and glitter into the social life of the White House. Then, extension of the democratic simplicity he favored and Mrs. John Adams in November 1800. At that time, most practiced in his social life. to it as the “President’s House” or the “President’s Palace.” also opened the house each morning to all visitors—an the east and west terraces were constructed. Jefferson family wash. During Thomas Jefferson’s administration, Mrs. Adams used the unfinished East Room to dry the building to be termed the “White House” from an early painted during the course of construction, causing the house after it was burned by the British in 1814, and the erection of the north and south porticos some years later.) The exterior sandstone walls were painted during the course of construction, causing the building to be termed the “White House” from an early date. For many years, however, people generally referred to it as the “President’s House” or the “President’s Palace.” The White House was first occupied by President and Mrs. John Adams in November 1800. At that time, most of the building’s interior had not yet been completed, and Mrs. Adams used the unfinished East Room to dry the family wash. During Thomas Jefferson’s administration, the east and west terraces were constructed. Jefferson also opened the house each morning to all visitors—an extension of the democratic simplicity he favored and practiced in his social life. When James Madison became President in 1809, his wife, the famous Dolley Madison, introduced brilliance and glitter into the social life of the White House. Then, on August 24, 1814, British forces captured Washington and burned the house in retaliation for the destruction by American troops of some public buildings in Canada. Although only the partially damaged sandstone walls and interior brickwork remained when reconstruction of the building began in 1815, the White House was ready for occupancy by President James Monroe in September 1817. The south portico, the dominant architectural feature of that side of the house, was built in 1824; the large north portico over the entrance and the driveway, in 1829.

Improvements, 1834-1848. When the country, at its history, the White House has kept pace with modern improvements. Spring water was piped into the building in 1834, gas lighting was introduced in 1836, and a hot-water heating system was installed in 1835. During Andrew Johnson’s administration, the east terrace was removed entirely. In 1881 the first elevator was installed, and in 1891, during Benjamin Harrison’s administration, the house was wired for electricity. When Theodore Roosevelt moved into the White House in 1901, in interior was a conversion of styles and periods, and the house itself needed extensive structural repairs. Congress appropriated the money to repair and renovate the house and to construct new offices for the President. Work began in June 1902 and by the end of the year the job was virtually completed by the architectural firm McKim, Mead and White.

Several important changes were made between 1903 and 1948. The west wing offices were enlarged in 1908, several guestrooms were made in the attic during Woodrow Wilson’s presidency, and the roof and third story were remodeled in 1927. A few years later, an electric kitchen was installed, and a basement was dug under the north portico to provide space for maintenance shops and storage. During World War II, the east wing and an air-raid shelter were constructed and a motion-picture theater was installed in the east terrace. In 1948 a balcony was completed off the second floor behind the columns of the south portico. Renovation, 1948-52. Over the years, piecemeal alterations had weakened many of the building’s old wooden beams and interior walls. But not until a thorough examination of the structure was made in 1948 was the really alarming condition of the house revealed. To allow a survey to be made, President Harry S Truman moved across the street into historic Blair-Lee House, now known as The President’s Guest House. Late in 1948, all furnishings were removed from the White House and placed in storage.

Inspection revealed that beams were inadequately supported, heavy ceilings had dropped several inches, and even the foundations were too weak to support the walls erected on them. Renovation began in December 1948 and by late 1950 the most critical phase of the work had been accomplished. The old sandstone walls were retained and supported by concrete foundations, and the wooden beams and brick supporting walls of the interior were replaced by a modern steel framework. Concrete floors were then laid and partition walls erected. In March 1952, the Presidential family resumed residence in the White House.

During the renovation, efforts were made to retain or restore the original atmosphere, while providing a more livable home for the President and his family.

This, then, is the White House. It has seen many historic events and personages. President Ford and his family invite you to see this great home and experience at first hand its unique warmth and dignity.

About Your Visit. The White House is open to visitors from 10 a.m. to noon, Tuesday through Saturday; in summer, the Saturday hours are extended to 2 p.m. The house is closed Sunday and Monday, and some holidays. Visitors with a physical handicap which will not permit waiting in line should come directly to the East Gate for prompt admittance.


The Library. More than 2,700 volumes dealing with American literature, history, biography, and art are housed here. The Library contains American furniture of the Federal period, a chandelier once owned by the family of James Fenimore Cooper, and five portraits of American Indians representing a delegation received by President Monroe in 1821.

The China Room. This room was first used for the display of Martin Van Buren's portraits in 1837 by Mrs. William Wilson, Benjamin's only surviving daughter. The glass on shelves is pieces from china sets used by all past Presidents. On the south wall hangs a full-length portrait of our first President, George Washington, who never lived here but whose estate remains a part of the President's family life. The architecture and plan of the White House are such that the entire first floor is a large, continuous hall with the informality of a rock band and high school prom to Mrs. Ford having tea with her guests in the Library.

Here are the rooms of the White House:

The Diplomatic Reception Room. This oval-shaped room is furnished as a part of the late 18th or early 19th century. Its oval center table symbolizes the 56 States. It was from this room that President Franklin Roosevelt made his fireside chat. The door at the end of the room opens on to the South Lawn. The room is now used as an entrance to the residence by the President, his family, and the staff.

The Green Room. This room, which once served as Thomas Jefferson's dining room, has been refurbished as a Federal part of the 1810 period and is now used for receptions. The furnishings are of American design made in New York by Duncan Phyfe or his contemporaries. The walls are covered with watered, moss green silk with designs of a striped silk damask, and on the floor is a 19th-century Turkish Hereke rug. The white marble mantel was purchased in London. On the table is a silver coffee service owned by John Adams and a pair of silver candlesticks used by Dolley Madison. The cut glass and gilt bronze chandelier dates from 1810.

The Blue Room. Furnished for its elliptical shape, the Blue Room is usually considered the most beautiful room in the White House and is one of the most used by the President to receive guests at State dinners and receptions. The walls are covered with varicolored Vermont marble; floors are of gray and pink Tennessee marble. The overture to the Blue Room, "The Star-Spangled Banner," is the seal of the President of the United States. The draperies of a striped silk damask, and on the floor is a pair of silver candlesticks used by Dolley Madison. The cut glass and gilt bronze chandelier dates from 1810.

The Red Room. This room was once John Quincy Adams' gallery and is now used for small receptions. This room has been the scene of several famous weddings, including those of Nellie Grant, Alice Roosevelt, and Grover Cleveland's marriage to Miss Frances Folsom.

The Kitchen. The long kitchen of the White House was completely remodeled in 1948. The only wedding of a President to take place in the White House occurred on this room on June 2, 1865, when Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton married Miss Mary E. Wickham.

The East Room. The east sits by white marbled walls, the English oak parquet floor is 1821, and the ceiling is decorated in white and gold. Large cut glass chandeliers, dating from 1927, hang from an elaborately decorated ceiling, and the floor is oak parquet. The State of New York, on the wall above, was presented in 1938.

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