

North Portico

The White House



The White House



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, HAROLD L. ICKES, *Secretary*

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THE WHITE HOUSE was the first public building to be erected in Washington, the cornerstone having been laid on October 13, 1792. The site was selected by Major L'Enfant, the French engineer who prepared the plan for the city, and was approved by George Washington. The architect, James Hoban, superintended the original construction, the reconstruction after the burning by the British, and later construction of the south and north porticos.

The design, said to have been suggested by that of the Duke of Leinster's palace in

Dublin, is of the classic style of architecture. The exterior walls of the building are constructed of light grey sandstone from quarries on Aquia Creek, Va., and were painted white in the course of the reconstruction after the fire.

First Occupied

The White House was first occupied by President and Mrs. John Adams in November 1800, although some of the interior construction, notably the East Room, had not been completed at that time. The east and west terraces were constructed during

East Room



Jefferson's administration. On August 24, 1814, the building was burned by the British forces which had captured Washington, the fire destroying the interior and part of the walls. The work of reconstruction was commenced in the spring of 1815, and President Monroe moved in during December 1817. The south portico was completed in 1824 and the north portico in 1829. In 1869, the east terrace was entirely removed, but no other important structural changes were made until 1902, except the erection of greenhouses on the west terrace.

Restoration of 1902

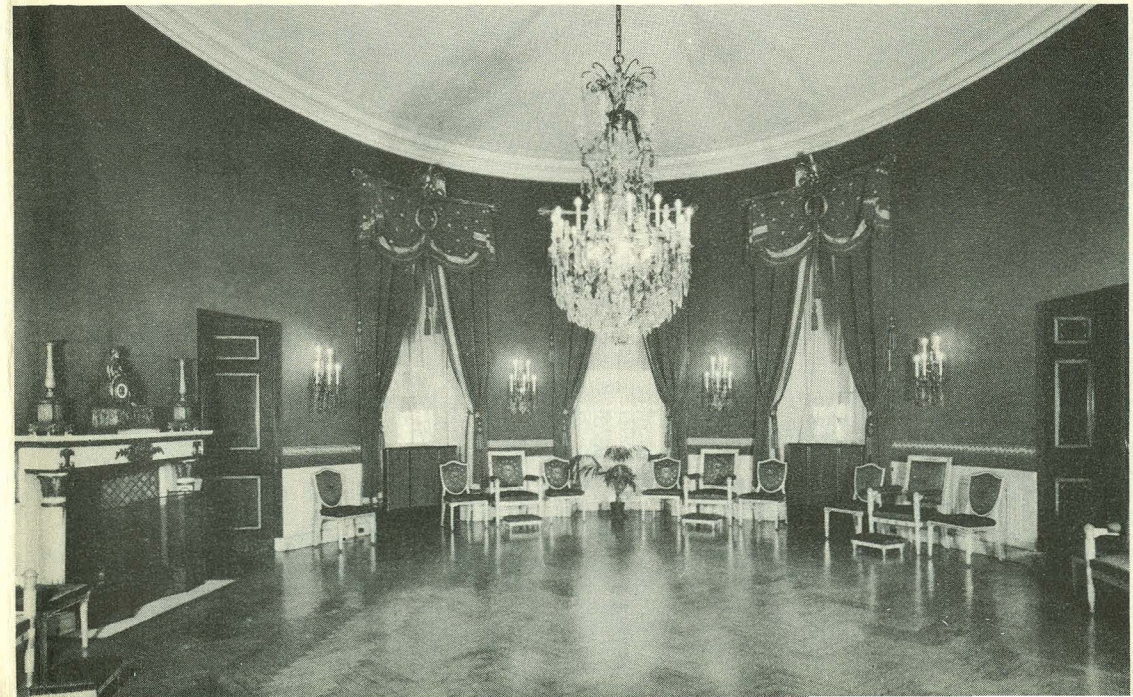
In 1902, during Theodore Roosevelt's administration, Congress appropriated \$65,000 for construction of new offices for the President and \$475,000 for making necessary changes in and additions to the White House and for refurnishing.

The improvements accomplished included: Construction of the new office

building at the west end of the west terrace; removal of greenhouses from the west terrace, and reconstruction of the east terrace, with a porte-cochere for the reception of guests; rebuilding practically all the floor of the first story, and strengthening the second-story floors; removal of the main stairway from the west end of the building to a place just east of the main lobby, and use of the space thus made available for enlarging the State Dining Room; constructing a small private stairway from the basement to the attic in the space immediately adjacent to the elevator; redecorating and refurnishing the entire main story; and providing a few rooms for servants in the attic. Architecturally, the changes and new decorations were designed to restore the interior, as far as possible, to a plan for the use of the building as originally conceived by George Washington.

The project was executed by McKim, Meade, and White, architects, of New

Blue Room



York. Work was started in June 1902; the President reoccupied the house in November; and all operations were completed by January 1, 1903.

1902-1941

No further changes were made in the period between 1902 and 1927, except the enlargement of the office building in 1910 and the fitting up of several attic rooms for possible use as guest rooms during President Wilson's administration. In 1927, the roof and third story were repaired and remodeled. The roof was kept at the original elevation in order that the exterior appearance of the building should remain unchanged.

The Executive Offices were remodeled and air-conditioning equipment installed in 1934.

The Executive Mansion and grounds are maintained by the National Park Service.

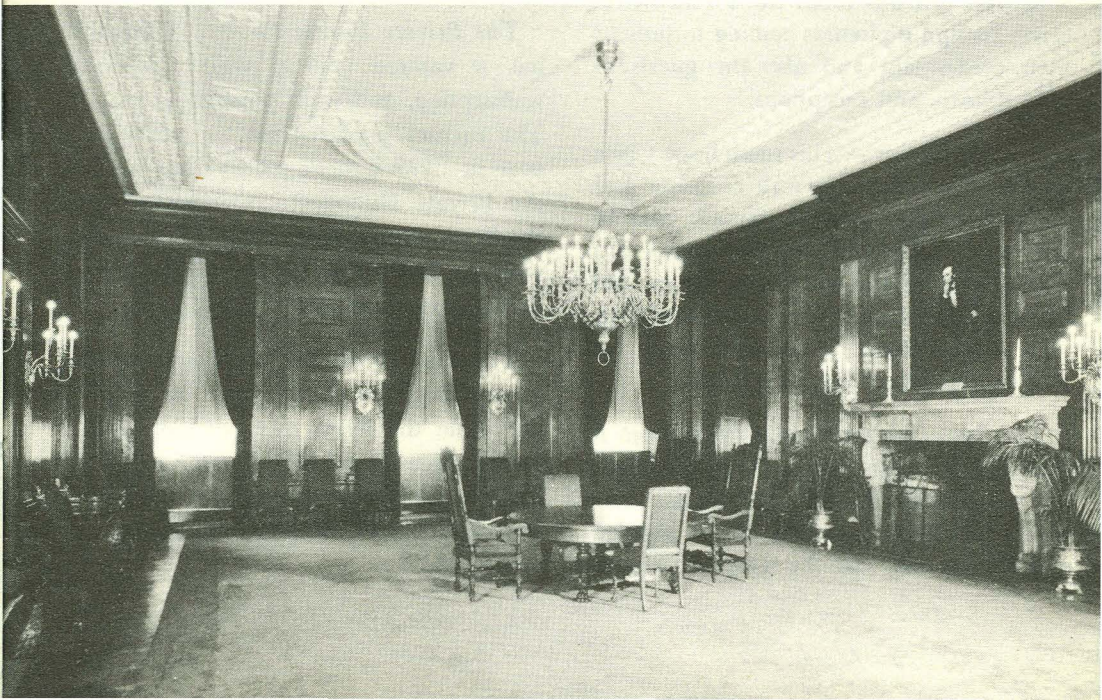
Description of the Rooms

First Floor

Entrance Lobby and Main Corridor.—These rooms have floors of Joliet stone, and the walls are painted buff and white. Six classic columns separate the lobby and corridor. The window hangings are red, and a red rug, 70 feet in length, covers the corridor floor. On the east and west walls of the lobby are mirrors reaching from the floor to the ceiling, and in the center of the floor appears the President's seal, in yellow bronze, inlaid in the stone.

The East Room.—The walls of this room are covered with wood paneling, enameled; the ornamental ceiling is done in plaster of paris, and set in the walls are six low-relief panels by Piccirilli Brothers, sculptors, the subjects being taken from Aesop's fables. On both the east and west sides of the room are two mantels of colored marble above which are mirrors. The room is lighted by three crystal

State Dining Room



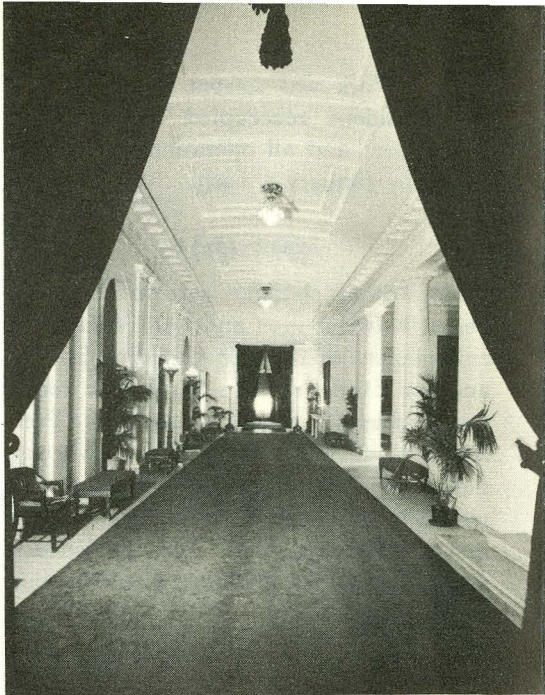
chandeliers and by four bronze standards bearing electric lights, which are placed at the four corners of the room. The window draperies are of heavy red silk damask. The floor is oak parquetry. The concert grand piano is of mahogany decorated in gold.

The Green Room.—The wall covering and curtains in this room are of green silk damask. The white marble mantel, together with that in the Red Room, was originally in the State Dining Room, having been purchased in England when the White House was reconstructed after the fire in 1814. The Aubusson rug on the oak floor bears the coat of arms of the United States. This room is used for informal receptions.

The Blue Room.—This room is elliptical in shape and is considered to be rarely beautiful in its proportions. The wall covering above the white enameled wainscoting is of heavy corded blue silk, and the curtains are of the same material. The mantel is of white marble, and the floor is of oak. In this room the President receives foreign diplomats coming to present their credentials, and also the guests at state dinners and receptions.

The Red Room.—This room has a white enameled wainscoting, wall covering and hangings of dark red silk damask, and an oak floor. The white marble mantel is a duplicate of that in the Green Room, and the floor is covered with a dark red rug. This room is used by the First Lady for receiving guests by appointment.

The State Dining Room.—This room is used for all large dinners and luncheons and can seat comfortably 100 guests. The walls from floor to ceiling are of paneled and carved oak, and the window curtains



*Main Corridor Looking Toward
State Dining Room*

are of green velvet. The ceiling is elaborately decorated. The chimney piece is of stone, and the chandelier and wall sconces are silver.

The Private Dining Room.—This room has a vaulted ceiling, white enameled wainscoting, and walls paneled in plaster. The mantel is of marble, with a mirror over it. The butler's pantry, just west of the Private Dining Room, opens also to the State Dining Room, and is connected with the kitchen on the ground floor by a dumb waiter and by a small staircase.

The East Room and the rooms on the ground floor are usually open to the public, while the lobby and corridor, Green Room, Blue Room, Red Room, and State Dining Room are reserved for the reception and entertaining of official visitors and guests.

Ground Floor

A corridor leading from the east entrance on the ground floor affords access to four rooms, open to the public: The library, containing books presented to the White House by American book publishers; the china room in which is housed a collection of china used by the various Presidents; the Diplomatic Reception Room, elliptical in form, from which the President speaks to all America over the radio; and a room which opens off the Diplomatic Room which contains furniture used by Presidents Johnson and Arthur.

Beneath the west terrace is the swimming pool, built by public subscription, for the President's use. This section of the ground floor is not accessible to the public.

Second and Third Floors

These floors are reserved for the family and guests of the President. The second floor has seven bedrooms and baths, in addition to the library, the President's study, and a wide hall extending the length of the building. The third floor has fourteen rooms and seven bathrooms, as well as a number of storage rooms.

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