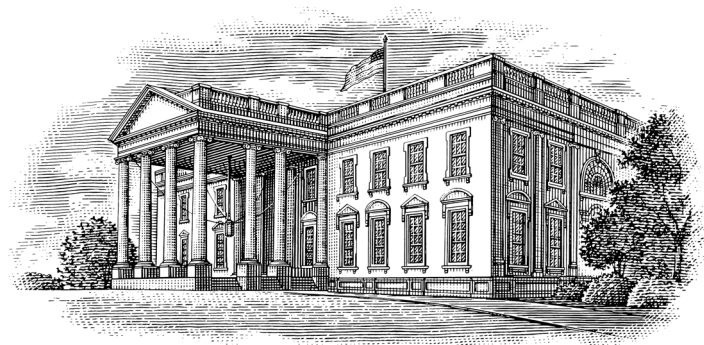


White House Words

A Style Guide for Writers and Editors



*THE WHITE HOUSE
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION*

The White House Historical Association is a nonprofit organization, chartered on November 3, 1961, to enhance understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of the Executive Mansion.

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White House Words

A Style Guide for Writers and Editors

Preface

Over many years, the White House Historical Association has received questions from scholars, journalists, authors, and editors about the right style for presenting names and terms relating to the presidency and the White House. What is the proper form of presidents' and first ladies' names? What are the correct names for rooms in the White House? What terms should be capitalized, and what terms can be abbreviated? We have been able to supply the answers to these questions with the detailed style sheet that the association's editors have developed during the course of their work on many books and scholarly resources on White House history.

Because of the interest in this well-considered style, we now make it widely available in this publication. We hope you will find answers to your questions here. The basic sources are *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th edition (2008), and *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th edition (2010), but the style has also been developed in consultation with the Office of the Curator, The White House, and with many scholars and editors who write and edit in the fields of presidential history, architectural history, and art history.

The Places and Spaces of the White House

B

Billiard Room. *Recreation room. In the early twentieth century, the billiard table was in today's Map Room. Ground Floor.*

Blair House, The President's Guest House. *Complex of four connected town houses that serves as the official guest house for foreign heads of state visiting the president; located at 1651–53 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, across the street from the White House.*

Blue Room. *Principal drawing room used for receiving guests, noted for its oval shape. State Floor.*

Broadcast Room. *Room created during the Truman renovation of 1948–52 to be used for televised addresses; today used for office and storage space. Ground Floor.*

C

Cabinet Room. *Meeting room for the president's cabinet. West Wing. Former Cabinet Rooms were in the Residence.*

Center Hall. *General use, gallery-like passage. Second Floor.*

China Room. *Exhibition space where selections from the historic presidential china collection are displayed. Ground Floor.*

Conservatories. *Glass-enclosed greenhouses built over the West Colonnade beginning in 1857; torn down during the Theodore Roosevelt renovation of 1902.*

Cross Hall (preferred over Transverse Hall). *Long, grand passage from the East Room to the State Dining Room; also a gallery of portraits of recent presidents. State Floor.*

D

Decatur House on Lafayette Square. *Town house of Commodore Stephen Decatur; located at 748 Jackson Place NW, today the National Center for White House History.*

Diplomatic Reception Room. *Oval-shaped room located beneath the Blue Room where foreign dignitaries and visitors from the diplomatic corps are received after they enter through the South Portico. Ground Floor.*

E

East Colonnade. *Glass-enclosed corridor connecting the Residence to the East Wing. Ground Floor.*

East Garden. *One of the principal flower gardens of the White House; located on the east side of the South Lawn; also known as the First Ladies' and the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden.*

East Room. *Great ceremonial room of the White House. State Floor.*

East Sitting Hall. *Family sitting room. Second Floor.*

East Terrace. *Open area above the roof of the East Colonnade.*

East Wing. *Building on the east, connected to the Residence by the East Colonnade; contains offices of the first lady and her staff, and the main entrance for visitors touring the White House.*

Ellipse. *Oval-shaped park to the south of the White House.*

Entrance Hall. *Formal reception area for visitors coming through the North Door. State Floor.*

Executive Mansion. *The White House.*

Executive Residence, the Residence. *Original central portion of the White House, where the first family's living quarters are located.*

F

Family Dining Room. *Originally the main family dining room; today used for special events. State Floor.*

G

Grand Foyer: *See Entrance Hall.*

Grand Staircase. *Formal staircase from the Second Floor to the State Floor; used mainly for ceremonial entrances on state occasions. State Floor.*

Green Room. *State parlor used for small gatherings. State Floor.*

Ground Floor. *Originally a utilitarian basement below the State Floor; redesigned with reception rooms in the Theodore Roosevelt renovation of 1902.*

Ground Floor Corridor. *Central passageway connecting Ground Floor Rooms, the West Wing, and the East Wing. Ground Floor.*

J

Jackson Magnolia. *Old Magnolia grandiflora tree near the South Portico, possibly planted during the Andrew Jackson administration.*

Jacqueline Kennedy Garden: *See East Garden.*

L

Ladies' Drawing Room. *Room originally reserved for ladies to withdraw to after dinner; today the Yellow Oval Room. Second Floor.*

Lafayette Park. *Landscaped park located to the north of the White House, across Pennsylvania Avenue.*

Lafayette Square. *The houses facing Lafayette Park to the north of the White House.*

Library. *Library with a collection of books on American history, thought, and tradition. Ground Floor.*

Lincoln Bedroom. *Guest bedroom that was the office and Cabinet Room of President Abraham Lincoln. Second Floor.*

Lincoln Sitting Room. *Parlor and dressing room for the adjacent Lincoln Bedroom. Second Floor.*

Lincoln Suite. *Guest suite consisting of the Lincoln Bedroom and Lincoln Sitting Room. Second Floor.*

M

Map Room. *Sitting room used as a situation room by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt during World War II. Ground Floor.*

N

North Corridor. *Narrow passage to a window over the North Door. Second Floor.*

North Drive. *Semicircular driveway from Pennsylvania Avenue to the North Entrance.*

North Entrance. *Entryway on the north side through the North Portico.*

North Entrance Hall: *See Entrance Hall.*

North Front. *Pennsylvania Avenue side of the White House.*

North Grounds. *Area including North Drive and the North Lawn of the White House enclosed by an iron fence.*

North Lawn. *Outdoor area on the north side of the White House.*

North Portico. *Three-sided, colonnaded entrance porch on the north side of the White House.*

Northwest Gate. *Gate on Pennsylvania Avenue that is the main entrance for official callers to the White House.*

O

Oval Office. *The president's office. West Wing.*

P

Paint Shop. *Workshop. Ground Floor.*

Pastry Shop. *Kitchen where desserts are created.*

Pebble Beach. *Area where television reporters do their stand-up shots with the White House in the background; redubbed “Stonehenge” after being repaved with fieldstone in 2003. North Lawn.*

President’s House. *The White House.*

President’s Park. *85-acre preserve designated by President George Washington when the capital was planned in 1792; includes the White House, Lafayette Park, the Ellipse, and the grounds of the Eisenhower Executive Office and Treasury Buildings.*

Press Room. *Assembly room for news reporters covering the White House. West Wing.*

Q

Queens’ Bedroom. *Guest bedroom named for the visiting royalty who have stayed there. Second Floor.*

Queens’ Sitting Room. *Parlor and dressing room for the adjacent Queens’ Bedroom. Second Floor.*

Queens’ Suite. *Guest suite consisting of the Queens’ Bedroom and the Queens’ Sitting Room. Second Floor.*

R

Red Room. *State parlor used for small gatherings. State Floor.*

Roosevelt Room. *Central conference room located across the hall from the Oval Office. West Wing.*

Rose Garden. *One of the principal flower gardens of the White House, located on the west side of the South Lawn; used for outdoor ceremonies; also known as the West Garden.*

S

Second Floor. *The level that appears as the “upstairs” from the street and houses the private family quarters.*

Solarium. *Private family recreation room above the South Portico. Third Floor.*

South Front. *“Rear” or garden front of the White House.*

South Grounds. *Area including the South Lawn of the White House, enclosed by an iron fence.*

South Lawn. *Outdoor area on the south side of the White House.*

South Portico. *Semicircular colonnaded porch with open-armed stairs on the south side of the White House.*

State Dining Room. *Dining room for State Dinners and other official dinners. State Floor.*

State Floor. *Main floor of the White House, containing the public rooms.*

State Parlors: *Blue Room, Red Room and Green Room.*

State Rooms. *Formal rooms on the State Floor, including the Blue Room, Red Room, Green Room, State Dining Room, and East Room.*

T

Third Floor. *Originally an attic above the Second Floor, redesigned for use by the first family in 1927.*

Transverse Hall: *See Cross Hall.*

Treaty Room. *Once a Cabinet Room; today a presidential study. Second Floor.*

Truman Balcony. *Second-level balcony added to the South Front of the White House by President Harry S. Truman in 1947–48.*

U

Usher's Room. *Room occupied by the Usher's Office. State Floor.*

V

Vermeil Room. *Exhibition space where a collection of vermeil (gilded silver) is displayed. Ground Floor.*

W

West Colonnade. *Column-lined open passageway that borders the Rose Garden and connects the Residence to the West Wing.*

West Garden: *See Rose Garden.*

West Lawn. *Outdoor area bounded by the West Colonnade, including the Rose Garden.*

West Sitting Hall. *Private sitting room. Second Floor.*

West Terrace. *Open area above the roof of the West Colonnade.*

West Wing. *Office wing of the White House that contains the Oval Office and offices for the president's closest advisers.*

Y

Yellow Oval Room. *Oval-shaped room located above the Blue Room that serves as a formal drawing room for the family quarters. Second Floor.*

Treatment of Terms Related to Presidential History and the White House

A

Adams, Adamses, Adams's, Adamses'
administration: *lowercase, as* Washington administration
adviser
aesthetic
Aesthetic (*style*)
African American (*n. and adj.*)
aide-de-camp
Air Force One
annual message
army, *but* U.S. Army
art moderne
art deco
artwork
Articles of the Constitution: *cap, but lowercase section, as* Article II, section 1
Armistice

B

battle: *cap specific ones, as* Battle of New Orleans
Beaux-Arts (*n. and adj.*)
Bicentennial
board of commissioners, the board

C

cabinet
capital, capital city
Capitol Building, the Capitol
chair: *preferred over* chairman
chief executive
chief justice
chimneypiece
Civil War
classical (*style*), classical revival (*style*)
Coast: *cap specific ones, as* East Coast
Cold War
collection: *lowercase specific ones, as* White House collection

colonial, colonial period

Colonial Revival (*style*)

commander in chief

Commission of Fine Arts, the commission, the fine arts commission: *official name is U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (founded 1910)*

Commission on the Renovation of the Executive Mansion, the commission, the renovation commission (*founded 1949*)

commissioner of public buildings

Commissioners of the Federal District, the commissioners

Committee for the Preservation of the White House, the committee (*founded 1964*)

Confederation Congress

Conference: *cap specific ones, as Yalta Conference*

Congress (*not the Congress*), congressional, Congress's

congressional picnic

congressman, congresswoman: *lowercase except preceding name, as Congressman Smith (preferred over Representative Smith)*

Constitution

Continental Army

Continental Congress

Crown: *cap in sense of royal government*

cubism

D

decor

Deep South

Democrats, Democratic Party

Diplomatic Corps

District of Columbia, the District

E

East Coast

Easter Egg Roll

Eisenhower Executive Office Building (EEOB)

election day

Electoral College

embassy: *cap specific ones*

Empire (*style*)

executive branch

Executive Mansion

Executive Office Building

F

facade

Farewell Address

federal (*adj. for government*)

Federal (*style and period*)

Federal City: *Washington, D.C., before it was named in 1791*

Federal District, the District

Federal Hall

Federalist period

Fine Arts Committee for the White House (*informally founded in 1961 by First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy; responsibilities assumed by the Committee for the Preservation of the White House in 1964*)

first family

First Federal Congress

first lady, first ladies: *lowercase except preceding name, as First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, first lady's own first name preferred (e.g., First Lady Michelle Obama preferred over Mrs. Barack Obama)*

Founding Father, Founder

Fourth of July

Framer

French Empire (*style*)

G

gas lamp

gaslight

Gothic Revival (*style*)

Great Seal

Greek Revival (*style*)

Gulf War

H

"Hail to the Chief"

House of Representatives, the House

I

impressionism

inaugural address

inaugural ball

inauguration

Inauguration Day

J

justice, chief justice

K

Korean War

L

L'Enfant, Pierre Charles (1754–1825): designer of the Federal City

L'Enfant plan

levee

Louis XVI Revival (*style*)

M

McKim, Mead & White

McMillan Commission (1901–2)

McMillan plan (1902)

Marine Band

Marine One

marines, *but* U.S. Marines, a Marine

Marquis de Lafayette

member of Congress, member of Parliament

Mexican-American War

N

naive

nation's house

Native American (*n. and adj.*)

navy, *but* U.S. Navy

neoclassical

New Year's Day

North, northern, northerner

O

oath of office
Office of the Curator, The White House (OCWH)
office-seeker

P

papers: *cap specific ones, as* Jefferson Papers
party: *cap specific ones, as* Democratic Party
people's house
Philadelphia Centennial Exposition
policy making (*n.*); policy-making (*adj.*); policy maker (*n.*)
portico, porticoes: *lowercase, but cap specific ones, as* North Portico, South Portico
presidency
president: *lowercase, cap only when preceding name or in context of formal address, introductions, and toasts*
president-elect
Presidential Coat of Arms
Presidential Flag
Presidential Libraries, Presidential Library System
Presidential Seal
"The President's Own": *reference to the Marine Band*

R

reelect
representative: *lowercase except preceding name, as* Representative Smith (*but congressman/woman preferred*)
republic, the republic
Republicans, Republican Party
Resolute desk: *made from the oak timbers of the British ship H.M.S. Resolute, a gift from Queen Victoria to President Rutherford B. Hayes in 1880*
Revolution, revolutionary
Revolutionary War
Roosevelt renovation (1902)
Rotunda: *cap when referring to the Capitol Rotunda*
Ruffles and Flourishes: *fanfare preceding ceremonial music played upon the arrival of state dignitaries*

S

Second Empire (*style*)

Secret Service

secretary of state: *lowercase, except preceding name*

Senate

senator: *lowercase, except preceding name*

Seven Years' War

Smithsonian Institution

Soldiers' Home: *nineteenth-century presidential summer retreat house in Washington, D.C.*

South, southern, southerner

Spanish-American War

Speaker of the House

Stars and Stripes

State Dinner

State of the Union address

State, War and Navy Building

Supreme Court, the court

surveyor of the public buildings

T

terra-cotta (*n. and adj.*)

Tidewater

torchère

Treasury Building

Truman renovation (1948–52)

U

Union, the Union

United States (*n.*), U.S. (*adj.*), United States' (*possessive*)

Usher's Office: *located in the Usher's Room*

V

veranda

vice president: *no hyphen, lowercase except preceding name*

Vietnam War

W

War of 1812

War of Independence

Washington, D.C.: *D.C. is set off with commas within a sentence*

West, Western: culture, civilization

West, western, westerner: U.S. region

Western Hemisphere

White House Christmas tree

White House collection

White House Historical Association (WHHA), the association

World's Columbian Exposition

The Presidents

<u>Number</u>	<u>President</u>	<u>Term</u>
1	George Washington	1789-1797
2	John Adams	1797-1801
3	Thomas Jefferson	1801-1809
4	James Madison	1809-1817
5	James Monroe	1817-1825
6	John Quincy Adams	1825-1829
7	Andrew Jackson	1829-1837
8	Martin Van Buren	1837-1841
9	William Henry Harrison	1841
10	John Tyler	1841-1845
11	James K. Polk	1845-1849
12	Zachary Taylor	1849-1850
13	Millard Fillmore	1850-1853
14	Franklin Pierce	1853-1857
15	James Buchanan	1857-1861
16	Abraham Lincoln	1861-1865
17	Andrew Johnson	1865-1869
18	Ulysses S. Grant	1869-1877
19	Rutherford B. Hayes	1877-1881
20	James A. Garfield	1881
21	Chester A. Arthur	1881-1885
22	Grover Cleveland	1885-1889

<u>Number</u>	<u>President</u>	<u>Term</u>
23	Benjamin Harrison	1889-1893
24	Grover Cleveland	1893-1897
25	William McKinley	1897-1901
26	Theodore Roosevelt (TR)	1901-1909
27	William Howard Taft	1909-1913
28	Woodrow Wilson	1913-1921
29	Warren G. Harding	1921-1923
30	Calvin Coolidge	1923-1929
31	Herbert Hoover	1929-1933
32	Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR)	1933-1945
33	Harry S. Truman	1945-1953
34	Dwight D. Eisenhower (Ike)	1953-1961
35	John F. Kennedy (JFK)	1961-1963
36	Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ)	1963-1969
37	Richard M. Nixon	1969-1974
38	Gerald R. Ford	1974-1977
39	Jimmy Carter	1977-1981
40	Ronald Reagan	1981-1989
41	George H. W. Bush	1989-1993
42	William J. Clinton (Bill)	1993-2001
43	George W. Bush	2001-2009
44	Barack Obama	2009-

First Ladies and White House Hostesses

Full names, including maiden names, are given here, although maiden names need not be used. First names are WHHA preferred style: e.g., Hillary Rodham Clinton over Mrs. William Clinton.

Administration

Washington	Martha Dandridge Washington. The Washingtons did not live in the White House.
John Adams	Abigail Smith Adams
Jefferson	Jefferson's wife, Martha Wayles Jefferson , died in 1782. Their daughter Martha Jefferson Randolph served as White House hostess for a short time, as did Dolley Payne Madison , wife of the secretary of state, on occasion.
Madison	Dolley Payne Madison
Monroe	Elizabeth Kortright Monroe
John Quincy Adams	Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams
Jackson	Jackson's wife, Rachel Donelson Jackson , died in 1828. Their nephews' wives, Emily Donelson and Sarah York Jackson , served as White House hostesses.
Van Buren	Van Buren's wife, Hannah Hoes Van Buren , died in 1819. Their daughter-in-law, Angelica Singleton Van Buren , served as White House hostess.
William Henry Harrison	Harrison's wife, Anna Symmes Harrison , never lived in the White House. Their daughters-in-law, Jane Irwin Harrison and Priscilla Harrison , served as White House hostesses.
Tyler	Tyler's first wife, Letitia Christian Tyler , died in the White House in 1842. In 1844, Tyler married his second wife, Julia Gardiner Tyler .

Administration

Polk	Sarah Childress Polk
Taylor	Margaret Smith Taylor. Their daughter, Betty Bliss , also occasionally served as White House hostess.
Fillmore	Abigail Powers Fillmore. Their daughter, Mary Abigail Fillmore , also occasionally served as White House hostess.
Pierce	Jane Appleton Pierce
Buchanan	Buchanan was a bachelor. His niece, Harriet Lane , served as White House hostess.
Lincoln	Mary Todd Lincoln
Andrew Johnson	Eliza McCardle Johnson. Their daughter, Martha Patterson , also served as White House hostess.
Grant	Julia Dent Grant
Hayes	Lucy Webb Hayes
Garfield	Lucretia Rudolph Garfield
Arthur	Arthur's wife, Ellen Herndon Arthur , died in 1880. His sister, Mary Arthur McElroy , served as White House hostess.
Cleveland	In 1886, Cleveland married Frances Folsom Cleveland . Until his marriage, his sister, Rose Elizabeth Cleveland , served as White House hostess.
Benjamin Harrison	Harrison's wife, Caroline Lavinia Harrison , died in the White House in 1892. Following her death, their daughter, Mary Harrison McKee , served as White House hostess.
McKinley	Ida Saxton McKinley
Theodore Roosevelt	Edith Carow Roosevelt

Administration

Taft	Helen Herron Taft. Their daughter, Helen Taft , occasionally assisted as White House hostess.
Wilson	Wilson's first wife, Ellen Louise Axson Wilson , died in the White House in 1914. In 1915, Wilson married his second wife, Edith Bolling Wilson .
Harding	Florence Kling Harding
Coolidge	Grace Goodhue Coolidge
Hoover	Lou Henry Hoover
Franklin Delano Roosevelt	Anna Eleanor Roosevelt Roosevelt
Truman	Elizabeth (Bess) Wallace Truman
Eisenhower	Mamie Doud Eisenhower
Kennedy	Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy
Lyndon Baines Johnson	Claudia Taylor (Lady Bird) Johnson
Nixon	Patricia Ryan Nixon
Ford	Elizabeth Bloomer Ford
Carter	Rosalynn Smith Carter
Reagan	Nancy Davis Reagan
George H. W. Bush	Barbara Pierce Bush
Clinton	Hillary Rodham Clinton
George W. Bush	Laura Welch Bush
Obama	Michelle Robinson Obama

Architects of the White House

Three architects may be said to have built the White House:

James Hoban designed and erected it, and was engaged by the government to reconstruct it after it was burned by the British on August 24, 1814. At some point Hoban, perhaps working with drawings made by others, designed the building's two porches, that on the south in 1824 and the north 1829–30.

Charles Follen McKim renovated and rather “reinvented” the White House in 1902 for Theodore Roosevelt. Partner in the famous New York firm McKim, Mead & White, McKim was schooled in melding modern building technology with historical design.

Lorenzo Simmons Winslow was architect for Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman. He designed the White House swimming pool for President Roosevelt and stayed on to engage in many other White House projects. For President Truman he first built the Truman Balcony to the South Portico and then planned and supervised the entire renovation of the White House, 1948–52.

Other architects have worked on the White House in major ways:

Benjamin Henry Latrobe built the east and west wings for Thomas Jefferson.

Thomas U. Walter, architect of the great Capitol dome, consulted on the White House with Millard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce, and Abraham Lincoln.

Nathan C. Wyeth designed the original Oval Office in 1909 for President William Howard Taft.

Eric Gugler moved the office to its present location in 1934.

The Manhattan architect **William Adams Delano** advised on the preservation of the house from the mid-1920s until the late 1940s.

Construction Timeline of the White House

July 1792. President George Washington approves the design and plans of James Hoban for the “President’s House.”

October 13, 1792. Cornerstone set in the mortar of a completed stone foundation wall.

November 1798. Structure of the White House is completed, and the sand-colored stone walls are whitewashed.

1805–8. President Thomas Jefferson builds the first east and west wings.

August 24, 1814. Invading British sailors burn the White House to its stone walls. It is one of the dramatic events in the War of 1812.

Winter 1814. Decision is made to rebuild the White House as it was.

January 1, 1818. President James Monroe opens the reconstructed White House at a gala New Year’s reception.

1824. South Portico is constructed by Hoban; it looks toward the Potomac River.

1829–30. North Portico is constructed by Hoban; it faces Pennsylvania Avenue.

1866. Jefferson’s east wing is demolished and replaced with small porch.

1902. White House is “restored” and updated by President Theodore Roosevelt, establishing a pattern of use still followed today; first West Wing office is built, attached to the original 1808 west wing or West Colonnade.

1909. West Wing is doubled in size by President William Howard Taft, to include the Oval Office, the oval shape inspired by the Blue Room.

1927. Roof and attic are replaced by President Calvin Coolidge with a new roof of steeper pitch, to accommodate a new Third Floor within, where a smaller attic had been.

Christmas Eve 1929. West Wing is gutted by fire.

1930. President Herbert Hoover lays aside his extensive plans for remodeling the West Wing and, because of the Depression, orders its reconstruction much as it was.

1934. President Franklin D. Roosevelt triples the size of the West Wing, moves the Oval Office adjacent to the Rose Garden.

1942. East Wing is expanded with addition of a two-story structure.

1947–48. President Harry S. Truman builds a second-story balcony to the South Portico.

1948–52. Truman supervises the complete reconstruction of the White House within the historic stone shell. The house of 64 rooms becomes one of 132 rooms.

1970. President Richard M. Nixon adds a columned porch to the front of the West Wing, patterning the design on Jefferson’s architectural design of the adjacent West Colonnade.

1980. President Jimmy Carter orders the cleaning and conservation of the paint-scaled stone walls; the process continues for nearly twenty years, being finally completed during the administration of President Bill Clinton. The house is repainted the warm white that in the twentieth century had replaced the stark white of the early years.

Further Reading

White House Resources

The White House: An Historic Guide, 23rd edition. Washington, D.C.: White House Historical Association, 2011. An illustrated guide to the White House.

[Learn more](#)

Book Catalog. Washington, D.C.: White House Historical Association, 2011. An up-to-date listing of books published by the White House Historical Association.

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