



The White House has been the Official Residence of every President of the United States with the exception of George Washington.

The White House is located on a site near the [Mall](#) chosen in 1790 by President George Washington and Pierre l'Enfant, the Architect who created the master plan for the new capital. Washington resided in the President's House at the temporary Capital of [Philadelphia](#) Pennsylvania.

Design competition

A competition held for the design of the new President's House received nine entries. The winner was James Hoban, an architect of Irish descent. His neo-classical design is presumably based on the Leinster House in Dublin.

Construction

Construction started in 1792 and in 1800, when the building was almost completed, President John Adams moved in. Ever since, each President of the United States has lived in the White House. In 1814, British troops invaded the defenseless city and torched several buildings, including the [Capitol](#), the Treasury, the War Department and the White House decided to rebuild the public buildings. James Hoban rebuilt the White House, of which only the outer walls were still standing, according to the original plans.

The Name

Most people seem to think the building was first painted white after it was rebuilt in 1817, but already in 1798 it was made white by a protective lime-based whitewash. It wasn't named White House from the beginning though: it was originally named the 'President's Palace', 'President's House' or 'Executive Mansion'. It was soon nicknamed 'White House' and in 1901 President Theodore Roosevelt made it the official name.

Oval Office

The White House has been extended and modified many times. The most important extensions were the addition of the East Wing and the West Wing. The latter contains the famous 'Oval Office', the president's main office. The room was modeled on the 'Blue Room', an oval room at the center of the White House. The building contains a total of 132 rooms.

Garden

The garden around the White House was first planted by John Adams. It was later redesigned by many presidents and first ladies. The most famous part of the garden was added in 1913 by Ellen Wilson, wife of President Woodrow Wilson. She created a Rose Garden, which would later be redesigned and used as a venue for official ceremonies by president Kennedy. It is located just outside the Oval Office.

Public Tours

Thomas Jefferson was the first president to allow public tours of the White House in 1805. Since September 11, 2001 they have been suspended but US residents can arrange group tours of 10 or more people through their member of Congress.