

## The Designed The White House

BY MAY SPARKS

In the year 1792, the Congress of the United States offered a prize of 500 dollars or a gold medal for the best design of a proposed house for the Presidents of the United States. Nineteen sets of plans were submitted. The prize for the White House design went to James Hoban, and he accepted the gold medal instead of the cash award. Hoban was also appointed to supervise the construction of both the White House and the Capitol at a salary of 1,500 dollars a year.

James Hoban was born at Desart, near Callan, County Kilkenny, in 1762. After qualifying as architect in Ireland, he went to the United States.

The young Kilkenny architect was a man of wit and charm. He was a good mediator of labour disputes and always ready to give a helping hand to those in need.

It is said that Hoban's design was inspired by Leinster House, Dublin. When the White House was being built, he had a census taken, and it showed that the town of Washington had 820 residents, most of them craftsmen and others who were engaged on the building.

### *DENSELY FORESTED*

At that time, the place was densely forested and was infested with toads and frogs. Elder bushes covered what is now Pennsylvania Avenue and there was not an avenue or street there, except the road with two buildings on each side of it, which was called New Jersey Avenue.

The foundation stone of the White House was laid on October 13, 1792, and in November, 1800, President Adams moved in.

By the spring of 1814, during President Madison's second term of office, the President's residence had come to represent the best architectural taste in America.

Later that same year, the British invaded Washington. While waiting to leave her beautiful home, and with the American troops in retreat, Dolly Madison calmly sat down to write

a letter to her sister describing the confusion, the nearby sounds of canon, and her fears for her absent husband. The next day, August 24, 1814, the British set fire to the Capitol and the White House.

### *PAINTED WHITE*

When the Americas were finally victorious and had rid themselves of the British, James Hoban was appointed architect for the rebuilding of the Capitol and White House. Hoban had the charred brownstones of the President's residence painted white to conceal the ravages of the British fire, and from that time down to the present, the President of America's dwelling place is known as "The White House."

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### *ACCOMMODATION*

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### *OAK BARK*

To be sold — 40 tons of well saved oak bark —Apply William Dunphy, Castle Blunden. 19th Oct., 1786. Finn's Leinster Journal.

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### *'98 PIKE*

*A '98 pike which was donated by the late An t-Athair Michael to Mr. Peter Duggan has been kindly presented by him towards a K.A.S. museum.*