

*T*hank you for joining us for “A Red, White and Blue Christmas” at the White House!

This year’s theme celebrates the patriotic spirit that unites us as Americans. During this hopeful season we are reminded of the blessings of freedom we enjoy, and we renew our sense of what is important in our lives. Family and friends gather to share old traditions and create new ones. Strangers exchange smiles and tidings of good cheer. Children happily sing along to the songs of the holidays and help bake holiday treats for their loved ones.

We are grateful to the White House Executive Residence staff, artists from around the country and many volunteers for decorating the White House red, white and blue! Thanks to their creativity and hard work, this year’s holiday decorations reflect the best of the American spirit.

May your holidays be filled with joy and happy memories.

Barack Obama

Laura Bush



"Christmas is a time to rejoice, and to give thanks for the blessings of the season and for the blessings that surround us every day of the year."

– President George W. Bush

EAST WING

Uncle Sam welcomes visitors to the White House for "A Red, White and Blue Christmas!" This grand icon of America was

inspired by Samuel Wilson, a New York businessman who supplied American soldiers with barrels of food marked "U.S." during the War of 1812. When asked what these initials stood for, one of Wilson's workers replied, "Uncle Sam Wilson!"

Santa's in the patriotic spirit, too! He's landed in the East Garden Room to deliver his bundle of red, white and blue presents – including that ever-popular gift, the teddy bear. "Teddy's bear" was created after President

Theodore Roosevelt made national headlines for declining to shoot a bear during a hunting trip in 1902.

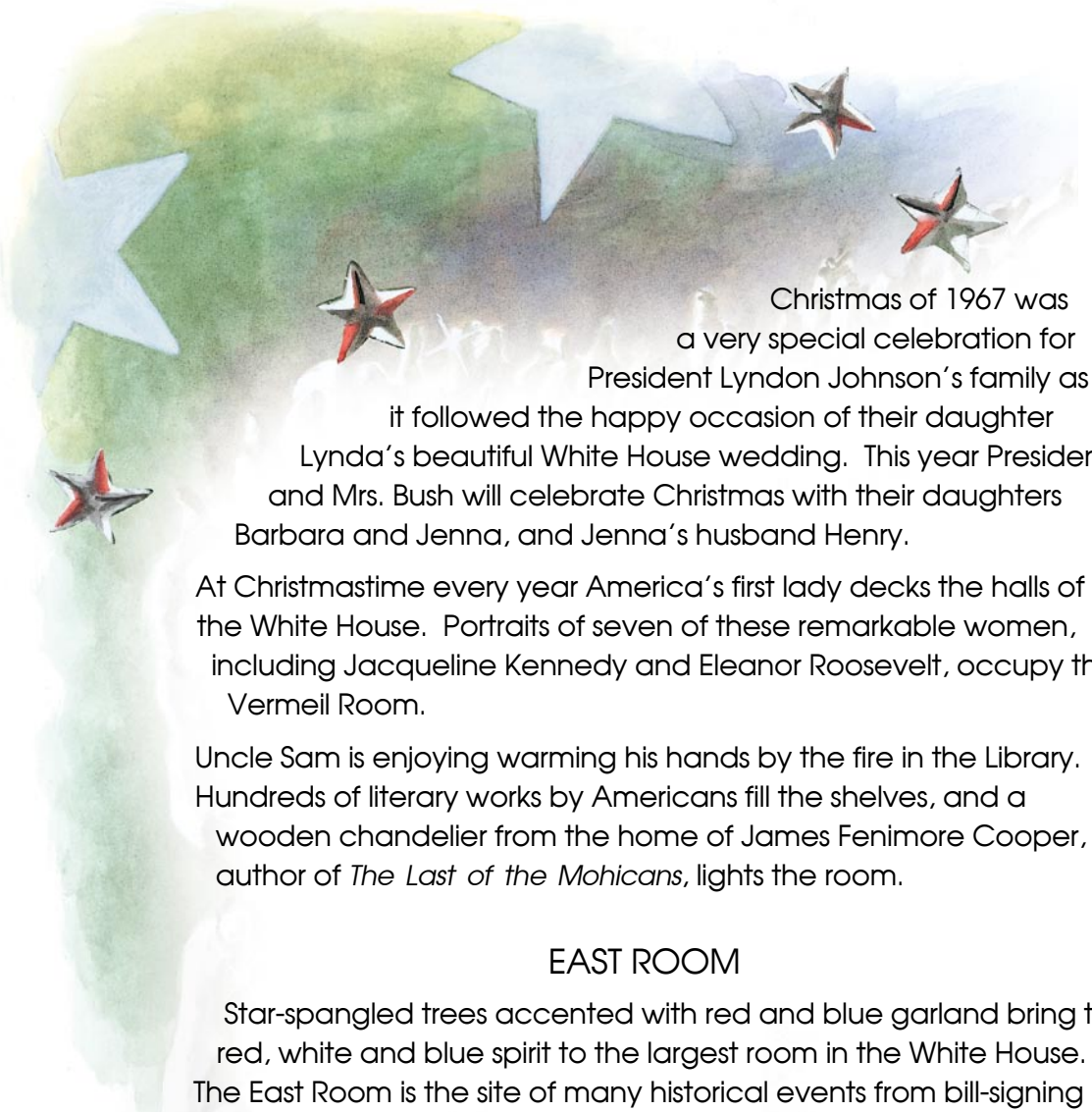
America's national bird, the bald eagle, is featured throughout the White House. Along the windows of the East Colonnade, eagles carry snow-covered wreaths in their talons. As you stroll through our celebration of red, white and blue, look for decorative eagles painted on presidential china or carved into furniture and architectural elements.

Official Christmas cards from first families, part of the permanent White House collection, are on display in the East Foyer. This year's holiday card, by T. Allen Lawson, depicts a winter-time view from the Truman Balcony of the South Lawn with the Washington Monument and Jefferson Memorial in the distance.

GROUND FLOOR CORRIDOR

Red poinsettias fill the Ground Floor Corridor with holiday cheer. Back from the White House decorations of Christmas 2001 are miniature reproductions of presidents' homes, including those of Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson.





Christmas of 1967 was a very special celebration for President Lyndon Johnson's family as it followed the happy occasion of their daughter Lynda's beautiful White House wedding. This year President and Mrs. Bush will celebrate Christmas with their daughters Barbara and Jenna, and Jenna's husband Henry.

At Christmastime every year America's first lady decks the halls of the White House. Portraits of seven of these remarkable women, including Jacqueline Kennedy and Eleanor Roosevelt, occupy the Vermeil Room.

Uncle Sam is enjoying warming his hands by the fire in the Library. Hundreds of literary works by Americans fill the shelves, and a wooden chandelier from the home of James Fenimore Cooper, author of *The Last of the Mohicans*, lights the room.

EAST ROOM

Star-spangled trees accented with red and blue garland bring the red, white and blue spirit to the largest room in the White House. The East Room is the site of many historical events from bill-signing ceremonies to weddings. Memorable holiday gatherings have been held here, including one in which children visiting President Andrew Jackson engaged in a spontaneous "snowball" fight with cotton balls!



A beautiful crèche of terra cotta and carved wood figurines is displayed on the east wall. This treasured 18th-century Italian nativity scene, given to the White House by Mrs. Charles W. Engelhard, Jr., has been on display in the East Room every Christmas season since 1967.

The famous portrait of George Washington by Gilbert Stuart was rescued by Dolley Madison, wife of President James Madison, just before the British set fire to the White House in 1814.

GREEN ROOM

Silver eagles and stars in the garland on the mantel add a special touch to this already festive room. And the painting of Independence Hall in Philadelphia is a fitting tribute to this year's patriotic theme.

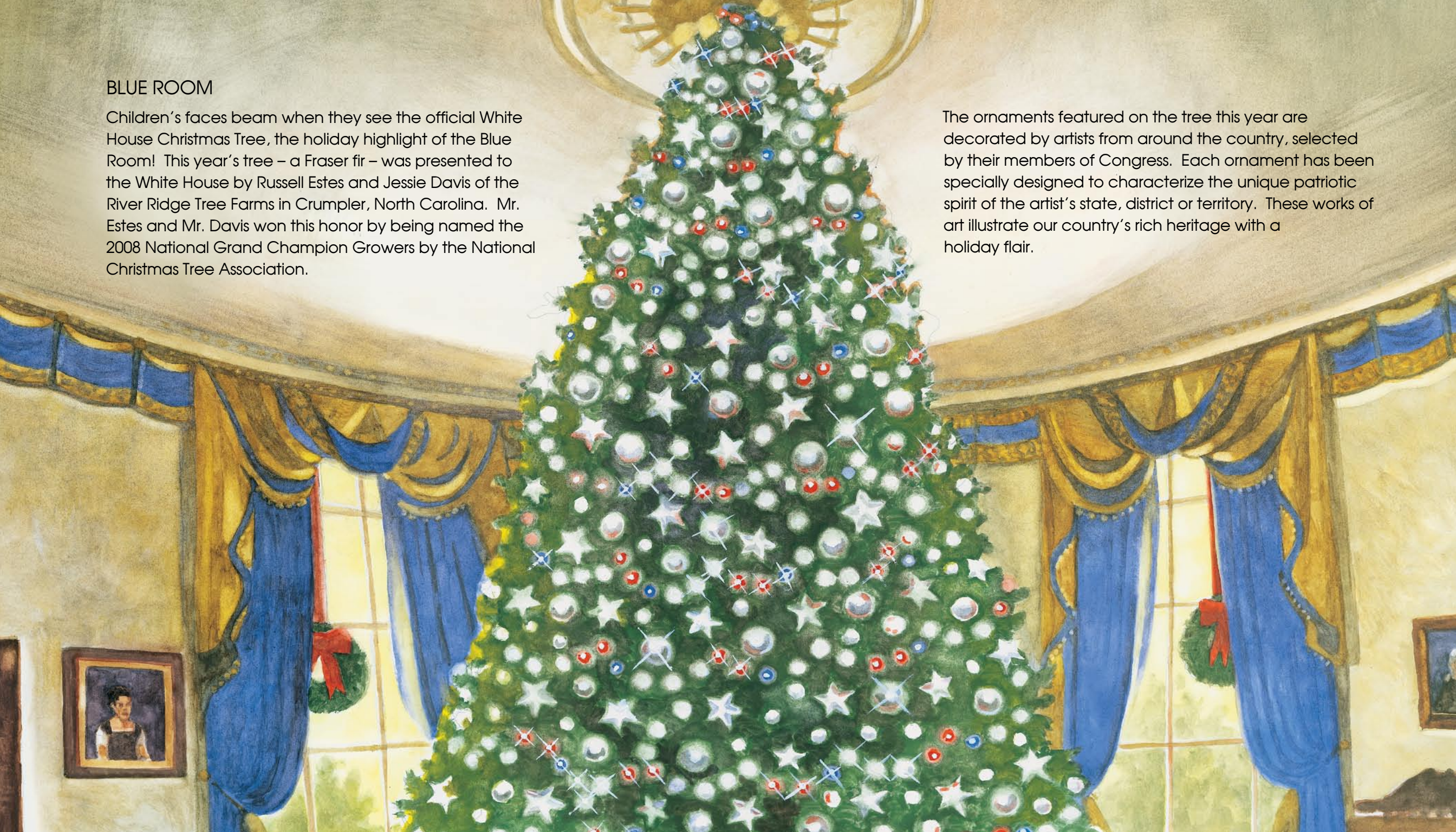
During the holidays we are especially mindful of the many blessings in our lives, including our American freedom. Both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were signed at Independence Hall, the birthplace of our country. This historic landmark housed the Liberty Bell for more than 200 years! As you think about this history, remember the patriots who gave so much to create a new country dedicated to liberty and justice for all.



BLUE ROOM

Children's faces beam when they see the official White House Christmas Tree, the holiday highlight of the Blue Room! This year's tree – a Fraser fir – was presented to the White House by Russell Estes and Jessie Davis of the River Ridge Tree Farms in Crumpler, North Carolina. Mr. Estes and Mr. Davis won this honor by being named the 2008 National Grand Champion Growers by the National Christmas Tree Association.

The ornaments featured on the tree this year are decorated by artists from around the country, selected by their members of Congress. Each ornament has been specially designed to characterize the unique patriotic spirit of the artist's state, district or territory. These works of art illustrate our country's rich heritage with a holiday flair.



RED ROOM

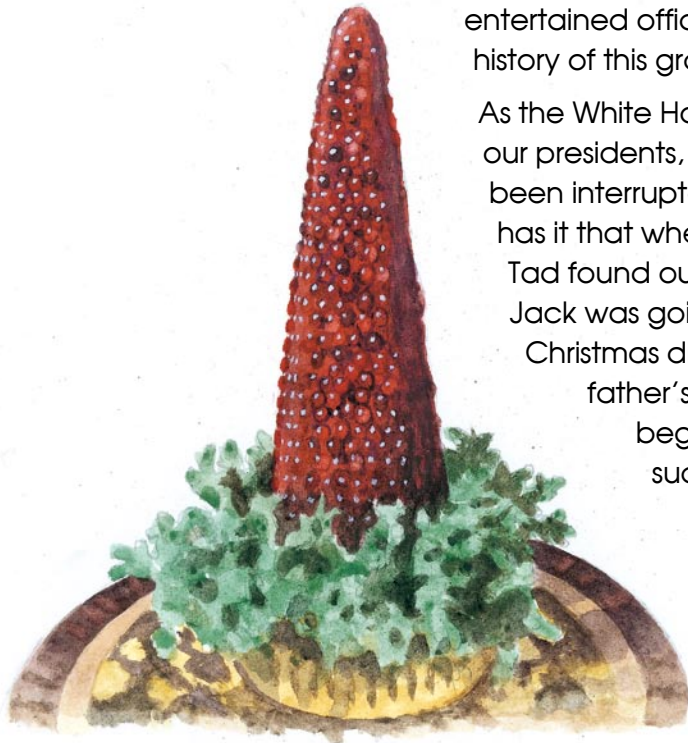
Dolley Madison fancied this inviting spot as the setting for lively political discussions and stylish parties with her friends. Her role as the gracious hostess of these memorable occasions has led some to call this room the "First Ladies Parlor." Look for the portrait of Dolley Madison above the right entrance into the State Dining Room.

The crimson cranberry tree is a favorite holiday decoration in the Red Room. Red, white and blue bells sparkling on the mantel evoke the jingling sounds of Santa's sleigh.

STATE DINING ROOM

Abraham Lincoln presides over this elegant room, where presidents and first ladies have entertained official guests throughout the history of this grand old home.

As the White House is both office and home for our presidents, affairs of state have sometimes been interrupted by family matters. A story has it that when Lincoln's youngest son Tad found out that his beloved pet turkey Jack was going to be the main course for Christmas dinner, he burst into one of his father's cabinet meetings and begged him to spare his turkey such a tragic fate. President Lincoln pardoned Jack, inspiring the annual tradition of the Thanksgiving Turkey Pardon.



Each year White House residents and visitors eagerly await the one-of-a-kind gingerbread house in the State Dining Room. White House Executive Pastry Chef Bill Yosses and Assistant Pastry Chef Susie Morrison have crafted the southern view of the White House with the patriotic theme as their inspiration. Hundreds of pounds of chocolate, more than 150 gingerbread sheets and countless hours of hard work went into this masterful and delicious creation.

Cookies dressed as members of the Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps march in front of the house, bringing to life an American tradition that dates to colonial times. You can almost hear the faint whistling of their flutes and rat-a-tat of their drums stirring crowds to the tune of "Yankee Doodle Dandy." And if you look closely, you'll see Santa's helpers – Barney, Miss Beazley and Willie – landing on the roof of the White House just in time for Christmas!



CROSS HALL AND GRAND FOYER

Trees glistening with snow illuminate the Cross Hall and Grand Foyer. Supported by carved eagles, the 1938 Steinway is used for entertaining guests during White House events. The U.S. Marine Corps Band, "The President's Own," provides the music for these gatherings.

The red, white and blue hues that inspire this year's holiday theme were carefully selected for the American flag by our founding fathers in 1777. The colors of Old Glory have come to represent the ideals Americans hold dear. Red symbolizes bravery, white represents purity, and blue signifies perseverance and justice. Stars form a constellation and stripes are assembled like rays of light emanating from the sun.



These "broad stripes and bright stars" also served as the inspiration of our national anthem, penned in 1814 by Francis Scott Key.

During the holidays and throughout the year, Americans give thanks for the brave men and women of the United States Armed Forces, who protect the "Red, White and Blue."

Guests have been welcomed for generations to see the White House holiday decorations. Your visit now makes you a part of America's history. May you and those you love have a joyful season filled with gratitude for the blessings of our great country.



THE WHITE HOUSE VISITOR CENTER

Replicas of this year's White House decorations will be on display at the Visitor Center during the holiday season.

The Center is located inside the north end of the Department of Commerce building, between 14th and 15th Streets at 1450 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, and is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. every day except Thanksgiving, Christmas Day and New Year's Day. You will find interesting exhibits, tourist information and helpful staff to answer your questions.

IN APPRECIATION

The White House is grateful to Peter Catalanotto for creating the artwork for this year's program. Mr. Catalanotto has illustrated many children's books, including *Happy Birthday America* by Mary Pope Osborne. He has published 36 books for children, 10 of which he authored.

He lives in Doylestown, Pennsylvania.