

**Feb. 29, 2012**

**Dodge County Independent**

**White House Historic Preservation: Part 1**

What's Happening Around Town?

*By Joe and Flo*

Flo: Hey, Joe! I hear there is good news! The Kasson City Council has approved the selling of the 1918 Historic School to Sherman & Associates. What happens next?

Joe: Yes, that is good news. Now Sherman & Associates will be doing a development plan that includes submitting for funding with the hope of moving forward with renovation. As I stated to you before, it is time; time to move forward.

Flo: Hey, Joe: I saw a documentary the other day concerning our nation's White House, so I decided to do a little research on its history. According to Wikipedia, George Washington never resided in the White House. Following his inauguration in 1789, he occupied two executive mansions in New York City; one between the period of 1789 to 1790 and the other between February and August 1790.

Joe: Well then, who was the first president to live in the White House?

Flo: John Adams and his wife, Abigail Adams took residence in the building in November of 1800. While it was being built, the 1790 Residence Act named Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to be the temporary national capitol for a ten-year period. With this act, the City of Philadelphia rented Robert Morris's city house (now 524-30 Market Street) for Washington's presidential residence. President John Adams also occupied this mansion until the White House was ready for occupancy.

Joe: Tell me more about the White House.

Flo: It was designed by Irish-born James Hoban in the neo-classical Federal style with details that echoed classical Greek Ionic Architecture. His original design was modeled after the Leinster House in Dublin, Ireland and did not include the north and south porticos. Until the 1860's it was the largest residence in the United States.

Joe: How was it determined that Hoban design the building?

Flo: There was an architectural design competition with nine proposals submitted; even one submitted anonymously by Thomas Jefferson. His plan was for a smaller building than the one Hoban submitted. President Washington, himself, was involved with the style. It has been noted that on his "Southern" tour to Charleston, South Carolina in 1791, he saw the Charleston County Courthouse during its construction and liked what he saw. It turns out it was designed by James Hoban. It is reported Washington met with Hoban and a month later Washington met with the commissioners of the federal city to make his judgment in the architectural competition. His review is recorded as being brief, and he quickly selected Hoban's submission. But as it turned out, Washington was not entirely pleased with Hoban's original design. He found it too small and lacking ornament, not monumental enough to house the nation's president. Upon his recommendation, the house was changed from three stories to two and was widened from a nine bay facade to an eleven bay facade.

Joe: When did construction begin?

Flo: Construction began October 13, 1792, with the laying of the cornerstone. The Main Entrance as well as the foundation of the house were largely built by enslaved and free African-American labors as well as employed Europeans. Scottish immigrants erected the sandstone walls as were the high relief rose and garland decorations above the north entrance.

Joe: How much did it cost?

Flo: It took eight years at a reported cost of \$232,371.83 (\$2.8 million in 2007 dollars). They did run into material and labor shortages, used less costly brick and yes, built two stories instead of three. When construction was finished, the porous sandstone walls were coated with a mixture of lime, rice glue, casein, and lead giving the house its familiar color and name (white).

Joe: Was it always called the White House?

Flo: Originally it was referred to by various names such as the "President's Palace", "Presidential Mansion", or "President's House". The earliest evidence of the public calling it the "White House" was recorded in 1811. A myth also emerged that during the rebuilding of the structure of the White House after the Burning of the City of Washington, white paint was applied to mask the burn damage it had suffered.

Joe: Tell me about the burning of Washington.

Flo: In 1814, during the War of 1812, the White House was set ablaze by British troops during the Burning of Washington, in retaliation for burning Upper Canada's Parliament Buildings in the Battle of York; much of Washington was affected by these fires as well. Only the exterior walls remained, and they had to be torn down and mostly reconstructed because of weakening from the fire and exposure to the elements, except for the portions of the south wall. After the fire, President James Madison resided in The Octagon House. Meanwhile, both architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe and Hoban contributed to the design and oversight of the reconstruction, which lasted from 1815 until 1817. In 1824, the south portico was constructed and six years later the north portico. There are pictures in 1824 of sheep grazing in the south lawn and a vegetable garden located there. The north portico faced Pennsylvania Avenue.

Joe: Wasn't there a tour conducted in 1962 of the White House with Jacqueline Kennedy?

Flo: There was, but that is a topic we could talk about the next time we meet.

*"What's happening around town"*

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