



THE WHITE HOUSE
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The White House Fence Historic Timeline Overview

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| <p>1801</p> | <p>President Thomas Jefferson ordered the construction of a wooden post and rail fence around the White House. By 1808, he had replaced the fence with a stone wall that enclosed the White House Grounds. At the south end of the grounds, a ha-ha wall (a sunken wall that serves as a vertical barrier while providing an uninterrupted view of the landscape) stood to prevent livestock from grazing in the garden. President Jefferson envisioned the South Grounds as a private garden with serpentine walks and a lawn that extended down to Tiber Creek (which runs under present-day Constitution Avenue), edged by a flower border. The North Grounds were to be formal, symmetrical, and open to the public.</p> |
| <p>1818-1819</p> | <p>A new semicircular driveway marked by eight stone piers, an iron fence and gates was built across the North Front of the White House.</p> |
| <p>1833</p> | <p>A long and heavy wrought iron fence was installed along Pennsylvania Avenue on the north side of the White House. Jefferson's stone wall was cut down along this run and served as the foundation for the new fence. This work was integrated into the existing 1818-1819 semicircular fencing.</p> |
| <p>1866 and 1872</p> | <p>East (1866) and West (1872) Executive Avenues were built on each side of the White House to serve as public streets. During World War II, both avenues were closed as a major security measure. West Executive Avenue, which runs between the White House and the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, was turned into a staff parking lot and never reopened after the war. East Executive Avenue, which runs between the White House and the Treasury Department, was closed to traffic in 1984 and was later converted into a service road and park in 1986.</p> |
| <p>1873</p> | <p>President Ulysses S. Grant expanded the grounds southward and enclosed them with iron fencing. He also began the policy of closing the grounds at sunset but successive presidents determined their own policy upon taking</p> |

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| | <p>up residency at the White House. In 1893, Grover Cleveland closed the South Grounds after strangers attempted to take photographs with his youngest daughter Esther. In 1901, Theodore Roosevelt briefly reopened the South Grounds, but visitors continued to take liberties with access and tried to photograph and meet with the Roosevelt family, forcing the president to close the South Grounds. In 1913, William Howard Taft restricted access to the North Grounds, only permitting the public to enter on certain days and specific times.</p> |
| 1917 | <p>President Woodrow Wilson closed the White House Grounds due to the American entry into World War I. In 1921, President Warren G. Harding reopened the grounds.</p> |
| 1923-1929 | <p>President Calvin Coolidge permanently closed off the South and North Grounds for security reasons at the recommendation of the United States Secret Service. Still, pedestrians wandered about outside the fencing surrounding the White House Grounds.</p> |
| 1935 | <p>Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. submitted his report on the White House Grounds to President Franklin Roosevelt. The plan became the template for improvements and work performed by the National Park Service and affirmed the policy of restricting public access to the grounds.</p> |
| 1937-1938 | <p>Perimeter fencing along East, West, and South Executive Avenues was removed and replaced by a new fence made to match that along Pennsylvania Avenue.</p> |
| December 7, 1941 | <p>After the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the start of World War II, the grounds as well as East and West Executive Avenues were closed to all but those with appointments and guarded at their perimeters from newly installed gatehouses. The driveway was cleared of visitors and the custom of leaving calling cards at the North Door was discontinued.</p> |
| March 1965-September 1967 | <p>As part of a \$272,000 renovating project, the north perimeter fence along Pennsylvania Avenue was set into a new foundation during the Lyndon Johnson administration.</p> |
| 1976 | <p>The 1818-1819 wrought-iron gates on Pennsylvania Avenue were replaced by reinforced steel gates built to withstand automobile crashes.</p> |

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| <p>November 1983</p> | <p>In response to the deadly attack on the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, three-foot-high concrete barricades (also known as jersey barriers) were placed at the northwest and southwest entrances to the White House Grounds. Similar barricades were erected outside the State Department and the Pentagon.</p> |
| <p>March 1988</p> | <p>Thick 38-inch high concrete bollards, joined by chains, were placed four feet apart along the Pennsylvania Avenue sidewalk in front of the White House fence between East and West Executive Avenues.</p> |
| <p>May 20, 1995</p> | <p>President Bill Clinton closed Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House to all vehicular traffic, a security response to the Oklahoma City bombing.</p> |
| <p>September 11, 2001</p> | <p>After the terrorist attacks of September 11th, new protective measures were installed outside the White House Grounds. Jersey barriers were placed around the entrances and Pennsylvania Avenue was later closed to pedestrian traffic.</p> |
| <p>November 2004</p> | <p>Pennsylvania Avenue reopened as a pedestrian-friendly civic space where people could stroll and bicycle between Lafayette Park and the White House fence. Jersey barriers were removed and retractable bollards were installed along the east and west ends of Pennsylvania Avenue.</p> |
| <p>July 2015</p> | <p>A removable anti-climb feature consisting of sharp metal points was installed on the top of the White House fence to deter any attempts by individuals to climb over the fence.</p> |
| <p>July 2016</p> | <p>The Commission of Fine Arts approved concepts for a new White House fence proposed by the National Park Service and the United States Secret Service. The proposed fence will be taller, stronger, and equipped with anti-climb and intrusion detection components.</p> |

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