

## MRS. NIXON'S WHITE HOUSE RESTORATION

The opening of the Blue Room to the public on May 15, 1972, marked the completion of Mrs. Nixon's major renovations of the State Rooms of the White House. Not since the early 60's, when the White House was first put in the museum category, had any important improvements been made. Mrs. Nixon's work is a part of the long history of continuing efforts to have the White House reflect its historic and artistic heritage as the 172-year-old official residence of the President of the United States.

The following is a brief description of some of the major accomplishments:

Refurbishing of the Blue Room in the French Empire style of President James Monroe included the new acquisitions of:

1. A bergere chair, one of two large arm chairs ordered by President Monroe from France in 1817 for the Oval Room (now the Blue Room). They were used by the President and First Lady. This bergere is the only one so far recovered.
2. Wallpaper based on an antique French Directoire wallpaper made in France in 1800.
3. Mantel made of white carrara statuary marble, early 19th century.

Refurbishing of the Green Room was completed on December 14, 1971, with a collection of American Sheraton Furniture, made by or attributed to Duncan Phyfe of New York City or his contemporaries, circa 1800-1815. Eighteen new pieces have been acquired for the room including:

1. Two unusual and rare 19th century work tables.
2. An arm chair made by Duncan Phyfe with the frame of the chair inscribed by Phyfe's upholsterer.

Refurbishing of the Red Room in the American Empire style (completed on November 8, 1971) brought the addition of five important pieces of furniture to the room including:

1. A rare secretary-bookcase made in New York about 1810-1815 and attributed to the work of Charles Lannuier.

2. A pair of rosewood card tables made in Boston, circa 1815.

Creation of the Map Room, a reception room on the ground floor of the White House, with a collection of American Chippendale furniture. It was first used on May 27, 1970 when President Nixon met with President Johnson prior to luncheon honoring Speaker John McCormack.

Other rooms Mrs. Nixon has re-done are:

Redecorating of the China Room, which contains china collections representing every past President, was completed and re-opened on November 20, 1970. New acquisitions include a hand-woven carpet made in England, circa 1850; an English chandelier of Regency period and dates from 1800. Examples of Presidential porcelain, some of which had not been formerly represented in the White House china collection:

1. French porcelain cup and saucer once owned by President James Monroe and later James Madison.
2. Two compotes from the White House state service of Franklin Pierce.
3. Other examples from the administrations of Madison, Monroe, Jackson, and Polk.

The Diplomatic Reception Room, completed on June 8, 1971, with the addition of a specially designed wool oval rug, a pair of rare Sheraton mahogany cane-seat settees, circa 1795, and an English Regency Chandelier, circa 1810.

The Vermeil Room redecoration was completed on June 17, 1971. Among the items placed in the room are: new draperies; a Hereke rug made in Turkey (circa 1860); two pair of English cut-glass wall sconces; rare American drum table; andirons made in Philadelphia circa 1750-1770.

Mrs. Benjamin Harrison began the first continuous historical project associated with the White House when she collected representative examples of china from previous Administrations. Mrs. Calvin Coolidge successfully obtained from Congress a resolution allowing acceptance of appropriate and exceptional antique furnishings for the residence, and also supervised the

raising of the roof and installation of a full third story, which, until her time, was the attic. Only the exterior walls of the White House remain from the original construction in 1792. The fire of 1814 gutted the mansion and the renovations of 1901-02 under President Theodore Roosevelt and of 1948-52 under President Harry S. Truman, necessitated extensive interior restoration.

Since 1961 approximately 1.5 million visitors a year have toured the White House. It is the only official residence of a chief of state open on a regular non-paying basis to the public, serving as a museum, as the official house for formal entertaining and ceremonies, and as private living quarters for members of the First Family.

The State Rooms had not been refurbished in ten years and the fabric wall coverings and upholstery had become soiled and worn. So that the White House would not be closed to regular visitors, Mrs. Nixon chose to work on only one room at a time. Her initial job for the restoration was raising funds for the project from private sources, as Congress makes no appropriations to the White House for refurbishing or acquisitions. One financial source has been the White House Historical Association which raises money from the sale of three books -- The White House - An Historic Guide, The Living White House, and The Presidents of the United States, which visitors may purchase during regular tour hours.

The White House was begun in 1792 and first occupied by John Adams in 1800. It was predominantly furnished in the 19th century decor with a few French and 18th century American furnishings. New acquisitions as well as major changes in White House decor must be approved by the Committee for the Preservation of the White House. The function of the Committee, established by Presidential order in 1964, is to protect, preserve and enhance the White House. The Committee's existence assures that another public auction, such as the one President Chester A. Arthur held in April 1882, can never again be held. At that time 24 wagonloads of White House furniture and household articles were sold to the general public.

On November 25, 1970, Mrs. Nixon completed months of planning and work when she pressed a button which lighted the exterior of the White House. The residence was the only national monument in the city which was not lighted at night.

Now residents and visitors have a memorable view of the White House exterior at all times. Again, funds for the project came from private sources.

In providing display cases in the East Colonnade containing history in miniature, the display of State gifts from other countries, Mrs. Nixon offers visitors an opportunity for a capsule view of past and present White House history, and a chance to see the finest art craftsmanship from other lands. Her initiation of a special East Room exhibit ~~list~~ of the many priceless items Mrs. Nixon has acquired for the White House. This painting hung in Mrs. Madison's Sitting Room in the White House while she was First Lady (it is today the Red Room). It is on loan from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Among other major acquisitions of this caliber -- in addition to those listed above are:

Portraits of President John Quincy Adams and Mrs. Adams by Gilbert Stuart painted in 1818 and 1821, gift to the White House by Mr. John Quincy Adams, great-great-great grandson.

Portrait of President John Adams by John Trumbull painted in 1793 when he was Vice-President, on loan from the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

34 major American paintings and sculpture, including landscapes, seascapes, and portraits of former Presidents and First Ladies:

Portraits of Presidents Theodore Roosevelt, John Tyler, Zachary Taylor, and Warren G. Harding.

Portraits of Mrs. Grover Cleveland, Mrs. James Garfield, Mrs. Millard Fillmore, Mrs. Warren G. Harding.

Examples of other paintings include:

"View on the Mississippi 57 Miles Below St. Anthony Falls, Minneapolis," by Ferdinand Reichardt, 1858.

"The Rainbow in the Berkshire Hills," by George Inness, 1869.

"Farmyard in Winter," by George Henry Durrie, 1858.

"The Mellow Autumn Time," and "Autumn Landscape on the Hudson River," by Jasper Cropsey.

"West Point, Near Garrison," by Robert Havell, Jr., c. 1850.

Nine period chandeliers and thirteen period rugs have been installed in White House Rooms.