

THE WHITE HOUSE
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

JAMES HOBAN

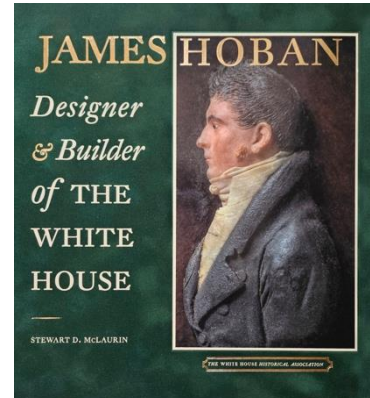
Designer and Builder of the White House

By Stewart D. McLaurin

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March 17, 2026 (Washington, D.C.) - The White House is one of the most recognizable landmarks in the world, yet few know the name or story of the man responsible for its design and construction: James Hoban.

A fascinating book originally published in 2021 and going into its third printing on March 17, 2026, [JAMES HOBAN: *Designer and Builder of the White House*](#) (White House Historical Association; hardcover), sets out to reveal who this elusive man was, what informed his craft, and the mark he left on this country, by tracing back to his roots in Ireland and by using his work on the White House as a window into his life and career.



Published by the White House Historical Association, which will celebrate its 65th anniversary this year, the anthology contains essays written by the world's leading scholars on James Hoban. With the 250th birthday of the United States of America forthcoming, there is no better time to celebrate the work of the elusive designer and builder who created what the world knows today as the White House.

Born in 1755, James Hoban spent his childhood years in Desart, Cuffesgrange, County Kilkenny. His father was a tenant farmer on the estate of the Cuffee family at Desart Court, a grand Palladian country house dating from 1733. It was in the estate workshops at Desart Court that Hoban trained as a carpenter and wheelwright, until his move to Dublin as a teenager. Hoban studied at the renowned Dublin Society Drawing School during a time of great expansion for the city. It is without a doubt that his training at the school gave him the skills to practice as an architect and opened doors to an influential circle of developers, architects, and craftsmen who helped consolidate his architectural training before he left for America.

James Hoban's first documented appearance in America is a notice he placed in both Charleston and Philadelphia newspapers in May 1785 advertising his carpentry services. He first settled in Philadelphia and shortly thereafter settled in Charleston, South Carolina, where he found success and quickly established himself within the fabric of the city. The connections he made there paved the way for

meeting George Washington and receiving the commission to build the President's House. By 1792, Hoban was at work on the building site, having won the competition for the design of the President's House. Washington had placed him in charge of the entire project, with all carpentry, stonemasonry, and brickwork under his supervision. The resulting structure, accomplished in time for President John Adams to take residence in November 1800, fulfilled Washington's vision and is today one of the most recognizable landmarks in the world.

With this anthology, the world's most knowledgeable scholars on James Hoban introduce us to him, presenting the story of his life, influences, and work. Church records in Ireland and Washington, D.C., preserve the dates of his baptism and marriage. A stone monument marks the site of his grave. The monumental buildings known to Hoban that still stand in Dublin and in the Irish countryside provide a tangible connection to Hoban's concept for the President's House. Hoban's surviving letters to the Commissioners for the District of Columbia further enrich the history. The Catholic churches he established, designed, and built throughout Washington, D.C. including St. Patrick's Parish, reinforce the influence he had on growing the Catholic Church in D.C. Newspaper advertisements and census records remind us that the President's House was built with enslaved labor and that Hoban himself owned slaves. These facts and more are illustrated in a catalog complete with beautiful photographs, sketches, newspaper articles, maps, and drawings help paint a fuller picture of his life and work.

"Looking beyond America's Semiquincentennial, let us carry forward the belief that history is worth preserving, that democracy is worth celebrating, and that together we can shape the next 250 years of this great American story," remarks this book's author **Stewart D. McLaurin**. "This mission extends to every corner of White House history, all rooted in Hoban's foundational design."

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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 *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 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.

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