



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

Robert Klara

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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.

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