

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, February 17, 1965

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A day given up to the White House and to art.

At 10:30 this morning, the Committee for the Preservation of the White House met in the Yellow Oval Room, with everybody present except Mr. duPont and Mrs. Kennedy, that is the public members - Alice Brown, Bruce Catton, Mrs. Marshall Field, Jim Fosburgh <sup>and</sup> - those that were attached, as it were, by law, to the White House: George Hartzog, of the National Park Service; and Jim Ketchum, the curator; Dillon Ripley, the Secretary of the Smithsonian; John Walker, the director of the National Gallery; and Bill Walton, chairman of the Commission on Fine Arts; and Mr. West, the chief usher here.

How I dreaded this meeting last year, and how hard I worked for it, and how well it came off, I think. This time I didn't dread it quite as much and I didn't do as much homework - and it showed. Although I think the meeting went off rather well.

Mr. Hartzog, representing the White House Historical Association, told us that last year the association had ear-marked one hundred thousand to give to the White House. We actually used only eighty-one thousand or have it in the process of being used, so we still have a little leeway there. And he said he thought they could contribute substantially more this year.

I reported on the drapes for the East Room, which we had hoped to have hanging in the fall and then by Christmas. Alas, it appears the fringe is being made entirely by hand by an old Frenchman in his 80's who does about four

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inches a day, but only in his fingers does the skill reside. Such artistry is passing from the life of today, and if he lives, and all goes well, we'll get our fringe and sew our curtains by Easter, we hope.

I showed them the reproduction of the Green Room rug, <sup>a</sup> little over six thousand, made in Puerto Rico. I'm glad it's within the confines of the United States, in a way.

We all agreed to order another one, a duplicate, for the red rug.

We discussed the second publication of the White House Historical Association, <sup>a</sup> each book on the Presidents, and a proposed third publication, the one in which I'm very much interested, the Living White House, which will be pictures and script of the families who have lived here. <sup>Sort of a</sup> series of anecdotes of how they really lived in the house, and what they've added to it. And herein lies a contribution I hope to obtain from Bruce Catton, that great historian and editor of the American Heritage magazine. I hope that he will do, <sup>or</sup> at least collaborate in doing, <sup>a</sup> part of the script for this book. I think that would add tone and prestige to it. So I suggested to Liz that she see Dr. Grosvenor of the National Geographic, <sup>and</sup> Bruce Catton, <sup>but they</sup> might get together for lunch to talk about this possibility.

Mr. Fosburgh, who works harder for the Committee for the Preservation of the White House than anybody during my time, outlined our hopes for acquiring outstanding American artists, <sup>a</sup> good example of their work, in

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the next four years. Especially Mary Cassatt, <sup>George</sup> Caleb Bingham - he and John Walker think we must have a Thomas Eakins, I don't know him well; a John Singleton Copley would be wonderful.

Bill Waldron raised the possibility of accepting paintings from living artists to be hung in the West Wing or the East Wing. They would not be purchased, of course, but be lent. It would have to be a very stiff committee and it's not going to be me that passes on choosing them. Hopefully, this might result in the White House some day owning outstanding artists of today ~~that~~ <sup>that</sup> it could not afford to buy in the year 2000, after they were dead.

They also discussed the possibility of letting the word get out that we hoped certain outstanding ones like Andrew <sup>Wyatt</sup> ~~Wyatt~~ would will a painting to the White House.

Then we talked about the completion of the Library, with its 2700 volumes, its Duncan Phyfe armchair and two side chairs recently acquired, through the work of Mr. duPont. And Jim Ketchum gave us all copies of the catalogue, a complete catalogue of all the acquisitions since 1961 and a partial <sup>catalogue</sup> of the contents of the house previous to '61.

We discussed show cases to be placed in the East Wing where the tourists sometimes line up for a long, long wait. These show cases would contain memorabilia such as Dolly Madison's earrings, and crystal and china for which there is no longer room in the China Room. Something to

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interest them for the long period of standing, when the line moves slowly, on crowded summer days.

We talked about the Library of film clips that is to be compiled. We already have some films from the lives of the two Roosevelts, the Trumans, Wilsons, and Kennedys.

A delightful bit is the four minute tour of the White House, conducted by Falla, FDR's scotty!

Most important of all to me, we looked at the lovely Sully, the painting of Fannie Kimball<sup>he</sup>, which Mr. Fosburgh has found. It was sitting on an easel<sup>o</sup> in the East Room. <sup>well</sup> I hope that within the next year, it will become the property of the White House - it cost \$20<sup>5</sup>,000.

Senator Bill Benton was one of the most articulate and interested members of the morning meeting, the first time he's come. When they were ready to leave, I asked Bill Walton and Alice Brown to linger. Alice is our house-guest. I wanted ~~them~~ to take them over to the West Wing to look at the President's waiting room, <sup>the</sup> so-called Fish Room, but there are no fish there in evidence now.

I slipped out a minute to greet President Eisenhower, who is Lyndon's luncheon guest, and was sitting in the West hall with his aide and General Clifton, while Lyndon finished up with the news men.

Lyndon later told me that he spent two and a half of the most stimulating and interesting hours with him. I told General Eisenhower what I had been doing and he asked me if David Finley was still helping out, and recalled

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how he and David Finley had worked together when he first came in, to get some landscapes in the White House. He said that before him, there were only portraits here. - Everybody wants to add their bit to this house, and everybody likes to remember what they did add!

He looked so hale, and hearty, and happy. How I pray that someday we will emerge from here and have some years of good health for Lyndon to enjoy life!

Alice and Bill and I found the waiting room bleak, and dingy, and completely undistinguished. It looks like somebody is moving out. It needs color and personality, perhaps a bright rug, maybe a red rug, and some framed letters or mementos or memorabilia of historic interest and then some personal things that belong to the present occupant of the White House. It needs personality.

At 4 o'clock, I had tea for the members of the White House Committee on the Fine Arts, the Committee on Paintings, Advisory Committee, and the Library Committee - all Mrs. Kennedy's creations, and for the Committee for the Preservation of the White House.

There were about 40 present, not the response that we had last year. Last year, many must have been motivated by the curiosity, but a goodly response.

I greeted them in the Green Room and then we went in to the Blue Room for tea. I had asked that everybody feel perfectly free to wander around and look at the things they were most interested in, and particularly to see the

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John Singer Sargeant, the latest <sup>add</sup> edition to the White House, the gift of the Whitney Warrens. And the Winslow Homer, the "Surf at Prout's Neck", the gift of the George Browns. And I was very interested in having them look at Fannie Kimb~~er~~<sup>le</sup> by Sully.

Two other art minded people I'd asked, were Mrs. Harriman, who's already been very generous to the White House, having given us the Whistler that hangs in the Green Room - and a young man named Dietrick who has evidenced an interest in lending to the White House, a John Singleton Copley, <sup>the</sup> "Little Boy with a Squirrel."

I was interested to meet him - he turned out to be only about 25 years old, quite good looking, quiet, rather shy it seemed. I ran into Lynda and detailed her to take him down for a good look at the Queen's Room.

Beautiful Jane Engelhard flew down with her young sister and brother-in-law from France; a plane load of people, including, I believe, <sup>11</sup> Sister Parrish, who had been the decorator in the beginning of the 1961 renovation. And Mrs. Pierce, the first curator.

I told Mr. Julian Boyd, the editor of the papers of Thomas Jefferson, about my latest proud possession, the letter of Thomas Jefferson, to Fabriony, asking him to find him some stone masons and gardeners, who were also musicians - and later found Mr. Boyd and Lyman Butterfield, of the Adams papers, in earnest examination of the Thomas Jefferson letter.

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Gentle Phyllis Dillon was there, and Susan Mary Alsop - Joe really took a hard blow at Lyndon in his column the other day, and I wonder if she felt a little odd.

Mr. Leroy Davis, who has helped so much with the frames, I understand; and frail, kindly David Finley - I enjoyed passing on to him the remarks from General Eisenhower.

And Mr. Lawrence Fleishman of Detroit, who keeps on telling Alice Brown that he's just about to acquire this and that for the White House collection.

Some 40 people in all. Some of the ones I wanted most couldn't be there - Stanley Marcus is in Europe; so is Ann<sup>^</sup>Ford; and Miss Ima Hogg is too old and ill; and Vincent Price, that attractive collector of the Sears, Roebuck paintings, is filming on the west coast.

After everybody had looked their fill, we went down to the theatre, and lo-and-behold I discovered that I had forgotten my small script, so I stood up and introduced the film and greeted the guests, without benefit to of material. But, of course, the main thing was to express/Mr. McGannon of Westinghouse Broadcasting, and the Howard Jensens who did the script, and actually produced it, our appreciation for a really exquisite public service job. After being shown in all the Westinghouse stations, and alas, there will be so many people to receive it in black and white, <sup>more</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>than</sup> in color

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— it is just superb. It will then be made available, film clips of it, to schools, perhaps the United States Embassies abroad, and maybe to other organizations.

Jane Engelhard remarked, "These paintings never looked so pretty before." Really they show up in film better than life.

Lynda Bird was with us all evening, greeting all the guests, and I was quite grateful to her. Everyone departed about 5:30, and Alice Brown and I, and Mary Lasker settled down to a quiet drink and talk about beautification and art.

And then when Mary left, Alice and I went to the pool, had a good long swim, got back to the White House in time for a 9:30 dinner with Lyndon. George came in from his business counsel meeting, while we were still at the table. He looked so well; he's learned how to relax; and though they sold Brown and Root a year or two ago, he still remains as Chairman of the Board, and still has too many irons in the fire and too many ties that connect him with it, to go into public service, to take a job with the government, which Lyndon keeps on wanting him to.

Alice's great enthusiasm now is building and decorating a dormitory which their foundation is giving to Rice. It will be called the Margaret Root Brown Dormitory. What a delightful memorial to Margaret - that lively spirit!



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I found, to my combined dismay and admiration, that the Browns had contributed \$50,000 from their Foundation, to the Kennedy Foundation of the Performing Arts. Alice said "Well, you appointed me, and we had to get it done." Apparently, it's not too easy to raise <sup>money</sup> for the project in Texas.

<sup>They'd</sup> It had a meeting with Bobby Kennedy, and Alice was less than enthusiastic about him.

We made plans to get together in Texas, the weekend of February 28th, to try to complete the Johnson City house.

One of the nice things about this job, is having such friends as the George Browns, as house guests. Everybody seems to like to come to the White House to spend the night.

Lyndon asked Alice about ~~the~~ Oveta Hobby. Alice said that she was enroute to Canada. We all hoped it was for a gay and happy trip - it's only been recently that she's been released from <sup>the</sup> long bondage of caring for Governor Hobby. Lyndon and Alice began to recall her life story and Lyndon said, "She lived up to her bargain." Beautiful, intelligent, and several decades younger than Governor Hobby - there must have been times when that was a wearying thing to do. Alice said that Margaret, in summing up Oveta, had said, "She's the only person I know, who's lived up to every potential." She decided she'd learn how to dress, and she did, turning from a dowdy young girl into a truly elegant, mature woman. She decided she'd

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and capable

learn about business - she became a very forceful/manager of a big metropolitan newspaper and TV station. She's done everything in life that she set out to do - and probably more, for she was first head of the WAC's, and first Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Department.

While all this was going on, this recitation of her life and praise, Lyndon picked up the phone, asked the operator to get her, and soon he was telling it to her. How like him! There's only a moment between thinking of something and acting on it. Sometimes it's almost as though he thought "I might not be here tomorrow to tell that person the good things I'm thinking of them, so I'd better tell them today, this minute."

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