

For immediate release
Tuesday, Dec. 10, 1974

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

The Nativity Scene in the East Room is an 18th Century Italian creche with 30 baroque carved figures, including the Holy Family, the three kings and their attendants, shepherds, angels, cherubs and various animals associated with the manger scene.

The creche was a gift to the White House in 1967 from Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Engelhard, Jr., of Far Hills, N.J. The White House had borrowed a creche in years before the Engelhard gift. Mrs. Engelhard had acquired the figures from Marisa Piccolo Catello of Naples, Italy after extensive research on the subject of creches and years of travel in Europe to study nativity scenes. The Catello family had collected Nativity figures for more than 300 years.

Brightly colored and richly clothed, the figures range from 12 to 18" high and are delicately carved in wood. They are arranged on a stage along the east wall of the East Room, flanked by tall Virginia cedar trees and juniper bushes. The arch of the stage is ivory colored with gold trim, and the architectural details match the decor of the East Room.

The setting and lighting was created by stage designer and theater consultant Donald Oenslager.

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