

50TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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July 14, 1995

LENGTH: 494 words

HEADLINE: WHITE HOUSE BLUE ROOM REFURBISHING COMPLETED WITH THE INSTALLATION OF CARPET

BODY:

A new oval carpet was installed in the Blue Room of the White House on July 5, 1995. The installation of the carpet completes the refurbishing of the Blue Room. The refurbishing project began in January of 1995. The wool carpet has a blue field with gold rosettes and an eight foot center medallion with classical motifs of scrolls, vines, flowers and lyres in cream, gold, red and blue. The motifs are repeated in the blue and gold border.

The design of the carpet, measuring 23.6 feet x 33.1 feet, was adapted from an original design for a neoclassical English carpet of about 1815, the period of the furnishings acquired by President James Monroe for the Blue Room. The design of the carpet is owned by Woodward Grosvenor & Co Ltd. in England. Woodward Grosvenor & Co Ltd. is represented in the United States by J.R. Burrows Company in Rockland, Massachusetts. The needlepoint weave carpet was made by the Stark Carpet Corporation and loomed in Henderson, North Carolina. The cost of the carpet was \$50,500.

Renovating and refurbishing of the Blue Room began January 3 of 1995. Work done in the Blue Room included replacing the wall paper, drapes and furniture fabric, repainting the room, and the preservation and conservation of historic objects in the room.

The Blue Room is one of three oval rooms in the White House and is located on the State Floor. The room, seen by 1.2 million visitors a year, was last refurbished in 1972. The draperies and furniture upholstery had become soiled, worn and sun damaged and needed to be replaced, as did the badly worn mid-nineteenth century Chinese carpet which had been in the room since 1975.

The Blue Room renovation/refurbishing is the first major White House project funded exclusively by the White House Endowment Fund. The White House Endowment Fund was established in 1990 as a non-profit charitable organization to raise a \$25 million endowment. The purpose of the endowment is to support, in perpetuity, the preservation and conservation of the public rooms of the White House, and the acquisition of objects for the White House collection of fine and decorative arts.

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: May 27, 1997

75TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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The Washington Post

August 19, 1993, Thursday, Final Edition

SECTION: HOME; PAGE T8

LENGTH: 1529 words

HEADLINE: Paying the White House Redecorating Bills;
As Costs Escalate, the Clintons Bank on Contributions

SERIES: Occasional

BYLINE: Jura Koncius, Patricia Dane Rogers

BODY:

The office of Hillary Rodham Clinton has acknowledged that costs for renovating the White House family quarters have escalated to \$ 400,000 but has refused to disclose who is donating money to pay the bills.

"We will release the information about the contributions when the renovations are complete along with a report about what was done," said Lisa Caputo, press secretary to the First Lady.

Caputo would not speculate on a completion date, but described the project as "well along the way."

According to the White House, no public funds are slated to be used. "We are talking about totally private money here," Caputo said. "The renovations are going to be funded entirely by contributions made through the White House Historical Association."

The White House Historical Association's chairman, Robert L. Breeden, said, "The money is being sent to us, but the requests are coming from someone on the White House staff." An administrative assistant at the not-for-profit organization confirmed that money was being collected nationally in an account at the association loosely called "the refurbishing fund for the Clintons." The assistant, who asked that her name not be used, said, "The Clintons or their friends are raising the money, I assume."

Redecoration of the two upper floors has been beset by delays, unplanned overtime and escalating costs, according to White House officials and sources familiar with the project.

Until last week, the White House had maintained official silence on the work in progress, which is being directed by Kaki Hockersmith, the Clintons' interior designer from Little Rock. But rising costs were acknowledged after disclosure of a reference to Hockersmith in a note believed written by deputy White House counsel Vincent Foster Jr. before his suicide last month.

Figures for the cost of renovating the family quarters and the Oval Office have swelled from an estimated \$ 250,000 in March to \$ 377,000 in June to the current estimate of \$ 400,000, according to Caputo. She added that the figures do not include the value of furnishings, fabrics and wallpaper that have been

The Washington Post, August 19, 1993

donated by manufacturers. Caputo said contributions are expected to be sufficient to cover all expenses.

"We will have a full accounting for everything when all the renovations are complete," said Caputo.

In the note discovered in Foster's briefcase and released last week by the Justice Department, Foster worried that "The Ushers Office plotted to have excessive costs incurred, taking advantage of Kaki and HRC." The Ushers Office approves all bills relating to household expenses.

In responding to the note, Caputo said, "We have no reason to believe there is anything wrong. We can only think that Vince was unclear about the costs."

Sources say the work includes painting, carpentry, draperies, carpeting, wallpapering and upholstering. According to Caputo, Foster's office and the office of chief usher Gary Walters, who oversees the household staff, including carpenters, plumbers and electricians, had a series of "miscommunications."

"The Ushers Office didn't know that certain time lines were being imposed by Kaki. Kaki didn't understand what certain deadlines would mean on overtime labor. You have to adjust the costs," said Caputo. Walters's office did not respond to inquiries.

The work on the private quarters is done primarily by White House staff, the National Park Service and independent contractors.

"The Park Service has jurisdiction over certain types of work at the White House," said Caputo. "Members of its staff do that work as part of their regular salaried work. Overtime costs incurred by the Park Service staff for projects unrelated to their official duties are billed to that project. In the case of the renovation, there are overtime costs and they are charged against the project."

Independent contractors who have worked on both public and private rooms at the White House under several administrations say that their costs and contracts have been closely monitored by officials, leaving little room for surprises. When working under a contract, said one independent artisan involved in the Clinton redecoration, "You can't jack up expenses. You have to absorb overtime costs."

Hockersmith did not return phone calls.

The Clintons and Hockersmith began putting their mark on the White House on Inauguration Day, when voluminous gold silk draperies designed by Hockersmith were installed in the Oval Office. Seven months later, only a few A-list guests of the Clintons have acknowledged seeing any refurbishments. Reports from these unofficial sources reveal that the Treaty Room has new walnut bookcases, gilded laurel wreaths and draperies using 80 yards of Sanderson's "Opera House."

In the family's kitchen, the "island" reportedly has been removed and the walls have been papered with Country Life Designs' "Brandon," a fruit pattern that would retail for \$ 104 a roll. The windows have coordinating curtains. According to Stephen Gnadt, president of Country Life Designs, Chelsea's room is being decorated in a floral and ribbon pattern called "Natalie" and has a

The Washington Post, August 19, 1993

hand-painted pillow featuring a likeness of Socks, the family's cat.

Hockersmith has visited frequently to oversee the work, according to sources involved in the project. Caputo said Hockersmith "is being paid for her services and her expenses."

The Clintons plan to forgo use of the \$ 50,000 redecoration allowance awarded by Congress to incoming presidents since the turn of the century. The Reagans did the same. The Bushes spent their allocation.

The Clinton administration is not the first to be reluctant to report its decorating expenses. It was only at the insistence of then president Gerald Ford that the tally for refurbishing Richard Nixon's bedroom -- \$ 91,325 -- was revealed.

The last time the private quarters had a major face lift was 12 years ago, when Nancy Reagan and California decorator Ted Graber supervised the spending of more than \$ 822,000 in privately raised funds to refurbish several dozen rooms, from the formal Yellow Oval Room to the First Lady's dressing room.

Under the Bushes, four rooms in the private quarters were redone by interior designer Mark Hampton: a sitting room, the sun porch, the president's private office and a former exercise room that became a guest room. Under president Bush, the Oval Office received a \$ 62,470 makeover including a \$ 28,550 rug, also paid for with private donations.

According to Dorothy M. Craig of Midland, Tex., a member of the historical association and chairman of the White House Endowment Fund, which raises money for the public rooms, the Bushes spent "next to nothing." Said Craig, "My dear friends George and Bar are thrifty New Englanders."

Contributions to the White House Historical Association are tax deductible. But, according to Breeden, the association has "strictly an administrative function" in handling money for the family quarters. "I want to make it clear that we are not raising money for the private quarters," he said. "The money is being sent to us."

"If the money comes in I would certainly think it would be kept in a separate account," he added.

The Reagans made use of the association when they amassed their decorating war chest in just two months. Donations from friends such as Armand Hammer, Alfred Bloomingdale and Frank Sinatra, enabled the Reagans and Graber to purchase curtains for 26 windows, 18 carpets and 72 lampshades. Floors were refinished in 24 rooms and wallpaper was hung in 10 rooms, seven closets and eight bathrooms. The Reagan redecoration, which took 10 months, was chronicled in an 18-page spread in the December 1981 Architectural Digest.

The Reagans actually raised more than they needed. When \$ 25,000 was received after the fund had closed, Nancy Reagan personally presented a check for that amount to Wolf Trap.

The White House Historical Association was set up by First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy to provide funds for the public rooms. Since 1961, it has raised more than \$ 8 million through sales of White House guidebooks and souvenirs.

The Washington Post, August 19, 1993

The three-year-old White House Endowment Fund, a separate organization that shares space in the association's Lafayette Square headquarters, is halfway to its goal of \$ 25 million. Interest on the endowment is earmarked for the public rooms. So far, all it has funded is a 50 percent deposit on a \$ 56,325 Stark carpet for the Blue Room.

Yet another group, the Committee for the Preservation of the White House, is involved in the public rooms. The 15 or so members of this presidentially appointed panel include experts in American decorative arts plus heads of the National Park Service, the Smithsonian Institution, the National Gallery of Art, and the Commission of Fine Arts. Members serve for two years.

According to White House curator Rex Scouten, President Clinton is in the process of appointing members to new terms. Scouten said the names should be made public in the next four to five weeks.

According to Caputo, Foster had been working on an executive order to extend the committee's charter at the time of his death.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO, ESCALATING COSTS HAVE RAISED QUESTIONS ABOUT LITTLE ROCK INTERIOR DESIGNER KAKI HOCKERSMITH'S WORK ON THE WHITE HOUSE PRIVATE QUARTERS. STATON BRIEDENTHAL FOR TWP

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: October 14, 1993

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February 1, 1995, Wednesday, BC cycle

SECTION: Washington News

LENGTH: 226 words

HEADLINE: Blue Room gets redecorated

DATELINE: WASHINGTON, Feb. 1

BODY:

The White House announced Wednesday that its historic Blue Room is being refurbished at a cost of \$358,358 with funds made available through the White House Endowment Fund. First lady Hillary Clinton reviewed the recommendations of the Committee for the Preservation of the White House and approved sapphire blue fabric that was used for draperies and upholstery, colors similar to those used in the 1800's. The walls have a gold covering. Lisa Caputo, the first lady's press secretary, said that the draperies and furniture had become ''soiled, worn and sun-damaged and needed to be replaced, as did the badly worn mid-19th century Chinese carpet which has been in the room since 1975.'' The blue fabric, featuring a gold eagle medallion on the chair backs, was adapted from one of the Monroe-era chairs in a portrait of James Monroe. Caputo said the wall coverings were adapted from an early 19th century American paper found in a Boston collection of antiquities. The woodwork has been painted white with a rubbed finish, giving the wood a porcelain appearance. A new carpet, based on an early 19th century design, is being made and will be installed this spring. The first lady plans to officially unveil the new decor in the Blue Room on Feb. 17 at a meeting of the White House preservation committee.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: February 2, 1995

64TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

The Associated Press

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February 17, 1995, Friday, AM cycle

SECTION: Washington Dateline

LENGTH: 428 words

HEADLINE: Mrs. Clinton Shows Off Renovated Blue Room

BYLINE: By LAWRENCE L. KNUTSON, Associated Press Writer

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

Hillary Rodham Clinton's outfit was as blue as the sapphire blue in the tasseled drapes and upholstery of the revived Blue Room she unveiled at the White House Friday.

And the seven gold buttons on her sapphire-blue suit matched the gold in the accents running along the tall ceiling and in the newly gilded ceiling medallion.

"It's blue for the Blue Room and I'm very happy," she said. "We have a continuous effort to make sure the White House is kept in the best possible shape and we are always trying to present the White House to the world in the best possible way."

The oval reception room had become worn and sun-faded, its central rug tattered beyond repair, since it was last redecorated in the Nixon administration, 23 years ago, she explained.

"And when I came to the White House the decision had been made that something had to be done," she said.

"My own feeling was that there be a more blue feeling in the room, but not so blue that it would be too dark, especially in the evening."

So the walls are a patterned cream with the blue coming from the fabrics, the top-and-bottom trim of the wallpaper, and the upholstery on the gilded Empire chairs and settee. President Monroe had bought the furniture in Paris to replace pieces destroyed when the British burned the place in 1814.

Tourists are visiting the White House at the rate of 1.5 million a year, and at that rate there is a certain amount of wear and tear, the first lady said.

Mrs. Clinton also led a tour of the East Room where three new carpets, hand-woven for the space at a donated cost of \$ 259,000, have been installed.

Mrs. Clinton said the carpets - pale green with gold details and a soft reddish-brown border - are intended, in part, to protect the East Room floors

The Associated Press, February 17, 1995

from the tiny pebbles and stones inadvertently brought into the room on the shoes of tourists and guests.

The East Room mantles have also been stripped of the "faux marble" white paint that has covered them since 1961 and returned to the "true red" or "antique rouge" color they had when first installed during President Truman's renovation of the White House in 1951.

The Blue Room's \$ 358,000 renovation cost was paid for through donations to the White House Endowment, as was the refurbishing of the East Room. A total \$ 25 million is being sought for the endowment and so far \$ 12 million has been raised, officials said.

The Commission for the Preservation of the White House supervised the Blue Room renovation. Mrs. Clinton noted its members have been appointed by presidents of both parties.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: February 17, 1995

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Federal Document Clearing House Congressional Testimony

April 25, 1996, Thursday

SECTION: CAPITOL HILL HEARING TESTIMONY

LENGTH: 1582 words

HEADLINE: TESTIMONY April 25, 1996 MRS. EARLE M. CRAIG, JR. MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTOS AND FIRST CHAIRMAN THE WHITE HOUSE ENDOWMENT FUND SENATE ENERGY PARKS AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND RECREATION PARKS BILLS

BODY:

STATEMENT OF MRS. EARLE M. CRAIG, JR.

Member of the Board of Directors and First Chairman

of

THE WHITE HOUSE ENDOWMENT FUND

before

THE PARKS, HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND RECREATION SUBCOMMITTEE SENATE

ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE April 25, 1996

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before you today in support of S.95 1, a Bill introduced by Senator Hutchison to commemorate the services of First Ladies Jacqueline Kennedy and Patricia Nixon in restoring and preserving the historic integrity of the PEOPLE'S HOUSE; and, to authorize a grant to The White House Endowment Fund in their memory to continue the work they began in the 1960's and 1970's.

With the encouragement of First Lady Barbara Bush, The White House Endowment Fund was chartered in 1990 as a wholly-owned not-for-profit subsidiary Corporation of the White House Historical Association. Its purpose is to raise a permanent endowment of \$25,000,000, the income from which will provide an assured source of funding for the Public Rooms and the White House Collection of fine and decorative arts.

At the request of Mrs. Bush, my friend and former neighbor in Midland, Texas, I served as Chairman of the Endowment from January 1990 to October 1994. I continue to serve as a Member of the Board of Directors.

From January 1990 to January 1993 I served by appointment of President Bush as a Member of the Committee for the Preservation of the White House. The committee advises the President, the First Lady, and the National Park Service with respect to the preservation and conservation of the Public Rooms of the White House and its Collection of fine and decorative arts, including the acquisition of objects therefore.

FDCH Congressional Testimony, April 25, 1996

In January of this year I was elected to the Board of Directors of the White House Historical Association. The principal activities of the Association are research and publication for sale of educational literature and objects interpreting "the White House and its history and the persons and events associated with it." The Association is not a fund-raising organization.

In 1961 Mrs. Kennedy initiated a three (3) part program: To restore the historic integrity of the Public Rooms of the White House; to establish a fine and decorative arts collection; and, to establish the White House Historical Association to publish and sell to White House visitors and others educational materials interpreting "the White House and its history and the persons and events associated with it."

Mrs. Nixon, entering an existing framework, began a program that enhanced the White House historically beyond what it had ever been through her acquisition of an extensive collection of American art and antiques.

These programs were supported by donations and by profits from sales by the White House Historical Association.

The fine and decorative arts donated to the White House during the leadership of Mrs. Kennedy and Mrs. Nixon, valued today at tens of millions of dollars, far exceed those received during all other Administrations combined, since the historic restoration program began in 1961.

The purpose of S.951 is to extend CONGRESSIONAL RECOGNITION to First Ladies JACQUELINE KENNEDY AND PATRICIA NIXON for their unique and memorable contributions to the restoration, furnishing, and preservation of the White House, surely one of the world's most recognizable and treasured symbols of Liberty.

As chairman of the fund-raising arm of the triumvirate of organizations associated with the White House, I came to appreciate how important it is to have a permanent source of funds to assure that the interiors of the White House will always reflect the finest of our country's cultural heritage. Before the establishment of the Endowment Fund, past Presidents and First Ladies had to "pass the hat" to obtain funds to maintain the President's House at its best and to acquire objects for its fine and decorative arts collection.

At the event celebrating the refurbishment of the Blue Room, paid for by income from the Endowment Fund, Rex Scouten, Curator of the White House, said to me that he thought he would never live to see the day when he didn't have to worry about paying for the constant need to keep the Public Rooms at their best.

The Endowment Fund has received contributions and pledges from individuals, foundations, and corporations. I believe that it would be most appropriate now, through the Grant honoring Mrs. Kennedy and Mrs. Nixon, to permit all the citizens of our country the privilege of participating in this ongoing, patriotic responsibility.

Bestowing this honor on Mrs. Kennedy and Mrs. Nixon would be in accord with the well-established congressional policy by which a grateful nation recognizes noteworthy and enduring contributions to the public interest with DIRECT APPROPRIATIONS in support of Programs, Endowments, and as Grants to Foundations and other Institutions to memorialize the contributions of the honorees.

FDCH Congressional Testimony, April 25, 1996

With a Memorial Grant to The White House Endowment Fund in honor of these two First Ladies, the Congress would, as it has done many times in the past for public and private citizens, not only memorialize their noteworthy contributions but also assure that the work they began in the 1960's and 1970's will be carried forward for the benefit of future generations.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee I urge your favorable action on S.951. I shall be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you very much.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: May 6, 1996

A Quiet Landscape Gets a Famous Home

Continued From Page 39

locate the painting for the White House.

The acquisition began with a letter written to President Clinton in 1994 by Edwin D. Bell, a retired college administrator at the State University of New York at New Paltz.

"I didn't write an angry letter," Mr. Bell said. "I said that I had always looked forward to the White House and was disappointed that there were no pictures of people of color."

It wasn't the first time the issue had come up. According to Mr. Driskell, a gathering of black artists at the White House during the Carter Administration had noted the same

lack.

"There are quite a few omissions in the collection," said Rex Scouten, the White House curator. "There are reproductions that should be replaced, and we don't have good representations from the Northwest and the South. But the letter got us going again."

In an effort to find an appropriate work, Mr. Scouten called Mr. Driskell and Sylvia Williams of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African Art. Their assignment was specific: find a painting that represented an American scene, measured about 5 feet by 2½ feet and was tasteful and appropriate. Government policy stipulates that no work can join the permanent collection unless its maker has been

It was impossible to 'fight prejudice and paint at the same time,' Tanner said before he left for Europe.

dead at least 20 years, a policy intended to shield the White House from controversy and the appearance of making commercial endorsements.

In their yearlong search, the consultants narrowed their choices to the work of three 19th-century African-American artists: Tanner, Robert S. Duncanson and Edward Mitchell Bannister.

"We had to take into consideration what was available in the marketplace," Mr. Driskell said. "The most desirable Duncansons were all European landscapes, so that eliminated them. The only Bannisters available were very small. Ideally, we'd thought about the portrait of Tanner's mother, but that belongs to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and it is not going to give it up."

Eventually, the two approached Rae Alexander-Minter, a grandniece of Tanner who owned the painting of sand dunes, and they purchased it for \$100,000. The financing came from



The New York Times

Henry Ossawa Tanner in 1923.

an endowment fund, a nonprofit association that raises money for art and furnishings for the White House collection.

The arrival of the Tanner in the White House says less about the issue of politically correct art than about the restraints, requirements and serendipitous nature of acquiring work for the President's residence. Until the Kennedy Administration, historical significance far outweighed artistic considerations in choosing pieces. Pictures of Presidents and their wives were favored.

In 1961, Jacqueline Kennedy decided to add works by major American artists as a way of celebrating American values and accomplishments. That same year, Congress designated the White House artwork and the public rooms a permanent collection and appointed a curator to oversee them.

Since then First Ladies have added to the collection, assisted by curators, the White House Historical Association and the Committee for the Preservation of the White House. Most of the works are acquired as gifts or through donations; only occasionally are they purchased, as was the case with the Tanner.

Even though the lack of a specifically black image was what prompted Mr. Bell's letter to President Clinton, he is content with the outcome of the search. "I must admit that my original idea, what I saw in my mind, was a portrait of a black person," said Mr. Bell. "I thought there should be a black face there. But I'm very pleased with the Tanner." □

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U.S. Newswire

October 22, 1996

SECTION: NATIONAL DESK, ART WRITER

LENGTH: 560 words

HEADLINE: White House Announces Acquisition of Tanner Painting

CONTACT: Marsha Berry, Neel Lattimore, Karen Finney or Steve Cohen,
202-456-2960, all of the Office of the First Lady

DATELINE: WASHINGTON, Oct. 22

BODY:

The White House announced today the acquisition of Sand Dunes at Sunset, Atlantic City, a painting by the renowned African-American artist Henry Ossawa Tanner.

This is the first painting by an African-American artist to be a part of the White House permanent collection. The painting will be unveiled by the President and Mrs. Clinton at a White House ceremony on October 29, 1996. Following the unveiling, the painting will hang in the Green Room of the White House.

Sand Dunes at Sunset, Atlantic City (c.1885, oil on canvas 29-1/4 x 58-3/4 in.) is a landscape with a "view across the cool gray of a shadowed beach to dunes made pink by the late afternoon sunlight. A low haze over the water partially hides the sun." The painting is considered one of Henry Tanner's largest, most artistically ambitious and most beautiful pure landscapes.

Tanner (1859 - 1937), the son of an African Methodist Episcopal minister and a mother who conducted private school in her home, was born in Pittsburgh, Pa. He studied under Thomas Eakins at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and was greatly influenced by Thomas Hovenden and by Hovenden's genre paintings of the 1880s. Although he spent over half of his life in France where he found an expansive and more accepting environment, he always considered himself an American. He made periodic visits to the United States and served as a lieutenant with the American Red Cross during World War I.

In the Spring of 1994, Mrs. Clinton, honorary chair of the White House Endowment Fund, and Endowment Fund trustees worked with the late Sylvia Williams, former director of the Museum of African Art at the Smithsonian and David Driskell, a leading expert on African-American art, to look for a work that would be compatible with the White House collection and would complement one of the public rooms. "The works of Henry Ossawa Tanner remind us that talent has the power to transcend prejudice. It is a deep honor for the President and me to honor Tanner's contributions to both African-American culture and the cultural life of our Nation. We are so proud to add this painting to the White House permanent collection," said Mrs. Clinton.

The painting was obtained from Dr. Rae Alexander-Minter, grandniece of the artist, by the White House Endowment Fund for \$100,000. The White House Endowment Fund is a non-profit charity and wholly-owned subsidiary of the White House Historical Association. The purpose of the Fund is to

raise money to provide permanent support for the White House collection of fine arts and furnishings and to preserve the historic character of the public rooms of the White House.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: October 22, 1996

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Copyright 1996 SOFTLINE INFORMATION, INC.
The Ethnic NewsWatch
Chicago Independent Bulletin

November 14, 1996

SECTION: Vol. 25; No. 17; Pg. 12

LENGTH: 652 words

HEADLINE: Talking It Over

BYLINE: Clinton, Hillary Rodham

BODY:
Talking It Over.

By Hillary Rodham Clinton

AN educator from New York visited Washington a few years ago and decided to go on a tour of the White House. He waited in line with thousands of others, eager for the opportunity to see America's most famous residence.

But as he walked through the public rooms and corridors, taking in all of the beautiful art on the walls, he was immediately struck that something was wrong. There were no depictions of black faces in any of the paintings, not even a portrait of the legendary abolitionist Frederick Douglass. In fact, there wasn't a single work by a Black artist -- not Edward Bannister, or Jacob Lawrence, or William Johnson, or any of the fine black painters our country has produced.

As a Black man, Edward D. Bell was saddened to discover this historical omission. So, he decided to do something about it. He wrote to the President to suggest a more representative White House collection that would offer a truer picture of American history -- one that would make all children who visit the White House feel a connection to our country's past.

The President read Bell's letter and directed White House Curator Rex Scouten to look for a work by a leading Black artist to hang in one of the public rooms. Two leading experts on Black art -- the late Sylvia Williams, former director of the Museum of African Art at the Smithsonian Institution, and scholar David Driskell -- helped locate a magnificent landscape by one of our nation's finest painters, Henry Ossawa Tanner.

Titled "Sand Dune at Sunset, Atlantic City," the painting was purchased by the White House Endowment Fund earlier this year from Tanner's grandniece, Dr. Rae Alexander-Minter. The painting, along with others by Tanner, had been kept over the years in her mother's house, where the shades were always drawn to preserve the canvases.

This week at the White House, the President and I presented the painting at a special ceremony that included Dr. Rae Alexander-Minter, Tanner's grandson, Jacques, and Edward Bell. It was a fitting tribute to Tanner and a homecoming of sorts for an artist whose work was far more appreciated overseas than here in the United States, largely because of racism during his time.

The artist was born in Pittsburgh in 1859, just before the Civil War. His father was a minister, and his mother, whose family had escaped slavery by riding to freedom on the Underground Railroad, was a teacher. Both parents instilled in him a belief in education, good citizenship and racial pride.

His life goals crystallized when he was 13 years old and saw an artist painting in a park. Mesmerized by the painter's work, he decided to pursue an artistic career for himself.

Not only did Tanner have to overcome racial prejudice among art teachers and art schools, he also had to endure skepticism from his peers, who doubted he could ever make a living as an artist.

But he persevered, even when fragile health forced him to scale back his work. By the time he died in 1937, he had won modest acclaim in art circles in the United States, but he had achieved far greater celebrity in France, where he had lived for many years and was named an honorary chevalier of the Order of the Legion of Honor, the highest civilian title the country confers.

In a poignant expression of the difficulties he faced as a Black painter, he wrote from Paris about the prejudice that led him to live much of his life far from his native land: "True, this condition has driven me out of the country...and while I cannot sing our National Hymn -- 'Sweet Land of Liberty' -- deep down in my heart, I love it and am sad that I cannot live where my heart is."

Now, at long last, Henry Ossawa Tanner is taking his rightful place alongside Winslow Homer, James McNeill Whistler, Mary Cassatt, John Singer Sargent and the other great American artists whose work graces the White House.

ETHNIC-GROUP: African/Caribbean

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: March 3, 1997

Famed room gets makeover

By Lawrence L. Knutson
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Designed to suit George Washington's formality, the Blue Room of the White House has served for 195 years as the center of state, an oval stage for presidents and their families.

Soon, for the first time since 1972, the Blue Room will present a new facade to the world. First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton is determined that after this renovation, the Blue Room will be bluer than it has been for the last 23 years.

The Committee for the Preservation of the White House concluded in 1990 that the Blue Room had become unpresidentially frayed after nearly two decades of constant use and recommended that it be renovated. Following a long period of design and planning, work began after Christmas decorations were stripped away.

The nation's governors will be the first to see the results when they are received at the White House by the Clintons this weekend. Mrs. Clinton will publicly unveil the room's new look on Feb. 17.

The Blue Room has welcomed millions of guests and tourists over two centuries. It has accommodated both weddings and funerals and the after-dinner singing of a president's daughter.

The oval room has housed one president's French empire furniture, another's Victrola, and a third's prized lionskin rug.

When raucous inaugural crowds pressed in on President Andrew Jackson so tightly he gasped for air, he escaped through the room's tall windows onto the South Portico and found refuge in his hotel.

In August 1814, when a messenger dispatched by the French ambassador tried to save the White House from the torch, he found British Maj. Gen. Robert Ross in the oval reception room supervising soldiers piling furniture in a heap to better encourage the flames.

And in 1948 the tinkling and chiming of the Blue Room's crystal chandelier during a Truman administration reception sent warning that the 148-year-old house was dangerously unstable, which led to the reconstruction of the interior.

When first lady Patricia Nixon tackled the Blue Room 23 years ago, the walls were draped in creamy white wall paper, decorated at the top and bottom with blue borders. But most of the blue in the room came from the drapes and the

upholstery.

By 1994, the room's carpet, made in China in the 1850's for a French palace, was deemed beyond repair. The entire room, Mrs. Clinton said, was "a little bit tired."

When workers clear away the scaffolds and the dropcloths, the walls will be a patterned beige bordered with resplendent deep-blue and gold borders.

"It will be a stronger, bolder room. The carpet and the upholstery on the furniture and the draperies will be blue," said Neel Lattimore, a spokesman for the first lady.

The Blue Room, flanked by the equally historic Green Room and Red Room, has always been oval. But it wasn't always blue.

That didn't happen until 1837 when President Martin Van Buren applied himself to interior decoration.

Presidential memories troop through the room like a cavalry charge.

■ Angelica Van Buren, the president's White House bride, drew stinging criticism for appearing as the centerpiece of a Blue Room tableaux, living paintings favored by Britain's young Queen Victoria.

■ President James Polk and his immediate successors, including Abraham Lincoln, stood behind a heavy marble Blue Room table to protect themselves from crowds pressing into the room during receptions.

■ Mrs. James Polk outright refused to let newfangled gas lighting invade the Blue Room. And when the gas failed during a grand reception, she emerged triumphant, standing in the Blue Room bathed in candlelight.

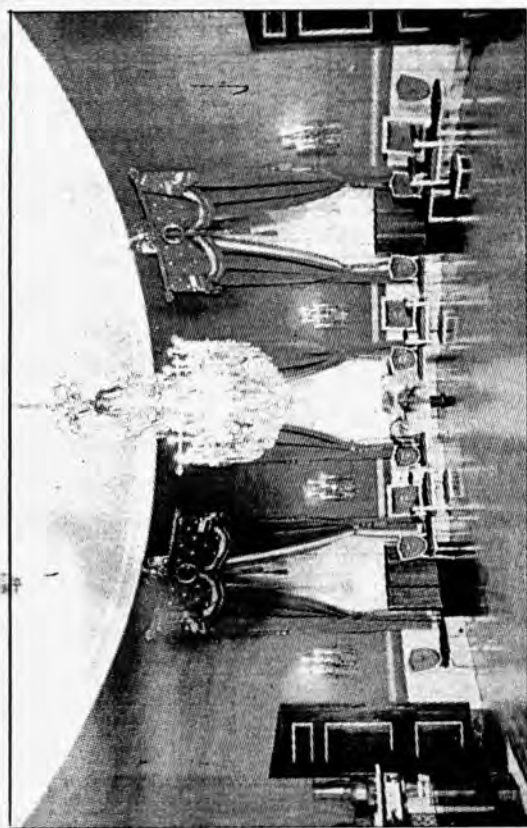
■ Under President Chester A. Arthur the state floors were redecorated elaborately by Tiffany. And in an inside joke, the Blue Room, because of its oval egg shape, was painted robin's-egg blue.

■ William Howard Taft installed a Victrola and a collection of records ranging from ragtime to opera. He personally turned the crank.

■ President Grover Cleveland married Frances Folsom in the candlelit Blue Room. Woodrow Wilson's daughters Jessie and Nell were married there and another Wilson daughter, Margaret, often sang for after-dinner guests in Blue Room musicales.

■ Franklin Delano Roosevelt installed a lionskin rug, the gift of Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia.

■ Ronald Reagan used the Blue Room in 1981 to receive the American hostages, finally freed from captivity in Iran



White House Historical Society
The White House Blue Room during Franklin Roosevelt's administration.

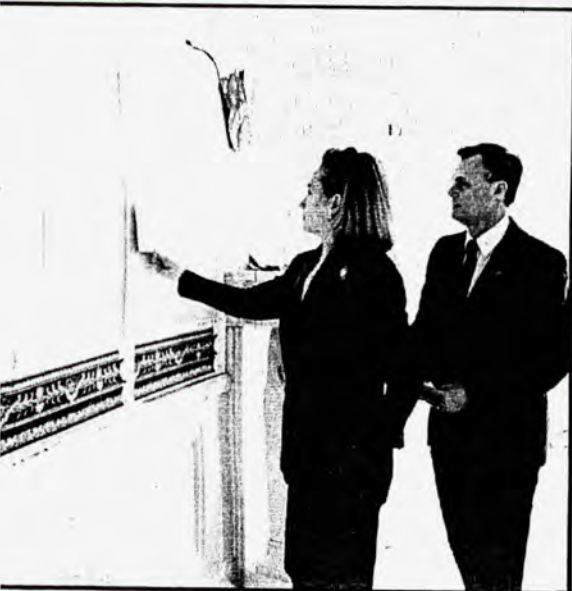
For the first time since 1972, the Blue Room of the White House will present a new facade to the world. For 195 years the room has served as an ...

OVAL STAGE



White House Historical Society

he White House Blue Room as it appeared during the Nixon administration. First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton is determined to make the room bluer than it has been for the last 23 years.



The Associated Press

above, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton examines wallpaper samples with the help of White House Chief Usher Gary Walters in the Blue Room of the White House. The nation's governors were the first to see the new room, which will be unveiled for the public Feb. 17. Right, the Blue Room during the Kennedy-Johnson administrations.

