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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Office of the Curator

January 2, 1975

THE OVAL OFFICE DURING THE ADMINISTRATION  
OF GERALD R. FORD

The Oval Office in the West Wing of the White House has been refurbished with new upholstery fabric. The predominant colors selected for the upholstery are golds, salmon and greens. The walls of the office have been repainted an off-white color for the first time since 1969.

The objects in the Oval Office will be described in a counter-clockwise direction beginning to the right of the door as one enters the Oval Office from the corridor.

\* Portrait of Benjamin Franklin by Charles Willson Peale

Charles Willson Peale's first view of Franklin came in 1767 when he was studying in London under Benjamin West. Peale had come to call on Franklin and through the doorway saw Franklin engaged in one of his favorite pastimes, engaging in an amorous conversation with a young lady on his knee. That started a cordial relationship and correspondence. Franklin wrote to Peale from London on July 4, 1771: ( continued on page 2)

\* Placed in the Oval Office during the Ford Administration



Sir,

I have received your obliging letter of April 21, and it gave me great pleasure to hear that you had met with such Encouragement at Philadelphia, and that you succeeded so well in your business in your native country. If I were to advise you, it would be, by great Industry and Frugality to secure a Competency as early in your life as may be: For as your Profession requires good Eyes, cannot so well be followed with Spectacles and therefore will not probably afford Subsistence so long as some other Employments, you have a Right to claim proportionally larger Rewards while you continue to exercise it to general satisfaction. The Arts have always travelled westward, and there is no doubt of their flourishing hereafter on our side of the Atlantic, as the Number of wealthy Inhabitants shall increase, who may be able and willing suitably to reward them, since from several instances it appears that our People are not deficeint in Genius.

When Franklin returned to Philadelphia in 1785, after a ten year residency in France, Peale finally succeeded in getting a life portrait of Franklin for his gallery of portraits of the Nation's founders started in 1782. This portrait stayed at the Peale Museum until its auction in 1854 when it was purchased by Joseph Harrison whose collection went to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia in 1913. The painting is on loan to the White House from the Academy.

\*\* Pair of Card Tables - This very beautiful pair of card tables was made in the Hepplewhite style in Philadelphia in the late 18th century. The tables are gracefully shaped with a serpentine front and delicately inlaid in the shell form. The tables are unusual in that they are richly inlaid with stringing that is used not only for outlining but also to create an intricate design. They are on loan from the Diplomatic Reception Rooms, The Department of State.

\*\* Placed in the Oval Office, December 31, 1974

\* Bronze Statuette - The bronze statuette by an unknown artist which has been placed on the card table depicts a young man with his dog. It is on loan to the White House from the National Collection of Fine Arts, the Smithsonian Institution.

\* Bust of Harry S. Truman - This bust of President Truman sculpted by an unknown artist was cast in 1947 by the Roman Bronze Works. It was acquired for the White House during the Eisenhower Administration.

Argand Lamps - This pair of Sheffield silver argand lamps with telescopic columns was made in England about 1800. This type of lamp was designed by ~~a~~ Dr. Argand originally to burn whale oil with a wick. The lamps are now electrified.

\* Bust of Abraham Lincoln - The small bust of President Lincoln was executed by Leonard Volk about 1880. His son, Douglas Volk painted a portrait of Mr. Lincoln which is in the Lincoln Bedroom in the White House.

\*\* Chest of Drawers - The handsome chest of drawers was made in Massachusetts in the Hepplewhite style in the early 19th century. The chest is mahogany and features a serpentine front with string inlay along the front, fan inlay quadrants on the drawers and a molded skirt continuing to scroll-cut bracket feet. On loan from the Diplomatic Reception Rooms, Department of State.

\* Placed in the Oval Office during the Ford Administration

\*\* Placed in the Oval Office on December 31, 1974

- \* Painting, " Passing the Outpost " - By A. Wordsworth Thompson ( 1840-1896). This historical scene depicts British soldiers stopping at a farmhouse along the New York - Boston Road. They are being delayed here by loyal American wives so that American soldiers may escape. The farm pictured here is believed to be the Nagel Farm which was built in 1736 near the Harlem River. The painting is on loan from The Union League Club, New York, New York.

Painting, "The President's House," - Artist Unknown. This painting is based on a William Bartlett engraving of the White House about 1839 showing Tiber Creek where Constitution Avenue is now located. The painting is believed to have been painted in the mid - 19th century. Gift to the White House in 1967.

- \* Sculpture " Broncho Buster " - By Frederick Remington (1861-1909) This important bronze sculpture on a cowboy riding a spirited horse was cast by the Roman Bronze Works about 1901. The original design was copyrighted by Remington in 1895. It was a gift to the White House in 1973 from Miss Virginia Hatfield and Mrs. Louise Hatfield Stickney, Covington, Kentucky.

- \* Federal Card Table made in Salem, Massachusetts, about 1810. It is unusual in that the table top is supported by a large and carved gilded spread wing eagle. This table is the only extant eagle table in this form in America today.

- \* Chinese Porcelain Fish Bowl. This rare porcelain fish bowl in front of the window was made in China in the late 18th century (Chien Lung period). In China, these bowls were formerly used to hold goldfish. Today, they are used as planters.

- \* Pedestals - The pedestal along the east wall is one of a pair of mahogany fluted commode pedestals made in America about 1805 in the Sheraton style. It was a gift to the White House in 1969.

\*Placed in the Oval Office during the Ford Administration

- \*\* Clock - The very handsome tall case clock was made by John and Thomas Seymour, prominent Boston cabinetmakers in the early 19th century. The works of the clock were made by John Douell who often worked with the Seymours. This clock was made in the classical style with straight simple lines and fluted columnar support structures. The case is a richly grained mahogany and features beautiful satinwood inlays. This clock along with many other pieces of Seymour furniture was acquired for the White House Collection in 1972.
- \* Statuette of Abraham Lincoln - This statuette of President Lincoln on the pedestal is a study for the statue of Lincoln done for the city of Frankfort, Kentucky. The artist was A.A. Weinman. It is on loan to the White House from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
- \* Painting "Eastport and Passamaquoddy Bay" - This landscape has been attributed to the French artist, Victor de Grailly, who was working in the United States between 1840-1870. This scene in the state of Maine was based on a drawing of the same subject by William H. Bartlett and engraved by Charles Cousen. Both the painting and the engraving were acquired by the White House in 1973.
- \* Pair of Delft Tobacco Jars - The handsome tobacco jars were made in Holland at the end of the 18th century. The jars are decorated in blue and white Delft tradition and depict the American Indian smoking seated near a barrel filled with tobacco. These jars were used in the New World and Europe to store tobacco.

Portrait of George Washington by Charles Willson Peale. The portrait of General George Washington in dress uniform is believed to be the only replica of a portrait of Washington painted by Peale in 1776. It is on loan to the White House from the Estate of Lansdell K. Christie.

Peale (1741-1827) was the only painter known to have painted Washington from life seven times. The portrait over the mantel is believed to be from the second sitting in May, 1776, before Washington received his country's recognition through his efforts at Valley Forge, Trenton and Princeton. The background shows the part of Boston, commemorating the siege of Boston, Washington's greatest victory at that time. The original portrait hangs in the Brooklyn Museum. There is only one full-sized replica (this one) and one miniature replica.

- \* Placed in the Oval Office during the Ford Administration  
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This full-sized replica was ordered from Peale for a "French gentleman" soon after the 1776 sitting. Its location remained a mystery from that time until Mr. and Mrs. Lansdell Christie, with the assistance of Peale scholar, Dr. Charles Colman Sellers, discovered it in Ireland in 1965.

\* Painting "City of Washington, 1833, From Beyond the Navy Yard

This painting was done by George Cooke in 1833. It depicts the city of Washington at that time as seen from the area across the Anacostia River. The White House can be seen at the left of the canvas and the unfinished United States Capitol with the Bulfinch dome can be seen high on the hill in the background. This painting was acquired for the White House Collection in 1972. An engraving based on this painting became a popular view of the city.

Desk - The desk which the President uses in the West Wing Oval Office was built by the United States Senate in 1858 for the Vice Presidential ceremonial room in the Capitol Building. It was used in this room from 1858-1965. President Grant's Vice President, Henry Wilson, fell ill in this room November 22, 1875 and died on the couch next to the desk. In 1965, the room was refurbished for Vice President Humphrey and the desk was taken out of service and placed in storage. It remained in storage until January 20, 1969 when President Nixon requested the desk for use in the Presidential office in the White House. He had used the desk while serving as Vice President. The desk has remained in the Oval Office during the Ford Administration.

\* Pair of andirons - In the fireplace are a pair of American Chippendale style brass andirons made about 1780. The tops of the columns are urn-shaped.

\* Fire Screen - In front of the fireplace is a brass and wire serpentine fire screen with brass finials made about 1800-1810. Acquired for the White House 1973.

\* Placed in the Oval Office during the Ford Administration.

Sofas - The two sofas in front of the fireplace are contemporary pieces which were previously in the Oval Office but they have been reupholstered in a striped fabric in shades of gold, green and salmon.

\* Chairs - The two wing chairs in front of the fireplace and the two arm chairs at the south end of the sofas are contemporary reproduction chairs which have been upholstered in a salmon-colored damask fabric.

Chairs - The cane-back chairs which have been placed around the room have been in the Oval Office since the Truman Administration. These chairs have been upholstered in the same fabric as the sofas.

\* Rug - This rug was specially woven for the White House in 1972. It was designed, with its pale yellow ground, for the Yellow Oval Room in the White House. The rug was used in the Yellow Oval Room until July 1974. It was placed in the Oval Office in November 1974 and has since been refurbished and reconditioned.

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