

JAMES HOBAN

architect

Each year, the St. Patrick's Day Parade marches proudly past the White House as it proceeds west on Constitution Avenue. We would be remiss if we did not point out that the executive mansion was designed by an immigrant from Ireland. A young architect named James Hoban came to the new capital city in 1792 to participate in a national competition to submit plans for a presidential residence. Washington was so new at that time that its only street was unpaved and few people had yet to make their homes here. Basing his design on Leinster House (built 1745 to 1748) in Dublin, Hoban

entered the contest and eventually won first prize and was awarded the commission to build the edifice and the sum of \$500. At George Washington's suggestion, he reduced the height of the building to two stories and expanded its dimensions. The East Room was also added at Washington's behest.

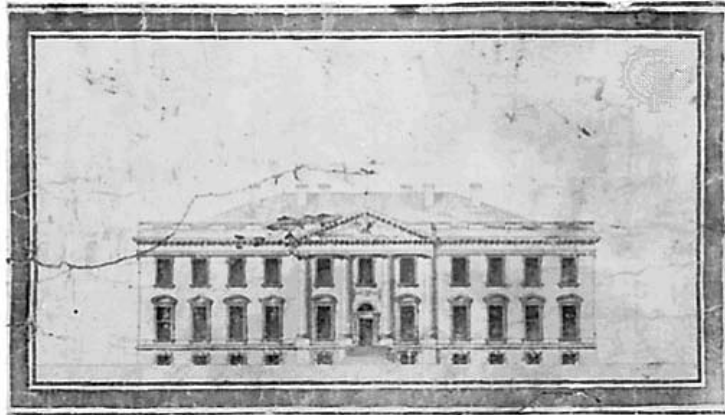
James Hoban was born into a devout Catholic family in Desart, near Callen, County Kilkenny in the year 1762. A student of Thomas Ivory, he studied at the school of the Royal Dublin Society in the Irish and English Georgian style. This is the style in which he worked during his entire career. Arriving in Philadelphia in 1781, he soon moved to South Carolina



where he designed the state capitol building in Columbia in 1791. At the invitation of George Washington, he traveled to Washington to enter the contest for the executive mansion project.

Defeating eight other contestants including an anonymous submission by Thomas Jefferson, he won the contest. Hoban stayed on to superintend its construction. On October 13, 1792, George Washington laid the cornerstone with James Hoban in attendance. President John Adams moved in with first Lady Abigail on November 1, 1800, with construction still underway.

James Hoban had now become one of the preeminent architects in the country and was in great demand. Although the Capitol Building was designed by Dr. William Thornton, Hoban was named Superintendent Architect of the Capitol and oversaw its nine years of construction.



With the incorporation of Washington as a city in 1802, Hoban was elected to the first city council, a post he held for the remainder of his life. He continued as an architect in the nation's capital building roads, bridges and buildings. Some of these projects included the Grand Hotel in 1793, the Little Hotel 1795 and the State and War Offices in 1818. His credits even extend to Ireland: the Rossenara House near Kilmoganny in his native county of Kilkenny.

In 1814, the British invaded the capital city and burned the public buildings. The President's house was left a charred shell. Hoban was called upon to rebuild it. This was no small task. The fire had weakened all but the south wall, requiring

dismantling and resetting of the sandstone blocks. The rebuilding was sufficiently complete in 1817, to allow occupation by the new president, James Monroe.

In 1824 the South Portico, the one facing our parade route, was added using Hoban's design. Six years later the North Portico was similarly built. Since that time, the East and West Wings were added to the original Hoban design. The name White House, informally used since 1811, was officially adopted by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1901. Several restorations have been done over the years, most famously the one during the Truman administration.

With his wife Susanna he had 10 children. Washington was his home until his death on December 8, 1831. He left his family an estate worth \$90,000, an impressive figure at the time. Two of his buildings, the South Carolina Statehouse and the White House, were both burned by invading armies.



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