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High res images available upon request

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**Marjorie Merriweather Post's Staff Dining Room on view beginning August 8**

**Re-created space, a model of mid-century modern design, offers view of staff life at Hillwood and the intricacies of Post's perfectly managed way of life**

WASHINGTON—A refurbished space at Hillwood Estate, Museum and Gardens will provide a glimpse into staff life at Marjorie Merriweather's Post's grand Washington, D.C. estate when the Staff Dining Room opens on August 8, 2014.

Between full-time, part-time, and seasonal positions, Post employed between 100 and 300 people across her three residences in Washington, D.C., Palm Beach, and the Adirondacks. This newly refurbished space, a result of last year's

special exhibition and accompanying publication ***Living Artfully: At Home with Marjorie Merriweather Post***, illustrates a small portion of staff life at Hillwood in the 1950s and 1960s, reflecting, like other working spaces at Hillwood, the design aesthetic of the mid-century, when Post renovated Hillwood. The new space highlights the importance that Post placed on the comfort and contentment of her staff and explores the precision with which she graciously managed them to maintain the flawless style of living and entertaining for which she is remembered.

Post spoke gratefully and with pride about her staff, saying, "I like a smoothly running organization and have been blessed with a staff who take pride and pleasure in seeing to it that it is just that. We work out our details meticulously so that matters progress smoothly, and this seems to make a very great impression...That has always been our way." When she oversaw the renovations for her new Hillwood estate, between 1955 and 1957, Post incorporated comfortable accommodations for her staff into the plans and included the most modern features to ensure efficiency and ease of use.



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“Post was a generous and competitive employer,” explained Estella Chung, curator of American material culture and historian at Hillwood. “She provided the typical room and board for live-in staff, but also paid compensation up to 35% higher than average and offered generous perks, such as tailored work clothes and laundry service paid for by the estate.” The staff for the house alone numbered 16 to 18 and included the butler, footmen, and maids, who received housing and meals as part of their compensation. Six security personnel worked rotating shifts. Post commissioned stand-alone outbuildings for the chauffeur, steward, head gardener, and unmarried staff. Employees who worked outdoors, such as the 12 to 15 gardeners, generally did not live on-site.

Adjacent to the Kitchen, with its gleaming linoleum floors and up-to-the-minute appliances, this newly refurbished room offers an inside look at life at Hillwood. Replicas of some of the original furnishings and the original flooring reflect the 1950s aesthetic, while panels with wall text and an organizational chart outlining the large staff that Post employed across her three properties further illustrate what life was like working for Post.

The Staff Dining Room, with its informality and close proximity to the Kitchen, was popular with young guests at Hillwood looking for company and a snack, which sometimes included delicious dinner party leftovers. “Anything from cookies to cake to whatever had been served the previous evening...You’d open those wonderful refrigerators and poke your head in,” described Post granddaughter Nina Rumbough. Hers is one of several voices of family and former staff that help tell the story in this new display.

### **Mid-Century Design at Hillwood**

The Staff Dining Room joins several other mid-century style spaces at Hillwood. The linoleum floors and Geneva steel cabinets of the Kitchen and Pantry, the “Mamie pink” color of Post’s bathroom, and the space-age looking hair dryer outfitting the Massage Room, are a few of the indicators that Post’s passion for French 18<sup>th</sup>-century interior design was complemented with an appreciation for modern-day style and convenience. Rooting Post’s Hillwood even more firmly in the modern era of the 1950s and 60s and further illustrating her mindfulness for her staff is a refurbished fallout shelter, one of four that Post had built across the estate in the 1960s, complete with pink walls and a supply of goods from General Foods. The shelter, along with the film projection booth, is open for private tours for upper level Hillwood donors and special group tours.

### **Opening Details**

The Staff Dining Room will first open to Hillwood members only on August 5, 6, and 7. These days will include informal talks with Post family members, including Post’s granddaughter and Hillwood board president Ellen Charles, discussing their experience with Post’s staff and the role that the Staff

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Dining Room played in it. See [www.HillwoodMuseum.org/Join](http://www.HillwoodMuseum.org/Join) for more details. The space will be open for public viewing beginning at 10 am on Friday, August 8.

The publication that accompanied the special exhibition, *Living Artfully: At Home with Marjorie Merriweather Post*, a luxuriously illustrated account of Post's organizational prowess and flawless style of living, now in its 5<sup>th</sup> printing, is available for sale in the Museum Shop.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Location:**

4155 Linnean Avenue, NW, Washington, DC  
Metro: VanNess/UDC, Red Line (20 minute walk)

### **Information:**

(202) 686-5807 for information and reservations or [www.HillwoodMuseum.org](http://www.HillwoodMuseum.org)  
Follow us [www.Facebook.com/HillwoodMuseum](https://www.facebook.com/HillwoodMuseum) or Twitter @HillwoodMuseum

### **Hours:**

Tuesday through Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm; Select Sundays, 1 to 5 pm. Closed Mondays, most national holidays, and for several weeks in January.

### **Café:**

The HILLWOOD Café serves lunch Tuesday through Saturday from 11:00 am to 3:30 pm. Afternoon Tea is served on Sundays only from 1 to 3:30 pm. Express Dining, featuring a quick selection of sandwiches, salads, snacks, and beverages is available Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm and Sunday from 1 to 4 pm. Call (202) 686-5807 for café reservations

### **Suggested Donation:**

\$15, \$12 seniors, \$10 college students, \$5 for visitors age 6 to 18. No donation is suggested for children under 6.

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When Post cereal heiress, art collector, social figure, and philanthropist [Marjorie Merriweather Post](#) left to the public her northwest Washington, D.C. estate, she endowed the country with the most comprehensive collection of Russian imperial art outside of Russia, a notable 18<sup>th</sup>-century French decorative art collection, and 25 acres of serene landscaped gardens and natural woodlands. Opened as a public institution in 1977, today Hillwood Estate, Museum and Gardens offers a gracious and immersive experience unlike any other. Highlights of the collection include Fabergé eggs, Russian porcelain, Russian Orthodox icons, Beauvais tapestries, and Sèvres porcelain, and Post's personal collection of apparel, accessories, and exquisite jewelry. Thirteen acres of enchanting formal gardens include the Japanese-style Garden, Rose Garden, French Parterre, and a greenhouse full of orchids.