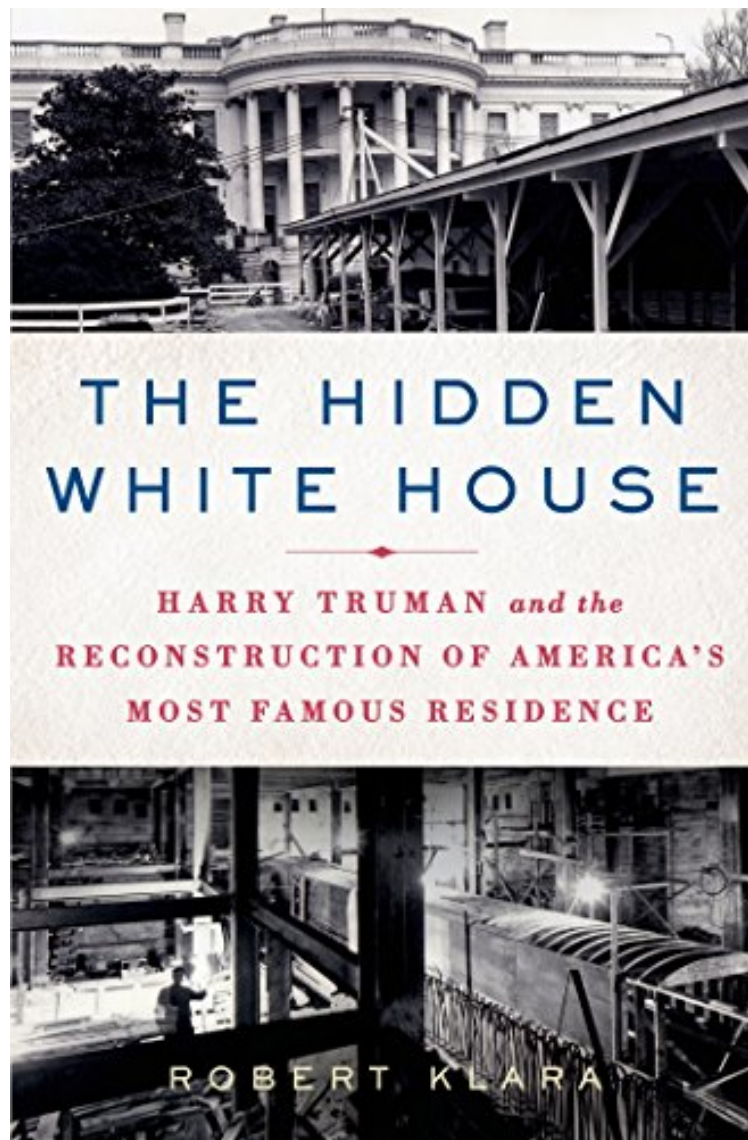


[Mobile library] The Hidden White House: Harry Truman and the Reconstruction of America's Most Famous Residence

The Hidden White House: Harry Truman and the Reconstruction of America's Most Famous Residence

Robert Klara

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Robert Klara : The Hidden White House: Harry Truman and the Reconstruction of America's Most Famous Residence before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Hidden White House: Harry Truman and the Reconstruction of America's Most Famous Residence:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful read about Harry Truman and the White house.By

Richard Shore This is a highly recommended read if you (and who doesn't) like Harry Truman. Having recently finished David McCullough's "Truman", and that's a major accomplishment ("Truman" is thousand pages, 800 would have been enough, Tuchman would said it all in 700) you would think you know Harry Truman. Would like to find time to elaborate on my thoughts on Klara's "Hidden White House", but for now, the beauty of this effort is that you get to know the real Harry Truman. So, if you are keenly interested in this vital period in US history get to know the real Harry Truman. This short, very readable book is a must supplement to "Truman", and learn some fascinating bits of history about our White House. OK. One more aside, when the job was finally finished Harry Truman anguish about the cost and construction delay. Truman said had he been in charge he you accomplished the job at half the cost in half the time. The author mocked Truman for saying this. But if you really know this complex man would really know that Harry Truman would have done it (despite every effort from a disfunction congress or government in general to drive up the cost and cause delays). 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An exhaustively researched, briskly paced narrative about a historic project most Americans know nothing about. By Adam Lenhardt This would really be a 4.5 star review if allowed half stars. It's one of those little known facts about America's most famous residence: There have really been two White Houses; the one designed by James Hoban and built between 1792 and 1800, and the one designed by President Truman (along with White House Architect Lorenzo Winslow and the Commission on the Renovation of the Executive Mansion) that was built by John McShain between 1949 and 1952. The two structures really only share a general layout and the same four outer walls. This bit of historical trivia has always fascinated me, the construction of a modern building within a centuries-old facade, and I had been eager for a while to learn more about it. Robert Klara weaves his exhaustive research into a peppy narrative that moves along at brisk, engaging pace. He does a terrific job of exploring the scope of the problem and is quite successful at capturing the distinct voices and personalities of the various players involved in solving it. In addition to learning a lot about the White House, I learned a lot about Truman the president and Truman the man. Klara is not awestruck by his subject matter, and his book is as attuned to flaws and shortcomings as it is to triumphs. His citations are staggeringly comprehensive, and provide a great road map for the reader that wants to dig even deeper into any given aspect of the particular historic project. I only have two real complaints: 1) Sometimes, in his attempts to spice up the storytelling of what could have easily been a dry treatise, he's a bit too bold about putting himself into the heads of the participants, declaratively presenting private thoughts that can only be assumptions based on educated conclusions. He also dwells overlong at times on irrelevant bits of color, particularly Lorenzo Winslow's fascination with seacutes;ances and the occult. 2) The book only includes sixteen pages of photographs in a glossy insert near the center. The photos that we do get are excellent, but the book would have benefited from even more of Abbie Rowe's incredible black and white photography, scattered throughout in context within the narrative. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. ... hard to comprehend what this entailed even with the amazing amounts of research and photos. By Loch J It is hard to comprehend what this entailed even with the amazing amounts of research and photos. For anyone connected with either politics or construction it is a must read. Of course, history buffs have to be included, too. I'll never quite fathom how any government really works. This book helps understand it.

Now including an excerpt from THE DEVIL'S MERCEDES: The Bizarre and Disturbing Adventures of Hitler's Limousine in America by Robert Klara. Coming March 2017. Critically acclaimed author Robert Klara leads readers through an unmatched tale of political ambition and technical skill: the Truman administration's controversial rebuilding of the White House. In 1948, President Harry Truman, enjoying a bath on the White House's second floor, almost plunged through the ceiling of the Blue Room into a tea party for the Daughters of the American Revolution. A handpicked team of the country's top architects conducted a secret inspection of the troubled mansion and, after discovering it was in imminent danger of collapse, insisted that the First Family be evicted immediately. What followed would be the most historically significant and politically complex home-improvement job in American history. While the Trumans camped across the street at Blair House, Congress debated whether to bulldoze the White House completely, and the Soviets exploded their first atomic bomb, starting the Cold War. Indefatigable researcher Robert Klara reveals what has, until now, been little understood about this episode: America's most famous historic home was basically demolished, giving birth to today's White House. Leaving only the mansion's facade untouched, workmen gutted everything within, replacing it with a steel frame and a complex labyrinth deep below ground that soon came to include a top-secret nuclear fallout shelter. The story of Truman's rebuilding of the White House is a snapshot of postwar America and its first Cold War leader, undertaking a job that changed the centerpiece of the country's national heritage. The job was by no means perfect, but it was remarkable; and, until now, all but forgotten.

From Booklist By 1949, according to Klara, the White House was in an advanced state of decrepitude. Wooden beams were rotting, floors were dangerously unstable, some timbers had scorch marks from the British burning during the War of 1812, and the foundation was sinking at an accelerated rate. So a three-year renovation project was launched, which basically gutted the interior while keeping the facade intact. In this gossipy, sometimes amusing,

sometimes irritating account, Klara describes how the interior arrived at its present form. Characters, famous and relatively obscure, flit in and out of the narrative, creating frequently humorous situations. Klara writes with a strong sense of the ironic, and he is careful to point out that more substantive world events were going on under Truman's watch. This is a light, generally enjoyable look at a historical sideshow. --Jay Freeman

Robert Klara's *The Hidden White House* will give you unique insight into the building our presidents live and work in. A tour de force narrative, this detailed history will give you a one-of-a-kind look into America's most famous house. --Newt Gingrich, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Victory at Yorktown*

Robert Klara brings the White House--its occupants, its rooms, even its swinging chandeliers--vividly to life in this gripping work of history. The book is rich with historical and architectural detail, and Klara, a brilliant storyteller, shows us why Truman's plan to restore the White House was an act not only of necessity, but of audacity. --Jeff Shesol, former speechwriter to President Bill Clinton and author of *Supreme Power: Franklin Roosevelt vs. the Supreme Court*

Robert Klara has crafted an unexpected and captivating story of the overhaul of America's most famous residence. While every first family lends its own personal touch to the White House, it is usually in the form of china patterns and drapes. President Truman, on the other hand, had the place gutted because it was threatening to collapse around him. From bathtubs to bomb shelters, Klara leaves no piece of crumbling sandstone unturned and is as astute a storyteller as he is a dogged researcher. His efforts have resulted in a rich and layered look at this unique episode in American history. *Hidden White House* is populated by complicated and quirky characters but Klara wisely saves the spotlight for the real star, the White House herself, as she narrowly escapes annihilation. We can be thankful she survived, imperfections and all, that Klara has brought her story to light. --Denise Kiernan, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Girls of Atomic City*

Money troubles, war with congress, fights with patriotic societies, an attempted assassination of the President, the building of an atom bomb shelter, lost contents -- the saga of the gutting and recreation of the "Great White Jail" that is the nation's White House is as dramatic as was Truman's presidency. In Robert Klara's riveting yet scholarly account it becomes no less than the story of America, as the U.S. becomes the world's foremost superpower -- with the reconstructed White House its symbolic and literal heart. --Nigel Hamilton, author, *American Caesars: Lives of the Presidents, From Franklin D. Roosevelt to George W. Bush*

A delightful and informative narrative; Klara brings the reconstruction's major players--including Truman and his family, architect Lorenzo Winslow, and contractor John McShain--to life in sharp prose, infusing this cracks-and-crevices expose with plenty of entertaining drama. --Publishers Weekly

Robert Klara has proven the old adage to be true -- if walls could speak what stories they would tell! Ghosts. Diplomats. Washington backscratching. *The Hidden White House* has it all in a fabulous romp across the landscape of American history as viewed through the prism of our most iconic residence. Hats off to Klara! A beautifully written book filled with quirky characters and amazing stories. --L. Douglas Keeney, author of *15 Minutes: General Curtis LeMay and the Countdown to Nuclear Annihilation*

There's a story that when Ronald Reagan first arrived at the White House, he asked to see the 'War Room,' presuming it looked just like the screen version from *Dr. Strangelove*. Which is to say, we all have our fantasies about the hidden life behind the stately white columns of America's most famous home--most of them false. Robert Klara's entertaining secret history of White House tells how it became the place we think we know but don't, proving the adage that truth can be stranger than fiction. --Mark Lamster, architecture critic, *Dallas Morning News*

Robert Klara's *The Hidden White House* serves as a landmark study of the post-World War II redefinition of America's premier residence. Thoroughly researched and engagingly written, this book casts deserved new attention on a favorite subject, highlighting the masterful walking of the fine line between preserving an historic shrine and fabricating a modern fortress and television-ready backdrop. Whether historian, architect, or homeowner (fresh from the throes of your own renovation), *The Hidden White House* affords an entertaining history lesson. --James Archer Abbott, director and curator, Johns Hopkins University's Evergreen Museum and Library; author of *Designing Camelot: The Kennedy White House Restoration*

Characters, famous and relatively obscure, flit in and out of the narrative, creating frequently humorous situations. Enjoyable. --Booklist

Klara's focused history will intrigue architectural history enthusiasts along with presidential history buffs and others who will appreciate a part of White House history that has been forgotten by many. --Library Journal

In the manner of Bob Greene's *Once Upon a Town* or Jody Rosen's *White Christmas* . . . Klara charms as he informs. A little gem. --Kirkus (starred on *FDR's Funeral Train*)

Klara has put together a thrilling piece of history. . . . [he] has managed to provide a fresh look at history as well as the political landscape of the twentieth century. --The Daily Beast on *FDR's Funeral Train*

Full of fascinating anecdotes. . . . This is popular history at its best: engaging, informative and insightful. It is very well written and . . . a pure pleasure to read . . . sheds welcome light on a fascinating and largely forgotten episode. --Christian Science Monitor on *FDR's Funeral Train*

About the Author ROBERT KLARA is the author of the critically acclaimed 2010 book *FDR's Funeral Train*, which historian and author Douglas Brinkley called "a major new contribution to U.S. history." Klara has been a staff editor for several magazines including *Adweek*, *Town Country* and *Architecture*. His freelance work has appeared in the *New York Times*, the *New York Daily News*, *American Heritage*, and *The Christian Science Monitor*, among other publications. Klara

makes his home in New York City.