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The White House. An Illustrated History

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Grace, Catherine O'Neill. *The White House. An Illustrated History*. Scholastic, Inc., 2003. ISBN 0439429714. \$19.95. 144 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: White House (Washington, D.C.)--Juvenile literature; Presidents--United States--

Miscellanea--Juvenile literature;

This exquisite book looks at the history of the White House from the point of view of each of its first residents, from the family of John Adams, to the current president. Published in cooperation with the White House Historical Association, author Catherine O'Neill Grace writes that the White House functions as a home, an office, a museum, and a ceremonial stage, and she successfully shows the reader how. What is so intriguing about the book is that Grace is not limited to a mere description of the rooms or the responsibilities of the President. She includes interviews with such White House staff members as the chief usher, the director of the Marine Band, the pastry chef, and the presidential pet handler. Readers actually get a sense of what it is like to keep a 132-room household up and running, how staffers prepare for state events, and what a cabinet meeting might be like. There is interesting information about Presidential children, for example, Susan Ford held her senior prom at the White House. It also relates how successive presidents and their wives made changes to the White House. The plentiful color photographs are stunning, and offer a glimpse into such rooms as the library, the China Room, and the Green Room. The White House easily holds its own with some of the stately homes of the European aristocracy. The introduction was written by current First Lady, Laura Bush. The text has a familiar conversational style that draws the reader in. This book is a gem and can be appreciated by adults as well as children.