

ultrapro
PEST PROTECTION



**YOUR HOMETOWN
PEST EXPERTS**

20% OFF
all residential and commercial
pest protection services.

www.ultrapropest.com • 201-857-3004 • 12 Sunflower Ave. • Paramus, NJ 07652

N.J. License: 907228
www.ultrapropest.com

ALPINE | CRESSKILL | ENGLEWOOD | ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS | TEANECK | TENAFLY | SOUTH EDITION

NORTHERN VALLEY

SUBURBANITE

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2022 | NORTHJERSEY.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Van Buren couldn't buy love

David M. Zimmer

NorthJersey.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

Edith Marie Van Buren had presidential forebears, an Englewood estate and a lemon of a marriage that she eventually turned into lemonade. • The daughter of a U.S. diplomat and a railroad heiress, Van Buren was aggressive in her pursuit of leisure. She spent most of the first half of her adult life traveling Europe and the second as a true globetrotter.

See VAN BUREN, Page 2



Edith Marie Van Buren. FILE

Relax This Holiday Season!
Prestige Checking

Bogota Savings Bank
www.BogotaSavingsBank.com



Projects?

Masonry Craftsmanship

likely seen us in your
neighborhood.

Be of Service?

Driveways - New & Repaired

Walkways

Patios

Retaining Walls

Driveways

Driveways

Foundation Repair

Driveway

Driveway Work

Driveway

Natural Stone

Driveway Work

Driveway Work

Estimates

an opportunity to work
on any project.

505-1346

Home Services

Englewood, NJ 07656

303-247-1900



Van Buren

Continued from Page 1

"Nearly all her life has been spent in foreign lands, and she has been around the world four times," The San Francisco Call reported in her July, 1900 wedding announcement. "She is a capital rider, a gifted linguist and enjoys friendship with many notable people in Europe, including King Leopold of Belgium, who has repeatedly showered the fair American with favors and attention."

Van Buren's elite social status saw her shine at state dinners. She likewise excelled at glamping.

In 1898, Van Buren and her friend Mary Evelyn Hitchcock braved the Klondike. On the outskirts of Dawson, Alaska, they were treated to an eight-course dinner that included peach ice cream and sparkling wine from the Moselle region, and escalloped tomatoes prepared by Van Buren, according to Hitchcock's account.

A "wonderfully clever businesswoman," Van Buren helped the pair procure some of the more crucial and profitable items for the Alaskan excursion, Hitchcock wrote in her memoir of the trip, "Two

Women in the Klondike." The pair slept on bespoke air mattresses procured from a San Francisco merchant and hung from custom hammocks. They had attendants who didn't appreciate being called servants, despite Van Buren's evident persistence.

They also brought along two Great Danes, a portable bowling alley and one of the first film-strip players, called an "animatoscope." They used the latter as an entertainment to their traveling bazaar, from which they sold an odd variety of things — from canned goods to religious services.

Just two years later, Van Buren was in London to marry the worst type of count: a fake Italian one called the Count de Castelménardo, whom she had met in France.

Perfect pedigree

Born in 1858, Van Buren defined "upper crust." Her father, Gen. Thomas Brodhead Van Buren, was a union officer and a nephew of a former U.S. president who served as the United States consul-general in Japan between 1874 and 1885. Her mother, Harriet Sheffield, was the daughter of the railroad magnate Joseph Earl Shef-

field.

Sheffield's brother-in-law, William Walter Phelps, urged the family to move to Teaneck. Phelps, who invested in Bergen plots from an office in Closter, owned roughly half the present town when he died in 1894. The Teaneck municipal building now stands on the grounds of his 350-foot-long home, an immaculately upgraded barn that burned in 1888.

Van Buren had an estate in Englewood. Rather than a home, it was more of a vacation spot. She spent most of her time in Europe hobnobbing. "At one time, she caused a good deal of talk in Europe by visiting a number of fashionable watering places without a chaperone," The Morning Call of Paterson reported in 1903. "Her Gibsonian type of beauty attracted much attention, which was not lessened by the report of her wealth, which followed her everywhere."

Van Buren's much-anticipated wedding in the summer of 1900 seemed to be on the up and up, according to the report in The San Francisco Call. Van Buren's patience in selecting a suitor was evidently about to pay off. She was to become the Countess de Castelménardo and join the Neapolitan nobility.

The writing was nonetheless on the wall when her betrothed, Gennaro Vessichio, aka Count Vessichio di Castelménardo, convinced her to pay her own bridal expenses.

The newlyweds returned that winter to Van Buren's Englewood home. Just one month later, in January 1901, Van Buren's mother died, leaving her daughter a large portion of her

CHAMBERS ELECTRIC
For All Your Electrical Needs
20+ Yrs Exp. • 24/7 Emergency Service
High Quality - Low Prices
SERVICE UPGRADE SPECIALS
Starting at:
100 amp \$1100 • 200 amp \$1700
NJ Lic #14473 • Insured & Bonded
JimChambersElectric@gmail.com
201-694-1136

See VAN BUREN, Page 5

Van Buren

Continued from Page 2

estate valued at \$200,000, The Morning Call of Paterson reported. For Van Buren, more money led to more problems. Within a month, the countess vented her frustration with a notice in the Englewood Press. "Please inform the stupid people of Englewood that I am perfectly willing to pay the debts for which I am responsible. Those for which I am not responsible, I refuse to pay," it stated.

By May 1901, the "count" had left for Europe. For some time, he refused to return, The Morning Call reported. Vessichio's favorite haunt was Monte Carlo, according to a November 1907 report in The New York Times. There, he had a stand-in for Van Buren, it claimed. Rather than give Van Buren her promised place in Europe's ruling elite, Vessichio was a grifter who used Van Buren's money for "gambling and fast living," the Times reported.

In 1906, Van Buren sought payback. A cryptic segment of a January 1906 article in The Morning Call set the

tone. "The Countess de Castelmendaro ... does not believe in matrimony for a girl with a career. She declares that marriage as a means of happiness is a ghastly failure and that the bachelor girl is independent and happy," the paper reported in January 1906.

Later that year, Van Buren paid \$4,000 to legalize the count's title before turning him in to authorities, according to her New York Times obituary. The baron received a three-month imprisonment after being convicted by the Italian courts of "faithlessness." Van Buren kept her noble title even after the November 1907 divorce. The "count," however, had been confirmed in his standing as a fraud and a criminal. After a lengthy investigation, Naples police declared him an indebted convict and Camorrist (a mafia-style criminal and extortionist), according to the Times.

Van Buren died in the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City in May 1914. Her funeral was held at First Presbyterian Church in Englewood. Seldom seen or heard of following the divorce, Van Buren's cause of death was unknown, The Record reported.

Don't Get Left In The Cold....
**Furnaces & Heat
Pumps From Carrier
Are Here To Help!**



Winter weather is just getting warmed up, but thanks to Carrier's furnaces and heat pumps, you'll be getting warmed up too!



Contact a Van Natta Mechanical expert today to make your home winter-ready with new units from Carrier!

Schedule your appointment today!

NJ Home Improvement
#13VH0238400 HVAC LIC #271

VAN NATTA
MECHANICAL CORP.

201-391-3700
VanNattaMechanical.com



Now is Time to Special offer for E

1-Year 4.1%

Visit the Englewood branch to
Apple banker for details! Get dir
at applebank.com/NJSave

Apple Bank

Established 1863 • Member

*Annual Percentage Yield (APY) stated is effective
2022. Offer good for the initial term only and may
Bank at any time. CDs require a \$1,000 minimum d
the APY. Early withdrawal penalty may apply. This s
opened at the Apple Bank Englewood branch, locate