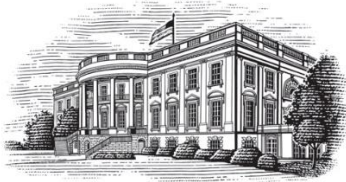


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THE WHITE HOUSE
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

NEW Episode: *The White House 1600 Sessions* Podcast “History of the *Resolute* Desk”

White House Historical Association President Stewart McLaurin Discusses the Origins and History of the Resolute Desk

June 22, 2026 (Washington, D.C.) – The White House Historical Association today released [a new episode of *The White House 1600 Sessions*](#) podcast exploring the history of the *Resolute* Desk and the ship from which it was created. Stewart McLaurin, president of the Association, traveled to The Historic Dockyard Chatham outside London, England, and the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London to get a special look at the location and proposed design used in the making of the presidential desk. Before the *HMS Resolute* was dismantled and her timber used to craft the *Resolute* Desk, it was part of a rescue Arctic expedition. Unfortunately, the *Resolute* got trapped in the ice, and after several seasons the crew was forced to abandon ship. Later, the *HMS Resolute* was found drifting by American merchant ships and was brought to the East Coast of the United States where it was repaired thanks to funding from Congress, and eventually returned to the United Kingdom.

“The Historic Dockyard Chatham is where the British ship, the *HMS Resolute*, was docked before it was decommissioned and broken apart in 1879,” said McLaurin. “A year later, the *Resolute* Desk was gifted to President Rutherford B. Hayes from Great Britain's Queen Victoria.”

McLaurin toured the *HMS Gannet* with Paul Barnard, Deputy Chief Executive at The Historic Dockyard Chatham. The *Gannet* is a Victorian naval sloop, a ship similar to the *Resolute* and roughly from the same time period, with its own ties to U.S. presidential history.

“Much like any historic ship, we're always undergoing repairs and refits,” said Barnard. “We were approached to make a gift for President Obama from [Prime Minister] Gordon Brown. And we made a really quite incredible pen holder from the timbers of this very ship.”

McLaurin and Barnard later visited the Joiners Shop, the likely location where the *Resolute* Desk was constructed by William Evenden. They met with Paul Wright, Interpretation Officer at The Historic Dockyard Chatham, who shared historic maps and diaries from workers that give a sense of the ‘yard and shop around the time the iconic desk was crafted.

We then follow Stewart to the National Maritime Museum where he dives deeper into the history of the *Resolute* Desk with Dr. Claire Warrior, Senior Curator at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London. There they observe a few objects not on public display, a block of oak and picture frame made from the *HMS Resolute* as well as proposed designs for the famous desk.

“You can see it's per Admiralty order. So the Admiralty commissioned this competition,” said Warrior. “Then particular furniture makers are chosen. And they start to have all these fantastical ideas about what you can make from the ship. And this is one of them.”

The *Resolute* Desk was used throughout the White House since President Hayes; however, the desk was first used in the Oval Office by President John F. Kennedy. It has also been used by Presidents Carter, Reagan, and every president since George W. Bush. Today, the *Resolute* Desk is a reminder of the history and friendship between the United States and Great Britain.

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

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.

About Royal Museums Greenwich

Royal Museums Greenwich incorporates the National Maritime Museum, the 17th-century Queen's House, Royal Observatory Greenwich and the famous clipper ship Cutty Sark. This unique collection of museums and heritage buildings form a key part of the Maritime Greenwich UNESCO World Heritage Site. The mission of Royal Museums Greenwich is to enrich people's understanding of the sea, the exploration of space, and Britain's role in world history. For more information, visit www.rmg.co.uk.

About Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust

The Historic Dockyard Chatham has over 100 buildings and structures, including 48 Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The site is in the stewardship of the independent charity, Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust (No. 292101).

The Trust's dual objectives of education and preservation are achieved by a strategy of preservation through reuse. Some of the buildings are open to visitors; others are occupied by residential tenants, businesses, and tertiary education faculties.

Visitors to and users of The Historic Dockyard Chatham are fundamental to its purpose and the economic reuse of the site and its buildings. Its staff and volunteers play a vital role in providing a high level of service and customer care. The Trust is also involved in the ongoing regeneration of Medway and The Thames Gateway, with Culture and Heritage at its heart.

thedockyard.co.uk

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