

The original documents are located in Box 36, folder “Christmas, 1975 - General” of the Sheila Weidenfeld Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Some items in this folder were not digitized because it contains copyrighted materials. Please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library for access to these materials.

CHRISTMAS AT THE WHITE HOUSE

INTRODUCTION

Christmas is a time of great joy, a time for family and friends and a time for thought and prayer. Along with the millions of other American families that celebrate this special holiday, the Nation's First Families have traditionally joined in the gaiety with White House festivities conveying to all, the generosity and goodwill of those who dwell within. Although much political history has been made behind its great doors, we are reminded at this season that the White House has also been a home since 1800 with each new family sharing and celebrating many of their own Yuletide observances and customs with the American people. Sparkling with colorful decorations, spiced with smells of deliciously prepared foods and ringing with the happy sounds of laughter and song, the White House has, since its earliest days, symbolized our country's festive celebration of Christmas. The triumphs and heartbreak, ceremony and personal drama which generated from the Presidential Residence are recalled with holiday nostalgia in the following pages.

EARLY CELEBRATIONS

The history of Christmas at the White House is as exciting and diverse as our Nation's heritage with succeeding Christmases reflecting the personalities of those who have played leadership roles in its development. Our first President, George Washington, did not have the pleasure of living in this fine home because it was not fully constructed until 1800. However, our second President, John Adams, moved in before the house was totally completed -- just one month before Christmas.

Although the mansion was forbiddingly cold and damp, Abigail Adams was determined to make the first White House Christmas a most memorable one. She planned two parties to celebrate the season: one given for the members of Congress, Government officials and the social elite of the District of Columbia and the second given for young children who were invited to play with their four-year-old granddaughter, Suzannah. Twenty cords of wood were burned to warm the chambers and dry the plaster, but unfortunately the new Executive Mansion was still far from cozy. The older guests shivered throughout the evening, leaving distressingly early but with the customary high spirits of childhood, the little ones romped about and kept warm with all the activity of the lively games, thereby enjoying thoroughly the gaiety of the occasion.

Thomas Jefferson, a true connoisseur, maintained a refined household despite his being a widower. Engaging the help of his Secretary of State's charming wife, Dolley Madison, he hosted exceptionally gay and exciting Christmas parties. In 1805 all six of his grandchildren were on hand to keep him company. Festivities became so overjoyful that in the midst of all the hot toddys, food and fun, the reserved President Jefferson grabbed his violin and played for the dancing pleasure of his one hundred guests.

Several years later Dolley Madison, as First Lady, again served as hostess for the White House Christmas galas. Mrs. Madison, always as elaborate as she was exuberant, ordered from France a huge, ornate mirror on which to display the many plates of goose, hen, puddings, cakes and other delicacies prepared for her holiday guests. Unfortunately the Madisons' extravagant social life was interrupted all too abruptly by the outbreak of the War of 1812 and the ensuing destruction of the White House.

Thus, it was not until 1817, during the Monroe Administration, that a First Family again enjoyed Christmas entertainment in the Presidential Residence. Their holiday celebration was particularly memorable, especially for their daughter, who met her future husband, Samuel L. Gouverneur, her father's secretary, there.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS SHARING

The refreshing spontaneity and boundless happiness of young children enjoying Christmas has truly been a most treasured aspect of White House festivities. Children were especially important to Andrew Jackson during the holiday season. Since his beloved wife, Rachel, had died only a few months before he entered the White House, his grandnieces and nephews arrived to cheer him on this first lonely Christmas. They insisted that he put up a stocking, and while he slept, they filled it with a corn cob pipe and other goodies -- a thoughtfulness which brought tears to the eyes of the stately "Old Hickory."

President Jackson often reminded his family that "the best way to secure happiness is to bestow it upon others." With tender memories of his days as an orphan, he directed his oldest nieces and nephews to pack up holiday baskets of treats and visit an orphanage in their horse drawn carriage. This became one of "Uncle Andy's" favorite projects and the children went there often to lighten the hearts of the homeless children.

The spirit of giving to the less fortunate remains a very vital part of White House Christmas rituals and America's Presidents throughout the years have derived much satisfaction from sharing their homes as well as their goodwill with those in need.

Abraham Lincoln and his family were especially noted for their charitable deeds. Young Tad showed up at the White House kitchen door one Christmas day with street urchins he had befriended. Although the cook wanted to shoo them away, the President insisted they be invited in for turkey and yuletide merriment.

More often it was the First Lady of the land who became involved in the special efforts to brighten the Christmases of the needy in Washington as well as to set an example of generosity for the entire country. Frances Folsom Cleveland, wife of our 22nd and 24th President, enjoyed attending benefit dinners given for the poor by area

Christmas clubs. Her presence was a vital boost to citizen responsiveness and participation in these philanthropic drives. Mrs. Cleveland had a great sensitivity to underprivileged children, distributed toys to them and joined in their laughter at Punch and Judy puppet shows which she had helped to promote.

Even in the dreary days following the great depression, the White House stood as a symbol of the Christ Child's message of faith, hope and charity. President and Mrs. Hoover decorated the rooms and filled them with the sound of happy children. Their grandchildren Peter and Peggy Anne hosted a special party for their friends who were asked to bring toys, warm clothing and candy, not for each other, but for the poor youngsters affected by the bad economic times. Girl Scouts were invited to serve and Mrs. Hoover led the young people through the halls of the Executive Mansion, each holding a candle and harmonizing in Christmas carols.

Eleanor Roosevelt, a woman of great compassion and deep personal empathy for others, made visits each year to the slums of the District of Columbia as a part of her Christmas ritual. Colorful stockings filled by various civic groups, festive trees and messages of peace and happiness were the gifts she carried to these grateful citizens.

Washington's orphans from St. Anne's Asylum and Junior Village were given a special holiday treat during the Kennedy years. At a party hosted by Mrs. Robert Kennedy, the President's sister-in-law, children delighted in receiving candy, balloons and other goodies as well as cherished memories of their day at the White House.

During the Johnson Administration, Mrs. Johnson held an Annual Children's Party, inviting underprivileged youngsters from the metropolitan area. In 1966 one hundred and fifty of them came, and between watching a puppet show, eating ice cream in the shape of Christmas trees and cookies, and meeting Santa Claus who provided gifts for all, the children had a most delightful time.

Mrs. Richard Nixon with her charming daughter, Julie Nixon Eisenhower, welcomed children from the Foundation for the Junior Blind to a White House Christmas party in 1971. Along with delicious punch and cookies, these exceptional young people enjoyed singing carols and other popular tunes. The highlight of their day was the unique opportunity to roam the upstairs rooms, becoming acquainted with objects of the famous Lincoln bedroom through vivid narration and special permission to handle the historical furniture.

FESTIVE ENTERTAINMENT

"Anything goes" was the rule in President Teddy Roosevelt's household, and there was never a dull moment in the joviality and merry-making in the White House during these years. On one Christmas afternoon, a turkey that had been delivered for Christmas dinner escaped from its pen. The President's

sons, in the tradition of the old lion hunter himself, chased the bird all around the White House grounds waving hatchets as their father watched their wild antics with great laughter. The next day the Presidential family was severely reproached by the press for their cruelty to animals. Another year the lively youngsters rode their ponies right into the mansion -- and got away with it!

"The Rough Rider" took advantage of the Christmas vacation to prove to his officers that an order requiring them to ride 90 miles on horseback in three days was not "unduly harsh." He set out at three o'clock one morning and returned from the long ride in the midst of a sleet storm -- 17 hours later and just in time to thaw out and enjoy a holiday feast.

Christmases with the Rutherford B. Hayes family were as unusual as they were exciting. The season of 1877 was especially festive as the President and his wife "Lemonade Lucy" re-enacted their wedding as a part of their silver anniversary celebration. In the company of the original guests, Mrs. Hayes appeared in the same white silk wedding gown and joined hands with husband Rutherford to exchange vows before the pastor who had officiated 25 years earlier.

Romance was again an important part of the Hayes' Christmas, although it was a long time developing. At a party for daughter Fanny, one of the guests, Helen Herron, a debutante from Cincinnati, shocked the gathering by openly declaring that she planned to return to the White House as a First Lady. She did indeed return to live in this Presidential Home some 30 years later -- as the wife of President William Howard Taft.

As First Lady, Mrs. Taft enjoyed four more festive holidays in Washington. Perhaps one of the most unusual gifts her jovial and overly rotund husband ever received while in office was a special pie presented to him by the International Bakers Association. Knowing how much he loved to eat, they made him a meat pie that measured 38 inches in diameter and weighed 92 pounds -- this for the family's Christmas feast!

Undoubtedly the most exciting yet traumatic Christmas Eve in White House History was that of 1929 when the Old Executive Office Building burned. President Hoover left his guests, including several children, and dashed from his dinner party in the elegantly decorated State Dining Room to the roof of the White House to direct the fire fighting. After much entreating and pleading, the Secret Servicemen finally persuaded him to rejoin his guests for the final moments of the holiday party. The following year President Hoover again invited the same children to the White House on Christmas Eve and presented them with fire engines in commemoration of the previous year's fire.

Celebrating Christmas with overabounding zeal, the Franklin Roosevelts held not only glamorous, official holiday parties but also private festivities that went on for days. On Christmas Eve the President began the

ritual with his famous reading from Dickens' immortal Christmas Carol and using a specific inflection for the role of Old Scrooge, enthralled all of his listeners. Stockings were hung that night and later filled by Eleanor with toothpaste, soap and other articles of cleanliness. Gifts were not opened until Christmas afternoon and it is said that the President was so interested in all the presents that each family member received that he would not get around to opening all of his own gifts until a few days later.

Franklin Roosevelt also celebrated the season with his staff at a reception where he shook each individual's hand. This tradition which has continued throughout the years was actually started by Herbert Hoover. However, it was Mamie Eisenhower who turned the gathering into a warmer party by serving coffee and Christmas cakes from all over the world. She even extended her generosity and gratitude by continuing the party for her personal staff in the family's personal quarters, upstairs in the Mansion.

During the Nixon Administration, there were several occasions for family, friends, officials and staff to gather in celebration of the season. In addition to a Christmas Evening at the White House where appropriate selections from such diverse authors as Martial, Shakespeare, Dickens, Dylan Thomas, Robert Benchly and Ogden Nash were read, the Nixons also hosted a Worship Service of Lessons and Carols where children of staff members were invited not only to attend, but also to participate!

QUIET CHRISTMASSES

Christmas for many Presidential families was not always a time for fanfare and jubilation but an occasion for more solemn, private ritual. James K. Polk and his wife, Sarah, were both serious and religious individuals who viewed this period as a time for thought and meditation. As her husband's private secretary, the sober Mrs. Polk had little interest in planning social activities. Nevertheless, sensing an obligation to invite official government representatives to the Presidential Home, she planned a formal reception, and in her maroon dress, by the side of her husband, greeted guests before a roaring fire in the East Room. No food or wine was served however, and the First Lady allowed no dancing or card playing.



The next two Presidents, Zachary Taylor who so tragically died only a year after entering the White House, and his successor, Millard Fillmore, also preferred to observe Christmas in a more quiet and private manner. Both Chief Executives entertained only family and close friends on Christmas, reserving New Year's Day for official guests.

There were times when the White House was filled with sorrow even in the midst of this usually happy season. The Franklin Pierces' stay in the White House was profoundly affected by their witnessing the death of their son in a train accident just prior to the inauguration. Having lost their only other child a few years earlier, President and Mrs. Pierce passed each Christmas without the comfort and joy of children near them.

Even though the historic era before the Civil War was marked with some early rumblings of separatism and the growing pains of westward expansion, the Administrations of Presidents Polk, Taylor, Fillmore, Pierce and Buchanan were relatively calm. However, in the true spirit of this pioneer age, President James Buchanan invited a delegation of visiting Pawnee Indians to a small holiday party. Although Buchanan, the only President who never married, had no family to gather for the holiday season, his unusual friends from the West brought great warmth and gaiety to the man whom they fondly called "Great Father."

DIFFICULT TIMES

The gaiety of the holiday season was also at times subdued by the frustrations, loneliness and tragedies of a nation at war. On Christmas Eve, 1861, President Lincoln left his family to call his cabinet together to consider the Trent Embargo, an issue of immense international concern. Two years later he again spent his holidays working on a profoundly important document, the Emancipation Proclamation which he issued on New Year's Day 1863, freeing all men from the bonds of slavery. And later in the day, he invited into his home the groups of Negroes who had lined up outside in order to meet the champion of their rights and freedom.

Ironically, on the Holy Day which has for Americans symbolized brotherhood and goodwill to men, Lincoln learned of one of the most agonizing victories in the bitter conflict between the North and South. On Christmas Eve he received a message from General William Tecumseh Sherman, "I beg to present to you a Christmas gift -- the city of Savannah."

World War I depressed the spirits of our entire nation and its idealistic and deeply sensitive President, Woodrow Wilson. As a gift to the Nation, he planted a huge elm tree as a living symbol of the peace and serenity for which he so fervently longed. However, still wrought with concern, he and his second wife spent far from joyous Christmases retreating to the comfort of their Virginia home, distributing gifts to children who lived along the way.

In 1941 with our Nation still quivering from the shock of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Winston Churchill joined the Roosevelts for the lighting of the National Christmas Tree. President Roosevelt revived the sagging spirits of a discouraged America by telling them, "Let the children have their night of fun and laughter. By our sacrifice and daring, these same children shall not be robbed of their inheritance, or denied the right to live in a free and decent world."

OTHER OBSERVANCES

Not all Presidents have chosen to spend their holidays in the public eye at the Executive Mansion. With increased communication and transportation, this is particularly true of some of our most recent leaders. President Harry Truman and his wife Bess enjoyed leaving the bustle of Washington festivities to find cheerful relaxation in their homestate of Missouri. It is interesting to note that while the White House was being renovated in the late 1940's, the Trumans lived in Blair House across the street, and there were fewer opportunities for seasonal parties in the Mansion itself. The Trumans experienced one particularly harrowing Christmas Eve when the President's plane enroute to Missouri was caught in a sleet storm and delayed in the air for several hours while an anxious nation awaited news of his safe landing.

The Kennedys and their two young children spent only two Christmases as the Nation's First Family before the young President was so tragically assassinated in November 1963. Both of these holidays were spent at the Kennedy family's residence in Palm Beach, Florida, so that all could be together with the President's ailing father. Two-year-old John-John received a toy helicopter just like the one that brought his daddy to the South Lawn of the White House -- quite a contrast to the hobbyhorses and wax dolls found under the stockings of the grandnieces and nephews of Andrew Johnson.

Lyndon Johnson and his family enjoyed Christmas Texas-style at their ranch. Humor has always been a part of their celebration, and each year Lady Bird decorates a deerhead hat rack with a red velvet nose and ornaments hanging from the antlers. This delightful creature is affectionately called Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. The family exchanges gifts and one very special one that daughter Lynda Bird received from her mother was a first edition copy of Charles Dickens' Christmas Carol.

DECORATIONS

What typifies the yuletide spirit more than shining decorations cheerfully adorning our homes? The White House over the past 200 years is certainly no exception, and each year the glitter of bright colors and twinkling lights among the evergreens and mistletoe set the atmosphere for Christmas celebrations.

The first Christmas tree ever to be decorated in the White House

was enjoyed by the Benjamin Harrisons in the Oval Room on the second floor of the mansion. Everyone, including the family, staff members and the President himself, decorated the tree with elaborate trimmings of real candles and silvery ornaments. The young people frolicked amidst the decorations singing German carols, and the President added to the fun by dressing up as Santa Claus and distributing gifts and goodies.

Harrison continued to decorate the Presidential residence at Christmastime for the remainder of his term in office, despite the tragic death of his wife in the fall of 1892. His last Christmas in the White House was further dampened when his young granddaughter developed scarlet fever and was quarantined upstairs throughout the season. Nevertheless, with undaunted spirits, he cheered the rest of his family by leading the annual tree decorating ritual.

Since that time, Presidential families have enjoyed the charm and pleasure of a decorated tree, each adding their own special touch and personality to this delightful tradition.

It was the Eisenhowers who set the record for the greatest number of trees in one season -- twenty-six! In 1959, Mamie, with her natural enthusiasm, decorated these trees, some with the ornaments and gifts sent to the Eisenhowers by the Communist leader Nikita Khrushchev. The decorations even extended to the laundry room and the maids' sitting chamber! Their little grandson David had his very own private tree on the third floor to avoid the panic he caused a previous year when he awoke at 3 A.M., squealing with delight over the presents under the tree.

In recent years the First Ladies have selected special themes for the White House Christmas tree. Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy in 1962 styled a tree after the famous one in Tschaikowsky's ballet "Nutcracker Suite," hanging sugarplum fairies, toy soldiers and drums as well as cookies and other goodies from every branch. White lights were used to set off the fine ornaments which were made by blind and elderly craftsmen. Tinsel was not used that year for fear that it would hide the colorful details which so greatly thrilled the Kennedy children, Caroline and John-John.

Lady Bird Johnson presented a new theme with her creation of the Early American Tree. Gingerbread cookies, snowmen, teddy bears, nuts, popcorn, cranberry chains, straw stars, toy soldiers, drums and dried seed pods were among the many ornaments which delighted visitors who passed through the Blue Room in 1966. The gingerbread was real as high as anyone could reach, but on the upper branches, it was ceramic. The following year shiny silver stars, tiny mirrors and balls were added, and little elves were placed under the tree to greet everyone who happened by.

To glorify the spiritual message of the birth of the Christ Child, a beautiful eighteenth century Italian creche is now displayed in the East Room. This exquisite nativity scene is composed of thirty handcarved, baroque, elegantly attired figures, including the Holy Family, the Wise Men, their attendants, the shepherds and angels and all the animals

associated with the manger. Donated to the White House during the Johnson Administration, this fine and deeply inspiring work of art has become another meaningful addition to White House Christmases.

The Christmas trees during the Nixon years have been a tribute to the fifty American states. The "American Flower Tree" is adorned with velvet and satin ornaments, each bearing a miniature replica of every state's official flower, gem or mineral. In 1970 the theme of the tree was expanded to reflect a special historical note. Gold and lace reproductions of Mrs. Monroe's fans, created by handicapped artisans, were added to the tree which was then moved to the Monroe Room, better known as the Blue Room. These golden ornaments were a beautiful compliment to the original gilded Monroe chairs which are located in this chamber.

Another historical addition to the Nixon Christmas decor is the display of the Fanny Hayes Doll House, constructed for President Hayes' young daughter by White House carpenters in 1877.

President and Mrs. Nixon, their lovely daughters Tricia and Julie and their husbands, Edward Cox and David Eisenhower, customarily enjoy a personal tree in their private quarters which is bedecked with ornaments that tell a story of past Christmases spent together. Every family member has an ornament with his or her name on it, and each year one new bulb is added to represent an event or family adventure. Remaining a permanent part of the family tree is the little Christmas ball that Tricia made in kindergarten. And not to be forgotten in the celebration, the Nixon dogs each have a stocking which is hung on the mantle and filled with treats.

Not all Presidents have been such enthusiasts for the Christmas tree. Teddy Roosevelt, an ardent conservationist, believed that the practice of cutting trees to decorate homes at Christmas was a wasteful depletion of our forests, and he banned this tradition from the Executive Mansion in an effort to influence his fellow Americans. Much to his surprise and initial dismay, his young son Archie decided that Christmas was not Christmas without a tree and the lad smuggled one into the house, decorated it in secrecy and waited until Christmas morning to unveil it. The President, after a few encouraging words from noted conservationist, Gifford Pinchot, admitted that it did lend a festive touch, and he then deemed a tree permissible only if it had been cut from an already too dense forest.

The exterior of the White House is also adorned with great splendor and exuberance. Passers-by on Pennsylvania Avenue have enjoyed the ever-green covered lanterns and twinkling lights which set off the North Portico. Millions of tourists to the Nation's Capital as well as area residents have happily taken the public tour of the White House to view firsthand the dazzle and luster of their President's home decorated for Christmas. However, it was Mrs. Nixon with her characteristic warmth and friendliness who first arranged special candlelight tours. She opened the doors to thousands for evening visits to the State Rooms and enhanced this time with the peaceful strains of live Christmas and classical music.

NATIONAL PAGEANT OF PEACE

All Americans both in the Washington area and across the land, have shared in the annual celebration known as the National Pageant of Peace. This meaningful observance began in 1923 with President Coolidge lighting a giant spruce which had been donated by the state of Vermont and placed on the South Lawn. This moving ceremony was broadcast on radio for the first time in 1925 so that the entire American public could enjoy the accompanying carol singing and trumpet blasts.

In 1932 the tree became a singing tree through the use of loud speakers hidden in its branches. Two years later the tree was moved across the street from the White House to Lafayette Park in order to accommodate the growing crowds. Franklin Roosevelt had a special little tree made and filled with nuts for the squirrels residing in the park.

In 1939 the site of the annual celebration was moved to its present location -- the Ellipse behind the South Lawn of the Executive Mansion. During the war years, electrical restrictions prevented using lights but the ceremonies and speeches did help to lift the hearts and raise the hopes of a nation involved in World War II.

President Eisenhower expanded the ceremony and invited 27 Embassies and their delegations to participate in the "Pageant of Peace." This international exchange with the various foreign representatives is still an important part of the annual holiday observance.

Today millions of Americans watch the lighting ceremonies via television. And Presidents who are absent from Washington light the tree by remote control from wherever they are, reminding the nation and the world of America's never ending quest for "peace on earth, goodwill towards men."

Wash Post. 12/16/75



An Early American Christmas

By Dorothy McCordle

An old-fashioned Christmas, like those 100 years ago, is on view at the White House.

An 18-foot Douglas fir dominates the Blue Room and is strung with tiny electric bee lights. But its 3,000 ornaments are hand-made, the kind that could have been whipped up in anybody's kitchen or from scraps in granny's sewing basket.

In the spirit of the Bicentennial, First Lady Betty Ford wanted a do-it-yourself Christmas, showing the skills of Early America. For it, she borrowed heavily from the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection in Colonial Williamsburg with the help of Beatrice Rumford.

Most of the ornaments for the tree were made by volunteers in Colonial Williamsburg, but there are also contributions from individuals and organizations across the country—nursing homes, 4-H Clubs and Girl Scouts.

Mrs. Ford also brought two home-

~~Phyllis & Neil~~
~~John. Prince George Post~~
~~+ Bullets~~
~~597-1621~~
~~552-9400~~

SANTA CLAUSE

Painted wood made for a toy shop -- carved in 1880's
by Samuel A. Robb of New York City

About 3 feet high

On loan from Smithsonian History & ~~Technon~~ Technology
(Social office has agreement with Smithsonian not to
put in release).



decorating craft ideas

1303 FOCH • FORT WORTH, TEXAS 76107

817/338-4401

2/26 R -
call files (2/11/4)
& ask for any
other corresp. for
these people. Thank.
Nothing in file

February 18, 1976

Dear Sheila:

Thank you so very much
for the Christmas pictures. I
really appreciate your
remembering - and anytime you
do have a craft-oriented picture,
glossy, if possible, black and
white or color, we will try
to work a story around it.

Best,

Dorelle



P.S. Thought you would enjoy
our February issue.

DMC

Salutes the 200th Anniversary of our Country

with this magnificent reproduction of the
Statue of Liberty made from another fine
D.M.C product, Art. 237, Machine
Embroidery Thread.

Available in transfer pattern No. 731 by
Vogart, and needlepoint canvas by Tina of
California worked in D.M.C Tapestry
Wool, Art. 482.

For sources of transfer patterns, thread,
and needlepoint canvas, write D.M.C today.

The D.M.C
Corporation



107 Trumbull Street, Dept. MCC, Elizabeth, N.J. 07206
Belding Corticelli-Ltd. P.O. Box 9, Dept. MC, Montreal 101, Quebec, Canada

decorating & craft ideas

TM

Start your own
Bicentennial
Collection

Star-within-a-
star Quilt

Bicentennial
Needlepoint
Pillow

Cross-stitch
Sampler

Also . . . Scrimshaw
Valentine Pillows
Peter Hunt
Folk Art Designs

Beginning—
“Crafts of
America:
1776-1976”



Newsmakers-----

Los A. Times 12/16/75

Betty Calls Ford Gift Idea Priceless

—Santa Claus, if he ignores the chief executive's express wishes, could be in deep trouble with the Ford Administration. First Lady **Betty Ford**, standing amid yarn, cornhusks, strings of popcorn and cranberries, pinecones and crocheted angels, laughed and said President Ford had looked up while reading the paper Sunday and jokingly showed her "what he wanted—a new digital wristwatch that costs \$3,000." Mrs. Ford, showing visitors the White House Christmas tree laden with 2,000 homemade



Marrow
Sent Christ. 9/2/76

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Mrs. Ethel Rouse
4800 N. 37 St.
Arl. 22207

Mrs. Alberta Keno
1212 Irwin
Lawton, Okla.
73501

For Immediate Release
Christmas Schedule--Week of December 15
Thursday, December 11, 1975

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary to Mrs. Ford

Dec. 15--1:30 PM

✓ Mrs. Ford will host a reception at the White House for the volunteers who assisted in making the handcrafted Christmas decorations for the White House, and florists who helped with the designs. The party will also serve as a press preview of the decorations. Pick-up for photographers: 12:45 PM--writers: 1:15 PM

5-7:00 PM

Staff Party--Private

Dec. 16--4:30 PM

Mrs. Ford will host a party at the White House for children of the Diplomatic Corps based in Washington. Entertainment will be provided by Kukla, Fran & Ollie.

Dec. 17--9:00 PM

The President and Mrs. Ford will host a Christmas Ball at the White House for members of Congress and their spouses. (Black-tie)

Dec. 18--2:00 PM

Mrs. Ford will attend the annual Christmas party at the Hospital for Sick Children, 1731 Bunker Hill Road, NE. She will help serve refreshments and will help Santa distribute gifts to the children.

Dec. 19--7:00 PM

The President and Mrs. Ford will host a party for members of the press corps who regularly cover the White House.

#

Further details will be furnished later.

UP-086

RB

CORRESPONDENTS:

A FEATURE ON PAST WHITE HOUSE CHRISTMASSES HAS BEEN PREPARED BY THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY. COPIES AVAILABLE FROM WIN BOOTH OR ROBERT RADCLIFFE, 296-7500.

UPI 12-08 02:01 PES

A-2
**

The Washington Star

Tuesday, December 16, 1975

Names / Faces

They Got the Tree Up

Betty Ford led a tour of the White House decorated for Christmas and told reporters the President wants a \$3,000 watch. She has decided, however, such a gift is

(WHITE HOUSE CHRISTMAS)

WASHINGTON (UPI)--FIRST LADY BETTY FORD UNVEILS THE WHITE HOUSE CHRISTMAS TREE DECORATED WITH 3,000 HANDCRAFTED ORNAMENTS AT A PARTY THIS AFTERNOON FOR VOLUNTEERS WHO HELPED WITH THE EARLY AMERICAN YULETIDE TRIMMINGS.

THE THEME SELECTED BY THE FIRST LADY THIS YEAR IS AN OLD FASHIONED CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS IN AMERICA WITH AN ACCENT ON ANTIQUE TOYS, CAROUSEL FIGURES AND DECORATIONS MADE FROM ACORNS, DRIED FRUITS, PEANUTS, STRAW PINE CONES AND GAILY COLORED SCRAPS OF FABRIC, YARN AND RIBBON.

FOIL, SEQUINS AND GLITTER ARE OMITTED TO PRESERVE A TRADITIONAL, OLD-FASHIONED FEELING.

MOST OF THE ORNAMENTS FOR THE TREE WERE MADE BY VOLUNTEERS FROM COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG, BUT INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS NURSING HOMES, 4-H CLUBS AND GIRL SCOUT TROOPS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

DECORATIVE LIGHTS HAVE BEEN LIMITED TO THOSE ON THE CHRISTMAS TREE--TINY WHITE BEE LIGHTS.

APPROXIMATELY 150 GUESTS WERE INVITED FOR THE PUNCH AND COOKIES RECEPTION WHERE THE MAKING OF HANDICRAFTS ALSO WILL BE DEMONSTRATED

UPI 12-15 02:22 PES

19th Century Yule at the White House

United Press International

The White House is decorated to resemble a 19th Century American folk Christmas complete with wooden carousel animals.

First Lady Betty Ford borrowed antique toys,

Virginia Museum

Chief Resigns

Associated Press

RICHMOND — James M. Brown III, director of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, has resigned effective Aug. 1, 1976.

Brown, director of the

Pine boughs are twisted around the marble columns to create a candy-cane effect. Freshly cut holly trees guard each side of the exit.

The White House decorations usually stay up until the weekend following New Year's Day.

Star
12/12/75

Make File - Christmas '75

The Post 10/1/75

Of Jobs and Plots and Openings

By Maxine Cheshire

n acquaintance bumped
Rose Mary Woods walk-
hone to her Watergate
rtment and expressed

turned out fiction based on
Jacqueline Kennedy's
marriage to Aristotle Onassis.

VIP

Great Britain Walter
Annenberg now has another
vacation place to put at the
disposal of his friends, the
Richard M. Nixons. In addi-

themes, wants to design or-
naments this year that will
feature the photographic
likenesses of all the members
of Congress . . . First Lady

-0-

WASHINGTON (UPI) -- THE WHITE HOUSE IS DECORATED TO RESEMBLE A 19TH CENTURY AMERICAN FOLK CHRISTMAS COMPLETE WITH 3-5 FOOT TALL WOODEN CAROUSEL ANIMALS.

FIRST LADY BETTY FORD BORROWED ANTIQUE TOYS, DECORATIONS AND PAINTINGS FROM THE ABBY ALDRICH ROCKEFELLER FOLK ART COLLECTION OF COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG. THEY ARE PLACED AMIDST THE USUAL WREATHS AND POINTSETTA BOUQUETS THROUGHOUT THE PUBLIC SECTION OF THE MANSION.

ONE OF THE FIRST CHRISTMAS DISPLAYS VISITORS SEE IS A SHOWCASE IN THE EAST WING, WHERE WHITE HOUSE TREE ORNAMENTS AND HOLIDAY PHOTOGRAPHS FROM PRESIDENTS HERBERT HOOVER TO FORD ARE UNDER GLASS.

IN THE EAST ROOM AN 18TH CENTURY ITALIAN CRECHE IS FRAMED BY TWO AROMATIC, UNADORNED PINES.

AN 18-FOOT DOUGLAS FIR FROM UPSTATE NEW YORK IS IN THE BLUE ROOM, DECORATED WITH ABOUT 2,000 HAND-MADE ORNAMENTS DONATED BY CHILDREN ACROSS THE UNITED STATES. ANTIQUE TOY TRAINS, WAGONS AND DOLL CRADLES SURROUND THE BOTTOM OF THE TREE. NINETEENTH CENTURY CHILDRENS' PORTRAITS HAVE BEEN HUNG ON THE WALLS.

-0-



Associated Press Wirephoto

THE FORDS . . . BETTY'S JUST A HOME-SPUN GAL. First lady Betty Ford stands before 18-foot Christmas tree at official unveiling of the first family's Yule spruce at the White House yesterday. The tree, which stands in the Grand Entrance Hall, is bedecked with 2,000 homemade decorations, including yarn, cornhusks, gingerbread, pinecones, paper, lace and crochet angels. And what does Betty want most for Christmas? "Happiness," she said, "and the family all together." The Fords again will spend Christmas at the Vail, Colo., ski resort—the family's traditional Yule gathering spot.

New York Times
12/16/75

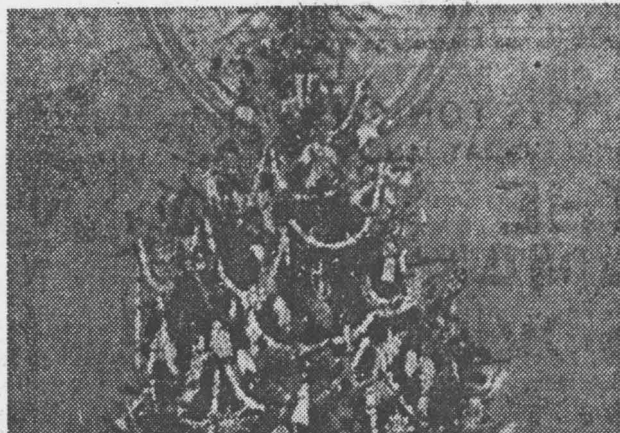
Notes on People

150 Tree Trimmers Feted by Mrs. Ford

"It has no tinsel—no sequins," Betty Ford pointed out yesterday as she led a tour of the White House Christmas tree and decorations, now open to public viewing. To the 18-foot New York-grown Douglas fir, topped by a cornhusk angel and hung with 2,000 home-

"honoring pure science wherever it is found," are chosen without regard of religion or nationality.

At San Diego's Federal jail, Julian Bond, the Georgia state senator, met with Eldridge Cleaver over the weekend and said he would make



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY NEWS FEATURE

WHITE HOUSE MEMORIES

SPAN 175 CHRISTMASSES

Washington -- Visitors to the Christmas White House may miss seeing President and Mrs. Ford, who like to spend the holidays skiing, but the memories of many a Christmas past may linger on.

Tourists will see White House fireplaces crackling with cheery flames, yuletide floral decorations everywhere, and beyond the huge bay windows the national Christmas tree, a sparkling tower in the distance.

History provides these glimpses of 175 years of White House Christmases:

John and Abigail Adams moved into the White House just in time for Christmas in 1800, and then burned 20 cords of wood in the 13 fireplaces in a vain attempt to ease the chill produced by the damp, newly plastered walls. Guests shivered, stayed only briefly, and to Mrs. Adams the first White House Christmas party was "a frost".

East Room Snowballs

Five years later the walls were dry, and a White House Christmas party was so merry Thomas Jefferson was moved to fiddle lively tunes on his violin.

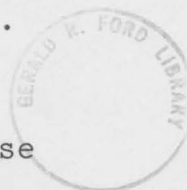
In 1835 Andrew Jackson abandoned presidential decorum on Christmas morning long enough to defend himself against an attack from his adopted son's children in a snowball fight with holiday cotton candy in the White House East Room.

Just before Christmas, the President and the children delivered presents around Washington, including a box of snuff to Dolley Madison.

14,970--RCR,R-W

(MORE)

12-2-75



WHITE HOUSE CHRISTMASSES (PAGE TWO)

Jackson had mentioned that Santa Claus had never visited him as a boy, so the youngsters hung up a stocking for him. Christmas morning, tears filled Old Hickory's eyes as he found it stuffed with a corncob pipe and tobacco.

In 1865, Abraham Lincoln welcomed hundreds of newly freed slaves to a Christmas season reception after he had found them outside on the lawn silently watching the festivities through the windows. They told him they had been hoping to shake the hand of "Uncle Abraham."

The President's son, Tad Lincoln, in like fashion, once brought home some street urchins to share Christmas dinner. Before the cook could shoo them away, the President intervened.

Rutherford B. Hayes and his wife reenacted their wedding as a White House holiday festivity to celebrate their anniversary.

President's Santa, Too

At the same time, President Hayes ignored an unfestive view of his contested election, a newspaper's ungracious comment: "This will be the first time a usurper has celebrated Christmas in the White House. But Santa Claus descends the chimney alike on the just and the unjust."

James Buchanan was a bemused victim of one of the nation's earliest examples of over-zealous Christmas merchandising. Just down the street from the White House of the childless bachelor was a store advertising in its window "The President Buys Toys For All His Children Here!"

Who put up the first Christmas tree in the White House? Some say it was Franklin Pierce in 1856. Others believe it was Benjamin Harrison, who helped erect and trim a White House tree in 1889.

(MORE)

WHITE HOUSE CHRISTMASSES (PAGE THREE)

The Christmas tree became a tradition at the White House until Theodore Roosevelt was elected President. An ardent conservationist, Roosevelt banned a White House tree in 1902, hoping to set an example that might help the fight to save evergreens from widespread cutting.

But he was red-faced when he discovered his son Archie had sneaked a tree inside the White House and set it up in a big closet of his room. Christmas morning, before seven, the Roosevelt children roused their parents out of bed, escorted them to the hidden tree, and everyone was given a present, including each of the many family pets.

Lighting the Tree

Calvin Coolidge was the first president to preside over the lighting of a national Christmas tree, a gigantic spruce from his native Vermont erected on the White House lawn in 1923.

Herbert Hoover and his wife delighted in the singing of young visiting carolers, and Mrs. Hoover would lead them on a parade through the darkened White House, each child holding a lighted candle.

James K. Polk always received guests at the White House on Christmas Day, standing before a roaring fire, Mrs. Polk traditionally wearing a maroon dress. Equally festive, Mrs. Mamie Eisenhower customarily wore a holly red dress as she frolicked with her grandchildren.

Most dramatic White House Christmases may have been the 11 presided over by Franklin D. Roosevelt. He always gathered his large family together and then read Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," changing his voice for each of the characters.

Recalled one of his sons: "Father was the meanest Scrooge you ever heard."

NORTH PORTICO

The hanging lantern is decorated with pine garlands.
Four Douglas Fir trees decorated with small white lights flanking main entrance.

GRAND FOYER

Two holly trees, one on either side of main entrance.
Over the main entrance is an evergreen and apple arrangement in a fan effect.
The Grand staircase and pillars are draped with pine garlands.
A kissing ball made of boxwood hangs over the Grand Staircase.
The mantel in the Grand Foyer is decorated with evergreen and apple arrangements.
A painted wood antique Santa Claus stands on landing of Grand Staircase.

CROSS HALL

Two Douglas Fir trees in niches on south wall.
Antique carousel figures (camel and giraffe) flank entrance to Blue Room.

STATE DINING ROOM

North wall: Gingerbread house made by Hans Raffert (all edible except smoke and windows).
West wall: Arrangement of evergreens and fruit--pineapples, pears, apples, lemons, limes, and oranges--on mantel.
South wall: Plain green wreaths in windows.
East wall: Fruit trees made with tiny apples, lemons, limes, and lotus seed pods, interspersed with greenery on tables.
Dining Table: Smaller trees made with fruit.

RED ROOM

Arrangements of variegated and green holly on tables.
A cranberry tree stands on table near east wall.

BLUE ROOM

Christmas tree decorated with hand-made ornaments and lights stands in center of room surrounded by antique toys.
Ten paintings of children done by early-American artists hang on the walls.
Arrangements of evergreens and apples on tables.
Plain evergreen wreaths in windows.

GREEN ROOM

Arrangements of variegated and green holly
Bowl of pomegranates on table

EAST ROOM

Mantels are decorated with arrangements of evergreens, including Noble Fir, magnolia leaves, etc., with centers of gilded magnolia leaves, lotus seed pods, okra pods, and pine cones.
An arrangement of evergreens stands on the piano.
An eighteenth century Italian creche stands on east wall flanked by two fir trees.

BALCONIES

The State Floor balcony is decorated with wreaths of evergreens and apples and draped with pine garlands.
The Truman Balcony is draped with pine garlands.

MAIN FLOOR

An antique horse carousel figure stands in the main floor hall.
Arrangements of poinsettias are placed throughout the House.

"A Children's Christmas" Decorates The White House



Taking the tinsel out of Christmas, in favor of a theme of "tradition and heritage," was the task of florists and others who helped decorate the White House for Christmas. The result was an old-fashioned "Children's Christmas."

First Lady Betty Ford requested that hand-made ornaments be used which had been sent to the White House during the past year. Under the direction of White House chief floral designer Elmer "Rusty" Young, volunteers from the florist industry joined with Colonial Williamsburg consultants in developing the decorations.

The florists were from the Allied Florists of Greater Washington, along with FTD Eastern Field Supervisor Bruce Sandin.

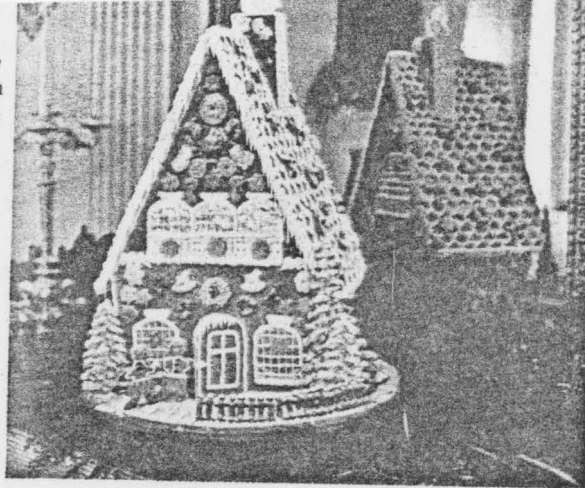
FTD President Don Flowers presented Mrs. Ford with a special Christmas/Bicentennial arrangement for the First Family's private quarters, with best wishes from the more than 14,500 FTD Florists.

The arrangement was presented to Mrs. Ford at a reception she held on Dec. 15 for the florists who worked in the White House during the past year on various events including Christmas.



First Lady Betty Ford greets FTD President Don Flowers at a reception for florist industry volunteers who helped decorate the White House for Christmas and other special occasions this year. Seen far right is Walter Charron, Nosegay Flower Shop, Washington, D.C.

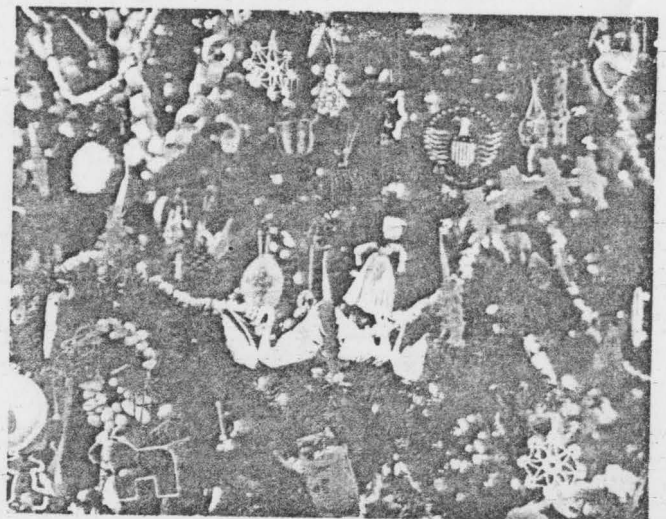
This delicious-looking gingerbread house topped a mantel draped with evergreens in the State Dining Room.



Flanking a mirror reflection of the tree are arrangements featuring red apples and green magnolia leaves and pine boughs in footed containers.



Bowls of colorful assorted fruit adorn this dining room in the White House, and also form mantelpiece and centerpieces.



A close-up of tree ornaments reveals the old-fashioned character of the decorations, which were handmade and sent to the White House by citizen groups.

Helping FTD Eastern Regional Field Supervisor Bruce Sandin decorate the tree are these Members: (l-r) Eleanor Robertie, John Sharper Florist, Inc., Oxon Hill, Md.; Susan Mauck, Clark's Flowers, Silver Spring, Md.; and Betty Gardiner, Mason's Flowers, Inc., Wheaton, Md.



AP Wirephoto

BETTY FORD DISPLAYS THE WHITE HOUSE CHRISTMAS TREE

An "old-fashioned theme" and handmade ornaments are featured this year.

Old-Fashioned' Christmas Planned in White House

By FRANCES LEWINE

WASHINGTON — (AP) — First Lady Betty Ford is emphasizing handmade Christmas ornaments, less-elaborate gifts and fewer tree lights as economy measures for this recession-time holiday.

theme," featuring patchwork quilts, patchwork tree ornaments and the odor of 50 spice-filled sachets.

Eighty florists from 24 states came to arrange poinsettias in tree shapes, red-ribboned wreaths in the windows, garlands of greens and decorations of ivy.





Williamsburg To Lend A Hand With White House Christmas

By **TINA JEFFREY**
TODAY Staff Writer

The White House Christmas will have a helping hand from Williamsburg this year, and area residents for the past

Although the handmade ornaments were her idea, there must have been some input from the President on the White House decorations, because he was in Williamsburg two years ago and saw the 1972 Christmas show at the

Garden Club members are arranging dried flowers in tiny baskets to hang from the limbs of the Fords' tree.

A selection committee at the Folk Art Collection will make final choice of items to

File - Christmas '75
Prepier - Note

- * Wanted to share tree with you, even if you have already seen it.
- * An old-fashioned Christmas tree
- * All volunteers - great
 - Colonial Williamsburg
 - Nursing homes
 - 4-H Club
 - Girl Scout Troops
- * Inexpensive
- * Thank ABBY AUDRIKH
ROCKEFELLER ART COLLECTION
at Colonial Williamsburg,
Under direction of BEATRIX
RUMFORD
- * Instruction sheet
- * Ornaments you and Susan made
- * East Room - Volunteers

