**White House USA Washington**

WHITE HOUSE [White House] - official name of the executive mansion of the President of the United States. It is on the south side of Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C., facing Lafayette Square.

The building, constructed of Virginia freestone, is of simple and stately design. The porte-cochere on the north front, which forms the main entrance, is a portico of high Ionic columns reaching from the ground to the roof pediment; it is balanced by a semicircular colonnaded balcony on the south with a second-floor porch, completed in 1948.

The main building (four stories high) is about 170 ft (52 m) long by 85 ft (26 m) wide. The east and west terraces, the executive office (1902), the east wing (1942), and a penthouse and a bomb shelter (1952) have been added.

The colonnade at the east end is the public entrance. The executive office is approached by an esplanade. Large receptions are usually held in the East Room, which is 40 ft (12 m) by 82 ft (25 m).

The elliptical Blue Room is the scene of many social, diplomatic, and official receptions. The Red Room and the Green Room are used for private and quasi-official gatherings. The White House, designated "the Palace" in the original plans, was designed by James Hoban on a site chosen by George Washington.

It is the oldest public building in Washington, its cornerstone having been laid in 1792. John Adams was the first President to live there (1800). The building was restored after being burned (1814) by British troops, and the smoke-stained gray stone walls were painted white. Despite popular myth the cognomen "White House" was applied to the building some time before it was painted.

The name became official when President Theodore Roosevelt had it engraved upon his stationery. Part of the house was rebuilt (1949-52) on a steel-supporting frame. The grounds, which cover about 18 acres (7 hectares), are attractive with broad lawns, fountains, trees, and gardens.

They were planned by Andrew Jackson Downing . Pennsylvania Ave. between the White House and Lafayette Square was closed to vehicular traffic in 1995 for security reasons.