

Our Floating White House



Top, left—President and Mrs. Harding and friends waving goodbye from the deck of the Mayflower; right—Commander Balston L. Holmes, of the President's yacht, the Mayflower. Center, left—The Mayflower; right—Smoking room. Bottom, left—Dining room; right—Reception room.

NO PRESIDENT nor Mistress of the White House ever has had so much rest and pleasure out of week-end yachting as the Hardings. Scarcely a week goes by that they do not embark on the beautiful government-owned boat, the Mayflower, known everywhere as the President's yacht, and cruise down the historic Potomac into Chesapeake Bay, visiting here or there as fancy dictates.

There's nothing selfish nor exclusive about these Mayflower trips. Neither the President nor Mrs. Harding are the sort of people who like to herd by themselves in lonesome aloofness. Being real, genuine, whole-souled human beings, they thoroughly enjoy the good old-fashioned art of being neighborly and sociable as practiced in typical small American towns where everybody knows each other by his first name. In this delightful respect the Hardings haven't changed the least bit since leaving the little town of Marion, Ohio. The elevation to the position of chief executive, and America's first lady, has not, in the leastwise, turned the heads of Mr. and Mrs. Harding. They never dream of starting out on a yachting trip without inviting as many friends to be their guests as the boat will comfortably accommodate.

The frequent use of the Mayflower during the past spring and summer has given it unusual prominence in the press of the country, arousing the curiosity of the public as to the history, general appearance and details of the noted craft.

The Mayflower, originally, was the property of Ogden Goelet, a New York business man of great wealth. It was constructed for him at Clydebank, Scotland, in 1896. Two years later, at the breaking out of the Spanish-American War, the United States Government purchased it from the Goelet estate for \$430,000. During the exciting days of our little scrap with Spain, the Mayflower, in command of Captain M. R. S. Mackenzie, was one of the busiest vessels connected with the American Navy.

It was during the days of the Roosevelt régime that the Mayflower was converted into a pleasure yacht for the exclusive use of the President of the United States.

The boat is of fair size, the water line being 275 feet, the breadth 36 feet, and draft 17 feet 4 inches. Her water displacement is 2,690

tons. She makes an average speed of 14.2 knots an hour. It requires a large crew of officers and men to keep the Mayflower in readiness for sailing at any hour of the day or night. It is always spick and span in appearance, the decks and every nook and corner being as clean and shiny as a bride's kitchen or a nurse's collar. Many a present-day wife could get some valuable housekeeping pointers in the way of neatness and cleanliness from the sailor methods aboard the Mayflower. It is quite evident that there is never any stinginess in the use of soap, water, scrub-brushes, brooms and elbow grease.

The reception room is as cozy and comfortable as any to be found in a private home. There is an abundance of big cushioned chairs and couches. For the musically inclined there is a beautiful piano and a victrola. It is quite evident, however, that the Hardings and their friends have little or no patience with the jazz junk with which the world is so sorely afflicted. On a little table near the piano are half a dozen hymn books and a large volume of old-fashioned songs, such as "Silver Threads Among the Gold," "The Old Oaken Bucket," "Dixie," "Swanee River," "Annie Laurie," "Good Bye My Lover, Good Bye," "My Old Kentucky Home," and "Home, Sweet Home." Both the hymnals and the popular song volume look very much the worse for wear, clearly indicating that many a happy afternoon and evening have been spent in the reception room.

Just one glance at the dining room is enough to make anyone feel as though he had been mealless for a week or more. It is, by all odds, the most fascinating part of the boat. This room extends the full width of the yacht and is as richly furnished as the best hotel in the land. The smoking room is as comfortable and palatial as the ones to be found on popular ocean liners.

Taking it all in all, the Mayflower makes it possible for the President to have a floating White House that is virtually as comfortable in its appointments as the celebrated mansion in Washington.

The man who is responsible for keeping the Mayflower in deep water and away from jutting rocks or shoals is Commander Balston L. Holmes, of the United States Navy. Commander Holmes saw much active service during the World War.