



THE WHITE HOUSE  
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OFFICIAL 2016 WHITE HOUSE ORNAMENT COMMEMORATES  
1929 WHITE HOUSE WEST WING FIRE  
*The White House Historical Association Honors President Herbert Hoover with  
36<sup>th</sup> Annual American-made Ornament, First Student-Inspired Design*

February 11, 2016 (Washington, D.C.)—The White House Historical Association unveiled today the design of the 2016 Official White House Christmas Ornament. Honoring the presidency of Herbert Hoover, the ornament is a vintage fire truck design commemorating the 1929 Christmas Eve four-alarm fire of the West Wing. Montserrat College of Art student Kayla Whelan, the winner of the Association’s national art school design competition, created this year’s design.

American-made, the 36<sup>th</sup> official ornament offered by the Association continues the tradition of honoring U.S. presidents in sequential order or marking a significant White House historical anniversary with the annual ornament. President Hoover served as the 31<sup>st</sup> President of the United States and was hosting his staff and their children for a Christmas party in the Entrance Hall of the East Wing when a fire broke out in the Executive Office.



One hundred and thirty firefighters from nineteen engine companies and four truck companies responded to the four-alarm fire that destroyed the West Wing. No one was injured in the blaze and the following Christmas, White House staff and their children gathered again to celebrate the holidays and the Hoovers presented the children with toy fire trucks as gifts.

“The 2016 ornament honors a significant moment in White House history that is an often forgotten moment of Hoover’s presidency,” said White House Historical Association President Stewart McLaurin. “We wanted to create an ornament that continues the beautiful aesthetic tradition of the past thirty-six years and also honors the hundreds of firefighters that heroically fought the Christmas Eve blaze.”

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The sale of every Official White House Ornament supports the Association's mission to preserve, protect, and provide public access to the White House. The ornament is on sale beginning today, exclusively at the Association's retail stores in Washington, D.C. and online at [Shop.WhiteHouseHistory.org](http://Shop.WhiteHouseHistory.org) for \$20.95.

This year's ornament design was created by Montserrat College of Art student Kayla Whelan, who won a national design competition the Association offered to art and design schools across the country. Whelan's winning entry was selected from among the hundreds of entries the Association received. Whelan received a \$5,000 cash prize for her winning entry and her college received a \$50,000 scholarship from the White House Historical Association.

Montserrat College of Art President Steve Immerman said, "The Montserrat community is ecstatic that another student has won such prestigious national recognition. We are so proud of Kayla Whelan for the hard work she has done to reach this level of professionalism. To create a design that will live on in our nation's history for centuries to come not only launches Kayla's professional career, but is further evidence of how Montserrat College of Art prepares students for careers in the creative industries."

*About The White House Historical Association*

First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy envisioned a restored White House that conveyed a sense of history through its decorative and fine arts. She sought to inspire Americans, especially children, to explore and engage with American history and its presidents. In 1961, the White House Historical Association was established to support her vision to preserve and share the Executive Mansion's legacy for generations to come.

Supported entirely by private resources, the Association's mission is to assist in the preservation of the state and public rooms, fund acquisitions for the White House permanent collection, and educate the public on the history of the White House. Since its founding, the Association has given more than \$42 million to the White House in fulfillment of its mission.

Online Retail Store:            [Shop.WhiteHouseHistory.org](http://Shop.WhiteHouseHistory.org)

Physical Retail Stores:        *White House Visitor Center*, 1450 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Open Daily 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

*White House History Shop*, 1610 H Street, NW  
Monday – Friday 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

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*Note for Members of the Press:* Images for press use only are available for download here: <http://bit.ly/1TePlyH>. Additional images and more product information is available upon request.

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