

= Lorena Hickok =

Lorena Alice Hickok (March 7 , 1893 ? May 1 , 1968) was an American journalist known for her close relationship with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt .

Born in East Troy , Wisconsin to a dressmaker and a dairy @-@ farmer , Hickok had an unhappy childhood marked by isolation and abuse . After her mother 's death when Hickok was fourteen , she left home , worked on her own , and completed high school with the help of a cousin . She went into journalism after failing out of college , and soon became a successful reporter for the Minneapolis Tribune and the Associated Press (AP) , achieving several firsts for American women journalists . By 1932 , she had become the nation 's best @-@ known female reporter .

After being assigned to cover Roosevelt during her husband 's first presidential campaign , Hickok struck up a close relationship with the soon @-@ to @-@ be First Lady . For several years , the two corresponded almost every day , traveled together , and professed emotional and physical affection for one another . The exact nature of this relationship has been widely discussed by historians ; some have argued that the relationship was clearly romantic or erotic , while others have argued that historians have been misled by Roosevelt 's exuberant letters . More than 3 @,@ 000 letters from the pair 's correspondence are preserved at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum .

Compromised as a reporter by her personal relationship with Roosevelt , Hickok left the AP and began work as the chief investigator for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) , a department of Franklin Roosevelt 's New Deal . Hickok encouraged or inspired several of Eleanor Roosevelt 's initiatives , including her syndicated column , her all @-@ women press conferences , and her planned community at Arthurdale , West Virginia . As Hickok grew more demanding of the First Lady , however , the pair 's initial closeness lessened . Following complications with her diabetes , Hickok resigned from FERA in 1936 and worked for three years promoting the 1939 New York World 's Fair . From 1940 to 1945 , she served as the executive secretary of the Women 's Division of the Democratic National Committee , living at the White House for most of this time . As her diabetes steadily worsened , she lived out her final years at Hyde Park to be near Roosevelt , publishing several books .

= = Early life and reporting career = =

Lorena Hickok , popularly known as " Hick " , was born in East Troy in Walworth County , Wisconsin , the daughter of Anna Adelsa (née Waite) and Addison Hickok . Lorena 's mother made dresses , while her father was a buttermaker . During childhood , Hickok experienced a troubled family life , characterized by abuse , unemployment , and repeated moves . When Hickok was ten , the family moved to Bowdle , South Dakota . An introverted child , Hickok was embarrassed by her height , and later recalled that she spent most of her time in solitude , daydreaming or playing with the animals of her family 's farm . At fourteen , she left home following her mother 's death , and worked as a maid until her mother 's cousin , Ella Ellis , took her in . While living with Ellis , Hickok finished high school and enrolled at Lawrence College in Appleton , Wisconsin .

Unable to fit in at college , Hickok failed out in her first year . She was hired to cover train arrivals and departures and write personal interest stories at The Battle Creek Evening News for \$ 7 a week . In an attempt to follow in the footsteps of her role model , novelist and former reporter Edna Ferber , she joined the Milwaukee Sentinel as its society editor , but moved on to the city beat where she developed a talent as an interviewer . She interviewed celebrities , including actress Lillian Russell , pianist Ignacy Paderewski , and opera singers Nellie Melba and Geraldine Farrar , gaining a wide audience . She also became close friends with diva Ernestine Schumann @-@ Heink .

Hickok moved to Minneapolis to work for the Minneapolis Tribune . She enrolled at the University of Minnesota , leaving upon being forced to live in a women 's dormitory . She stayed with the Tribune where she was given opportunities unusual for a female reporter . She had a byline and was the paper 's chief reporter , covering politics , sports , and preparing editorials . During her tenure with the paper , she also covered the football team , becoming one of the first female reporters to be

assigned a sports beat . In 1923 , she won an award from the Associated Press for writing the best feature story of the month , a piece on President Warren G. Harding 's funeral train .

During her years in Minneapolis , Hickok lived with a society reporter named Ella Morse , with whom she had a six @-@ year relationship . In 1926 , Hickok was diagnosed with diabetes , and Morse persuaded her take a year 's leave from the newspaper so the pair could travel to San Francisco and Hickok could write a novel . At the beginning of the leave , however , Morse unexpectedly eloped with an ex @-@ boyfriend , leaving Hickok devastated . Unable to face a return to Minneapolis , Hickok moved to New York , landing a job with the New York Daily Mirror .

After working for The Mirror for about a year , Hickok obtained a job with the Associated Press in 1928 , where she became one of the wire service 's top correspondents . Her November 1928 story on the sinking of the SS Vestris was published in the New York Times under her own byline , the first woman 's byline to appear in the paper . She also reported on the Lindbergh kidnapping and other national events . By 1932 , she had become the nation 's best @-@ known female reporter .

= = Early relationship with Eleanor Roosevelt = =

Hickok first met Roosevelt in 1928 when assigned to interview her by the AP . In 1932 , Hickok convinced her editors to allow her to cover Eleanor Roosevelt during her husband 's presidential campaign and for the four @-@ month period between his election and inauguration . When the mother of Franklin 's secretary , Missy LeHand , died in October 1932 , Eleanor invited Hickok to accompany her to Potsdam , New York for the funeral . The women spent the long train ride talking , beginning a long friendship . By Franklin 's inauguration on March 4 , 1933 , Hickok had become Eleanor 's closest friend . The two made trips together to Albany and Washington , D.C. , and spent nearly every day in each other 's company . Hickok joined the Roosevelts every Sunday night for dinner , while on other nights Eleanor joined Hickok at the theater or opera , or at dinners alone at Hickok 's apartment . For the inauguration , Eleanor wore a sapphire ring Hickok had given her .

That same day , Hickok interviewed Roosevelt in a White House bathroom , her first official interview as First Lady . By this time , Hickok was deeply in love with Roosevelt and finding it increasingly difficult to provide objective reporting . In addition , Hickok 's job kept her largely in New York , while Eleanor was in Washington . Both women were troubled by the separation , professing their love by telephone and letter ; Roosevelt put a picture of Hickok up in her study , which she told Hickok she kissed every night and every morning . During this period , Roosevelt wrote daily ten- to fifteen @-@ page letters to " Hick " , who was planning to write a biography of the First Lady .

The nature of Hickok and Roosevelt 's relationship has been a subject of dispute among historians . Roosevelt was close friends with several lesbian couples , such as Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman , and Esther Lape and Elizabeth Read , suggesting that she was familiar with the lifestyle ; Marie Souvestre , Roosevelt 's childhood teacher and a great influence on her later thinking , was also a lesbian . Hickok biographer Doris Faber published some of Roosevelt and Hickok 's correspondence in 1980 , but concluded that the lovestruck phrasing was simply an " unusually belated schoolgirl crush " and warned historians not to be misled . Researcher Leila J. Rupp criticized Faber 's argument , calling her book " a case study in homophobia " and arguing that Faber unwittingly presented " page after page of evidence that delineates the growth and development of a love affair between the two women " . In 1992 , Roosevelt biographer Blanche Wiesen Cook argued that the relationship was in fact romantic , generating national attention .

Biographer Doris Kearns Goodwin summarized the letters between Hickok and Roosevelt thus :

Hickok longed to kiss the soft spot at the corner of Eleanor 's mouth ; Eleanor yearned to hold Hickok close ; Hickok despaired at being away from Eleanor ; Eleanor wished she could lie down beside Hickok and take her in her arms . Day after day , month after month , the tone in the letters on both sides remains fervent and loving .

Goodwin concluded , however , that " whether Hickok and Eleanor went beyond kisses and hugs " cannot be known for certain , and that the important issue is the impact the close relationship had on both women 's lives . A 2011 essay by Russell Baker reviewing two new Roosevelt biographies in the New York Times Review of Books stated , " That the Hickok relationship was indeed erotic now

seems beyond dispute . "

= = In the Roosevelt administration = =

Early in the Roosevelt administration , Hickok is credited with pushing Eleanor to write her own newspaper column , " My Day " , and to hold weekly press conferences specifically for female journalists . Hickok found it difficult to objectively cover the Roosevelts herself , however , and once suppressed a story at Eleanor 's request . The declining quality of her reporting soon caused her to receive a pay cut . Despite her worries about leaving the career on which she had built her identity , Hickok quit the AP at Eleanor 's urging in mid @-@ 1933 . Eleanor then helped Hickok obtain the position as a Chief Investigator for Harry Hopkins ' Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) , where she conducted fact @-@ finding missions . In 1933 , Hickok went on a two @-@ month tour of the American South , where she was horrified by the poverty , malnutrition , and lack of education that she encountered . She urged Eleanor to visit a tent city of homeless ex @-@ miners in Morgantown , West Virginia , an experience that led Eleanor to found the federal housing project of Arthurdale , West Virginia . In March 1934 , Hickok accompanied Eleanor on a fact @-@ finding trip to the US territory of Puerto Rico , reporting afterward to Hopkins that the island 's poverty was too severe for FERA to usefully intervene .

During her time with FERA , Hickok developed a dislike of reporters . In one report to Hopkins in 1934 , she wrote , " Believe me , the next state administrator who lets out any publicity on me is going to get his head cracked " . In February 1934 , Time called her " a rotund lady with a husky voice , a peremptory manner , baggy clothes " , a description that wounded Hickok . In a letter to Hopkins ' secretary , she asked , " Why the Hell CAN 'T they leave me alone ? " Following the incident , Hickok and Roosevelt redoubled their efforts to keep their relationship out of the spotlight ; on one occasion , Roosevelt wrote to her , " we must must be careful this summer & keep it out of the papers when we are off together .

As Roosevelt became more active as first lady , however , she had less time for Hickok . Hickok grew angry and jealous at perceived slights , and demanded more time alone , which Roosevelt was unable to give ; at other times , she attempted unsuccessfully to separate herself from Roosevelt . Though the pair remained friends throughout their lives , they continued to grow apart in the years that followed . In 1937 , Roosevelt wrote to Hickok that " I never meant to hurt you in any way , but that is no excuse having done it . . . I am pulling back from all my contacts now . . . Such cruelty & stupidity is unpardonable when you reach my age . "

After an incident with her diabetes while traveling , Hickok resigned her FERA post for health reasons in late 1936 .

= = World 's Fair = =

On the advice of Roosevelt 's secretary , Malvina Thompson , Hickok then sought work in New York with public relations man and politician Grover Whalen . Shortly after Franklin Roosevelt 's 1936 re @-@ election , Hickok was hired by Whalen to do publicity for the 1939 New York World 's Fair . Opportunities for female employees of the Fair were limited , and she found the work unrewarding compared to her reporting days . Hickok primarily worked on promoting the fair to young people , including arranging class trips . Because Hickok rented both a country home and an apartment , she often faced financial problems despite her good salary during these years , and Roosevelt occasionally sent her small gifts of money .

= = Democratic National Committee = =

With help from Roosevelt , Hickok became the executive secretary of the Women 's Division of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) in February 1940 , doing groundwork for the 1940 election . Taking to the road again , she wrote Roosevelt , " This job is such fun , dear ... It 's the nearest thing to newspaper work I 've found since I left the A.P. "

From early January 1941 until shortly after FDR 's fourth inauguration in 1945 , she lived at the White House . During her time there , Hickok 's nominal address was at the Mayflower Hotel in DC , where she met most people . Also during this time , she formed an intense friendship with Marion Janet Harron , a United States Tax Court judge who was ten years younger than she and almost the only person to visit her at the White House .

When Hickok 's diabetes worsened in 1945 , she was forced to leave her position with the DNC . Two years later , Roosevelt found her a position with the New York State Democratic Committee . When Hickok 's health continued to decline , she moved to Hyde Park to be closer to Roosevelt . She lived in a cottage on the Roosevelt estate , where she died in 1968 .

= = Legacy = =

Late in life , Hickok wrote several books . She co -@-@ authored Ladies of Courage with Eleanor Roosevelt in 1954 . This was followed by The Story of Franklin D. Roosevelt (1956) , The Story of Helen Keller (1958) , The Story of Eleanor Roosevelt (1959) , and several more .

Hickok willed her personal papers to the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum in Hyde Park , part of the US National Archives . Her donation was contained in eighteen filing boxes that , according to the provisions of her will , were to be sealed until ten years after her death . In early May 1978 , Doris Faber , as part of research for a projected short biography of Eleanor Roosevelt , became perhaps the first person outside the National Archives to open these boxes , and was astounded to discover that they contained 2 @,@ 336 letters from Roosevelt to Hickok , and 1 @,@ 024 letters from Hickok to Roosevelt . Most of them dated to the 1930s , but the correspondence continued up to Roosevelt 's 1962 death . Hickok 's papers remain at the FDR Library and Museum , where they are available to the public .

Based on these letters , Terry Baum and Pat Bond wrote the play , HICK : A Love Story , the Romance of Lorena Hickok and Eleanor Roosevelt .