

The White House

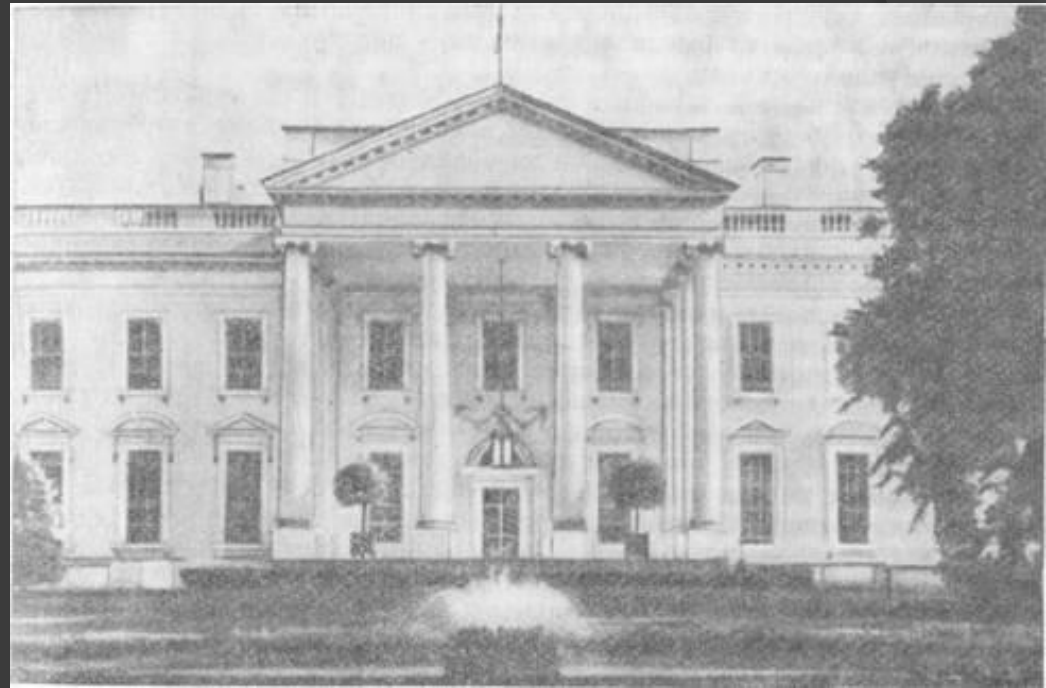


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About the Building

- For two hundred years, the White House has stood as a symbol of the Presidency, the United States government, and the American people. Its history, and the history of the nation's capital, began when President George Washington signed an Act of Congress in December of 1790 declaring that the federal government would reside in a district "not exceeding ten miles square...on the river Potomac." President Washington, together with city planner Pierre L'Enfant, chose the site for the new residence, which is now 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. As preparations began for the new federal city, a competition was held to find a builder of the "President's House." Nine proposals were submitted, and Irish-born architect James Hoban won a gold medal for his practical and handsome design.



About the Building

- Construction began when the first cornerstone was laid in October of 1792. Although President Washington oversaw the construction of the house, he never lived in it. It was not until 1800, when the White House was nearly completed, that its first residents, President John Adams and his wife, Abigail, moved in. Since that time, each President has made his own changes and additions. The White House is, after all, the President's private home. It is also the only private residence of a head of state that is open to the public, free of charge.

About the Building

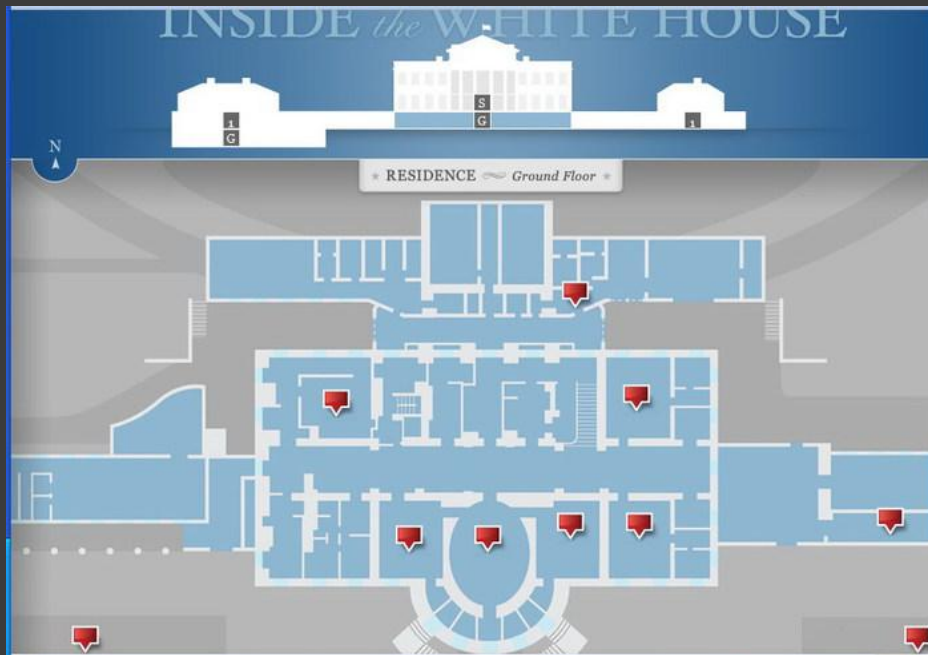


- The White House has a unique and fascinating history. It survived a fire at the hands of the British in 1814 (during the war of 1812) and another fire in the West Wing in 1929, while Herbert Hoover was President. Throughout much of Harry S. Truman's presidency, the interior of the house, with the exception of the third floor, was completely gutted and renovated while the Trumans lived at Blair House, right across Pennsylvania Avenue. Nonetheless, the exterior stone walls are those first put in place when the White House was constructed two centuries ago.

About the Building

- Presidents can express their individual style in how they decorate some parts of the house and in how they receive the public during their stay. Thomas Jefferson held the first Inaugural open house in 1805. Many of those who attended the swearing-in ceremony at the U.S. Capitol simply followed him home, where he greeted them in the Blue Room. President Jefferson also opened the house for public tours, and it has remained open, except during wartime, ever since. In addition, he welcomed visitors to annual receptions on New Year's Day and on the Fourth of July. In 1829, a horde of 20,000 Inaugural callers forced President Andrew Jackson to flee to the safety of a hotel while, on the lawn, aides filled washtubs with orange juice and whiskey to lure the mob out of the mud-tracked White House.

About the Building



- After Abraham Lincoln's presidency, Inaugural crowds became far too large for the White House to accommodate them comfortably. However, not until Grover Cleveland's first presidency did this unsafe practice change. He held a presidential review of the troops from a flag-draped grandstand built in front of the White House. This procession evolved into the official Inaugural parade we know today. Receptions on New Year's Day and the Fourth of July continued to be held until the early 1930s.



Facts

- There are 132 rooms, 35 bathrooms, and 6 levels in the Residence. There are also 412 doors, 147 windows, 28 fireplaces, 8 staircases, and 3 elevators.
- At various times in history, the White House has been known as the "President's Palace," the "President's House," and the "Executive Mansion." President Theodore Roosevelt officially gave the White House its current name in 1901.
- Presidential Firsts while in office... President James Polk (1845-49) was the first President to have his photograph taken... President Theodore Roosevelt (1901-09) was not only the first President to ride in an automobile, but also the first President to travel outside the country when he visited Panama... President Franklin Roosevelt (1933-45) was the first President to ride in an airplane.
- With five full-time chefs, the White House kitchen is able to serve dinner to as many as 140 guests and hors d'oeuvres to more than 1,000.
- The White House requires 570 gallons of paint to cover its outside surface.
- For recreation, the White House has a variety of facilities available to its residents, including a tennis court, jogging track, swimming pool, movie theater, and bowling lane.



The Blue Room

- The Blue Room is the center of the State Floor of the White House. Over the years, the Blue Room's oval shape and breath-taking view of the South Lawn of the White House have captivated its visitors. The Blue Room has been the customary place for presidents to formally receive guests. Flowers are a traditional decorative feature of the room as is a distinctive marble-top table purchased by James Monroe in 1817.



The Blue Room



In this room on June 2, 1886, President Grover Cleveland became the first and only president to be married in the White House. His bride, Frances Folsom, was not only 27 years his junior but also, at the age of 21, the youngest first lady in history.



Entrance and Cross Halls

- The Entrance Hall, as its name implies, leads guests to the White House from the visitor's entrance into the East Wing of the building. In 1806, President Thomas Jefferson had turned the Entrance Hall into an informal exhibition space for artifacts from the expedition to the Western Territories by White House aide Meriwether Lewis and Captain William Clark. Upon taking office, President Ulysses S. Grant began the tradition, which still endures today, of hanging presidential portraits in both the Entrance Hall and the perpendicular Cross Hall.



The East Room

- This large room flanking the East corner of the White House has served an incredibly diverse array of uses over the past two centuries. First Lady Abigail Adams used it as a laundry room, while her husband's successor, President Thomas Jefferson, divided the southern half of the still-unfinished room into an office and bedchamber for his aide, Meriwether Lewis. Jefferson's successor, President James Madison, used the room as his Cabinet Room. The East Room was not fully decorated until 1829 during President Andrew Jackson's administration, though it wasn't until 1902, when President Theodore Roosevelt commissioned a restoration, that the room was restored to its appearance before the fire of 1814.



The East Room

Over the years the large, multipurpose space has been the site of weddings, funerals, press conferences, receptions and receiving lines. Upon occasion, President Woodrow Wilson turned the area into a movie theater, and Jacqueline Kennedy used it as a theater for the performing arts.

The room has unfortunately served much more somber ends: The bodies of both Presidents Abraham Lincoln and John Kennedy have lain in state in the East Room. Additionally, during the Civil War, Union troops were at one point quartered in the room.



The Diplomatic Room



- Located along the Downstairs Corridor, the Diplomatic Reception Room was the furnace room until the 1902 White House renovation, which transformed the semi-industrial space into a beautiful parlor. The room has since been a gathering place for guests prior to White House events. The Diplomatic Reception Room was first used for hosting diplomats on January 8, 1903, when President Theodore Roosevelt and First Lady Edith Roosevelt held a reception there.



Family Life

- The White House has served as the home for the president and his family since November 1800, when President John and Abigail Adams became the mansion's first residents. Over the years the White House has been the site of many family gatherings, including birthday parties, holiday dinners, and even weddings and funerals.
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- On September 9, 1893, First Lady Frances Cleveland gave birth to Esther Cleveland, her and President Grover Cleveland's second daughter. Esther is the only child of a president to ever be born in the White House.
- In 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt and his family gathered to celebrate Christmas. President Roosevelt took great pleasure in watching his children and grandchildren open gifts. But the President was so busy leading the war effort that he did not have time to open his own gifts. A few weeks later, a housekeeper found the President's gifts in a closet--unopened. Dwight and Mamie Eisenhower's grandson, David Eisenhower, celebrated his eighth birthday in 1956 at the White House with a western party based on television personality and cowboy, Roy Rogers. Not only was Roy Rogers the theme of the party, but he and his wife, Dale Evans, also attended as special guests.
- Though President Cleveland is the only President to ever marry in the White House, several brides -- including presidential daughters Nellie Grant, Alice Roosevelt and Lynda Johnson -- have used the East Room for their nuptials.
- Although the East Room has been the site of many happy occasions, it has also been a place where mourners have gathered. The Green Room housed the body of Abraham Lincoln's son, Willie, who died of an illness.
- The size of a president's family has varied, and one family made a lasting impact on the White House grounds. President Theodore Roosevelt's six children so filled the home with joy and laughter that he ordered the construction of a temporary building to serve as office space for his staff. Today, that building is called the West Wing.



The Green Room

- The Green Room, located on the first floor of the White House, serves primarily as a state parlor and has long been a favorite of Presidents and their families due to its intimate scale and distinctive décor. During his tenure in office, President John Quincy Adams named it the "Green Drawing Room," though the inspiration for the name may have come from President Jefferson's use of the space as a dining room, when he would cover the floor with a green-colored canvas for protection.
- Among the most historically significant events in our nation's history occurred here - the signing of our first declaration of war. President James Madison officially declared war on the British in 1812 in the Green Room. (Two years later, British forces would burn the Green Room -- and the rest of the White House -- to the ground.)
- Decades later, President Abraham Lincoln held the funeral for his youngest son William Wallace here in February of 1862.
- First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy redecorated and refurbished the Green Room, along with many other notable rooms in the White House, in 1961.



The Red Room

- The Red Room received its name in the 1840s from its vivid color scheme, made all the more striking by its small size. While many First Families have enjoyed the room, two first ladies in particular made special use of it:
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- Beginning in 1809, First Lady Dolley Madison held Wednesday Drawing Rooms that opened the doors for socializing between members of opposite political parties during a period of fierce partisan segregation. Her success as the Capital's hostess redefined the role of the First Lady and helped usher in pivotal discussions in the run-up to the War of 1812.
- Very shortly after her husband's inauguration in 1933, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt hosted the first of many press conferences for women reporters in the Red Room. Because women reporters were excluded from the president's press conferences, Mrs. Roosevelt's press conferences erased a social barrier. Though originally Mrs. Roosevelt discussed cooking and housekeeping topics, as her involvement in social issues and her rate of travel increased, the subject matter at these press conferences turned to discussions of domestic policies.



Renovations

- With six children, President Theodore Roosevelt was cramped when he moved into the White House on September 27, 1901 following the death of President William McKinley. Office and living space were mostly confined to the second floor of the White House. For safety reasons, the floors of the State Dining Room and East Room were reinforced with wooden planks whenever a large number of guests were expected for an event. The new president soon realized the White House needed to be expanded and restored, so he supervised a large-scale renovation that lasted through 1902 and brought the iconic building into the 20th Century.
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- President Roosevelt ordered the construction of a temporary office building to the west of the White House. Today, the building is known as the West Wing. The renovation not only relocated staff offices, but it also renovated the living space of the White House, expanded the State Dining Room, repaired the rooms on the State Floor, remodeled the basement and transferred the visitor's entrance from the north to the east.

Renovations

- On Christmas Eve, 1929, a fire broke out in the West Wing. When the charred interior was rebuilt, a new feature was added: air-conditioning. Four years later, another president named Roosevelt made changes to his fifth cousin's "temporary office building" -- Franklin Roosevelt expanded the West Wing and relocated the Oval Office to the southeast corner in 1934. He also built a swimming pool, which was converted into a Press Briefing Room during the Nixon Administration.
- First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy redecorated almost all of the White House in order to highlight more historically and decoratively significant pieces and create a more tasteful and comfortable atmosphere for the First Family and staff. Her famed tour of the newly renovated White House was broadcast on CBS in 1961 and solidified her place in the American psyche as a public tastemaker. Her work led to the formation of a curatorial staff, who now work to preserve and decorate the White House in collaboration with incoming Presidents and First Ladies. The East Garden was renamed in Mrs. Kennedy's honor.



The State Dining Room

- When Thomas Jefferson became President in 1801, he turned the State Dining Room into his office and used the adjacent Red Room to receive guests and meet visitors. Several years later, President Andrew Jackson improved both the ambiance and odor of the room when he moved the White House stables out from under its windows. President Jackson also officially named the space the State Dining Room.



The State Dining Room



- In the 1902 renovations, the State Dining Room underwent the most dramatic transformation of any room on the State Floor of the White House. Previously, the room had only been able to hold 40 guests for dinner. By removing a staircase, the architects significantly expanded the State Dining Room to its current holding capacity of 140 people.



The Cabinet Room

- The Cabinet Room opens directly into the Oval Office and overlooks the famed Rose Garden. It serves as both a public and private space for presidents to communicate their priorities and receive advice and feedback from cabinet secretaries and advisors. The centerpiece of the room is a large oval table, a gift from President Richard M. Nixon in 1970, surrounded by leather chairs. Each chair is specifically assigned, with a small, engraved brass placard on the back indicating the position of the person meant to sit there. The president is seated in the center on the East side of the table.



The Oval Office

- ◉ The Oval Office is the official office of the President of the United States.
- ◉ The office was designed by the architect Nathan C. Wyeth at the order of President William Howard Taft in 1909. Named for its distinctive oval shape, the Oval Office is part of the complex of offices that make up the West Wing of the White House. Badly damaged by a fire in 1929, the office was rebuilt by President Herbert C. Hoover. In 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt enlarged the West Wing and added today's Oval Office, designed by Eric Gugler.
- ◉ The architectural features of the Oval Office, which draw from baroque, neoclassical, and Georgian traditions, have become symbolic of the power and prestige of the Presidency in the minds of Americans and people across the world. There are three large south-facing windows behind the President's desk, as well as four doors into different parts of the West Wing. The ceiling is adorned with an elaborate molding around the edge, and features elements of the Seal of the President.
- ◉ Presidents generally change the office to suit their personal taste, choosing new furniture, new drapery, and designing their own oval-shaped carpet to take up most of the floor. Paintings are selected from the White House's own collection, or borrowed from other museums for the President's term in office.
- ◉ The President uses the Oval Office as his primary place of work. It is positioned to provide easy access to his staff in the West Wing and to allow him to retire easily to the White House residence at the end of the day. The President commonly chooses the Oval Office as the backdrop for televised addresses to the nation, and countless foreign leaders have traveled to the office to meet with the President.

The Oval Office

- The Oval Office serves as the president's personal office and as a location for private meetings and conversations with aides and advisors. It's situated in the center of the West Wing, connected to both the Cabinet Room and the Chief of Staff's office. It is frequently used to stage televised addresses and hold both private and public conversations with everyone from newly appointed members of congress to NCAA champions to visiting heads of state. Though perhaps the most iconic room in the White House, the Oval Office was not used as the President's personal office until after its renovations in 1902. President Taft was the first to relocate the office to this room and is responsible for changing its shape from rectangular to oval. Though the room's eponymous shape is considered its most distinctive feature, the preference for oval rooms dates to the time of our first president, President George Washington -- other old rooms in the White House, such as the Blue Room, are also ovular. For President Taft, the Oval Office may have symbolized his view of the modern-day president. Taft intended to be the center of his administration, and by creating the Oval Office in the center of the West Wing, he was more involved with the day-to-day operation of his presidency than his recent predecessors had been.

The Oval Office

- What President Taft could not imagine in 1909 when he built the Oval Office was that the office itself would become a symbol of the Presidency. Over the years Americans developed a sentimental attachment to the Oval Office through memorable images, such as John Kennedy, Jr. peering through the front panel of his father's desk or President Nixon talking on the phone with astronauts after a successful voyage. Television broadcasts, such as President Reagan's speech following the Challenger explosion, would leave lasting impressions in the minds of Americans of both the office and its occupant.



Roosevelt Room

- The window-less Roosevelt Room occupies the original site of the president's office, built in 1902 during President Theodore Roosevelt's expansion of the White House. Seven years later, when the West Wing was expanded and the Oval Office was built, the room became a part of two waiting rooms. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt relocated the Oval Office from the center of the building to the southeast corner in 1934, this room received a skylight.
- The second President Roosevelt called this room the Fish Room, since he used it to display an aquarium and his fishing mementos. President Kennedy continued the room's nautical theme by mounting a sailfish that he caught in Acapulco, Mexico.
- President Richard Nixon named the room in 1969 to honor both Presidents Roosevelt for their expansions and improvements to the West Wing. Traditionally, the mantelpiece holds bronze busts of both presidents (as well as President Theodore Roosevelt's Nobel Peace Prize, the first awarded to an American) and their portraits hang on opposing walls. Today the room is used as a conference room and features a multimedia center for presentations.



Vice Presidential Residence -Number One Observatory Circle

- For nearly 200 years, unlike the President, the Vice President did not have an executive mansion to live in. But by the 1970s, the cost of securing the Vice Presidents and their families in private residences had become prohibitively expensive, prompting Congress to establish a permanent Vice Presidential residence at Number One Observatory Circle. In 1974, Walter Mondale became the first Vice President to move into the building, and it has since been home to every Vice Presidential family.
- The white 19th century house overlooking Massachusetts Avenue and adjacent to the United States Naval Observatory was built in 1893 and originally intended for the superintendent of the Observatory. Despite its new neighbors, the Naval Observatory has continued to operate and still keeps its famously accurate atomic clocks and serves as working scientific facility in the study of timepieces and navigation.

