

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Thursday, June 4, 1964

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This was a day important because of the presentation of Adam Silver.

It began with working with Eric Goldman on the letter that I will sign that will be put in the front of the new edition of the White House guide book.

Then many chores and lunch in room.

And then at 5 o'clock to the East Room for the Adam Silver reception.

This is a day significant because it marks the return to the White House ~~of the return~~ of the most important possession of the first President to live here, John Adams. And it is important to me because it's the most historic thing to come here since my occupancy.

The 80 odd guests were an interesting assemblage as I walked into the East Room. The donor is Mr. Mark Bortman of Austin, and interestingly enough, he came to know Lyndon, then Senator Johnson, a good many years ago and because he was head of the people-to-people program, got to know him better when Bashir <sup>Ahmed</sup> ~~Ohmed~~, the camel driver came over here at Lyndon's suggestion, and the people-to-people program sponsored his trip.

There were 13 members of the Adams family present including Mr. and Mrs. John Quincy Adams, and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Boylston Adams, and I found out later, ~~not all~~ the Adams' were present! We'd invited the Massachusetts delegation in Congress and a great many of them came, headed by Senator Saltonstall, and some five or six others.

Mrs. Kathrine Drinker Bowen, <sup>the</sup> historian, was there; and also the Lyman Butterfields, he is editor of the Adams papers; and the Clifford Shiftons, he's

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director of the American Antiquarian Society; and Miss Alice Winchester, editor of Antique Magazine, something Mrs. Johnson used to love to read.

From the committee for the Preservation of the White House, I was duly impressed and grateful to have Mr. Henry duPont there; and Alice Brown; and Mrs. Marshall Field, for her first meeting with us; and the S. Dillon Ripleys of the Smithsonian; as well as the John Walkers of the National Gallery of Art; and Bill Walden of the Fine Arts Committee.

There were some old friends who just happened to be in town to - Willis Hurst, who's our house guest; Bess Porter <sup>Parmenter</sup> ~~Parmiter~~ and her new husband, up from Jacksonville, Florida, ~~up~~ to visit her daughter, and I, so happy that I could have her here, when something was going on. She looks very happy. And my neighbor for 18 years, Dr. O. E. Read, who brought his daughter, Rosalie with him, since Mrs. Read is out of town.

And Mary <sup>N</sup>ash Scott who's visiting from Austin.

The gold chairs were arranged in the familiar semi-circle, the Adams' on the front row on one side and the Bortmans, Mr. and Mrs. Bortman and their daughter and son-in-law on the other. And the urn itself, beautifully displayed against the background of black velvet, on a stand right below the podium for all to admire.

I began by welcoming everybody and introducing Mr. Mark Bortman, whose sense of history and generosity of spirit, had prompted the ceremony. His presentation was really terribly sweet. He noted the similarity <sup>in the careers</sup> ~~between~~ of the first / ~~the~~ occupants of the White House and the present occupants. John Adams and

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Lyndon Johnson came from homes that created in them, a great strength of character and a strong desire for higher education. Both men had the advantage of genteel but hard economic stringency, under difficult conditions in acquiring educations; they both had that character which enabled them to become good school teachers.

John Adams devoted all of his life in the service to his country, as  
Lyndon Johnson now is doing. //

I was thrilled by what he said and touched.

The urn had been purchased by John Adams when he served abroad as our country's envoy and then became one of the first important pieces of ceremonial silver used by the second President and his wife, in the White House itself. It has the initials J. A. A. - John Abigail Adams. It had been passed down in the Adams family until 20 years ago, when it was purchased by a dealer in New York, who in turn sold it to the Bortmans, and they, moved by the significance the White House is now acquiring, and I think a little by his liking for Lyndon, were returning it, as a gift, to the House where it was used in 1800.

In accepting it I told, what I hoped was a humorous story, that not all the gifts that came to the White House, were as relevant to its history as this, and described the gift from a far away Sultan 125 years ago, to his Excellency Martin Van Buren, President of the United States of North America, which included two horses with their groom, a bottle of Attar of Roses, five

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demijohns of Rose water, one gold mounted sword, one bottle of diamonds, and one box of mixed pearls and diamonds.<sup>ii</sup>

And then speaking of the woman to whom this coffee urn belonged, I quoted a letter that she wrote in November of 1800 to her sister, Mrs. Cranch, when she first moved into the White House.

"This house is twice as big as our meeting house in Quincy. I believe the great hall is as big. I'm sure it's twice as long. Cut your coat according to your cloth. But this house is built for ages to come. The establishment necessary is a tax which cannot be borne by the present salary - nobody can form an idea of it but those who come into it. Not one room or chamber is finished, of the whole. It is made habitable by fires in every part, thirteen of which, we are obliged to keep daily, or sleep in wet or damp places."

And yet, in spite of all these problems, Abigail Adams' gracious manner, coupled with such precious examples of household furnishings as we are presented today combine to offer her husband's guests an atmosphere of complete charm and hospitality."

And then I introduced Mr. Thomas Boyleston Adams, the President of the Massachusetts Historical Society, which was founded before this house was even built back in 1791, and he is a descendant of both the Adams Presidents. He's a great, great, great grandson of John Adams and he gave us a delightful little talk.

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He said that he was delighted that the urn had come to the White House where it belonged but he was surprised that any of the so-called family loot was on the loose, since the family had relegated the historic possessions to the Quincy house in 1925!

I really thought they were most abashed that somebody had sold it 20 years ago.

Then he regaled us with tales of Abigail and John Adams, from the Adams family correspondence, and presented me with two volumes of it, for my own personal library.

His speech was a bit wry and rather amusing. I would love to have a tour of that house in Quincy with him, and he most particularly asked me ~~todo~~ so.

The Strolling Strings made background for us as we went into the State Dining Room for refreshments. It was a very satisfactory afternoon for me certainly, and I hope for the Bortmans, and for the Adams.

One of the Mrs. Adams, had on a quaint hat that tied under the chin. Later on someone told me that she said it was really quite an old one from several generations back, that she had brought down in a box, especially for this occasion. It is delightful to see someone so secure in family prestige, that they can actually dress as they please. I rather like it.

Also, it reminds me of Alice Brown's joke about someone who asked a typical old Boston dowager, "Where do you buy your hats?" The dowager looked at her rather perplexed and said, "Buy hats! We have our hats."

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When everybody had left, Alice went upstairs with me about 6:30 and showed me a picture which the Nelson <sup>Waggoner</sup> ~~Waggoner~~ family would be glad to lend to the White House or possibly give to it. The signature in the top right hand corner said - "To my friend Delores - John S. Sargent." It's of a very pretty woman, I think an actress, in an elaborately ruffled dress. I am delighted at this response, and we'll see what the committee has to say. I think very likely, since a John Sargent was just given to the White House about two weeks ago, <sup>in</sup> memory of John Kennedy, that we'll just borrow this one, <sup>if</sup> that is the Committee's wishes. But it is an enchanting picture.

We talked about Isabelle's new baby, a boy, Travis Mathis. Alice and George are going to be out at Huntlands for a week or so and she will be here - they will - for the dinner for Erhard on the 12th.

Later I went over to Lyndon's office and we went out to the Max Friedman's house, very late indeed, for dinner. It was a birthday party for Bill Moyers who's just turning 30.

Their house is right next door to Kay and Phil Graham. Mrs. Max Friedman's first husband was their editor. There is a glorious back yard with a very noble tree in it. The tables were spread on the back porch. It was small company of about 20 - McGeorge Bundys, the Valentis.

Good talk, toast to Bill and an early evening. The <sup>sort</sup> ~~start~~ of the richness peculiar to Washington and what I shall miss most when I leave here.

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I went to bed thinking how lovely the urn looked on the card table in the Green Room, in front of the picture of old Philadelphia - and in fact, I wondered what John Adams would think of it because it would now bring a half million dollars - or so I read in Betty Beale's column.

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