



THE WHITE HOUSE
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

*In celebration of America's 250th Birthday,
the White House Historical Association releases*

THE WHITE HOUSE

The History of An American Idea

By William Seale

Preface by Stewart D. McLaurin

On-sale June 29, 2026

June 29, 2026 (Washington, D.C.) – In celebration of the 250th birthday of America, the White House Historical Association is releasing the fourth edition of William Seale's seminal architectural history *The White House: The History of An American Idea* (on-sale June 29, 2026). First published in 1992, and updated and revised by William Seale in 2001 and 2017, this new edition has been enhanced with color images and updated photography throughout.

Although built in the experimental years of the new nation and altered over its 200-year history, the White House remains the natural symbol of the American presidency and perhaps the best-known residence in the world. The history of the house, as told through this volume, is a story of survival and growth that parallels that of the nation it has come to symbolize. Enriched by the little known details about official and domestic life, *The History of An American Idea* reveals the numerous changes the building has undergone and the paradox of its survival. The house required preservation less than 25 years after its construction. Burned to a smoke-blackened shell by the British in 1814, it was rebuilt, later to be threatened with replacement but retained, condemned to destruction, but made new. Many presidents hired architects and made changes, small and large. Included in this book are rare glimpses of long-vanished interiors brought to life with historical plans, prints, and photographs, brought together in one volume.

As the United States celebrates its Semiquincentennial this year, the White House Historical Association's mission—to preserve, protect, and provide access to the rich history of America's Executive Mansion—is more vital than ever. Central to this enduring legacy is the influence of author of this book, the late Dr. William Seale, a towering figure in White House historiography whose brilliance and knowledge illuminated the White House's architectural and cultural evolution. In the preface for the book, Stewart D. McLaurin, President of the White House Historical Association writes, "When *The White House: The History of an American Idea* was published in 1992, there was no

other book like it. Dr. Seale examines how the mansion could be both always the same, as George Washington envisioned it, and constantly changing, as presidents have remade it to suit their times.”

As William Seale writes in the book’s Introduction, “The idea of the White House began to take shape in the last decade of the eighteenth century . . . Ideas put it up, and ideas shaped it year by year . . . The White House has been pulled apart, rearranged, gutted by fire and renovation, and reassembled; yet it is always the same. Its idea has become its essence.”

About Stewart D. McLaurin

Stewart D. McLaurin has served as the president of the White House Historical Association since 2014. He is the host of *The White House 1600 Sessions*, the Association’s official audio and video podcast devoted to exploring the history and untold stories of America’s most iconic residence and highest office. He is a member of the USA Today Board of Contributors and writes a monthly column about the history of the White House. His books include *The People’s House Miscellany* and *James Hoban: Designer and Builder of the White House*, which he has adapted into a children’s book, *The White House: Designed by James Hoban, Built by Many Hands*.

About William Seale

Trained as a historian, the late William Seale received his PhD from Duke University and began his career teaching at Lamar University, the University of Houston, the University of South Carolina, and Columbia University. After briefly serving as curator of cultural history at the Smithsonian Institution in the early 1970s, Seale worked independently, focusing his research and writing on the White House and the restoration of historic American buildings and state capitols. His books on White House history included *The President’s House* (1986); *The White House Garden* (1995); *The Night They Burned the White House* (2014); *A White House of Stone: Building the First Ideal in American Architecture* (2017); *Blair House: The President’s Guest House* (2018); and *To Live on Lafayette Square: Society and Politics in the President’s Neighborhood* (2019). He contributed to *The White House, An Historic Guide, 50th Anniversary Edition* (2011), founded *White House History Quarterly* magazine, provided the narrative to *At Home in the President’s Neighborhood* (2016), and edited *The White House: Actors and Players* (2000).

About our Books

In 1962, when First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy gave Americans a televised tour of the White House interiors she announced, “We are going to do a book.” This promise became a guidebook, *The White House: An Historic Guide*, the Association’s first project. Now, more than sixty years later, the Association has matured into a nationally recognized independent publisher with more than one hundred titles produced to date as well as a quarterly magazine now in its eighty-first issue. Our books serve as a tangible representation of the Association’s mission to enhance understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of the historic White House, as they have from the start. From general interest to highly focused, our titles cover a broad range of subjects related to the history of the President’s House and its historic neighborhood, from its architecture, gardens, fine and decorative arts, to the presidents and first ladies who lived there over the years, to the stories of those who built and cared for the house, to its global context as the home and office of our nation’s head of state. Our list includes titles that appeal to history buffs and art lovers, connoisseurs and curious amateurs, scholars and tourists, adults and children.

About the White House Historical Association

Founded in 1961 by First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy, the White House Historical Association is the nonprofit, nonpartisan organization entrusted with preserving and sharing the history of the White

House. Supported entirely by private philanthropy and the sale of educational books and products, the Association reaches millions of students, teachers, and lifelong learners through research and scholarship initiatives, public programming, and the authoritative titles published by its independent press. Throughout each presidency, the Association works with the Offices of the First Lady and the White House Curator to acquire and preserve historic objects for the White House Fine and Decorative Arts Collection. The Association also operates The People's House: A White House Experience, a free, immersive, educational museum in Washington, D.C., which welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. To learn more about the White House Historical Association, please visit WhiteHouseHistory.org.

THE WHITE HOUSE: *The History of An American Idea* by William Seale

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PUBLICITY CONTACT: Kathleen Carter | Kathleen Carter Communications
kathleen@kathleencartercommunications.com | 845-548-1664