



*THE WHITE HOUSE
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION*

Olympians at the White House: Historical Highlights

There has been a long tradition of presidents welcoming Team USA Olympic Athletes to the White House. This continues a long legacy of celebrating cooperation, competition, and national pride displayed during the Olympic Games.

- June 12, 1924: Members of the U.S. Olympic Boxing Team visited the White House before heading to the Summer Olympic Games in Paris.
- April 14, 1961: Olympic gold medalist Wilma Rudolph received an opportunity to visit to the White House and meet with President John F. Kennedy. She agreed even though it meant missing her plane at the airport, and possibly an important race.
- December 1, 1964: About 100 of the U.S. Olympic medal winners from the Tokyo, Japan summer Olympics attended a luncheon held in the East Room of the White House.
- March 21, 1980: President Jimmy Carter brought representatives from the U.S. Olympic team to the East Room to have a discussion with them about the 1980 boycott of the Moscow, Russia Olympics. Carter stated his regrets to the athletes who had dreamed of participating and gave an overview of the reasons for the boycott.
- February 29, 1984: President Ronald Reagan spoke to the U.S. Olympic team from the State Dining Room, congratulating them for their performance in the 1984 Sarajevo, Yugoslavia Winter Olympics. He praised figure skater Debbie Armstrong for winning the first U.S. woman to win gold in a skiing event since 1972.
- April 2, 1992: In a ceremony on the South Lawn of the White House President George H.W. Bush congratulated United States Olympic athletes who competed in the 1992 Winter Olympics in France. "Each of you showed how the Olympics race can ennoble the human race, that cooperation and competition can produce a better world. And you led the way to America's best showing in the Winter Games since 1980, 11 medals, the most we've won on foreign soil," the president remarked.

- April 13, 1994: President Bill Clinton offered some congratulatory remarks to athletes from the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Germany in the East Room of the White House. Clinton praised athletes on their strong performance at the Germany games admitting, “I may have endangered the national security, because I stayed up every night until you went off the air. [*Laughter*] I saw every last event. I saw every last interview.”
- April 29, 1998: President Clinton delivered remarks on the White House South Lawn to the athletes from the 1998 Nagano, Japan Winter Olympic team. He gave a warm speech congratulating the athletes, “In a fundamental way, you have become a part of America's team for the rest of your lives. If you choose, for the rest of your lives, because you were an Olympian, you can have a profound positive impact on all the people with whom you come in contact, but especially on young people.” Clinton also took this opportunity to congratulate the athletes that competed in the 1998 Paralympics.
- April 23, 2002: President George W. Bush honored the 2002 Winter Olympic and Paralympic team on the South Lawn of the White House. Bush commended the athletes’ performance at the Salt Lake City, Utah games and praised the “uniquely American” character of the team by stating, “After all, we had firefighters on our team; we had members of the Armed Services; we've got community volunteers. And your commitment to your communities will serve you well as champions.”
- April 14, 2014: In an East Room ceremony both President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama congratulated the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic teams for their performance in the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia. Michelle Obama highlighted her “Let’s Move” campaign to encourage America’s youth to be active and eat healthy.

Other notable visits with the president that did not occur at the White House:

- August 1908: Members of the U.S. Olympic team visited President Theodore Roosevelt at his home Sagamore Hill, NY, which served as a “Summer White House.”
- July 10, 1976: President Gerald Ford traveled to Plattsburgh, New York to speak to athletes about to compete in the 1976 summer Olympics in Montreal, Canada. The president highlighted their role in celebrating the bicentennial of American independence.

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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. 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 White House Historical Association has contributed more than \$47 million in fulfillment of its mission. To learn more about the White House Historical Association, please visit www.whitehousehistory.org.

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