



## PRESS RELEASE

White House Historical Association  
740 Jackson Place, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006

---

For immediate release

Contact: Maria Downs  
202.737.8292 x317  
mdowns@whha.org

### **2008 WHITE HOUSE ORNAMENT PORTRAYS FIRST WHITE HOUSE CHRISTMAS TREE**

The 2008 White House Christmas ornament honoring the presidency of Benjamin Harrison (1889-1893), the twenty-third president of the United States, was inspired by the Harrison family's Victorian Christmas tree, the first documented tree to decorate the President's House. The ornament, the 28<sup>th</sup> in a series started by the White House Historical Association in 1981, presents the White House as a family home.

Christmas stands out in White House memory as a special time for the Harrisons. Accommodations were tight with six adults and three grandchildren sharing the second floor family quarters. The president doted on his grandchildren and went to great lengths to amuse them. He said, "We shall have an old-fashioned Christmas tree for the grandchildren upstairs, and I shall be their Santa Claus." To the delight of the children, the tree was laden with decorations and innumerable toys and treats. Mrs. Harrison had made sure each member of her husband's staff was remembered with a personal token and all of the domestic employees were called in to receive gifts from under the tree.

Inspired by the Harrison's Christmas tree, this year's gold finished ornament is an interpretation of the first tree. Beneath the tree are the presents the Harrison grandchildren received: a toy train and a wooden sled await Benjamin, Mary's rosy-cheeked doll sits on a tricycle, and nearby is Marthena's much wished for dollhouse. A three-foot high Santa Claus completes the season's spectacle.

Of the previous White House ornaments, 20 honored presidents starting with George Washington. The 1989 ornament pays tribute to the bicentennial of the American presidency, and 1992 honors the laying of the White House cornerstone in 1792. The bicentennial of the White House as home of the president was commemorated in 2000. In 2002 the ornament honored the centennial of the restoration of the White House and the building of the West Wing.

The cost of the ornament is \$16.95 plus packing and delivery and can be ordered from the White House Historical Association, P.O. Box 96586, Washington, D.C. 20090-6586, or you can call toll free 1-800-555-2451, or visit online at [www.whitehousehistory.org](http://www.whitehousehistory.org). Each of the 27 ornaments (from 1981-2007) is also available, along with educational brochures.

The White House Historical Association was established in 1961 as a non-profit organization to enhance the understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the White House. All proceeds from its trusts and sales of ornaments, publications and other association products are used to fund acquisitions of historic furnishings and art works for the permanent White House collection, assist in the preservation of the public rooms, and further its educational mission.

#####

For assistance with images please contact Hillary Crehan at [hcrehan@whha.org](mailto:hcrehan@whha.org)