



Since 2003, The Kentucky Ladies Historical Tea Society has brought together local tea lovers for various events throughout the year, including a Christmas Tea with a vintage teacup exchange. Polly Singer, pictured second from left, has been a part of the group for almost 15 years.

# Teatime Traditions

Text and Photography by Polly Singer

I have always considered myself a nontraditional person. However, as I get older, I find that I embrace traditions because they anchor us in uncertain times. They give us focus and something to look forward to.

I have been a member of the The Kentucky Ladies Historical Tea Society for 14 years, and one tradition I treasured for many years was the annual Christmas Tea with a vintage teacup exchange. For us members, it was truly the highlight of the season. We met in a member's home, and each lady brought a special holiday tea dish, usually in the colors of red and green. We enjoyed delectable tea sandwiches, soup, scones, quiche, and, of course, sweets. Then we swapped gifts and opened our treasures! Needless to say, each of us has a cherished teacup collection from the annual tea.

Early on, the society decided to make the teacup exchange a tradition. While the tradition hasn't been observed since 2019, I still recall how each of us would take great care in choosing the right cup, and many of us would be on the lookout throughout the year for unusual or particularly handsome cups to contribute. In 2018, I received a lovely Royal Albert cup and saucer with soft pink cherry trees against a blue sky.

We are a varied group of ladies consisting of retirees, teachers, government employees, a nonprofit director, and myself, a milliner. We have fun spicing up our

teatime outfits with hats, gloves, and vintage-inspired fashion. For a few years, we attended the Jane Austen Festival in Louisville, making our own Regency costumes, and even hosted our own Edwardian picnic, Victorian tea, St. Patrick's Day tea, Georgian tea, roaring '20s tea, and a Beatrix Potter tea.

The ladies from our tea society have been there for each other during tragic losses and illnesses, as well as the joyous moments. When my father died, members came to the visitation and brought food. We hosted a 1920s-themed bridal tea for a member who was getting married. While our love of tea brought us together initially, we have forged a deeper bond over the years. Each gathering is filled with more relaxation than one would get at a five-star spa. We leave feeling happy and refreshed.

While we haven't been able to gather together for more than a year, we are excited to plan events for the future and look forward to once again sharing cups of tea and the return of our traditional teacup exchange. ☕

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*Polly Singer is a milliner who finds tea is best when shared with friends. Based in Kentucky, she loves cats and anything Victorian and is a dedicated Anglophile. For more information, visit [hatsandveils.net](http://hatsandveils.net).*