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# MISS ELSIE PALMER

A Masterpiece is Born





# Her Mother: Mary Lincoln Mellen Palmer (‘Queen’)

◆————◆  
Born in Kentucky in 1850 & died in  
England in 1894

Given the nickname, ‘Queen’, by her  
maternal Grandmother

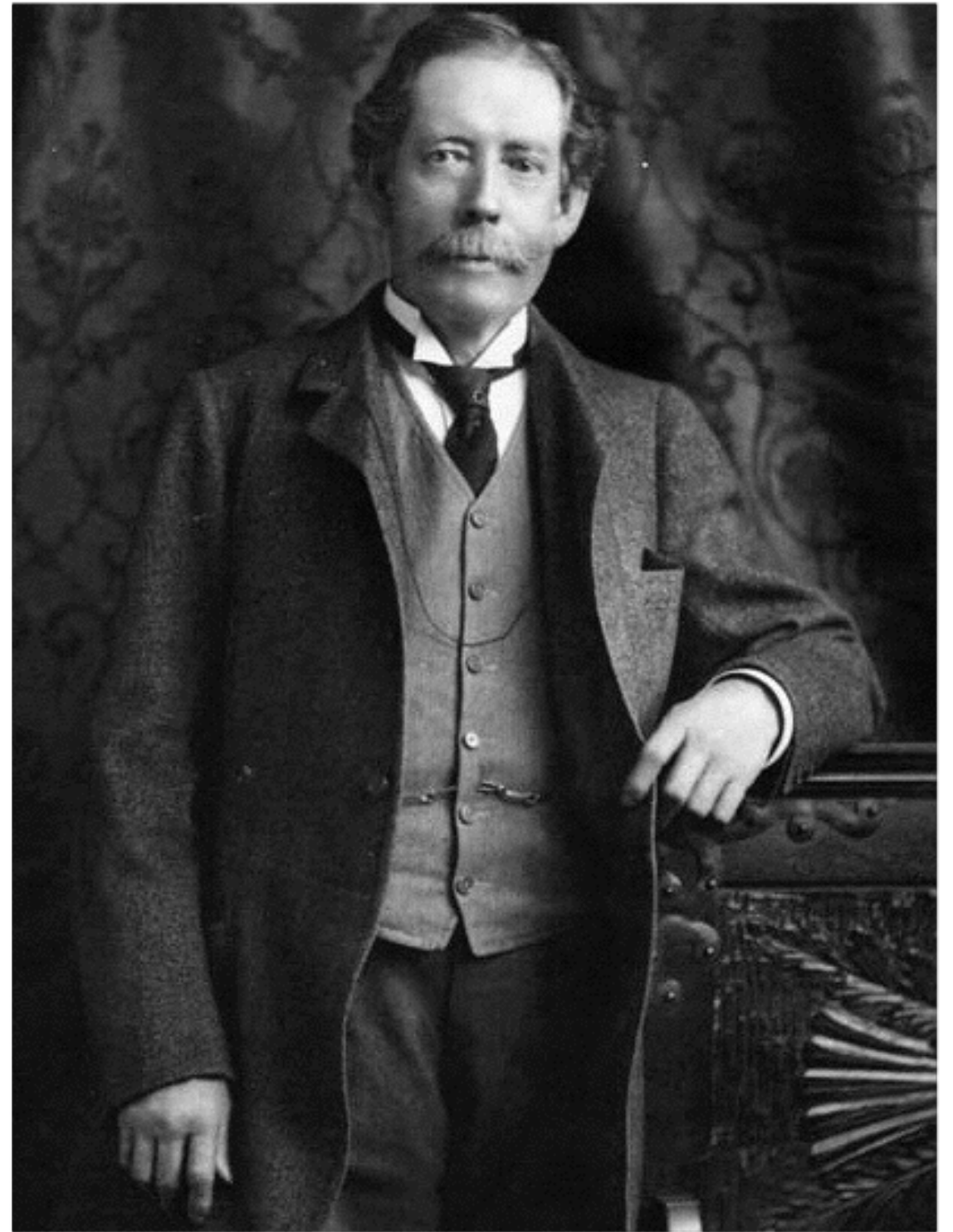




# Her Father: William Jackson Palmer

◆————◆  
Born in Delaware in 1836 & died in  
Colorado Springs in 1909

Railway engineer; founder of  
Colorado Springs; Brevet Grade of  
Brigadier General in the Union  
Army; Medal of Honor





# Queen & William marry in 1870

◆————◆  
They were married at her father's home in New York, and they honeymooned in England. Queen fell in love with England and its historic houses





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# ‘GLEN EYRIE’

The Palmers’ frame house in Colorado Springs





**Their first  
child, Elsie, is  
born in 1872  
in New York**





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# ELSIE HAD TWO SISTERS

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★ ★ ★ ★

Marjory, the youngest

&

Dorothy ('Dos'), the middle

★ ★ ★ ★





# Queen and Elsie come to Ightham Mote

◆ ————— ◆  
In April, 1887, Queen rented  
Ightham Mote, and she brought her  
three daughters to live here





# Queen's 'Dearly beloved Mote'

SUPPLEMENT TO "THE GARDENERS' CHRONICLE," FEBRUARY 2<sup>ND</sup> 1889



IGHTHAM-MOTE, KENT.



# SIDE-SADDLE SISTERS

Marjory, Dorothy & Elsie outside the West Bridge





# Henry James, the great American writer

Henry James came for Christmas  
1887, when he told the children  
ghost stories by the fire in the  
medieval Great Hall





# Ellen Terry, the famous Shakespearian actress

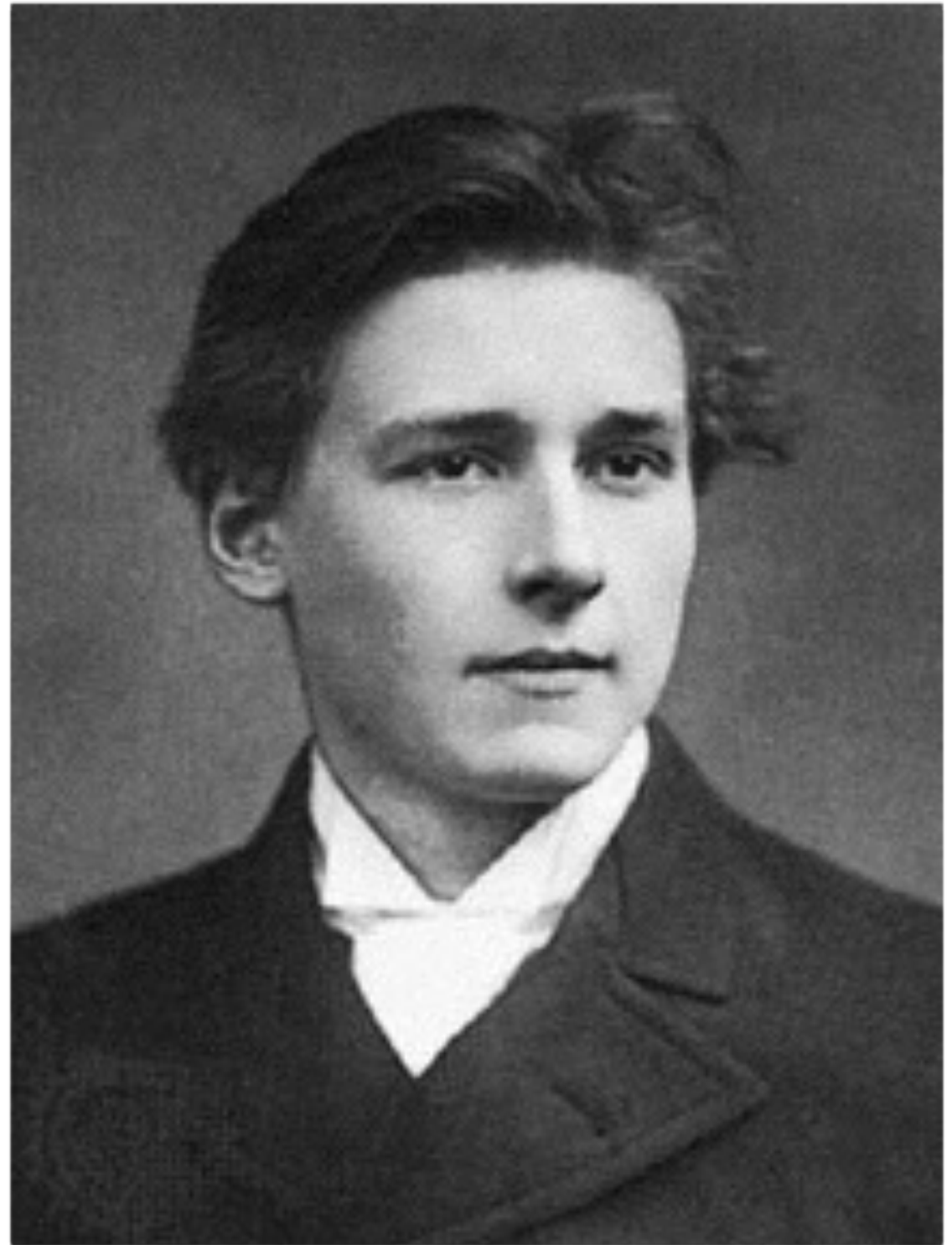
◆ ————— ◆  
Ellen Terry became Queen's close friend. Ellen & Queen, with the three sisters, held lively dressing-up parties in the Great Hall, acting out scenes from plays and Gilbert & Sullivan operettas





# Edward Gordon Craig comes to play

◆ Ellen Terry's son, Edward Gordon Craig, was friends with the three sisters. They fished out of the the Library windows, and played hide-and-seek in the old house and gardens. He became a distinguished theatre designer





# They go to see Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth

Henry Irving's landmark production of *Macbeth* opened at the Lyceum Theatre, London, on 29 December, 1888, starring Ellen Terry wearing the now famous 'beetle-wing dress' designed by Queen's friend, Mrs J. Comyns Carr (Alice Strettell)





# John Singer Sargent comes to Ightham Mote

◆————◆  
Sargent attended the first night at the  
London Lyceum and he vowed to  
paint *Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth*.

He also got to know the Palmer  
family, and began visiting Ightham  
Mote





# Sargent at Ightham Mote with Queen and Elsie in 1889





# Queen asks Sargent to paint Elsie

- \* Sargent did a number of preliminary pencil-and-ink/oil sketches of Elsie aged 16 going on 17
- \* He included her collie dog as she posed in the Great Hall





# Sargent sketched Elsie's pet





# Elsie is posed in a dramatic oyster silk dress

◆ ————— ◆  
With her hair long and her dress  
ankle length, Elsie is posed as a girl  
who has not yet ‘come out’, but also  
as a thoroughly-modern  
‘Renaissance madonna’





# A Masterpiece is Born





# Richard Ormond, Sargent's great nephew, comments...



- \* 'Elsie appears hauntingly beautiful, dressed in a costume that is both picturesquely antique and stylishly modern. The linen-fold panelling behind her plays up the feeling of past times and historical associations'
- \* 'The portrait remains one of Sargent's most compelling and original characterizations'



# ‘A GAME OF BOWLS’

★★★★ In 1889, while painting Elsie, Sargent also completed a large canvas of bowls being played on the North Lawn of Ightham Mote. Queen & Elsie were two of the players

★★★★





# Please help us to buy 'A Game of Bowls'

◆ ————— ◆

We have been given the rare opportunity to buy Sargent's *A Game of Bowls, Ightham Mote, Kent*. Please make a donation at our Visitor Entrance, or speak to a member of staff/volunteer

Thank you



National Trust

A Game of Bowls at Ightham Mote 1889

Help us keep  
A Game of Bowls  
here at Ightham  
Mote forever...

We want everyone to enjoy seeing this painting, by John Singer Sargent, painted at Ightham Mote in 1889. Help us to acquire it for future generations to enjoy by donating today.

Please make a donation at our Visitor Entrance.  
Thank you for your support.

FR Registered with FUNDRAISING



# Queen and her daughters leave Ightham Mote

◆————◆  
When the house was sold to Thomas Colyer-Fergusson, the Palmer family wistfully left the Mote on 31 March, 1890. They eventually moved to Oak Cottage, Frant, Sussex





# Queen dies at Frant on December 28, 1894

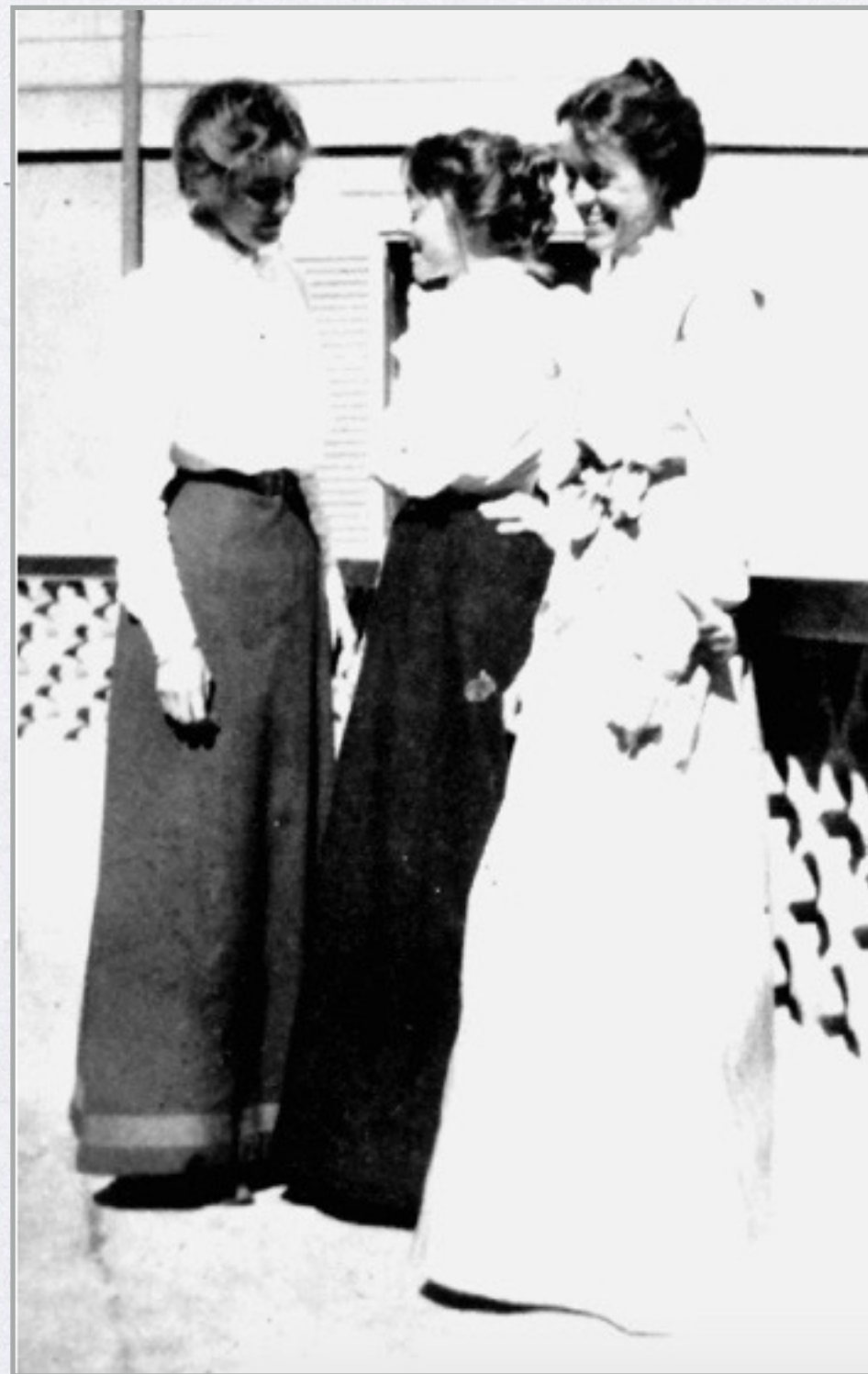
◆————◆  
The end came swiftly, before William could arrive from Colorado Springs; she died at Oak Cottage on 28 December, 1894. She was 44; they had been married for 24 years





# Back to Colorado Springs and a new life

◆ ————— ◆  
In 1895, their father took the three sisters back to Colorado Springs for a rather different life. This photograph, taken c. 1900, shows them as being close, with Marjory on the left, Elsie in the middle, and 'Dos' on the right





# Elsie marries into the Bloomsbury set

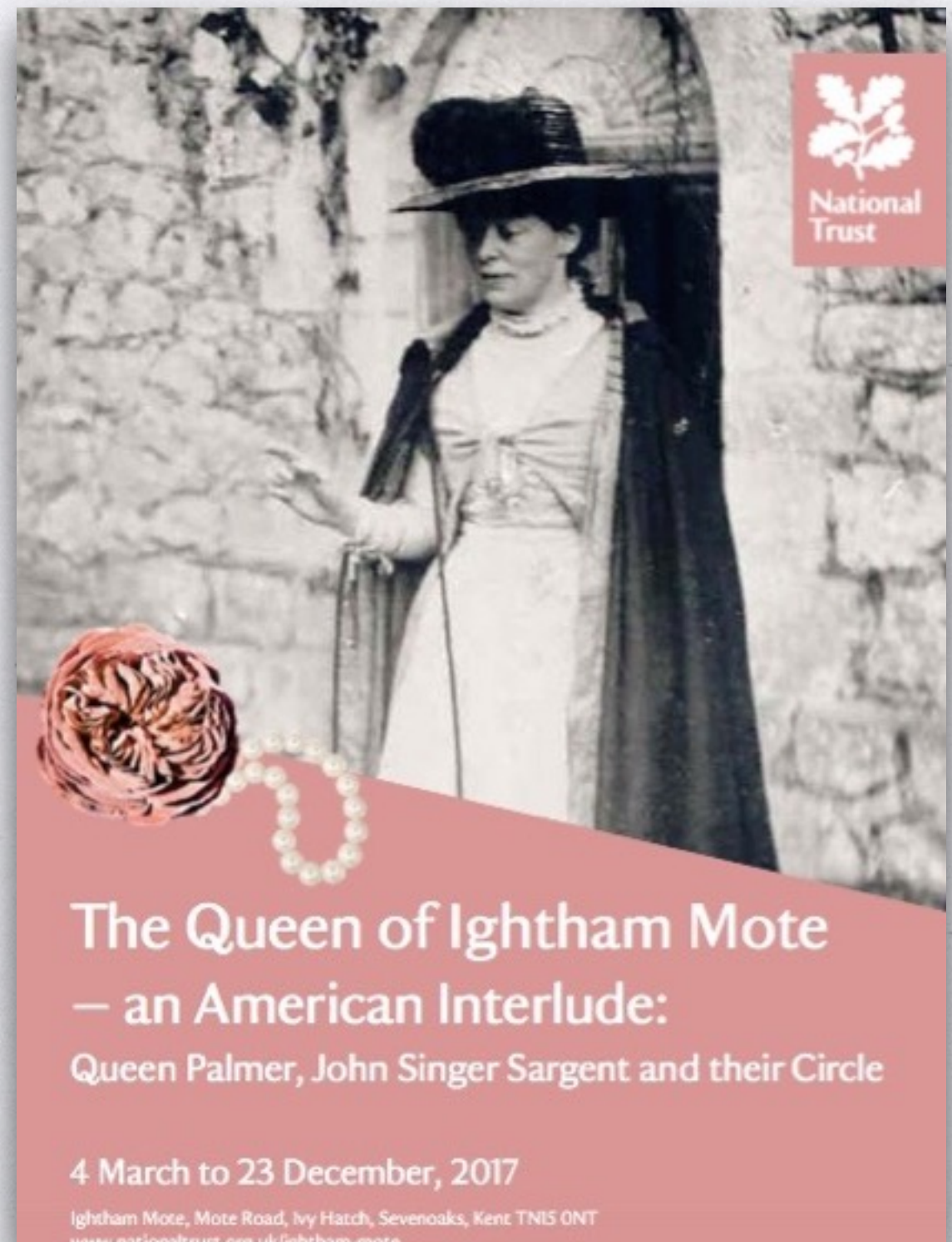
◆ ————— ◆  
Elsie married British novelist, Leo Myers, a fringe member of the Bloomsbury Group. It was through Leo that Elsie came to know Virginia Woolf. They had two daughters, Elsie Queen ('E.Q') and Eveleen ('Eve'), and five grandchildren. Elsie died in England in 1955





# Exhibition Booklet on sale

There is an **Exhibition Booklet** on the life and times of the Palmer family and friends at Ightham Mote. It is available to buy in the shop and in 'Meet & Greet', priced £5



**The Queen of Ightham Mote**  
— an American Interlude:  
Queen Palmer, John Singer Sargent and their Circle

4 March to 23 December, 2017

Ightham Mote, Mote Road, Ivy Hatch, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 0NT  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/ightham-mote](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/ightham-mote)



# A Face that Launched...





# Please do come to see me as 'A Young Lady in White'



*Elsie Palmer*



# Acknowledgments

Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center  
Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum

Richard Ormond

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National Trust, Smallhythe Place

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