



THE WHITE HOUSE
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

White House Transitions Fact Sheet

Compiled November 2020

1801	<p>President John Adams did not attend Thomas Jefferson's inauguration. He departed from the White House at 4 am the morning of his successor's inauguration. While Adams never recorded why he left, he may have wanted to avoid provoking violence between Federalists and Democratic-Republicans, as this was the first time the presidency was transferred to an opposing party. He was also never formally invited by Jefferson and perhaps didn't want to impose.</p>
1829	<p>Like his father, John Adams, President John Quincy Adams did not attend the inauguration of his successor. President-elect Andrew Jackson arrived in Washington on February 11, 1829. He did not call on President Adams, nor did Adams invite Jackson to the White House. Later that month, President Adams moved to a mansion on Meridian Hill in Washington, D.C., and officially departed the White House on the evening of March 3, the day before the inauguration of President Jackson.</p>
1837	<p>President Andrew Jackson attended the inauguration of Martin Van Buren. This was the first time that an outgoing and incoming president rode together in a carriage to the Capitol for the inaugural ceremony. The carriage featured wooden pieces from the USS <i>Constitution</i>.</p>
1841	<p>President-elect William Henry Harrison arrived in Washington, D.C. in February 1841, occupying the National Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue. On February 10, he met with Van Buren at the White House. On February 12, Van Buren hosted Harrison and others for dinner at the White House. When the National Hotel became overcrowded, Van Buren offered to leave the White House early to accommodate Harrison, but the president-elect decided to take a brief trip to Virginia before the inauguration.</p>

1845	<p>While staying at the National Hotel in 1845, James K. Polk and his family were invited to the White House by President John Tyler for a dinner on March 1, three days before inauguration. That same day, Tyler signed a joint resolution passed by Congress that offered Texas admission into the Union.</p>
1849	<p>The Polks left the White House on March 3, 1849 for the Willard Hotel. The typical March 4 inauguration was delayed until the 5th as the 4th fell on a Sunday. President Polk used the vice president's office in the Capitol for last minute work. On March 4, his last day at the White House, he wrote in his diary, "I feel exceedingly relieved that I am now free from all public cares. I am sure I shall be a happier man in my retirement than I have been during the four years I have filled the highest office in the gift of my countrymen."</p>
1853	<p>In 1853, President-elect Franklin Pierce was treated to a dinner party by President Millard Fillmore. The Fillmores moved out of the White House the day before inauguration to the Willard Hotel, renting space there while their home in Buffalo was being furnished. Fillmore rode with Pierce to the Capitol for the oath of office—Pierce remained standing to acknowledge the cheering onlookers.</p>
1857	<p>In 1857, James Buchanan stayed at the Willard Hotel before the inauguration. He visited President Franklin Pierce on January 27—that same day there was also a public reception at the White House. Afterwards, Buchanan returned to Pennsylvania before traveling back to Washington, D.C. Early on March 4, Pierce said final farewells to his cabinet before riding with Buchanan to the Capitol for the inaugural ceremony, the first inaugural known to have been photographed.</p>
1877	<p>Rutherford B. Hayes was the first president to take the oath in the White House. He was invited to dine with President Ulysses S. Grant, who insisted that Hayes take the oath privately (as March 4 fell on a Sunday) so he did in the Red Room. Hayes then took the oath publicly on Monday, March 5.</p>

1889	<p>On February 27, 1889, President-elect Benjamin Harrison and his family were honored with a dinner at the White House. On the morning of March 4, President Grover Cleveland and President-elect Harrison went to the inauguration. Before they left the White House, First Lady Frances Folsom Cleveland and her husband signed photograph albums for staff.</p>
1897	<p>In March 1897, First Lady Frances Folsom Cleveland was sad to leave the White House for the second (and final) time. President Grover Cleveland took a final walk among the State Rooms, asking one of the staff to remove the portrait of him for storage in the attic. Before the inauguration, Cleveland and the new president, William McKinley, spoke amiably in the Blue Room.</p>
1909	<p>Shortly after taking office in 1909, President William Howard Taft was asked how he liked being president. President Taft replied, "I hardly know yet . . . When I hear someone say Mr. President, I look around expecting to see Roosevelt [Theodore, his predecessor]. . . So you can see that I have not gone very far yet." After the ceremony, First Lady Helen Taft rode from the Capitol back to the White House with her husband, the first time a president's spouse had done so.</p>
1921	<p>On March 4, 1921, President Warren G. Harding opened his presidency with a luncheon provided by outgoing First Lady Edith Wilson at the White House. He then received citizens from his hometown of Marion, Ohio, in the East Room, went to the executive offices, and met with the Hamilton Club of Chicago before dining at the White House.</p>
1929	<p>President Calvin Coolidge hosted a dinner for members of his cabinet the night before leaving office. The next day, March 4, 1929, the Coolidges gave small gifts to the White House staff. After a brief meeting between the Coolidges and Hoovers in the Blue Room, the party departed for Capitol Hill for the inauguration ceremony. Upon assuming office, President Hoover added more telephones and radios to the White House, expanding its technological capabilities. Among the objects Hoover brought to the White House was an engraving of Francis Carpenter's <i>First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation before the Cabinet</i>, featuring President Abraham Lincoln.</p>

1933	<p>During the transition between presidents Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt, the two met in the Red Room for tea on March 3, 1933, holding a rather cool meeting on how to deal with the country's growing economic woes. On the morning of the inauguration, Hoover's cabinet met one final time before the Hoovers met the Roosevelts in their cars outside the North Portico.</p>
1953	<p>Before inauguration day on January 20, 1953, the Eisenhowers stayed at the Statler Hotel. The previous December, First Lady Bess Truman had shown the newly renovated White House to Mrs. Eisenhower. While at the Statler, the incoming first family was joined by their son, John, on temporary leave from military service in Korea. President-elect Eisenhower wore a stiff-curl brimmed hat instead of the more traditional high silk hat.</p>
1961	<p>After a snowstorm the preceding night, President John F. Kennedy was inaugurated on January 20, 1961. The transition between Kennedy and Dwight Eisenhower was smooth with the Brookings Institute providing transition reports in the weeks before inauguration.</p>
1963	<p>Congress passes the Presidential Transition Act to promote the orderly transfer of power across the federal government. "The law requires the General Services Administration to provide office space and other core support services to presidents-elect and vice Presidents-elect, as well as pre-election space and support to major candidates. The Act also requires the White House and agencies to begin transition planning well before a presidential election, benefitting both first and second term administrations." For more information, see https://presidentialtransition.org/publications/presidential-transition-act-summary/</p>
1969	<p>Despite the national tension of the late 1960s, President Lyndon Johnson remained dedicated to a smooth transition of power, speaking with candidates Richard Nixon, Hubert Humphrey, and George Wallace. President Johnson delivered his last State of the Union on January 14, 1969. The last letters President Johnson signed in the White House were letters to his sons-in law, then serving in Vietnam.</p>

1980	In 1980, the Reagan and Carter transition teams held a meeting at the White House movie theater. This was only the second time a transition team had held a meeting in the White House. The first was when the Ford and Carter teams met in 1976. President Carter worked nonstop during the final days of his administration to secure the release of 52 Americans hostages held by Iran. He was still making calls fifteen minutes before the Reagans arrived at the White House for the inauguration. The hostages were released minutes after Ronald Reagan was sworn into office.
1993	On January 20, 1993, President George H.W. Bush began a new presidential tradition—leaving behind a congratulatory letter for his successor. In his letter to President-elect Bill Clinton, Bush wrote: “You will be our President when you read this note. I wish you well. I wish your family well. Your success now is our country’s success. I am rooting hard for you. Good Luck.”

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