

George Washington lays the cornerstone of the White House, October 13, 1792

On this day in history, October 13, 1792, George Washington lays the cornerstone of the White House. President John Adams would be the first American president to live in the presidential mansion in Washington DC. Today's White House, however, looks very different than the building that was originally constructed.

After Congress decided to locate the federal capital along the Potomac River in 1790, Pierre Charles L'Enfant was chosen to design a plan for the federal city. Part of the plan included space for a massive mansion, five times the size of the house that was eventually rebuilt.

In 1791, a public request was put out by President George Washington for potential designs for the president's mansion. Irish architect James Hoban's design was eventually chosen. Hoban had designed the Charleston County Courthouse in Charleston, South Carolina, a building Washington had seen when he visited there. Washington liked the courthouse's design and Hoban's plans for the presidential house looked very similar.

On October 13, 1792, Washington laid the cornerstone for the White House. The original home did not have the circular south portico or the northern drive under portico that Americans recognize today. Instead, both the north and south sides of the White House had only a series of eleven windows on 2 floors.

After the White House was burned in 1814 by the British, the building was mostly reconstructed. The familiar rounded south portico was added in 1824 and the north portico in 1830. The White House's West Wing was not added until 1901 by President Teddy Roosevelt for more office space. President William Howard Taft built the first Oval Office there in 1909. The East Wing was first added by President Roosevelt, but has gone through several iterations, including time as a greenhouse and a cloakroom.

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The White House was entirely gutted during the administration of President Harry Truman. A steel frame was placed inside the outer walls and all the inner walls were replaced. Today, the White House has six stories, 2 under ground, a ground floor, the State Floor, Second Floor and Third Floor. The entire White House complex also has the East and West Wings for offices, the Blair House for guests and the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, which houses more presidential offices.