. Vietor, a member of one of the oldest families of New York City, on June 13, 1913. On the back of this photograph, is written,

Eleanor Woodward Vietor, presented to the Court of St. James 1924. Is this a 35 year-old Eleanor? So far, I haven't been able to substantiate that, but I believe it is Eleanor.

Her daughter-in-law, Mia Macklin Hodge had also been presented to the Court of St. James in 1938, before her marriage to Eleanor's son, Jack. Mia had attended Heathfield School in England and was a member of the British Olympic skating team and held the European water-skiing championship.

Mia's first husband was Peter Hodge. It was mentioned that Mia's wedding to Jack Vietor was swank and lavish and ranked with any Hollywood movie marriage. It was mentioned that Jack Vietor was the heir to a \$7,000,000 fund left by his mother, heiress to the Jell-O fortune.

The bride was given away by Prince Vladimir de Rachevsky.

Until Queen Elizabeth II abolished the practice of presenting

debutants to the Court in the 1950s, young ladies of noble birth were presented to the Court of St. James, but other women, of notable standing were also presented to the King and Queen. So this must have been the situation with Eleanor and Mia.

It was compulsory that women presented to the court had to wear a tulle veil with three white feathers, in respect for the Prince of Wales. The three feathers were mounted and worn toward the left side of the head. Colored feathers were not allowed and the veils could not be longer than 45 inches. Formal dresses with trains were the rule as were full length white gloves. As I look at the photo, I wonder what Eleanor did with her gloves.



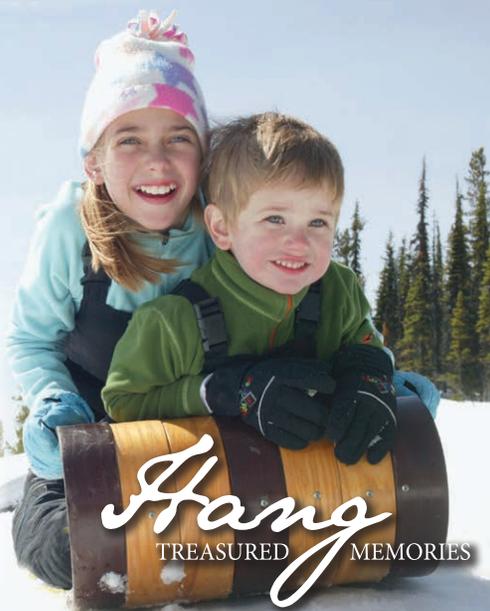
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