



The White House, in Washington D.C., is the official office and family residence of the president of the United States. Before 1790, government offices, Congress, and the Supreme Court, were located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Congress designated a ten square mile section of land along the Potomac River, to be the permanent capitol, Washington.

Thomas Jefferson, then secretary of state, advertised a contest to select the design for what was called the President’s House. A design by architect James Hoban was chosen and work was begun in 1792. His design featured a simple, neoclassical style—and white paint. Since then, the White House has been altered, rebuilt, and expanded several times—but it’s always repainted white. George Washington watched over the original construction, but he never lived in the White House. The second president, John Adams, and his wife, Abigail Adams, moved into the still-unfinished, and unfurnished, building in 1800. Since then, growth, presidents’ needs, and war, have helped to shape its world-famous appearance.

During the War of 1812, invading British troops attacked Washington and set fire to the White House. Most of the internal structure was destroyed, but the thick stone walls were saved. President James Madison asked the architect, James Hoban, to rebuild it—exactly as it had looked before the fire. Over many years, other presidents added graceful porches, rows of columns, and several gardens. In 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt needed more space—both for his offices and for his family of six children. He expanded the family quarters, built a new front entrance, and created the new West Wing. Today, the West Wing houses the president’s Oval Office and the offices of the vice president, the chief of staff, and the press secretary.

You can tour several White House public rooms. On the ground floor, tour groups look into the Vermeil Room and Library. Upstairs, they see the beautiful East, Green, Blue, Red Rooms, and the State Dining Rooms.

Today’s White House has 132 rooms, 35 bathrooms, 412 doors, 28 fireplaces, a theater, and a bowling alley. The entire second floor serves as private living quarters for the president’s family. They get to call the White House—home!

Do You Know?

The White House architect, James Hoban, was from Dublin, Ireland. He designed the White House to look similar to a beautiful private home in Dublin, called Leinster House. Today, Leinster House serves as the offices of the Irish Parliament.

WOWSER!

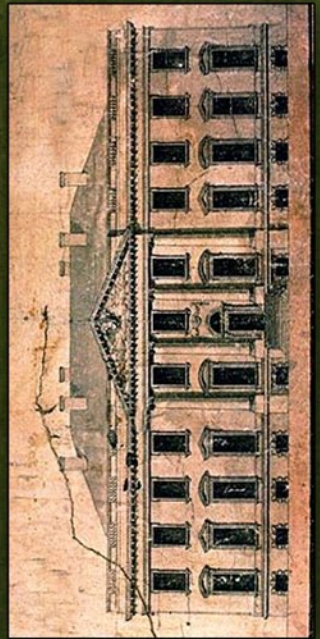
In 1948, President Harry Truman ordered the White House to be strengthened, remodeled, and fireproofed. The four-year project began after the leg of a heavy piano fell through the aging floor!

Discussion questions

1. President Theodore Roosevelt made several changes to the White House. Name two of them.
2. Several rooms are named after colors. What colors are they?
3. Who was the first president to live in the White House?



THE WHITE HOUSE



Architect James Hoban's original drawing



Rear view of the White House



The President's Oval Office