



Barack Obama Presidential Library

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White House 2013

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Gather Around

HOLIDAYS AT THE WHITE HOUSE 2013



Thank you for visiting the White House! We are delighted to welcome you as we gather around and celebrate the stories and traditions that bring us together at this special time of year.

As members of one American family, we are united in a story built over the course of two centuries. The holidays are a wonderful opportunity to recall our Nation's journey, to reflect on the blessings we enjoy and the trials we weather, and to remember those who serve and sacrifice for our freedoms. It is a season when each of us can do our part to care for one another—whether by volunteering, offering a kind word to a stranger, or opening our hearts to someone in need.

May you be inspired by your visit to the “People’s House,” where you will discover festive decorations and rich tales, and may we all carry the spirit of the season with us throughout the New Year. Our family wishes you and your loved ones the very best, and we hope your holidays are filled with joy and peace.

 *Michelle Obama*

EAST VISITOR ENTRANCE AND LANDING

The outer walls of the White House's East Wing are decorated with lush garland and gleaming gold vines; flickering lanterns encourage guests to gather inside the entry way of the "People's House." Overhead, chandeliers are covered in fresh greenery and dangling ornaments, while the pillars are decorated with a red berry and gold-and-green leaf design.

The first tree within the walls of the White House pays tribute to the men and women who serve in our Armed Forces. Decked in red, white, and blue ornaments, it proudly sits on the East Landing of the East Wing. To honor our Gold Star Families, who have lost a loved one serving in the military, ornaments in the shape of stars hang from the tree's branches. These small tokens of remembrance represent the brave service members who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country and serve as a constant reminder that our fallen heroes, and their families, will never be forgotten.



EAST COLONNADE

Peek out the floor-length windows and past the stained glass wreaths to the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden; there stands another Christmas tree wrapped in twinkling lights perched atop a scarlet sleigh. A hand-made ruby and jade archway, composed of satin ribbon and chenille stems, leads to a room dedicated to celebrating the joy of being a child during the holiday season.

EAST GARDEN ROOM

Imagination runs wild in the East Garden Room, where the magic of the season transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary. Books morph into stunning Christmas trees, and their pages become unique works of art. On the east wall of the room, black and white ribbons intertwine to bring replicas of First Dogs Bo and Sunny to life. If you watch closely, you might even catch the Portuguese Water Dogs wagging their tails!



VERMEIL ROOM

The glow of gilded silver brightens the portraits of First Ladies gracing the walls of the Vermeil Room, and rings draped in pink and cream satin give the room a wintry flair. A festive arrangement of purple roses and hydrangeas complements the décor, adding a touch of natural elegance to the space. Since the Nixon Administration, this area has been a sitting room. In ages past, it served as a storeroom, dressing room, office, and billiard room.

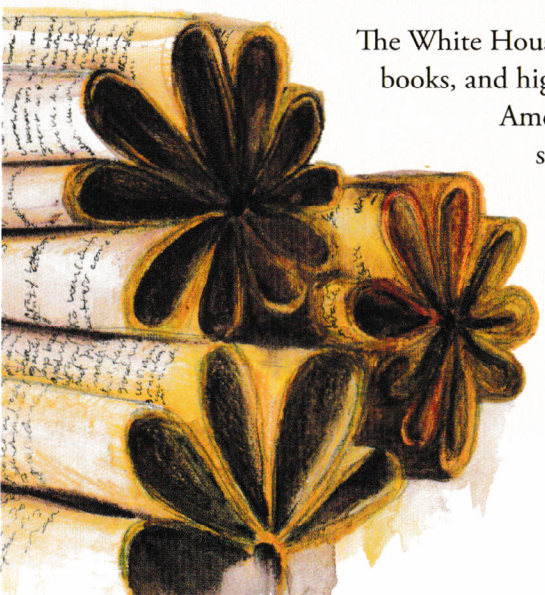
CHINA ROOM

Dangling crystal ornaments decorated with greenery and berries hang from the tree, and candles placed atop vermeil candlesticks shimmer on the mantelpiece. Though the tradition of commissioned White House China began in 1817, it was not until decades later that First Lady Caroline Harrison began cataloguing and displaying the china services associated with previous First Families. Years afterward, First Lady Edith Wilson established this room as the China Room.

LIBRARY

The White House Library is home to 2,700 books, and highlights the long-standing American tradition of sharing stories with family and friends.

Reading holiday classics is a ritual that First Families, like families across our country, have enjoyed for generations. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, our country's 32nd President, read

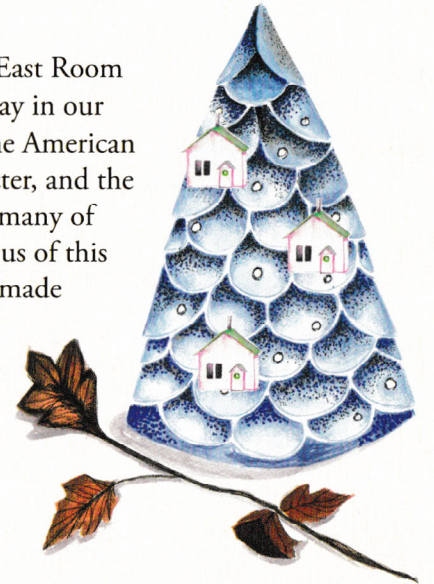


A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens to his family every Christmas. And today, First Lady Michelle Obama visits patients at the Children's National Medical Center every year to read holiday favorites such as *Twas the Night Before Christmas*.

EAST ROOM

The largest room on the State Floor, the East Room pays tribute to the special role the arts play in our country's history. The arts both reflect the American spirit and help shape our national character, and the decorations throughout the East Room, many of which were made by volunteers, remind us of this cornerstone of American culture. Hand-made cardboard houses decorate the four grand trees spread throughout the room. Brightly colored finial ornaments and painted pinecones are nestled in the trees, while fresh green garlands line the mantelpieces and door frames. Wreaths hang over the mirrors reflecting the famous paintings of President George Washington and First Lady Martha Washington.

On the wall of the East Room sits the White House crèche. The crèche has been a part of the White House holiday décor since it was given by the Engelhard Family during the Johnson Administration in 1967. Originally from Naples, Italy, the Baroque-style set consists of 44 terracotta and wood figures, some over 300 years old.





GREEN ROOM

Flower ornaments, sugared fruits, and lush foliage convey the beauty of nature in the Green Room, accenting the oldest piece of architecture found inside the White House: a marble mantel installed in 1819. Originally placed in the State Dining Room, this magnificent mantelpiece moved to the Green Room when President Theodore Roosevelt renovated the White House in 1902. Multiple administrations have worked to ensure this room and its furnishings portray the Federal style reminiscent of our Nation's early days.

THE BLUE ROOM

At the heart of the White House lies the Blue Room. This oval room is home to the official White House Christmas Tree, and this year's tree, like many in years past, features decorations honoring our military families. Children, living on bases across our country, created holiday greeting cards made in the shape of their home state. These unique decorations, along with round ornaments featuring the silhouettes of each state and territory, hang from the tree's majestic branches. Red, white, and blue ribbon trim the 18-foot-6-inch Douglas-fir from Lehigh, Pennsylvania.

Through long deployments and frequent moves, our service members and their families remain our country's most resilient patriots, and, as the decorations remind us, these brave Americans come from every corner of the United States. As a Nation, we have an obligation to serve our military families as well as they serve our country. To send a message of thanks, share your family's story of service, or get involved in your community, please visit:

WWW.JOININGFORCES.GOV

THE RED ROOM

The final parlor room on the State Floor is the Red Room. Embroidered satin ribbons cascade down the two trees, painted nutcrackers accent side tables, and stained-glass wreaths adorn windows overlooking the South Lawn. During the Roosevelt Administration, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt used the room to host the first of many gatherings for women reporters who at that time were excluded from the President's press conferences.

For many years, the Red Room has been home to the traditional White House cranberry tree. In keeping with this custom, a vibrant crimson and plum-colored flower and fruit vase—made entirely of sugar paste—contains a one-of-a-kind arrangement of scarlet and fuchsia flowers and cranberries.



STATE DINING ROOM

George P.A. Healy's iconic portrait of President Abraham Lincoln hangs in the State Dining Room, where timeless decorations like wreaths, ribbons, and snowflakes evoke memories of the first Christmases observed within these walls.

In 1800, President John Adams was the first leader to step inside the newly built White House. Shortly after his arrival, President Adams penned a moving letter to his wife, Abigail, who was still living in New England: "I pray Heaven to bestow the best of blessings on this House, and all that shall hereafter inhabit it. May none but honest and wise men ever rule under this roof." Over 200 years later, his inspired words form the centerpiece of the State Dining Room's mantel.

The State Dining Room is also home to the famous gingerbread house. Over the course of several weeks, members of the White House pastry team work diligently to perfect every detail of the 300-pound, edible White House replica. This year, the gingerbread house rests on a custom-made hearth fashioned from Springerle Cookies. These sweet treats tell stories through images imprinted on their dough by hand-carved, wooden molds. Framing the opening of the hearth are sugar paste recreations of the tiles commissioned for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's fireplace. The act of gathering around a fireplace reminds us of President Roosevelt's famous "fireside chats," which lifted the spirits of Americans during a time of great trial.

PINECONE CANDLE

MATERIALS:

- 3 inch glass votive candle
- pinecones (you can buy scented pinecones from your local crafts store, or use a dry pinecone that you have found outdoors)
- masking tape
- hot glue/hot glue gun
- glitter spray (optional)
- clippers and/or pliers

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Wrap the glass votive in masking tape to provide a protective layer.
2. Using clippers and/or pliers, cut the pinecone scales from the pinecone, creating enough material to cover the entire surface.
3. Starting at the top of the votive, glue a row of pinecone scales around the perimeter.
4. Continue gluing rows in an overlapping fish-scale motif until the entire votive has been covered.

Optional: Spray the finished piece with glitter spray to add sparkle.



ENTRANCE HALL AND CROSS HALL

Decorations that represent our Nation's heritage drape the North Entrance and Cross Hall. Celebrating the holiday season with guests from across our country and around the world has been a White House tradition since the 1800s.

On January 1, 1863—one of the most historic days in our Nation's history—President Abraham Lincoln welcomed thousands of visitors to the White House for a New Year's Day reception before he signed the Emancipation Proclamation. After shaking thousands of hands, he went upstairs to sign the momentous document. Fatigued from greeting so many guests, the President's right hand trembled as he went to sign. President Lincoln knew that a jittery signature would make it appear as though he hesitated in his decision. So he paused, waited for his hand to steady, then slowly and firmly signed his name. One hundred and fifty years later, we gather in these historic halls and remember the ongoing work of perfecting our Union.



Cranberry Upside Down Cake

A recipe from the White House Pastry Kitchen

For the bottom of the cake pan:

*1/4 cup butter (1/2 stick)
1/2 cup tightly packed dark brown sugar
1 cup fresh cranberries*

Cake:

*1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour 3/4 cup granulated sugar
2 teaspoons baking soda 3 tablespoons orange juice
1/4 teaspoon salt 2 large eggs, **separated**
1/2 cup unsalted butter, 1/2 cup milk
(1 stick)*

Pre-heat oven to 350°.

Melt butter and brown sugar together in a saucepan and pour into the bottom of a greased 9" cake pan with a parchment circle on the bottom. Add cranberries.

In a large bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, and salt.

In the bowl of your electric mixer, or with a hand mixer, beat the butter with half the sugar until light and fluffy. Scrape down the sides of the bowl and then beat in the orange juice.

Add the egg yolks one by one, beating well after each addition. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add the flour mixture alternately with the milk.

In a clean bowl, beat the egg whites with the other half of the sugar until the whites hold a firm peak. With a large spatula gently fold the beaten egg whites into the cake batter in two additions.

Pour the batter into the cake pan containing the sugar and cranberry mixture.

Bake in preheated oven for 30 - 40 minutes, or until the top of the cake has browned, starts to pull away from the sides of the pan, and a toothpick inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean.

Remove from oven and place on a wire rack to cool for about 15 minutes. Run a sharp knife around the edge of the pan and then flip the cake over onto your serving plate.

Makes one 9-inch cake



IN APPRECIATION

The White House is grateful to the Executive Residence staff, agencyEA, and the many volunteers from across the country who gathered together to help prepare and decorate the White House this holiday season. We greatly appreciate all of the hard work of the students from Sitar Arts Center and the Duke Ellington School for the Arts, both located in Washington, D.C., who created the artwork for this year's holiday booklet.