



INTRODUCTION

When studying history, it is important to examine how things can change over time. How did we get from point A to point B? Also, why did we get from point A to point B? From the outside, the White House appears to rarely change. The Residence, along with the East and West Wings, stands as an enduring symbol of the presidency and the United States, but behind the recognizable façade many changes have taken place to enlarge and update the space to meet the evolving needs of the first families. Explore some of the changes, expansions, and renovations of the White House from the completion of the porticoes in 1830 to the last major renovation ending in 1952.

CONTEXTUAL ESSAY

President George Washington oversaw the initial design selection for the Executive Mansion and chose architect James Hoban's plan in 1792. Over the next three decades, the White House would be completed, burned by the British, and rebuilt with porticoes, or porches, added to its southern and northern fronts (**Images 1 & 2**). The iconic central White House building was completed by 1830, and its exterior has largely remained the same. From the 1830s until 1902, alterations to the White House occurred principally to its interior. These changes not only reflected the evolving tastes and needs of its occupants, but also included the installation of new amenities such as running water, central heating, and electricity.



Image 2

The President's House was designed to be an office and a home. As the nineteenth century progressed, presidential families, along with their children and relatives, crowded into the cramped Second Floor quarters which were on the same floor as the president's office. This produced increasing demands for more space at the White House. Throughout 1889 and 1890, First Lady



Caroline Harrison promoted a major expansion of the White House complex, but Congress declined to fund the project (**Image 3**).

As the youngest president to assume office, Theodore Roosevelt brought six children to the White House in 1901 (**Image 4**). After one year, First Lady Edith Roosevelt asked the distinguished architect Charles F. McKim for his advice concerning the overcrowded Second Floor quarters (**Image 5**). McKim recommended a complete renovation of the house that would provide a new West Wing for the president and his staff, (**Image 6**), double the space allocated to the family living quarters, and create a new East Wing for receiving guests (**Images 7 & 8**). These plans significantly changed the functionality of the White House. With a few exceptions, much of the White House complex as we know it today reflects the 1902 renovation.



Image 10

In 1909, President William H. Taft had the West Wing enlarged, adding the first Oval Office (**Image 9**). Herbert Hoover rebuilt this wing after a fire in 1929 (**Image 10**). With the expansion of the staff in the 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt requested additional space, and the West Wing was renovated under the supervision of architect Eric Gugler (**Image 11**). His West Wing renovations produced a second story, excavated a larger basement for staff and support services, and moved the Oval Office to its present location in the southeast corner, adjacent to the Rose Garden. By the late 1960s, the term “West Wing” for the executive office space came into common usage.

In 1945, President Harry Truman moved into the White House and noticed large areas of cracking plaster. A structural survey revealed major problems caused by stress from previous expansions, including the third floor built in 1927. Then in 1948, architect Lorenzo S. Winslow was constructing

a balcony on the South Portico when the whole building started to show alarming signs of collapsing. Quickly, Truman appointed a Commission on the Renovation of the Executive Mansion, and Winslow began a full renovation of the White House. The Truman renovation retained the original walls, the third floor and the roof, while removing, and then reinstalling, the interiors within a skeleton of steel structural beams on a new concrete foundation. Two levels of sub-basements and service areas under the North Portico were constructed, and the Grand Staircase was substantially changed (**Images 12-14**). During these renovations, Truman and the First Family lived in Blair House across the street on Pennsylvania Avenue. Finally, on March 27, 1952, the Truman family moved back into the White House after the building had undergone four years of extensive renovations (**Images 15**).

Since 1952, attempts to provide a sense of history resulted in decorative changes to the interior of the White House, but no substantial architectural work was done. Over the decades and into the twenty-first century, paint has been removed and stones have been repaired, but James Hoban's original ideas remain despite the many changes the White House has experienced.

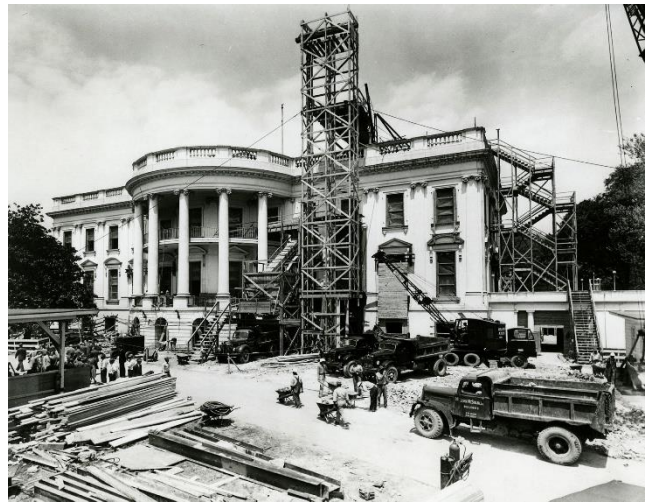




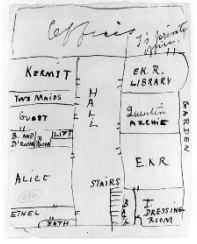


Image 13







IMAGES

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Source	Title	Date	Created By	Courtesy Of	Thumbnail	Web Link
1	South Portico and Lawn	2012	Bruce White	White House Historical Association		https://library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/archives/5017-Digital%20Library/Main%20Index/Views/1112808.tif.info
2	North Portico	2010	Bruce White	White House Historical Association		https://library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/archives/5017-Digital%20Library/Main%20Index/Views/9398.tif.info
3	Plan for Enlarging Executive Mansion	1889	Fred D. Owen	Library of Congress		https://library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/archives/5017-Digital%20Library/Main%20Index/Views/1038.tif.info
4	The Theodore Roosevelt Family	Ca. 1903	Unknown	Library of Congress		https://library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/archives/5017-Digital%20Library/Main%20Index/Presidents/Theodore%20Roosevelt/1637.tif.info
5	Edith Roosevelt's Plan for the Family Rooms of the White House	1901	Edith Roosevelt	Houghton Library, Harvard University		https://library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/archives/5017-Digital%20Library/Main%20Index/Views/1880.tif.info



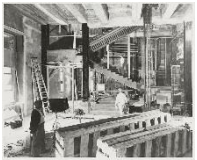

CHANGES TO THE WHITE HOUSE: 1830 – 1952



6	Archie Roosevelt on Algonquin in Front of the New West Wing	1903	Unknown	Library of Congress		https://library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/archives/5017-Digital%20Library/Main%20Index/Presidents/Theodore%20Roosevelt/2528.tif.info
7	East Terrace Construction	1902	Unknown	White House Historical Association		https://library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/archives/5017-Digital%20Library/Main%20Index/Views/372.jpg.info
8	East Entrance	Ca. 1906	Handy Studios	White House Collection		https://library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/archives/5017-Digital%20Library/Main%20Index/Views/9278.jpg.info
9	Taft Seated in Oval Office	Ca. 1909	Unknown	Library of Congress		https://library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/archives/5017-Digital%20Library/Main%20Index/Presidents/William%20H%20Taft/1763.tif.info
10	Fire in the West Wing	1929	Herbert E. French	Library of Congress		https://library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/archives/5017-Digital%20Library/Main%20Index/Views/2923.jpg.info
11	Franklin D. Roosevelt in the Oval Office	1935	Unknown	Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum/ NARA		https://library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/archives/5017-Digital%20Library/Main%20Index/Presidents/Franklin%20D%20Roosevelt/2539.tif.info

CHANGES TO THE WHITE HOUSE: 1830 – 1952



12	Bulldozer in the White House	Ca. 1948-1952	Abbie Rowe	Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum/ NARA		https://library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/archives/5017-Digital%20Library/Main%20Index/Construction%20%26%20Maintenance/367.tif.info
13	South Portico Under Construction	1950	Abbie Rowe	Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum/ NARA		https://library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/archives/5017-Digital%20Library/Main%20Index/Construction%20%26%20Maintenance/369.tif.info
14	Entrance Hall Under Construction	Ca. 1950	Abbie Rowe	White House Collection		https://library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/archives/5017-Digital%20Library/Main%20Index/Construction%20%26%20Maintenance/2435.tif.info
15	The Trumans Entering the White House after Renovations	1952	Abbie Rowe	Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum/ NARA		https://library.whitehousehistory.org/fotoweb/archives/5017-Digital%20Library/Main%20Index/Presidents/Harry%20S%20Truman/434.tif.info



SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

- Make a list of the reasons why the White House has changed over time. Follow up activities can include:
 - Create a scenario for why the White House might change in the future. Consider technology and current events.
 - Using previous knowledge of United States history, discuss events that students may be surprised to learn did not change the White House.
- Consider why President Truman renovated the White House from 1948-1952 rather than replacing it.
 - What are the advantages and disadvantages of saving historic homes?
 - Investigate these questions and more by researching the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Register of Historic Places.
- View the CRP's images. Which images and changes relate to the White House's role as a home for the first families, and which images and changes show the White House's role as an office for the President and their staff? What challenges come with a building that serves multiple functions?
- *This CRP works as a stand-alone resource but also complements the *Designing the White House (1792-1830) CRP.**