



THE WHITE HOUSE
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

NEW Episode: *The White House 1600 Sessions* Podcast “White House History and the Waldorf Astoria New York”

White House Historical Association President Stewart McLaurin Discusses Nearly a Century of Presidential Connections with Author David Freeland and Waldorf Astoria Executive Director of Sales Jasmin Howanietz

December 18, 2025 (Washington, D.C.) – The White House Historical Association today released a [new episode](#) of *The White House 1600 Sessions* podcast featuring a special conversation with Stewart McLaurin, president of the Association, David Freeland, historian and author of “American Hotel: The Waldorf-Astoria and the Making of a Century,” (Rutgers), and Jasmin Howanietz, Waldorf Astoria Executive Director of Sales, about the longstanding relationship between the American presidency and the iconic New York hotel.

Every president since President Herbert Hoover, who gave a radio address for the hotel’s grand opening in 1931, has stayed at the famed Waldorf Astoria location. Two towers make up the Waldorf Astoria, a hotel and a residence where President Hoover lived for several decades after leaving the White House. The hotel has not only served as a home away from home for presidents, but also as a backdrop for pivotal moments in American history, including President Theodore Roosevelt’s powerful speech on race relations at the 1905 Lincoln Dinner and President Lyndon B. Johnson’s defense of the Civil Rights Act in the Grand Ballroom.

“There are few places outside of the White House that are as deeply connected to the American Presidency,” McLaurin said of the Waldorf Astoria.

Freeland shares fascinating details on the extent to which the hotel became essential to American political life. He recounts a particularly compelling story about the contentious 1924 Democratic Convention—the longest in history up to that point. While the convention was held at Madison Square Garden, delegates retreated to the Waldorf’s “smoke-filled rooms” to resolve their differences over Prohibition.

“The Waldorf Astoria offered a space for people to come together—officials, delegates, even presidents—and work through differences in a comfortable environment, a bit outside of the public glare,” said Freeland.

The episode also highlights the hotel’s remarkable infrastructure designed to welcome world leaders. Howanietz describes how the hotel maintains multiple entrances and elevator banks to ensure that delegations attending the United Nations General Assembly are hosted as distinguished guests. She

also discusses the Presidential Suite—now called the Empire Suite—which once featured items gifted from Presidents Jimmy Carter, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Bill Clinton, and more.

Given the hotel's deep-rooted presidential legacy, the White House Historical Association has partnered with Waldorf Astoria Residences New York to create a private Presidential Library amenity available exclusively to residents. The hotel and residences reopened this year after closing for almost eight years to conduct extensive renovations and restorations. The Library was curated by Association historians, and the collection features carefully selected books, biographies, and replicated works of art from the White House Collection.

The Library currently houses a rocking chair gifted by President John F. Kennedy after one of his stays at the hotel, and a White House Christmas tree adorned with [presidential ornaments](#) for the holidays. This special podcast recording took place in the private residential theater with an audience of the Association's Next-Gen Leaders.

The White House 1600 Sessions podcast is available on Apple Podcasts and Spotify.

The full video of this podcast episode is also available on the White House Historical Association's YouTube channel [here](#).

For more information, please contact press@whha.org.

The White House 1600 Sessions

The White House Historical Association's President Stewart McLaurin is the host of *The White House 1600 Sessions*, the Association's official audio and video podcast devoted to exploring the history, cultural impact, untold stories, and personal accounts of America's most iconic residence and highest office.

About the White House Historical Association

The White House Historical Association was founded in 1961 by First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy to support her vision to restore and preserve the Executive Mansion and its legacy for generations to come. Mrs. Kennedy sought to inspire Americans, especially children, to explore and engage with American history and its presidents. Supported entirely by private resources, the Association is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that has contributed more than \$115 million to the White House in fulfillment of its mission. To learn more about the White House Historical Association, please visit WhiteHouseHistory.org.

About Waldorf Astoria Residences New York:

For nearly a century, Waldorf Astoria New York has been a fixture of New York City society, earning its place as a beacon of radiance in the cultural capital of the world. The legendary property is synonymous with refined elegance, magnetic grandeur, and societal aspiration, long-serving as a distinguished hub for the social elite, world leaders, and captains of industry. Following an extensive restoration, the property will retain the scale and beauty of the original Art Deco architecture, while entering into an era of unprecedented residential luxury on Park Avenue. As part of the substantial reimagination, above the legendary hotel will sit 372 private residences, ranging from studios to four bedrooms, with interiors designed by Jean-Louis Deniot. Residents have access to 50,000 square feet of exclusive private amenities, along with special access to the best-in-class services and amenities found only at the Waldorf Astoria New York hotel, including the 30,000 square foot Guerlain spa, state-of-the-art fitness center and standout signature restaurants.

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