

GRABER, TED: Papers, 1980-1989
(0.7 l. ft.; Box 1-3)

Biography

Ted Graber (ca. 1920-2000) was a California interior decorator popular with the affluent Hollywood social scene. He is known for working in the “Hollywood Regency” / “Hollywood traditional” style pioneered by his original mentor and partner William “Billy” Haines. He was also one of several personal decorators for President and Mrs. Reagan.

Ted Graber was born in Los Angeles, California around 1920. His father was an antiques dealer and cabinet maker. As a youth, Mr. Graber spent his time with his father learning about antiques and furniture making. Mr. Graber studied at the Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles and served in the Army during World War II. He then joined Mr. Haines, who was already a well-known West Coast decorator. Mr. Haines died in 1973.

Graber was known to Mrs. Reagan from her many social contacts. In the late 1960s, Graber and Haines decorated Winfield House, the official residence of the U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain, for Ambassador Walter Annenberg and his wife Lee. He subsequently redecorated the Annenberg’s well known Palm Spring, California residence, Sunnylands.

In 1981 First Lady Nancy Reagan hired Graber to redecorate the family quarters of the White House. The redecoration cost nearly one million dollars, and was largely paid for by private donations from individuals. Graber and Mrs. Reagan used the Reagan’s family furniture in many cases. In addition, they sought out White House antiques which were brought out of storage, refurbished and used in the redecorations. Nearly all the curtains were replaced, many of which had been in place since the Jackie Kennedy remodel of the White House. In addition, a great deal of “behind the walls” refurbishing was done of plumbing and electricity at this time.

After the private residences were completed, Graber continued as a long term collaborator with Mrs. Reagan throughout the Reagan Administration advising on decorations for special events, state dinners, menus, and holiday decorations. The Reagans were both genuine friends with Graber. The official Presidential Diary shows Graber as a frequent overnight guest and enjoying private dinners and lunches with the Reagans.

His relationship with Mrs. Reagan continued after the White House. He assisted with the decoration of the Reagan’s post-presidential private residence in Bel Air, Los Angeles, President Reagan’s post-presidential office in Century City, California, and the private Reagan quarters at the Reagan Library and Museum. His work was continued by interior designer Peter Schifando. Mr. Schifando assisted Graber on the White House redecoration.

Gerber retired officially in 1989 due to Alzheimer’s Disease. He died in Sonoma, California on June 3, 2000 at 80 years old.

Scope and Content

This collection was created from material donated to the Library from Jean Mathison. Ms. Mathison was Graber's assistant for over 30 years and also worked with famed Hollywood designer Billy Haines. Mathison states the material was part of the "clean up" of the old office space for Haines / Graber.

This collection largely consists of photographs of White House private residence rooms redecorated by Graber in the early 1980s. These photographs were used to assess and describe the Reagan's personal items auctioned by the Reagan Foundation after Mrs. Reagan's death in 2016.

Other material includes news articles on Graber, Billy Haines, and Queen Elizabeth's visit to the west coast of the United States in 1983 (Graber decorated the 20th Century Fox film stage used for the large dinner given by the Reagans for Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip). Other material includes White House programs, note cards and trip books from Graber's social association with the Reagans during the 1980s. Also included is a copy of the original museum design for the Reagan Library.

This collection is arranged into four series: SERIES I: White House Decoration; SERIES II: White House Consultation Material; SERIES III Post-Presidential Consultation; and SERIES IV: Ted Graber Personal Material.

SERIES I: WHITE HOUSE DECORATION, 1981-1989 (0.3 l.ft.; Box 1)

This series consists of mostly photographs of the completed rooms decorated by Mr. Graber and various assistants. In addition material includes information on Mr. Graber and his decorating styles; information on redesign of the Oval Office rug; Graber's assistance on formal rooms in the White House including the Oval Office and the Cabinet Room; provenance information on furniture and other items used in the White House; and some general background information on the White House, the Old Executive Office Building and the White House grounds.

SERIES II: WHITE HOUSE CONSULTATION MATERIAL, 1981-1989 (0.1 l.ft.; Box 1)

This series consists of material related to Mr. Graber's association with Mrs. Reagan as a consultant on social issues and decorating for State and personal entertainments including advice on flower arrangements, menus and Christmas decorations. It includes press accounts of Queen Elizabeth's 1983 visit to the west coast of the United States and covers the large dinner given in her honor by the Reagans with Graber serving as a consultant.

SERIES III: POST-PRESIDENTIAL CONSULTATION, 1989 (0.1 l.ft.; Box 1-2)

This series consists of the first efforts at designing the President's post-Presidential office; requests for Graber's comments on the original Reagan Library museum designs; and Graber's material from the presentation of the official Reagan portraits in 1989

SERIES IV: TED GRABER PERSONAL MATERIAL (0.2 l.ft.; Box 2)

This series consists of material regarding William Haines; Ted Graber; President Reagan and First Lady Nancy Reagan; and mementos from events and Presidential trips involving Graber.

CONTAINER LIST

SERIES I: White House Decoration, 1981-1989

Box 1

White House – Cabinet Room

White House - Oval Office with Old Rug

White House - New Oval Office Rug

White House - Mrs. Reagans Office, East Wing, February 1988

White House - Ground Floor Ladies Powder Room, 12/04/1986

White House Private Residence - First Lady's Dressing Room September 1988

White House Private Residence – President and Mrs. Reagan's Bedroom, October 1988

White House Private Residence Yellow Oval Room October 1988

White House Private Residence – Private Sitting Room, September 1988

White House Private Residence – Center Hall, 1988

White House Private Residence – Dining Room

White House Private Residence - East Sitting Hall, January 1984

White House Private Residence – Queen's Bedroom, 1988

White House Private Residence – West Sitting Room, October 1988 [Reagan's Private Living Room]

White House Private Residence - Third Floor Sitting Room, Jimmy Carter 11/21/1980

White House Private Residence – Bedrooms

White House Private Residence – Pool Room

White House Private Residence – Third Floor Sitting Room (Reagan's Furniture)

[White House Private Residence – Third Floor Sitting Room Graber/Reagan Redecoration] Southeast Corner Sitting Room

White House Private Residence – Third Floor/Unknown Location

White House Private Residence – Various Hallways – Individual Furniture Pieces

White House Private Residence – *Architectural Digest* re: Nancy Reagan/Jacqueline Kennedy Redesigns, December 2004

[Unknown Furniture – Possibly Reagan Ranch]

Gift Unit Tracking Report, 11/18/1981 – Gifts on Display

Presidential Seal

[Provenance of Furniture Placed in White House]

Executive Office Building, General Services Administration: Historical Study No. 3, 1964, 1984

Life Magazine – Bicentennial Issue, “The White House 1792-1992” – See oversize “The White House Gardens and Grounds”

“The White House: The First 200 Years”

SERIES II: White House Consultation Material, 1981-1989

Box 1, cont.

Queen Elizabeth Visit to Southern California, 02/27/1983-03/01/1983

Queen Elizabeth Visit to San Francisco, 03/02/1983-03/03/1983 (1)(2)

[Gahl Hodges]

Prince Charles/Princess Diana Visit to White House, 11/09/1985

President's Award for Distinguished Federal Civilian Service to Chief Usher Rex

Scouten – Photos, 02/07/1986

State Dinner with Mikhail Gorbachev, 12/08/1987

Menu Reviews

1988 White House Christmas Decoration Schedule

[Unidentified Table Settings for Mrs. Reagan Hosted Event]

SERIES III: Post Presidential Consultation, 1989

Box 1

[President's Office in Los Angeles]

Box 2

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Public Exhibition Space. Preliminary Concept

Proposal, December 1988 (1)(2)

Presentation of Official Portraits – President and Mrs. Reagan, 11/15/1989

SERIES IV: Ted Graber Personal Material

Box 4, cont.

1985 Inaugural Ceremonial Invitation

Christmas Card, 1981

Haines/Graber 1969 Redecoration of Winfield House, London

Life Magazine – “Special Issue” p.41 – See oversize

M Magazine November 1983, “Chatting with the President”, p. 46-53

[Nancy Reagan Interview – Reflections on White House Years]

[Nancy Reagan/President Reagan Photos]

Oval Office, Ted Graber

Program: 1981 Presidential Inaugural Concert Performances, 01/18/1981

Program: Camp David “Change of Command” 07/25/1988

Program Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher Dinner, 02/26/1981

Ted Graber Press Clippings

Trip of the President to Independence, Missouri, 09/02/1985, Trip Book

Trip of the President to Las Vegas, Nevada and Washington DC, 04/10/1988, Trip Book

White House Note Cards

William “Billy” Haines Material

Williamsburg Summit, 1983 Booklet

Box 3: (Flat - oversized)

Life Magazine – Bicentennial Issue, “The White House 1792-1992”

Life Magazine – “Special Issue” p. 41