



THE OVAL OFFICE

The Oval Office

History

The first "Oval Office" was built in 1909 in the center of the West Wing of the White House. In 1934, during the Franklin D. Roosevelt Administration, the Oval Office was moved to its current location on the southeast corner of the West Wing, overlooking the Rose Garden.

Purpose

The Oval Office is the president's formal workspace where he meets with heads of state, diplomats, Congressional leaders, business representatives, government officials, and his staff. Here he addresses the American people and the world on television or radio. It is where he deals with the issues of the day.

Decorations

Each president has decorated the Oval Office to suit his personal taste. Among the features that remain constant are the white marble mantel from the original 1909 Oval Office, the Presidential seal in the ceiling, and the two flags behind the President's desk—the United States flag and the President's flag.

The Oval Office Today

President George W. Bush has chosen, like many presidents before him, to use the Resolute Desk. The desk was made from the timbers of the H.M.S. Resolute, an abandoned British ship discovered by American whalers in the Arctic. It was returned to the Queen of England by President Pierce on behalf of the American people. After the ship was retired, Queen Victoria commissioned the desk and presented it to President Rutherford B. Hayes in 1880 as a token of friendship and appreciation.

For his office, President Bush has selected several paintings of Texas scenes that remind him of his home state. One oil painting by W.H.D. Koerner depicts a horseman charging up a steep and rough trail. The painting *A Charge to Keep* is also the title of the President's autobiography. This title is taken from a hymn by Charles Wesley.