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THURSDAY, MAY 9, 1968

Office of the Press Secretary
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON
AT THE WHITE HOUSE RECEPTION UNVEILING
THE NEW WHITE HOUSE CHINA

Today is a proud occasion for me. We celebrate the arrival of a new set of state china.

For the artistry, we are grateful to many in this room -- to Tiffany's and Castleton -- and for the gift we are grateful to a donor who asked to remain anonymous.

The White House has been the scene for the drama of the United States for almost 170 years. One has only to walk in the door to feel the presence of history.

The White House china reflects the tastes of past First Ladies -- and often their husbands! And like the great portraits, the furniture and paintings, the china collection is a cavalcade of the changing personalities and events that have enriched the heritage of this house.

When Abigail Adams moved into the still unfinished White House, she brought her own delicate set of Sevres china with her. She was determined to make the Executive Mansion of this new country a source of pride for the country as well as a symbol abroad.

The oldest surviving state china was selected by Dolley Madison: a rather simple design, followed later by the Monroe China whose border medallions reflect the strength, the agriculture and science of the country.

Some of my favorite china is the service selected by Mary Todd Lincoln in 1861. The fashion of the times is well defined by the purple border -- a color she loved -- and by the eagle in the bold wing-spread pose so popular in that era.

I feel indebted to Mrs. Benjamin Harrison for two things: First, she started the china collection -- gathering pieces together from past administrations. I hope you will see that collection in the China Room. Also, I love the border pattern of goldenrod and corn she selected for her own china. It speaks of the richness of our land and of her own region of the country.

Pride in America is reflected by the Presidents who attempted to buy china made in this country for the White House. The slow development of the Nation's kilns, however, meant that no American china was purchased for the Executive Mansion until Woodrow Wilson placed an order with Lenox in 1916. In a slightly earlier era, Theodore Roosevelt raged at a secretary when told that no adequate American procelain could be bought for the White House -- "Do you mean to tell me that in this country no one is fit to make china for the President?" he shouted.

But American industry has developed its own fine china. Over the past five decades, china for the White House tables has been produced in this country.

The growth of the United States is also evident in the growth of the china services. Many of the early Presidents used their own china in the White House; their dinners were small.

President Monroe's guests for state occasions never numbered over 30; even in President Grant's time, the guest list rarely rose above 36!

Today there are sometimes 190 guests at a State Dinner, and some 40 Heads of State are entertained yearly.

The China we are introducing today, made by Castleton for Tiffany's, is a joy to me.

For the eagle which centers the service plates, we went back to President Monroe's china. He was the first President to employ the national symbol holding the arrows and the olive branch, with the American shield as a breastplate. In the time of President Monroe -- the early 1800's -- there was an emerging feeling of nationalism, and I would like to think that this same eagle used in 1968 will symbolize for the future this same patriotism -- a sense of pride in America.

We have also tried to capture a spirit of American unity by including each state in the service; each dessert plate will bear the state flower of one of the 50 states.

We paid tribute to our heritage through the wildflower theme used on most of the pieces. Ours is country whose people conquered the land, mile by mile, from one ocean to the other. To me, wildflowers will always portray not only the beauty of nature, but the life-giving qualities of our land as well.

The wildflowers also reflect our contemporary concern for conservation and beautification -- an attempt by so many people to protect our Nation's natural resources and to leave a better legacy for our future generations.

So it is with a sense of pride -- and of personal pleasure -- that I welcome the new White House china. May all future occupants and their guests enjoy its use.

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