An Autobiography of the Executive

Mansion... As Written by

Mrs. Herbert H. Lehman
The Present 'First Lady'

DAILY WORKER FILES

AS FOREIGN AGENT

Washington — (AP) — O. John Rogge, assistant attorney general, said today that The Daily Worker, official newspaper of the Communist Party in the United States, had filed a registration statement required of all agents of foreign principals.

Such statements are required under a 1938 law, but the Daily Worker heretofore has refused to file, the Justice Department said.

Rogge's announcement said while denying it acted as an agent for any foreign principal, the Daily Worker had admitted relationship with several foreign organizations, including Runag, a Communist propaganda source in Moscow, Russia.

MRS. HERBERT H. LEHMAN

Neighborhood's Wash

Scaling Fence Is a 'Personal Touch'

Mistress of the Executive Mansion at 138 Eagle these last seven years, Mrs. Herbert H. Lehman, wife of the Governor, has delved into the "personal history" of the famous structure and has composed what she chooses to call "An Autobiography of the Executive Mansion," which follows:

I MAKE no claim to beauty—having been built during that period of American architecture when artistic merit was measured by the volume of turrets, cupolas and gingerbread decoration.

I have no inferiority complex, however, for despite my many failures, they say I have a certain dignity—which perhaps is also typical of the time of my origin. My surroundings—once the most fashionable in the Capital City—have grown more humble with the years, but I feel thoroughly at home and happy, and rather enjoy each little personal touches as a neighbor's washtub swaying in the breeze, at times almost scaling the fence right into my very grounds.

There has been a lot of talk about changing the location of the Governor's Mansion. But I have often heard my present occupants say they like me just as I am, and that they could not possibly like a new and modern mansion so well as me, with my traditions and memories of bygone days.

WHEN the present Governor's wife used to visit Mrs. Roosevelt, I recall very well how she would study me from top to bottom. I had the feeling she was contemplating the changes she would like to make if ever she were mistress of the mansion. Often times she has said what fun it would be to redecorate and refurbish me. She thinks my proportions are beautiful and is most enthusiastic about the graciousness of my broad halls and high ceilings, but she bemoans the fact that the Governor says "thumbs down" on any decorating involving large expenditures. Perhaps he is right—but I could be so handsome with lots of fresh paint and some bright new chintzes.

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The architect who planned me certainly understood his job, for although I was not originally cast for such a lofty position, I seem to have fulfilled my obligations satisfactorily—having comfortably housed all the governors and their families since the state first bought me in 1874, and made me the official Executive Mansion.

As a matter of fact, I really served a three-year probation, term, for Gov. Samuel J. Tilden rented me when he was elected in 1874. No adequate residence had previously been provided for the governors since March, 1874, when Albany was first selected by the Legislature as the Capital City of the Empire State, had always rented homes in various parts of the city. I came a long way from my humble beginning as a farmer's house to become the Executive Mansion which enviable position I have proudly held continuously sin 1874.

A S Governor Tilden, the first governor to be housed under my roof, was a bachelor, I could not imagine what he would do with so much space. It fell to the Governor's sister, Mrs. Pelton, to manage his social and domestic affairs, to see that the opportunities afforded within the borders of my walls were not wasted.

This she did creditably, for Governor Tilden's incumbency was marked by much lavish entertaining and many brilliant affairs—perhaps the most outstanding of which was the reception in honor of William Cullen Bryant in February 1875. This has been referred to as "one of the finest entertainments ever held at the mansion."

While I do not want to append a boastful note, I am mighty proud of the long line of distinguished governors who have graced my threshold at...

138 Eagle—the home of New York's Governors.
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of the many crucial problems which have been discussed and oftentimes solved under my roof. You will understand the pride I feel in my unexcelled record when you recall that two of our greatest presidents, Grover Cleveland and Franklin D. Roosevelt, went to the White House via the New York Executive Mansion, and that they both—as well as another great governor, Alfred E. Smith—received word of their presidential nominations in my rooms.

By the way, did you know that a really historic romance had its inception here during the administration of Grover Cleveland, when Miss Ruth Folsom—who later became Mrs. Cleveland—was a frequent visitor at the mansion?

A L T H O U G H space does not permit a detailed reference to each of the governors, I have known, my story would be incomplete without mentioning Theodore Roosevelt, who distinguished himself not only as a great governor, but as a great president as well.

Then, too, I cannot refrain from mentioning another, whose long record of distinguished service makes me especially proud of having known him—and whose wife I have frequently heard referred to as "one of the most popular First Ladies the state has ever known." Perhaps you have already guessed that I refer to the present chief justice of the Supreme Court of the United States—the Hon. Charles Evans Hughes, who was governor of New York State from 1907 to 1910.

It is a temptation to go on and on, reminiscing about the interesting and colorful incidents I have personally witnessed in the past. Since, however, this is 1940 and the trend of the times is to live in the present and future rather than in the past, I am going to bring you down to the present day and touch upon the lives and personalities of people, some of whom you know or with whom you have become familiar through the press.

BECAUSE of your interest in me, I feel you would like to know something about the family which at present calls me their home. As I have already mentioned, I had long considered Governor and Mrs. Lehman old friends when they came to reside within my walls. I had, however, known their children but casually prior to 1933, when they celebrated their father's first inauguration here.

Soon we grew to be close friends, for my corridors seemed to hold untold charms for them and their young friends. For the first two years, John, then a lad of 13, and Hilda, 12 year old, attended school in Albany. Peter, the eldest son, was at boarding school and subsequently went to college. Since a long while now, I regret to say, their young voices and gay laughter resound but seldom in my halls, for John and Hilda are at college and Peter is married.
High Finance and Lollipops Are Discussed
With Equal Solemnity and Serenity
When Children Pay Visits

The children of the neighborhood seem to sense the void made by the absence of the young Lehmans and it is frequent occurrence in the early evening to hear the front door bell and the sound of little feet saying, "Is the Governor at home? Can we see him and Mrs. Lehman?" Invariably, if the Governor is not occupied, these youngsters are ushered into his study on the ground floor.

It amazes me to see with what frankness they converse with Governor Lehman—just as though they were contemporaries. All kinds of topics are discussed—books, sports, and, last but not least, another topic of mutual interest—lollipops—of which the Governor always keeps a supply on hand for just such emergencies. On saying, their parting words almost invariably are, "When can we come again?"—and the answer, even now, is always, "Never too soon to suit me!"

Another welcome caller is the postman, who, in addition to the general mail which is addressed to the Governor and his wife, frequently brings letters from the Lehman children. Most of the Governor's mail is taken direct to his office, but a few of the letters come to the mansion. Like you, I have often wondered what and why so many people write to a governor's wife. I made it my business to find out, and it is an amusing experience to see how deeply touched they are by this courtesy and friendship on the part of their little neighbors.

While the formality and type of social entertainments at the mansion vary with each administration, there are two functions which, over a period of years, have come to be a part of the tradition of the Governor's official life. To the Legislative Reception and Ball, usually held early in February, are invited all legislators, heads of departments of the state government, newspaper correspondents covering the capital district, members of the Governor's office staff, members of the judicial department of the state government, and many other groups connected with the government of the state. Cares and problems are checked in my cloak room, and a spirit of friendliness and gaiety prevails.

The other function to which I refer is the state dinner to the judges of the Court of Appeals and their wives. It seems to me that Governor and Mrs. Lehman always look forward to this occasion with particular pleasure—perhaps because the Governor's brother—now chief judge—has sat as a member of this court since long before the Governor entered public life.

There are, of course, many other functions of a somewhat official character. The present Governor's wife has been "at home" on alternate Tuesdays, on which occasions she is assisted in receiving by Mrs. Charles Poletti, the wife of the lieutenant governor. These "at homes" are most informal and provide an opportunity for discussion of intimate and personal topics. It is here that I am often discussed sometimes quite critically, with such remarks as "Why don't you do over the halls and remove the red paper?" or "Couldn't you repaint the drawing room?" Although I don't understand much about finance or budgets, I gather that the Governor feels there are more pressing needs at the moment than a "new outfit" for me. So I suppose I shall have to go along for the time being with unchanged attire—red walls and all!

Not long ago, however, I did have some fresh paint very effectively applied on my fences and outside trim. This was early last June, when an unusual amount of activity on my premises announced the joyous news that the Conference of Governors was to meet in Albany for the first time, and that I was to be freshened and groomed for the occasion. The luncheon in my garden, attended by governors of 30 states and their families, will always stand out as one of the most impressive as well as one of the most historic of all my recollections. I learned much about the various states as I overheard the visiting governors discuss their individual difficulties and common problems.

How proud I am to be located in a democracy where men from all parts of a vast country can come together in a spirit of cooperation, for the sole purpose of freely exchanging views and benefiting by one another's experience!

Perhaps it was only my imagina—
Reception given by Governor Tilden to William Cullen Bryant, poet and editor, on Feb. 8, 1875, in the parlors of Executive Mansion.