

## Presidential Pets

### Hayes Center showcases companions who called the White House home

By ANN WEBER  
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"If you want a friend in Washington, get a dog."

Harry S. Truman gets credit for that famous line, but many other presidents have found a dependably sympathetic ear and unconditional loyalty in pets that are nonexistent in politics.

Their White House friends have included cats, hamsters, parakeets, guinea pigs, a macaw, and a snake as well as dogs. Legend has it that Lafayette kept an alligator in the East Room while visiting John Quincy Adams. Tad Lincoln befriended a turkey, leading to the modern-day White House practice of pardoning a turkey at Thanksgiving. Theodore Roosevelt's children took their pony, Algonquin, by elevator to the family quarters to cheer up brother Archie, who had measles. Archie squealed, startling the pony, who went down with a crash.

Those are some of the fun facts and anecdotes presented in White House Pets: Ambassadors at Large, one of two exhibits running now through Jan. 10 in the Hayes Museum at the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center in Fremont. The second exhibit is White House Horses.

Both are on loan from the White House Historical Association in Washington. Those panels of text and images are supplemented with Hayes center artifacts and photos related to the many Hayes family pets and farm animals, both in Washington and Spiegel Grove, including the war horse Old Whitey, goats, pigeons, and Siam, the first Siamese cat in America.

"Animals, whether pampered household pets, working livestock, birds, squirrels, or strays have long been a major part of life at the White House," states the introduction to White House Pets. "Some pets simply provided companionship to the president and his family. Others gained fame for a role in shaping the president's public image."

William Bushong, historian and Web

master for the White House Historical Association ([whitehousehistory.org](http://whitehousehistory.org)), said the horses exhibit points out that "the horse was a utilitarian part of the White House for many years and had a central role in the everyday, workaday life as well as the ceremonial aspects of conveying the president around town."

Speaking by phone from Washington, Mr. Bushong said the pets exhibit is the smaller of the two, "but it could be a lot larger because there have been hundreds and hundreds of pets."

Among them, he said, were Thomas Jefferson's mockingbird, Dick, who rode on the president's shoulder; Warren G. Harding's Airedale Laddie Boy, who sat in on Cabinet meetings in his own chair; FDR's Scottish terrier, Fala, who was involved in promoting a rubber drive in World War II, and the Coolidge menagerie that included Rebecca the Raccoon. The critter had been sent to the family from a Southerner with the idea she would end up on the dinner table, something the Coolidges didn't have the heart for — or the appetite.

Herbert Hoover's German shepherd, King Tut, was used during his election campaign to soften his image as a stiff, sour man, Mr. Bushong continued. LBJ had several dogs, including beagles named Him and Her and a mutt named Yuki who rode in Air Force One back to the LBJ Ranch when the president left office.

The pets exhibit illuminates "the lighter side of life at the White House," said Mr. Bushong, the curator of both exhibits. The White House is a national symbol and museum, he added, but "it's also a place where families live."

Both White House Pets and White House Horses are included with admission to the Hayes Museum. Prices recently were raised in response to a 45 percent cut in state funding, to \$7.50 for adults, \$6.50 for seniors, and \$3 for children 6-12. Kids 5 and younger are free. Hours also have been reduced. Starting tomorrow, the Hayes Presidential Center will not be open on Mondays. Hours other days remain the same: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. Details at [rbhayes.org](http://rbhayes.org).

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Below: Mary McKee and Maj. Russell Harrison, the son of President Benjamin Harrison, pose with their dog, Jack, as Benjamin McKee and Marthena Harrison ride a wagon pulled by their goat His Whiskers, in 1890. Mary, Benjamin, and Marthena are grandchildren.

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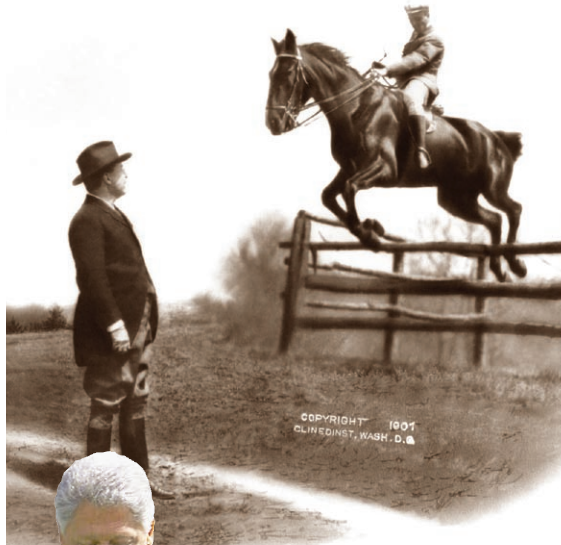
WHITE HOUSE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
Grace Coolidge posed for her official portrait with her white collie, Rob Roy, in 1924.



ASSOCIATED PRESS  
Richard Nixon with his dog, Checkers, in 1959.



JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY  
President John F. Kennedy greets Caroline and John, Jr., with their pony, Macaroni, outside the Oval Office in 1962.



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Theodore Roosevelt watches his son, Theodore, Jr., jump a hunter over a rail fence in 1907.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

President Clinton returns to the White House with his dog, Buddy, in 1999.



HAYES PRESIDENTIAL CENTER

An 1876 photo of Scott Hayes, 6, son of Rutherford B. Hayes, with the family dog, Old Major.



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A statue of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his dog, Fala, are part of an FDR memorial in Washington.

