

A woman of short stature, high heels, and quick wit, Louise Sneed Hill ruled over Denver's high society for four decades with her Southern charm, societal tact, and a passion for success. To Hill, elite society was, in part, a game that could be lost and won and she was determined to come out on top. Much like the ideal of the self-made man that implied success in a professional capacity, shrewdness and wit in business, and acquisition of great wealth, Hill was a self-made woman in terms of elite societal achievement. She aided in ushering in a new era of culture in the United States. She was one of the earliest women to publicly bring about the transition from Victorian culture to a modern society that embraced things like alcohol and leisure activities. Hill's personality was, in the words of *Denver Post* reporter Helen Eastom, the culmination of "the delicate grace and dignity of the south, and the charming vigor and spontaneity of the west."<sup>1</sup> She combined her southern roots of a relaxed, Victorian leisure culture with a moral, puritanical work ethic common of the North as well as the vision of liberal individualism that the final frontier of the West provided to present a new vision of gentility.

Hill was born in a compelling time between the Victorian moralists of the preceding generation and the flappers of the next aeon. While modernization of society is typically attributed to movie stars/celebrities and the jazz age contemporaries of the 1920s and later, Louise Hill's generation were actually the earliest catalysts for change. Born in the 1860s, Hill, with aspirations of leading high society, had to find a delicate balance between reconciling with the older generation while bringing about new traditions to satisfy the more modern, vogueish-inclined individuals of her generation and those of the next that entered the social scene during her reign. Oftentimes, it was this uncharted middle ground she walked that caused so many of her decisions to appear paradoxical. While she felt much of society was too stringent, she still harkened at times towards maintaining control and policing society – she felt the reins needed to be loosened but also authored a book on social etiquette. She desired an essence of strictness but with playful qualities, like the introduction of animal dances (such as the worm wiggle and turkey trot) and the enjoyment of alcohol and frivolous activities like roller skating to the privileged class. Throughout her tenure as the doyenne of Denver's upper crust, she walked a fine line between the old and the new at a time when American society was unsure of its social direction as it entered into the first decades of the twentieth century.

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<sup>1</sup> Helen Eastom, "Hospitality of Mrs. Hill World Famed," *The Denver Post*. 12 Sept 1926.