



Who's Who in a Gilded Age House

The Family

Patriarch

- The male head of household, who was either a self-made millionaire or the son. These men were generally owners of large industries, real estate, or in banking. The inheritance of fortunes was usually willed to the first-born male of the family.

Lady of the House

- The wife of the head of the household. The marriage was generally a match arranged by the families to either stay within their social standing or to rise to a higher rung on the social ladder. The lady of the house was responsible for running the household with the assistance of the butler, the hiring and firing the servants, planning of all social events, menus, and dinners in the house.

Children

- Children were raised to be neither seen nor heard. They saw their parents very little during the day except at dinner. Nurses and nannies, usually of French or German origin, raised the children.

The Servants

In general, the household staffs were no less than 40 full-time positions. Servants were recent immigrants from Ireland and Germany. The servants traveled with the family to the summer homes and back again in the fall.

Butler

- Usually British, in charge of all the other house staff
- Reported to the lady of the house
- Assisted with all household purchases, supervising all comings and goings in the house

Secretary

- The personal assistant to the Lady of the house
- Opened the mail, created correspondence, kept the social calendar, answered the telephone and intercepting messengers

Chef

- In charge of the kitchen and two or more assistant chefs
- Cooked for the family as well as for large dinner parties

Pastry Chef

- Created and made all desserts
- An important status symbol to impress the guests with presentation of different and exotic desserts

Kitchen maid

- In charge of maintenance and proper storage of all items contained in the kitchen and pantry
- Supervised at least two additional kitchen maids for heavy kitchen work

Scullery Man

- In charge of heavy items in kitchen such as lifting, fueling the stoves and removing the trash

Linen maids

- Responsible for the washing and ironing of all bed linen, which was changed daily.
- Over 180 to 200 sheets a week

Personal Maid

- Attended to each member of the family
- Kept clothes in order, packed and unpacked, and generally kept the bedroom in order.

Footmen

- At least four, hired to polish silver, do heavy lifting, assist with setting up the house and serving for large parties and dinners, and helping visitors from their carriages into the house.

Chamber Maids

- Responsible for cleaning the bedrooms, dressing rooms and baths.

Parlor maids

- Responsible for the entertainment rooms on the main floor.

Cleaners

- Responsible for the daily cleaning, care and maintenance of the house.

Useful maids

- Responsible for cleaning servant quarters and washed dishes.

Head Gardener

- In charge of the garden staff, maintenance and upkeep of the grounds.

Carriage staff

- Stable men and carriage drivers
- Responsible for maintenance of the stables, horses, and carriages.

Nanny

- Responsible for the care of the children of the house.

Tutor

- Responsible for the education of the children of the house.