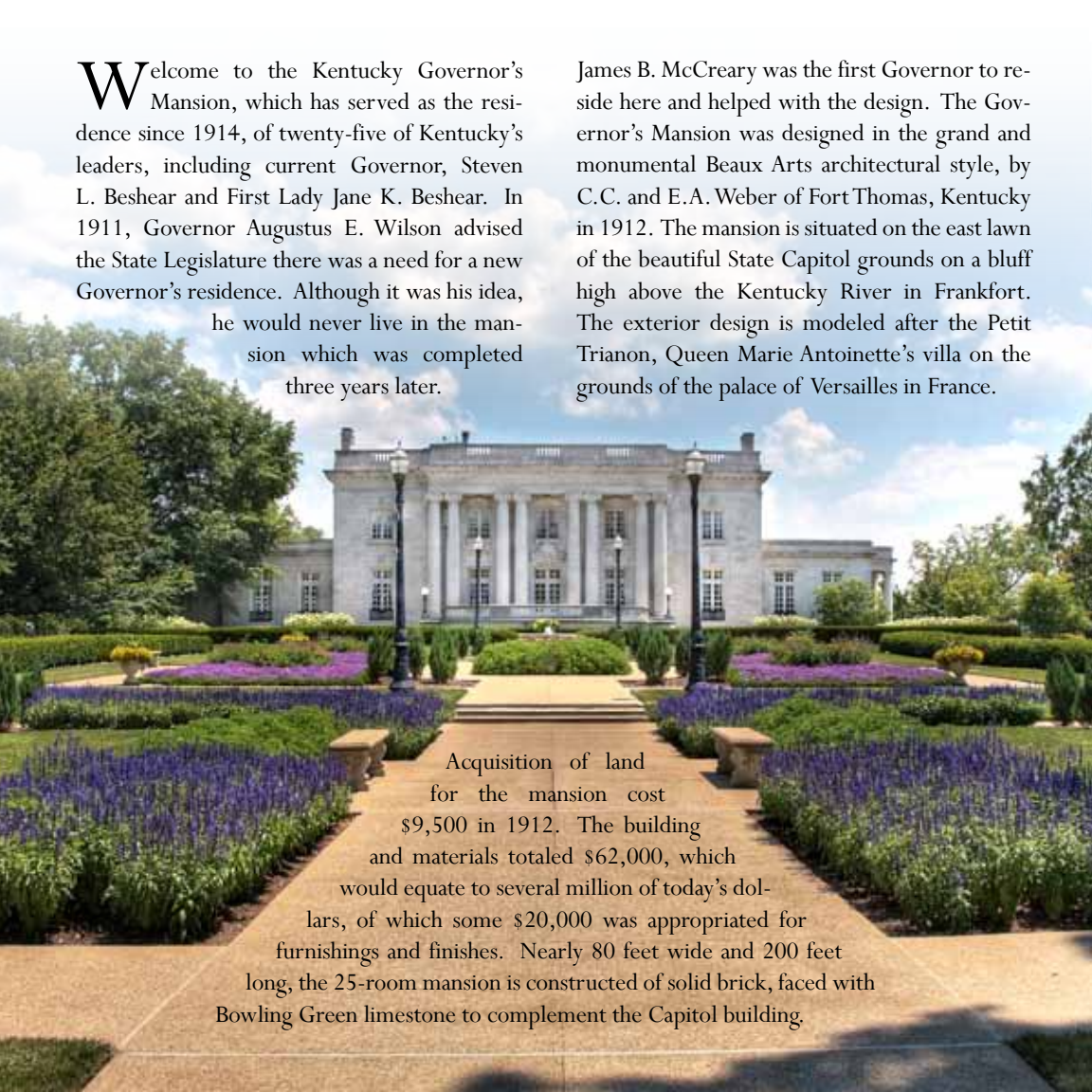


A photograph of the Kentucky Governor's Mansion, a large white neoclassical building with a prominent portico supported by columns. The building is illuminated from within, and the sky is a vibrant orange and yellow from a sunset. The foreground features a well-manicured lawn, a hedge, and some trees with autumn foliage.

*Kentucky
Governor's Mansion
"The people's house"*

Welcome to the Kentucky Governor's Mansion, which has served as the residence since 1914, of twenty-five of Kentucky's leaders, including current Governor, Steven L. Beshear and First Lady Jane K. Beshear. In 1911, Governor Augustus E. Wilson advised the State Legislature there was a need for a new Governor's residence. Although it was his idea, he would never live in the mansion which was completed three years later.

James B. McCreary was the first Governor to reside here and helped with the design. The Governor's Mansion was designed in the grand and monumental Beaux Arts architectural style, by C.C. and E.A. Weber of Fort Thomas, Kentucky in 1912. The mansion is situated on the east lawn of the beautiful State Capitol grounds on a bluff high above the Kentucky River in Frankfort. The exterior design is modeled after the Petit Trianon, Queen Marie Antoinette's villa on the grounds of the palace of Versailles in France.



Acquisition of land for the mansion cost \$9,500 in 1912. The building and materials totaled \$62,000, which would equate to several million of today's dollars, of which some \$20,000 was appropriated for furnishings and finishes. Nearly 80 feet wide and 200 feet long, the 25-room mansion is constructed of solid brick, faced with Bowling Green limestone to complement the Capitol building.



Between 2005 and 2007, private fundraising raised nearly three million dollars to continue restoring portions of the Commonwealth's most important address. The privately raised funds removed decades of built-up paint from the walls and restored the delicate ornamental plaster work. Hardwood floors were refinished, new carpets and rugs were made especially for the mansion's state floor. Several important decorative and fine arts were added to the mansion's permanent collection in 2007, including an impressive E.F. Caldwell early 20th century rock crystal chandelier and works of art by important Kentucky artists such as Paul Sawyer and Carl Brenner.



Beginning in October 2008, the Governor's Mansion welcomed the Rebecca and Jay Rayburn Collection. The exhibition consists of nearly 50 pieces of fine art painted by artists who were born, lived, or educated in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The painting collection is the accomplishment of more than four decades of art collecting by Robert and Jane Humphreys, formerly of Owensboro, Kentucky. Their daughter, Rebecca Rayburn, inherited the collection along with her husband Jay. The Rayburn's have generously agreed to continue to loan portions of their marvelous collection on a rotating schedule to the Governor's Mansion and the Old Governor's Mansion.



The Governor's Mansion contains many furnishings and works of art which are of museum quality from previous administrations. Several items of furniture and decorative arts have a long association with the mansion. These include the state dining room table and chairs from the first A.B. ("Happy") Chandler administration, the Italian bombe' chest in the Sun Parlor, and the large pier mirrors on the stair landing. The late 19th century mirrors were moved from the Old Governor's Mansion and may be among the oldest items on display. The silver regency candelabras in the state dining room are associated with the Commonwealth's first governor, Isaac Shelby. The exquisite and regal USS Kentucky Battleship silver pieces in the State Dining Room and Family Dining Room are on loan from the Kentucky Historical Society. This is a small portion of the entire set on permanent display at the Kentucky History Center located in downtown Frankfort.

The architectural design of the Governor's Mansion was a product of its time -- the post Civil War Gilded Age of "conspicuous consumption." The building reflects the grand spirit of people who had tremendous resources and had not yet experienced a severe economic depression or World Wars. Great care was spent on the design and the craftsmanship of every aspect of the Governor's Mansion with attention to exquisite decorative details executed in high-quality craftsmanship. Historians have speculated that the beginning of World War I interrupted the original construction before the interior and gardens could be completed. The mansion is elegantly proportioned with a front portico that includes four pairs of fluted Ionic columns rising over 20 feet. A stone balustrade and terrace make an impressive entrance to this historic building. The Kentucky Governor's Executive Mansion was listed on the National Register of the Historic Places in 1972.

The interior of the mansion reflects the eclectic interest in French Neo-Classicism typical of the Beaux-Arts period. The formal reception rooms all open off of gracious cross hallways. The state dining room, with a large semicircular bay and tall windows, provides distinguished guests a wonderful view. Most light fixtures and decorative features, such as the ornamental plaster and mantels, are original to the building. From the center cross-hallway, double stairways wind gracefully upward to the second floor private living quarters. The Governor's Mansion is both, a private home and a public building. It serves as the center of the first family's ceremonial, social, and political activities and is the proud possession of every Kentuckian. Some of Kentucky's most well known and celebrated names in the arts and entertainment have performed in, or visited the Mansion as well. For several years the very popular *In Performance at the Governor's Mansion* was recorded for KET public television in the Mansion's Ballroom, showcasing the talents of artists such as Rosemary Clooney, Jean Ritchie, Lionel Hampton and the Governor's School for the Arts among others. The Executive Mansion has also been featured on A&E Television's *America's Castles* series.



The mansion is known as "*the people's house*" perhaps for traditions such as these... When a new first family moves into the Governor's Mansion, one of the first signs of community they experience is a knock on the door and a hearty welcome from the town's folk. Tradition suggests the welcoming party bring a silver tray of food to present to the newest members of the community as a welcoming gift. This happens even before the newly elected Governor is ceremonially sworn in. There are other traditions related to the Governorship and the Governor's Mansion.

It is customary for the outgoing Governor to invite the Governor-elect and his family to dinner at the Mansion shortly after the election and during the time of transition. There is also the tradition of the first spouses. This custom has the First Lady of the retiring Governor leave for the spouse of the incoming Governor, a platter of baked ham with beaten biscuits and a white cake on the dining room table.

If the walls of the Governor's Mansion could talk, we would undoubtedly hear many exciting stories - stories that tell of family celebrations and personal heartaches, political deals that resulted in triumphant victories and bitter losses and of course, plenty of the kind of gossip that seems to thrive in Frankfort.



By the 1980s, two world wars, the Great Depression and limited state funding had not been kind to the graceful mansion over the years, and action was desperately needed to preserve it from an uncertain fate. Between 1980 and 1983, the non-profit *Save the Mansion Foundation*, headed by then First Lady Phyllis George Brown, raised the funds necessary to return the Kentucky chief executive's residence from its perilous state to its original grandeur. The non-profit foundation also funded purchases of museum quality pieces of fine early 20th century Louis XVI French furniture, colorful and rare 19th century Japanese porcelain, and included a formal front garden complete with fountains based on the original unrealized 1913 drawings of the mansion grounds. Several noted historians were involved in the project, including historic interior specialist William Seale.



The Kentucky Governor's Mansion is one of few executive residences in the United States open to the public. Please visit our website at www.governorsmansion.ky.gov for information. Thousands of visitors from across the Commonwealth and around the world visit the Governor's Mansion every year. The Commonwealth feels everyone should have the opportunity to enjoy and appreciate the architectural style, decorative arts, antique treasures and general spirit of "*the people's house*". Regularly scheduled public tours of the Governor's Mansion State Floor are available every Tuesday and Thursday morning from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. (excluding some federal and all state holidays). Additional school and group tours are scheduled each Wednesday morning during the months of April and May. Groups are requested to contact the Capitol tour desk by calling 502-564-3449 or by emailing capitoltourdesk@ky.gov to confirm an appointment.



Photos: Gene Burch Photography