



HELEN HERRON TAFT 1909-1913

Helen “Nellie” Taft was one of the most politically involved First Ladies in history.

She aggressively appealed for Theodore Roosevelt’s endorsement of her husband William Howard Taft for President. Throughout her tenure as First Lady, she actively petitioned for change in the White House and the government, seeking to improve the working conditions for women and African Americans in the federal government. She also hired African American White House ushers instead of the all-white staff that was usually hired. Nellie forever improved the beauty of Washington, DC by convincing the Agricultural Department to plant cherry trees along the tidal basin. Working with the Japanese government, she procured an additional 3,000 trees for the city and alongside the Japanese ambassador’s wife, planted the first two cherry trees in 1912, both of which are still alive today.

Nellie was well known for her special lemon champagne punch she would serve at events. Although her exact recipe is unknown, what follows is a modern adaptation.

More recipes are available in our *First Ladies Cookbook*:

<https://national-womens-historymuseum.myshopify.com/collections/books/products/first-ladies-cookbook>