Governor's Mansion
1526 H Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Located at 16th and H streets
in downtown Sacramento

California's executive mansion, popularly known as the Governor's Mansion, was built in 1877 for Albert Gallatin, a partner in the Sacramento hardware store of Huntington & Hopkins. Gallatin hired Uriah Reese to build the house. The architect was Nathaniel Goodell. In 1887, Gallatin sold the house to Joseph Steffens, a local businessman and father of the famous journalist an author, Lincoln Steffens.

The State of California purchased the house from Steffens in 1903 for $32,500. Victorian architecture was then already somewhat out of style, but the house was suitably impressive, conveniently located, and comfortable. A small wing was added to the house and the Governor's Office and the home was furnished, bringing the total cost to $56,000.

Governor George Pardee and his family were the first residents of the "new" Governor's Mansion, which during the next 64-years was home to the families of 12 other governors, including Earl Warren who later became Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, and Ronald Reagan, who later became president of the United State.

The Mansion is unusual among museums in that it is not a replica nor a restoration. It stands much as it did when vacated by the Reagans in 1967. "Walk through history" and see the furnishing and personal items left by each family, including Governor Pardee's 1902 Steinway piano, the plum velvet sofa and chairs purchased by Mrs. Hiram Johnson in 1911, hand-tied Persian carpets acquired by Mrs. Earl Warren in 1943, and the official state china that Mrs. Goodwin Knight selected in the late 1950's.

You will also see marble fireplaces from Italy, gold framed mirrors from France, and exquisitely handcrafted hinges and doorknobs, all of which are reminders of the Victorian era. In addition to the tour itself, it is also possible to look around the mansion grounds and enjoy the flowers, shrubs, and trees, some of which date back to 1877. A swimming pool, presented as a gift to Governor Edmund G. Brown, Sr. in 1959 is visible inside the fenced patio.

The remaining text of this document is basically the tour presented by Tour Guide Jeannine Wells. She has been guiding tours at the historic Governor's Mansion for ten years. Through the years she has had the privilege of interviewing members of most of the families who have lived in the historic mansion.

She would like to acknowledge and thank the following people for their help during her research:

Miss Madeline Pardee
Mrs. James Gillette, Jr.
Members of the Rolph Family
Mrs. Frank Howard Merriam
Mrs. Earl Warren
Mrs. Patty Warren
Mrs. Betty Foote Henderson
Governor Edmund G. "Pat" Brown
Mrs. Helen Amick
Mr. Joe Munizich
Mr. And Mrs. Ronald Nielson
Mrs. Mabel Bowden
Mr. Honathan Weedman
Mrs. Nan Nichols
Mrs. Ronald Regan
Mr. Michael Kelly
Revernd Don Wells
Miss Helen Pardee
Members of the Richardson Family
Mrs. C. Glover
Mr. Dean Olson
Judge Earl Warren, Jr.
Mrs. Goodwin Knight
Mrs Edmund G. Brown
Mrs. Kathleen Brown Rice
Mrs. Helen Merring
Judge Stanley Mosk
Mr. H.G. Knapp
Dr. and Mrs. Joseph Wheelwright
Mr. Charles parks
Mr. Robert Handsaker
Mr. William Thompson
Capitol Restoration Research Team
Mrs. Naomi Schmidt

And many other people who have given "bits of information" during and after tours.

Publishing this book was made possible by Jane Wheelwright in loving memory of her mother, Lottie Steffens.

Front Hallway

Welcome to California's first official Governor's Mansion.

As you turn the pages of this book, you will see what the historic Governor's Mansion looks like today.

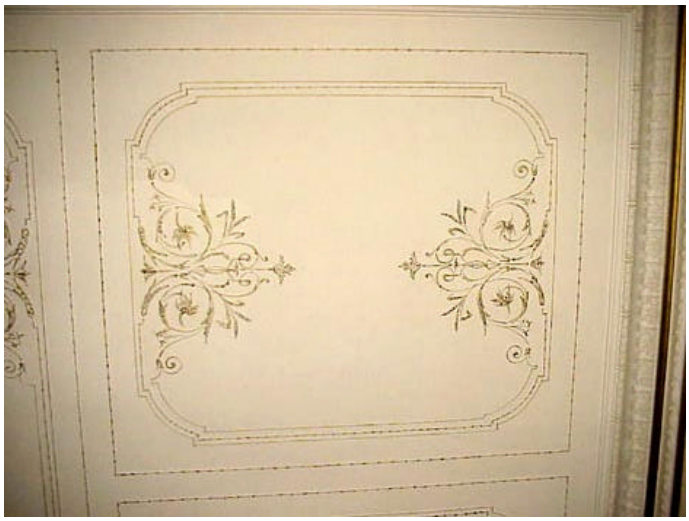
The house was built in 1877 for Albert Gallatin. He worked for the Huntington-Hopkins hardware firm and became managing partner when Collis Huntington and Mark Hopkins became involved with the building of the Central Pacific Railroad, the western segment of the first transcontinental railroad.

In 1887 Mr. Gallatin sold the house to his friend, Joseph Steffens, a prominent local businessman and father of the noted author Lincoln Steffens. Steffens sold the house to the State of California in 1903 for $32,500.

As we begin our tour through the front door and enter the foyer, you will immediately feel the grandeur of the mansion, as you look at the sweep of the hallway and the rise of the lovely spiral stairway. You can see, as you enter, the influence of the Huntington-Hopkins Hardware Store in the handcrafted bronze hinges on the inner hallway doors. A hummingbird has been moulded in the center of each of the matching bronze doorknobs, for which Mr. Gallatin is reported to have paid 25¢ apiece wholesale.

Your attention will also be drawn to the beautiful scratch (raised design) ceilings. To make the designs, plaster was pushed through a cone onto a glazed paper lying on a cool, hard surface. After the designs hardened, glue was applied, and they were hand-held against the ceiling until the glue dried. After the completion of that process, gold leaf was applied to the original scratch or raised designs.

The scratch ceilings at the Governor's Mansion are now gilded with paint instead of gold leaf.



Ceiling Detail

Door Detail

Door Detail

Formal Parlor

Upon leaving the entry hall, you come to the Formal Parlor or First Parlor. The furniture was selected by Nina (Mrs. Earl) Warren in the 1940's. Most of the pieces of furniture are fine reproductions of the Victorian period. However, the couch is of Duncan Phyfe styling. Mrs. Warren also purchased the outstanding Persian carpets seen in the first parlor and in all of the main floor rooms. We are told they were hand tied by young girls who, because of their tiny fingers, could tie the knots very close and tight. Although the purchase price for all the rugs was approximately $10,000, they are now worth many times the amount. The carpet in this room is a "Kerman".

The sterling silver tea service belonged to Lottie Steffens, daughter of Joseph Steffens. The service has been donated to the Governor's Mansion by Jane Hollister Wheelwright, the daughter of Lottie Steffens.

Most of the lamps in this room are the touch of Virginia (Mrs. Goodwin) Knight. The two cherub lamps on either side of the fireplace were made by the Cope De Monte Company.

The marble fireplace is the first of seven you will see in the mansion. Gallatin had them shipped from Italy. These fireplaces burned coal. Each was equipped with petticoat mirrors for the ladies to stroll past and to make sure they were not improperly dresses with their slip showing.

On the mantel is a lovely 1857 French clock. It can be seen in the earliest photos we have of the house's interior. The candelabras on the mantel were selected by Mrs. Warren.

Many people notice the radio and phonograph combination in the attractive walnut cabinet that was purchases and used by the Warrens.

The parlor was so formal in Gallatin's time that the children were only allowed to visit on special occasions when invited by their parents.

The Second Parlor

The second parlor was the informal living room, much like today's family room. The furnishings were selected by Bernice (Mrs. Pat) Brown in the 1960's. Mrs. Brown is also responsible for the gold flecked wallpaper in both parlors.

The painting on the south wall is on loan from the DeYoung museum in San Francisco. The portrait is of Mrs. Collis P. Huntington and was painted by Alexander Cabinal.

The two photographs on the north wall are of Lottie Steffens and John James Hollister, the first couple to be married in the mansion. These photographs were donated by Jane Hollister Wheelwright.

The beautiful fireplace is composed of three varieties of brecciated marble.

Above the fireplace is one of the four original mirrors imported by Gallatin from France. The mirrors adorn the four fireplaces on the first floor.

The velvet drapes hanging in the first and second parlors are reported to be the original 1877 drapes purchased by Gallatin. They have lasted so long because they are made of linen velvet, imported from Europe, and are heavily lined.

The Persian carpet in this room is from Isfahan.

Located on the mantel is a Sevres bisque candy dish. It, like the clock in the first parlor, has been in all of the old photos.

The television set was purchased during the Goodwin Knights' tenure. The other item from the Knight period is the window airconditioner. Both items are still operational.

Music Room

On the right of the main hall is today's Music Room. The 1903 Steinway piano immediately commands your attention. Many of the governors played this piano, as have many visiting show business celebrities such as Phyllis Diller and Liberace. By the window is an 1858 German music box that plays several tunes.

However, Gallatin demonstrated through his use of mouldings, that this was his library. Above the windows at the top of the mirror is the profile of William Shakespeare. Along the sides of the mirror we see the poet Lord Byron, and on either side of the doorways are found wise Egyptian Pharaohs.

In the closet to the left are the last remaining curved bookcases. The cases, which rounded out the corners of the room, were removed by Minnie (Mrs. Hiram) Johnson in 1911 when she remodeled the mansion. During Gallatin's time the room was referred to as Sacramento's "Oval Library", for Gallatin permitted the public to use it.

Mrs. Johnson placed the purple velvet furniture and matching drapes in 1911. The furniture still has the original covering.

Two alabaster "books" containing Gallatin's carved initials are found under the fireplace mantel. Three types of ornament were used in building the fireplace: the alabaster books, the flanking columns of onyx marble and the main body of the gold-veined black marble. The Ansonia clock on the mantel was used in the home during the 1930's by Governor Frank Merriam's family. It was donated to the mansion in the 1960's by Merriam's daughter-in-law, Hazel (Mrs. Frank Howard) Merriam.

Mrs. Warren purchased and placed a warm wine colored Saruk carpet in this room.

Dining Room

As you approach the Dining Room of the historic Governor's Mansion, you immediately notice the mouldings of fruit, vegetables, fish and fowl. Originally all of these mouldings were painted in their natural colors. How colorful it must have been to see purple grapes, silver fish, green and brown ducks and peaches against the dark mahogany wainscoting! Mrs. George Pardee had the natural color mouldings and wainscoting painted white. Later, Mrs. Johnson not only had all the dining room woodwork, including the fireplace, but all the mahogany in the mansion painted gray.

The dinner plates on the table are a 1911, hand-hammered, sterling silver set embossed with the standing California bear. The silverware has the "walking bear" of the California State flag. Mrs. Brown commissioned this set in the 1960's. The beautiful crystal is Hawkes, with the "Delhi" pattern. It was purchased by Mrs. Warren. On the table is a hand-embroidered tablecloth, reportedly made in China.

Governor and Mrs. James Rolph selected the table and chairs, the gold brocade drapes, and the crystal chandelier in the 1930's. Lydia (Mrs. C.C.) Young selected the remaining first-floor chandeliers in 1927 to replace single drop cords with one bulb that had been installed in 1896. The original fixtures in 1877 were gas.

Also visible are the two walnut side buffets and mirrors purchased by Mrs. Warren. On one of the buffets sits the sterling silver punch bowl donated by the Browns at the one-hundredth-birthday party for the mansion in 1977. On the other buffet are several pieces of the "Ransgill" pattern china that was selected by Governor and Mrs. Goodwin Knight. This fine china was made in Oakland, California.

The Persian carpet in this room was made in Kashan.

Blue Room

Leaving the first floor, we climb the twenty-six steps to the second floor. To our left is the Blue Room. The décor was selected for Governor Edmund G. "Pat" Brown in the 1960's. He often used it as an office and bedroom. Left of the doorway, you can see that he has a modern shower installed in the adjoining bath. To the right of the doorway is a small dressing-room area. It was added in 1917 and was used a nursery for Governor William Stephen's granddaughter. Later, Governor Young's daughters used it as a study and sitting room.

The double bed was extended to seven feet in order to accommodate Governor Warren, who was quite tall. Most of the furniture was the choice of the Warrens except for the lovely Chinese cabinet in the right-hand corner, which was chosen by Mrs. Brown.

Governor Merriam's dress suit, gloves, scarf and tie are displayed on the bed. A favorite photo of his granddaughter is located on the desk. This photo was kept on this desk throughout Governor Merriam's tenure.

The bedspread and drapes are made of sail canvas and were chosen by Mrs. Brown. Please note the very novel use of double shades on the long windows across the room from the doorway.

The top hat and cane located on the Chinese prayer table represent Governor James Rolph. He was considered to be quite a "dandy". He wore a flower in his lapel, carried a fancy cane and wore cowboy boots much of the time.

Guest Bedroom

The east corner bedroom, the birthplace of Leta Gallatin, is now referred to as Mrs. Knight's room or the Guest Bedroom.

Some of the famous guests who used the room are President and Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Governor Thomas E. Dewey, and Governor Adlai Stevenson. Some believe that President John F. Kennedy also slept here.

We see many of Mrs. Knight's touches in the room. She selected soft-pink drapes and matching bedspreads. Her hat is displayed on the chaise lounge. There are several photos of Governor and Mrs. Knight in the room. Virginia Knight's most interesting remembrances in the room are her pitcher teapot lamps. Two of them are on display. One is located on the desk while the second is placed on the table between the beds. Mrs. Knight had twenty-seven pitcher-type lamps made. She placed them throughout the house as part of her decorating scheme. It was in this room that she worked on gathering and framing the photographs of the other "First Ladies" of the mansion. The photographic display is located in the downstairs hallway.

The French Provincial furniture goes back to 1911 and was selected by Minnie (Mrs. Hiram) Johnson.

The beautiful bride in the photograph seen across from the door is Virginia Warren, the oldest Warren daughter, now Mrs. John Charles Daley.

Master Silver Bath

A battery-powered generator in the basement operated Mr. Gallatin's water system. The water was pumped to a cast-iron holding tank on the third floor. From here on, gravity flow made the water system function.

The "chicken wire tile" floor was each laid by hand. Many people comment that they remember seeing this type of floor in older houses.

From the bathroom, you can look into one of the closets in the master bedroom. The clothes in the closet are gowns donated by Mrs. Warren. They were all hand made for her by "Angelia's of Los Angeles."

It is unusual to find a Victorian with closets. At one time, a closet was taxed as an extra room. The mansion has many, most of which has the added convenience of a built in shoe rack around the bottom.

The small closet across from the toilet was used as the shoe-polish closet during Warren's residency.

The Porch Room can be observed from the bathroom as well.

Porch Room

The Porch Room was a small balcony on top of the roof of the Sixteenth Street side entrance porch for many years. You could reach it by stepping through the almost floor-to-ceiling window of the silver bath.

Now the room is accessible from the silver bath through a door placed where the large window used to be. The other entrance is from the "Pink" or master bedroom.

In 1907, the Gillette family had the balcony made into a screened-in sleeping porch. They felt this would help their young son James Jr., who suffered from asthma.

When the Warrens arrived in 1943, the porch room was in very poor condition. With six children, they needed another bedroom on the second floor. It was decided to remodel the porch room. Much to everyone's surprise, it became a lovely bedroom for Bobby Warren, the youngest son.

When "Honey Bear" Warren, the youngest daughter, became ill with polio, Mrs. Warren moved to the porch room in order to be near and care for her daughter's needs during the night. Honey Bear had bee given the master bedroom because she was "such a neat child."

During the Knight's years, the porch room was used as a sitting room. Mrs. Brown converted it into an office for the "First Lady". She selected the present décor.

Children's Room

The Children's Room received it's last redecorating while the Warrens were on vacation. Oscar Jahnsen, the governor's aide, had the room refurbished for Dorothy Warren. Her picture hangs on the back wall of the room. It was painted by Bruce Bushman, grandson of the late movie star Francis X. Bushman. Most of the furnishings, including the Toby lamp on the desk, are from the Warren residency. The small rocking chair with the ceramic doll, the blocks, and the toy harvester have been added by the Department of Parks and Recreation.

If you stand to the left of the doorway and look to the right at a slight angle, you can still see the bathtub with the red-rose wallpaper decoration.

Thirteen-year-old "Skipper" Reagan, son of Governor and Mrs. Ronald Reagan, was the last person to use this room.

Hall Bedroom

Through the open door in the hallway from the children's room, two rooms can be seen. The Gallatin's baby nurse originally used one room and Mrs. Gallatin's live-in French seamstress occupied the second.

Moving along the hallway, we leave the Gallatin home and enter the section added soon after the State of California purchased the mansion in 1903. On one wall of the addition are displays of Warren family photographs taken when the family lived in the mansion. Built-in linen closets and a shoe closet line the opposite wall.

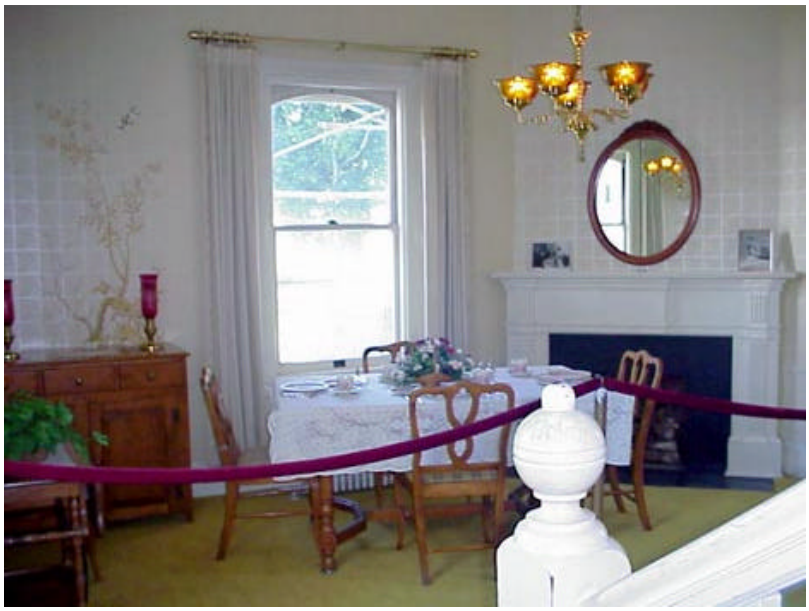
The room at the end of the hall has had many used. Maids, secretaries, guests, and family used it at various times. Bobby Warren used this room for a period of time when his sister was ill with polio.

The last person to use the room was Governor Edmund "Jerry" Brown. During most of the eight years that his father was governor, Brown was attending college or law school. When he came home to visit, this was his room.

The 1914 model Oliver typewriter on display is in good working order. It was added by the Department of Parks and Recreation and was never used by Governor Brown. The desk in the room was made for Governor Warren by prisoners at San Quentin. Many times the governors had furniture made for the mansion at the prisons.

The carpet in this room is an old Axminster and was installed in 1927. You will notice that it was made in twenty-seven-inch wide strips. Carpet was made in this fashion until broader looms were constructed.

Breakfast Room



The state constructed this side addition to give the governor an easy access office. Visitors did not have to disturb the governor's family when they used the side entrance from the porch. The room remained an office until 1927 when Mrs. Young decided it would make today's lovely Breakfast Room.

Mrs. Brown selected the décor seen today. She selected the drapes and wallpaper. Mrs. Warren purchased the bird's eye maple furniture. The table pulls out from either end for a nice, bng extension. She also selected the "Syracuse" china. It is the old ivory china with the "Lady Louise" pattern.

The two items from the Merriam family seen in this room are the silver-plate teapot and the beautiful candelabra on the mantel.

The big, white box in the corner always sparks interest. It is a 1928 York refrigerated air-conditioner. It is the best working refrigeration unit in the mansion and a very quiet one, for the wood casing absorbs the sound very effectively.

The windows in the room clearly show the waves and variations of old glass. It is believed that they are the original windows placed when the addition was built.

The fireplace is the only one in the mansion with a wood mantel.

Another interesting item in this room is the silver-plate crumb tray on the sideboard.

Looking through the window, you can see into the see into the second floor of the Carriage House and see that it was used only as a hayloft. It never provided servant housing.

Kitchen

The final room on the tour is the original kitchen. Mrs. Knight planned this as a Scandinavian kitchen. A windmill design wallpaper strip can be seen around the top of the room. The copper hood above the stove is a Danish feature, and we are told the color is "Danish blue." The kitchen décor has not been changed since then, with the exception of the linoleum floor covering, which was replaced by the state in 1978.

The modern, self-cleaning stoves and ovens were selected and installed by the Browns.

Featured in the kitchen is a marble-top table. It is simply two marble fireplace mantels lying loose on a wooden frame and is believed to be original to the mansion.

The kitchen and pantry were the only part of the house damaged in a 1917 assassination attempt on Governor Stephens. Dynamite was placed outside the mansion just beneath where the dishwasher is situated today. No on was injured. Though it was blamed on the Wobblies (Industrial Workers of the World), no one was ever convicted.

An annunciator can be seen on the wall. It is the servants' call system and was operated in 1877 on battery power.

The food pantry and the butler's pantry can be seen from the kitchen.

Fifteen families have lived in the mansion. Of the total, thirteen have been governors and their families. Changes have occurred in the mansion because of the needs and desires of its occupants. In this book we have tried to reflect the changes in the lifestyles and needs as they have affected the rooms and décor.

In 1967 the Department of Parks and Recreation took over the operation of the historic Governor's Mansion. In 1974 a new governor's mansion was constructed in Carmichael, a suburb of Sacramento.

We hope you have enjoyed your look through this mansion and will come visit us again.