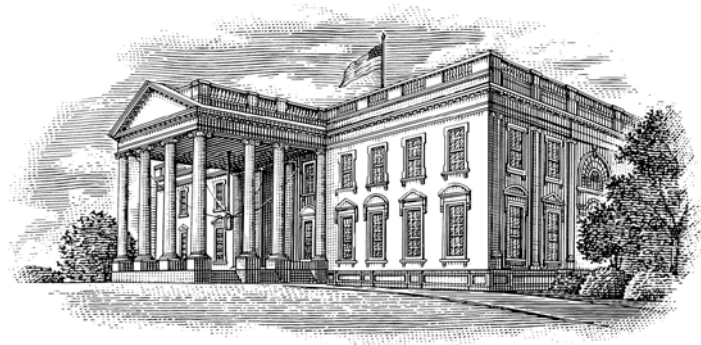


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HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION*

## White House Gates Swing Wide Open

Background Information on the White House Easter Egg Roll

Easter egg rolling, originally held at the Capitol, was moved to the sloping South Lawn of the White House when disgruntled members of Congress complained of little feet ruining the grass and passed a law forbidding the use of Capitol grounds as a children's playground. On Easter Sunday of 1878, a small announcement in the local press informed the egg rollers the new law would be enforced.

President Rutherford B. Hayes, taking his daily walk, was approached by a number of young egg rollers who inquired about the possibilities of egg rolling on the South Lawn of the White House. After making inquiries the president issued an official order that should any children arrive to egg roll on Easter Monday, they were to be allowed to do so. That Monday, as children were being turned away from the Capitol grounds, word quickly spread to go to the White House.

Since then, American presidents and their families have celebrated Easter Monday by hosting an "egg roll" party. Held on the South Lawn, it is one of the oldest annual events in White House history. Presidents and First Ladies have personally greeted the egg rollers as have members of the Cabinet, athletes, musicians, celebrities and the official White House Easter Bunny. At the end of the day as egg rollers say goodbye, each receives a special memento and departs with fond memories of a happy White House tradition.