



The George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum "serves as a resource for the study of the life and career of George W. Bush, while also promoting a better understanding of the Presidency, American history, and important issues of public policy. The Library and Museum accomplishes its mission by preserving and providing access to Presidential records and other donated collections, hosting public programs, creating educational initiatives, preserving artifacts, and producing innovative museum exhibits.

The George W. Bush Library and Museum is part of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). As the Nation's official record keeper, NARA serves as administrator for records of the United States Federal Government. NARA's Presidential Libraries and Museums are repositories for textual, electronic, and audiovisual Presidential records as well as domestic and foreign Presidential gifts.



GEORGE W. BUSH
PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY
AND MUSEUM



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About the company that built the desk

Where the canvas ends, the art of Eli Wilner begins. From works of exceptional cultural value to purely personal treasures, quality and passion can make all the difference in how we experience artwork. Eli Wilner has the artistic vision, historical expertise and team of skilled craftspeople to make that experience something very special.

It's no wonder his work is in the finest collections, museums and galleries, including The White House, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Smithsonian American Art Museum and the George W. Bush Library & Museum. Eli Wilner's unique ability extends beyond the public realm to private homes, creating individual works and personal collections for the enjoyment of family and friends.

ELI WILNER
& Company
MASTER FRAMERS

THE RESOLUTE DESK

THE FAMOUS DESK USED BY PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH
ORIGINALLY MADE FROM THE TIMBERS OF HMS RESOLUTE
RECREATED BY ELI WILNER & CO.



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The Resolute desk is a large, nineteenth-century partners' desk often chosen by presidents of the United States for use in the White House Oval Office as the Oval Office desk. It was a gift from Queen Victoria to President Rutherford B. Hayes in 1880 and was built from the timbers of the British Arctic Exploration ship HMS *Resolute*.

HMS *Resolute* was a British Arctic Exploration ship that set sail in April 1852 to search for the missing British explorer Sir John Franklin, who left Britain in 1845 in search of the fabled Northwest Passage through the Canadian Arctic. HMS *Resolute* became trapped in the Arctic pack ice in 1853. In 1855 an American whaling ship found HMS *Resolute* adrift and sailed it back to New London, Connecticut.

HMS *Resolute* was completely refitted and sent back to Britain in 1856 as a gesture of goodwill and friendship. When HMS *Resolute* was decommissioned in 1879, Queen Victoria had the desk made from the wood of the ship and gifted it to President Hayes.

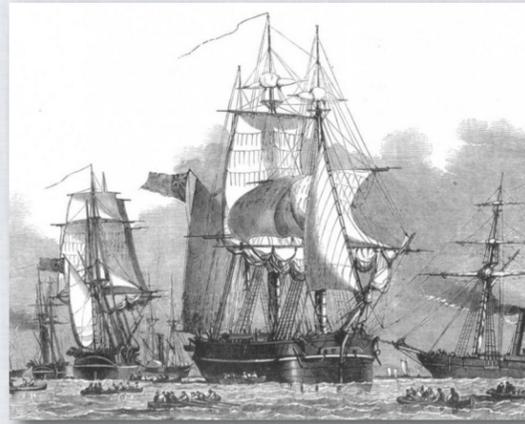
Many presidents since Hayes have used the desk at various locations in the White House, but it was Jackie Kennedy who first brought the desk into the Oval Office in 1961 for President John F. Kennedy. It was removed from the White House for only one time in 1963, when President Johnson allowed the desk to go on a traveling exhibition with the Kennedy Presidential Library. After this it was on exhibit in the Smithsonian Institution. President Jimmy Carter brought the desk back to the Oval Office, where President Ronald Reagan, President Bill Clinton, President George W. Bush and now President Barack Obama have used it.

A brass plate on the front of the desk presented to President Hayes in 1880 bears the following inscription:

H.M.S. RESOLUTE forming part of the expedition sent in search of SIR JOHN FRANKLIN IN 1852, was abandoned in latitude 74° 41' N longitude 101° 22' W on 15th May 1854. She was discovered and extricated in September 1855 in latitude 67° N by Captain Buddington of the United States Whaler "GEORGE HENRY."

The ship was purchased, fitted out and sent to England as a gift to HER MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA by the PRESIDENT AND PEOPLE of the UNITED STATES as a token of goodwill & friendship. This table was made from her timbers when she was broken up, and is presented by the QUEEN OF GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND to the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES as a memorial of the courtesy and loving kindness which dictated the offer of the gift of the "RESOLUTE."

Interesting fact: The front panel of the desk features the presidential seal—one of only four in the White House that have the eagle's head turned towards the 13 arrows in the eagle's left talon, as opposed to the now-official arrangement with the eagle turned towards the olive branch with 13 leaves in the right talon.



Top:
HMS *Resolute*

Signing the peace treaty with Spain in President McKinley's office- 1898

President Kennedy working while John Jr. plays in the Resolute Desk

President George W. Bush sitting at the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office



Top:
The Eli Wilner & Co. craftspeople hand carving the intricate details of the Resolute Desk

Fitting the sides of the desk

The base structure starting to take shape

Details of the carved ornaments that fit around the desk

Staining the desk



The Re-creation of the Resolute Desk

In 2010 Eli Wilner & Co. was commissioned to recreate the Resolute Desk by Mr. Jim Dicke II who donated the replica to the Museum.

Eli Wilner & Co. is a studio and gallery where frames and frame restorations are hand crafted for major works of art and featured in museum and private collections. Wilner has framed 28 paintings in the White House, *Washington Crossing the Delaware* for the Metropolitan Museum of Art and some of the most expensive paintings ever sold at Sotheby's and Christie's. In addition to creating frames Wilner also creates carved doors, custom pedestals and bespoke furniture.

Wilner's reference material to recreate the Resolute Desk came from multiple sources, including books such as Betty C. Monkman's *"The White House, Its Historic Furnishings and First Families"*. This was an especially valuable reference as it contained precise measurements and details of the desk.

The wood is plain sawn oak. In addition to the complex and elegant structure of the desk there are many passages of hand-carved ornament on the desk: foliate drawer fronts, carved arches atop center panels, oval medallions and a carving of the presidential seal at the front, center of the desk.

Many subtle details comprise the exact replication of the desk. For example, Wilner learned that American tanneries only tan half hides, so the leather for the large desk top was imported from Europe.

The desk was constructed over a six-month period with a minimum of two people working on it at all times. The project was accomplished first by the structural re-creation of the desk, and then as that came into being, the carving of all the special decorative accents that embellish the desk. Finally, after everything was complete the desk was stained to a beautiful color.

The Resolute Desk required over 2,500 hours to complete.

