



THE WHITE HOUSE
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The White House Fence Historic Timeline Overview

Compiled January 2017

<p>c. 1801</p>	<p>President Thomas Jefferson erects a post and rail fence around the White House. President Jefferson envisioned the South Grounds as a private garden with serpentine walks and a lawn that extended to the Tiber Creek, edged by a flower border. At the southern end of the south lawn he built a “ha-ha,” an eight-foot wall with a sunken ditch meant to keep livestock from grazing in the garden.</p>
<p>1818-1819</p>	<p>A new semicircular driveway marked by eight stone piers and an iron fence and gates was built across the North Front of the White House. (Parts of the wrought-iron fence and stone piers still stand today on Pennsylvania Avenue, with replica gates made from reinforced metal installed in 1976 for increased security.) The stone retaining wall on the south remained until 1873, and mischievous youths often painted their names on the wall.</p>
<p>1833</p>	<p>Long, low and heavy wrought iron fence was installed and ran along the top of the stone wall along the façade of the North Front.</p>
<p>1866 and 1871</p>	<p>East and West Executive Avenues were built on each side of the White House as public streets. In World War II, as a major security measure, both West Executive and East Executive Avenues, which run close by each end of the White House, were closed to the public. West Executive Avenue, which runs between the White House and the Eisenhower Old Executive Office Building, was turned into a staff parking lot and never reopened. East Executive Avenue, which runs between the White House and the Treasury Department, was closed to traffic in 1986 and converted into a service road.</p>
<p>1873</p>	<p>President Ulysses Grant had an iron fence installed on the south side of the White House to control large crowds that gathered for the New Year’s Day reception and other occasions.</p>

1902	Andrew Jackson's 1833 iron railing along the North Portico was removed and replaced by a parapet wall because architect Charles Follen McKim, in charge of restoring the White House, believed the railing was too intrusive and clumsy.
1937	The 1818 and 1873 wrought-iron fences were removed and replaced by a steel fence topped by tall bronze spears.
February 1, 1937	The \$50,000 independent offices appropriations bill reported to the House of Representatives included an appropriation for \$1,500 to repair and paint the White House fence.
December 7, 1941	After the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the start of World War II, the grounds were closed to all but those with appointments and guarded at their perimeters from newly installed gatehouses. The driveway was emptied and the custom of leaving calling cards at the North door was discontinued.
September 18, 1942	As part of a Department of the Interior World War II scrap metal drive, 1,600 feet of iron spikes that had formed the White House fence that had been replaced in 1937 were taken by truck to a junkyard to be scrapped.
August 14, 1945	On V-J Day, President Truman shook hands through the White House fence with some of a happy crowd that had gathered outside.
June-October 1965	As part of a \$272,000 renovating project, the White House fence was reset into a new foundation of aquia sandstone left over from extension work on the U.S. Capitol's East Front.
1976	The 1818 wrought-iron gates on the Pennsylvania Avenue side of the White House were replaced by reinforced steel gates built to withstand automobile crashes.
November 1983	In response to the deadly attack on the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, jersey barriers (low concrete walls) were erected around the White House.

March 1988	Thick 38-inch high concrete bollards joined by chains were placed four feet apart along the Pennsylvania Avenue sidewalk in front of the White House fence between East and West Executive Avenues as replacement for the jersey barriers installed in 1983.
May 21, 1995	Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House was closed to all vehicular traffic, a response to the Oklahoma City bombing the previous month.
November 2004	Pennsylvania Avenue became a new pedestrian-friendly civic space where people could stroll and bicycle between Lafayette Park and the White House fence.
July 2015	A removable anti-climb feature consisting of sharp metal points was installed on the top of the White House fence to deter and inhibit any attempts by individuals to climb over the fence. This is a temporary measure that will be in place until a long-term solution is implemented.
July 2016	The Commission of Fine Arts approved concepts for a new White House fence. The proposed fence will be taller, stronger, and equipped with anti-climb and intrusion detection components. Standing at a prospective eleven feet and seven inches, the new fence would add more than 4 feet of additional fence height to the current roughly seven foot high fence. Pending final approval by the Commission, construction plans to begin by 2018.
January 2017	The Commission of Fine Arts granted final approval on the new fence design initially approved in July 2016, with some details to be further refined in the next months.

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<p>Members of the media may contact Lara Kline for additional information or to schedule an expert interview at lkline@whha.org or 202-218-4316.</p>
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