



PRESS RELEASE
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For immediate release

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THE WHITE HOUSE:
ITS HISTORIC FURNISHINGS AND FIRST FAMILIES

The first detailed history of the White House decorative arts collection, *The White House: Its Historic Furnishings and First Families* by Betty C. Monkman with photography by Bruce White, is now in its third printing. The book initially published in November 2000 by the White House Historical Association and Abbeville Press has enjoyed singular success amongst decorative arts lovers, history enthusiasts, scholars and casual readers alike.

For 200 years, the White House has served as the residence of our nation's president and his family. Every chief executive except George Washington has lived there, but our first president left his mark on it as well, by selecting the site and approving its design. John and Abigail Adams were the first residents, and each family ever since has been encouraged, through congressional and private funds, to make it a comfortable home and to acquire the necessities for carrying out the other role of the White House as a place of state ceremony and as the office of the President.

The White House collection of furniture, silver, glass, porcelain and textiles is rich with historical associations and reflects their use in a house that has served as the home of presidents and their families for 200 years. It is also a well-documented collection with bills of sale dating to its first occupants and photographic records since the 1870s. Official documents, letters and diaries inform us about the objects in the White House in 1801 when John and Abigail Adams departed and Thomas Jefferson took office, as well as items which were sold when Theodore Roosevelt swept away the 19th century interiors in 1902. Documents also reveal the reasons James Monroe ordered objects from France in 1814 and the history of the French silver bought by Andrew Jackson in 1833 from the estate of a former Russian minister to the United States. A speech by a Congressman in 1840 is evidence of how White House furnishings were the focus of anti-Van Buren forces during the 1840 presidential campaign.

“The objects in the house resonate with meaning, imparting inspiration and a glimpse into past presidential lives and significant White House events for each new family,” says author Betty Monkman, curator of the White House.

The White House: Its Historic Furnishings and First Families features a forward by First Ladies Lady Bird Johnson, Betty Ford, Rosalynn Carter, Nancy Reagan, Barbara Bush, and Hillary Clinton. The introduction is written by Wendell Garrett. This handsome book will appeal to anyone interested in the decorative arts, biographies, history, and Americana.

Betty C. Monkman has worked in the White House curator’s office since 1967, first as museum registrar, then associate curator, and since 1997 as curator. She planned and curated the first exhibition on the White House in 1992 and continues to work closely on other exhibits at the White House Visitor Center. She has written a number of articles on the White House decorative arts and has lectured throughout the country.

Bruce White specializes in the photography of works of art and architecture and has been engaged by some of the country’s leading cultural institutions. He was formerly a staff photographer at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The White House Historical Association was established in 1961 as a non-profit organization to enhance the understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the White House. All proceeds from the sale of this book and other association products are used to fund acquisition of historic furnishings and art works for the permanent White House collection, assist in the preservation of the public rooms, and further its educational mission.

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