



During his 1994-2005 tenure at the White House, executive chef Walter Scheib (center) and his staff prepared all menus and meals for the First Family and their private entertaining, as well as for official and state functions.

Photo by Maggie Knaus © White House Historical Association



In the 19th century, the White House kitchen and several servant rooms were located on the ground floor. Dolly Johnson, President Harrison's cook, can be seen in the family kitchen in this ca. 1891-93 photograph. Often damp and moldy, the ground floor was a difficult place for the White House staff to work and live.

Photo by Frances Benjamin Johnston. Courtesy Library of Congress



This 1929 photo shows P.E. Allen of the White House police force, trainer Harry Waters, and some of the White House dogs, although not Herbert Hoover's personal favorite, King Tut.

Photo by Herbert E. French, National Photo Company. Library of Congress



This 1889 hand-colored wood engraving from *Harper's Weekly* depicts a state dinner during the first Cleveland administration.

White House Historical Association (White House Collection)

The Working White House, a collaboration of SITES, the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, and the White House Historical Association (WHHA), focuses on the men and women who have served not only the First Family, but also the nation. The continuing presence of these workers has been a defining element in the culture of the White House since 1800, when John and Abigail Adams and their small household staff moved into what was initially called the President's House. Over the next decades, presidential families continued to hire their own servants, and in some cases presidents brought slaves to work in the White House.

The growth of the nation and the federal government contributed to the development of a professional domestic staff, notes WHHA historian William Bushong. "But its growing professionalism was also a reflection of the expanding social, political, and diplomatic importance of the White House and the symbolic power of the chief executive."

Objects such as tools, housekeeping implements, reproduction period clothing, and manuscript materials provide context for the exhibition's "day-in-the-life" focus on 19th- through 21st-century workers.

Text and images also explore themes ranging from skills and responsibilities, to slavery and racial segregation, to relations with the first family. Compelling oral histories of men and women who have served presidents from William Taft through George W. Bush are supplemented by an audio tour and a video that help exhibition visitors understand the White House as a unique occupational setting.

- Scheduling: Shannon Perry, 202.633.3138, perrys@si.edu
- Content/design: Parker Hayes, 202.633.3113, hayesp@si.edu
- Participation fee: \$7,500 per 10-week booking period, plus prorated shipping
- Size: 2,000 square feet (185 square meters)
- Security: Moderate
- Tour begins: September 2008

THE WORKING WHITE HOUSE

Two Centuries of Traditions and Memories

"During all my years of managing the White House . . . my loyalty was not to any one President but rather to the Presidency and to the institution that is the White House."
— J.B. West, White House chief usher, 1957–69

The White House is a potent national symbol—the seat of executive power and a ceremonial setting. It is also a home. While the president and his family are temporary residents perhaps hoping to renew their four-year lease at election time, members of the household staff are permanent employees whose tenure has at times spanned five administrations. A dedicated workforce of butlers, maids, engineers, housemen, chefs, electricians, florists, ushers, doormen, carpenters, and plumbers operate, maintain, and help preserve the 132-room executive mansion at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.