

the Minister to Great Britain. At the Court of St. James, Lane refined her trademark social skills and absorbed the “protocol and social amenities” as a favorite of Queen Victoria. This exposure helped to prepare Lane as hostess and plan for the decoration of the White House.<sup>lvi</sup> Although the term “First Lady” generally refers to the wife of the current President, Lane impressed so many people with her grace and aptitude, that she first received the title through an article in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 1860: “the lady of the White House, and by courtesy the first lady in the land.”<sup>lvii</sup>

Drawing from her social breeding, Lane took on the task of modernizing the appearance and role of the White House. Apart from the structure’s function as a home and office for the President, it was a reflection of the country. Lane’s vision outfitted the house in the most fashionable order, equal to the palaces of Europe (Figure 47). By the time she joined her uncle in the great mansion, Lane had traveled extensively abroad, staying in England, Scotland and Paris. She too became well acquainted with the Bonaparte family. In 1855 Emperor Napoleon III brought his new bride, Empress Eugenie, to London. Harriet wrote to her sister acknowledging the event:

In the afternoon at five they received the diplomatic corps at the French Embassy and I had a long talk with her majesty, most gracious and affable. She is very striking, elegant and graceful... we go to the palace tonight to an evening party, and there I shall even have a better opportunity of seeing them I was disappointed in the emperor’s appearance—he is very short.<sup>lviii</sup>

Encounters such as these helped to influence the palatial vision Lane developed for the White House as an international icon of America.

Impressing foreign dignitaries was not as easy a task for Lane as it was for Monroe. The White House now had competition in being the grandest American home. At one point, the White House was the grandest and largest house in the United States.<sup>lix</sup> The rapid rate of development in the United States was a result of industrial production and economic growth. More Americans made more money and could now afford far finer things than the federal government could provide for the President. Therefore, Lane outfitted the White House on a budget, but worked to make it look as magnificent as the grand estates being built in America at the time (Figure 48).

Under Lane, many additions were made to the White House during the Buchanan administration. She added an outdoor pleasure garden for the President and commissioned six portraits of former presidents to be painted by George Peter Alexander Healy: Martin Van Buren, John Tyler, Millard Fillmore, John Quincy Adams, James K. Polk, and Franklin Pierce. Monroe's portrait was left out and much more of his legacy was about to leave the property.

In accomplishing the major redecoration plans, much for the benefit of her Uncle James, the image of the Presidency and the White House certainly improved. Although given a budget, Lane's redecorating project for wallpapering, upholstering, and refurnishing the rooms could not be paid for entirely with the federally approved funds. The Blue Room was still an actively used room and used for formal receptions. Lane's White House redecoration reflected a common trend within American interior design: the forty-year old, once ornate and fashionable, *empire*-style furniture was now considered poor taste and old fashioned. Furniture of the

more modern “Victorian” revivals of the Rococo and Gothic styles replaced the obsolete *empire* classicism. Classicism was no longer an antidote to political propaganda. Winterer’s studies also suggest that mid nineteenth-century American culture did not find relevance in classical education, which translated to its rejection in cultural identity and contemporary taste.<sup>lx</sup>

President Monroe’s custom ordered Bellangé furniture was, to Lane, a sign of the old. She, like Monroe, wanted the White House to be the grandest and most identifiable place, signifying American accomplishment and refinement. It was to be in line with the courts of Europe, especially now as the United States was becoming a powerful international player. Lane’s name and reputation, along with her uncle’s administration and the image of the United States, would be associated with the final design. The end result could be nothing less than exceptional and refined. The Bellangé suite was removed from display in 1860, and replaced with custom made gilded Rococo Revival furnishings made by Gottlieb Vollmer of Philadelphia (Figure 49).<sup>lxi</sup> The Vollmer suite, ordered in 1859, included two ottomans, four armchairs, two pairs of sofas, four side chairs, four reception chairs, and one center divan all upholstered in a blue brocatelle.<sup>lxii</sup> In comparison to the large quantity of the Monroe suite, made of sofas, *bérgères*, armchairs, side chairs, upholstered stools, and footstools, this order was indeed far less in number, although the space was not left empty due to the massive size of Victorian furniture.

The decision of what to do with the Bellangé furniture may have had several options, but a public auction in 1860 was the ultimate avenue for removal. The funds raised went right back into the redecoration of the White House to aid in the

pr the Lane spent a fortune on the new Vollmer furnishings. The Great Panic of 1857 still loomed over Washington's political atmosphere, and using tax dollars to outfit the White House with fancier furniture could result in a tarnished image for both Lane and Buchanan.

1860 marked a major shift in the White House interior; a pervasive vogue for rich furnishings continued, but the delicate nature of the Bellangé suite's subtle grandeur was replaced with an overhaul of monumental, ready-made Victorian furniture. Unlike Monroe's, Lane's choice of furnishings was heavily criticized by the press according to William Seale, White House expert, "a *New York Times* reporter borrowed from [Edgar Allen] Poe in finding the state apartments 'a perfect cholera morbus of drapery and furniture.'"<sup>lxiii</sup> Seale characterized the Buchanan administration as the last days of America as it had been. The exit of the Bellangé suite was a ceremonious action in removing the oldest objects from the White House, and replacing it with newer furnishings. It symbolized the modernization of the President's House and its furnishings. The old was ushered out, confirming that the focus of America, and Lane, was on current fashion trends.

The total cost for Lane's decorating plans ran high and America's economic woes caused by the Great Panic of 1857 loomed over Washington's political atmosphere in 1860. Therefore, the Bellangé furniture was sold at auction to remedy the two issues. The ultimate removal of the Bellangé destroyed its original meaning in sync with the White House, but it also parallels Monroe's decorating mantra. Lane, like Monroe, wanted to furnish the White House with objects, which evoked a positive American image. Their responsibility to project America as a

fashion-conscious culture was an attempt that ran paralleled to portraying America as a powerful nation. Unfortunately, the romantic history associated with the White House's reconstruction and President Monroe was not enough to save the Bellangé furniture from leaving its natural habitat in the blue elliptic room.

### *Chapter 3: All that Glitters is Not Lost*

By the eve of the Civil War, the Bellangé furniture had undergone various phases of attention: first being admired and meticulously attended to and then having its context in the house significantly altered by splitting it up into two separate rooms. Now the furniture's life in the White House had finally come to an end, leaving as old-fashioned outcasts. Fortunately, the decision to put the Bellangé suite up for auction provided the furniture with another chance to be recognized and prized.

Following the removal of the Bellangé suite from the White House, J.C. McGuire & Co. Auctioneers were enlisted to sell the suite, along with other cast-off objects. The printed sale announcement was in a variety of publications including the *Washington Evening Star*:

Handsome furniture, curtains, and carpets from the President's House at public sale—On Tuesday morning, January 17 at 1 o'clock in the large room second story of Sibley & Guy's building two doors west of the auction rooms, we shall sell a number of articles of furniture from the President's House, comprising—Suites of full gilt Parlor Furniture in blue and gold satin damask comprising two large Sofas and Cushions, twelve Arm Chairs, two Fire-Screens, six Foot stools and four Ottomans, with Curtains and Carpets to match. Suite of full gilt Parlor Furniture in green and gold brocatelle, comprising one Sofa and Cushions, sixteen arms Chairs, with Curtains and Carpets to match....<sup>lxiv</sup>

The listing for twenty-eight armchairs, twelve upholstered blue and sixteen upholstered green, two sofas, four ottomans and six foot stools hardly makes up the original 1817 fifty-two piece suite. In fact, the suite originally only had eighteen armchairs, so a mistake must have been made in the final count, or there was not a distinction between the side chairs and armchairs. It is also possible that extreme wear or accidents, such as Jackson's inauguration, resulted in broken objects over

time. Any number of scenarios could account for the different totals, but whatever their fate may have been, the mystery of the missing pieces still persists 150 years later.

The auction took place on January 17, 1860, and must have had a considerable turnout. Although the auction's advertisement stated the selection of "gilt Parlor Furniture" was a suite, the objects sold on an individual basis. As each piece sold to its new owner, a record was kept of the purchase price but not of the purchaser. Of the Bellangé furniture that has been returned to the White House, the information presented through scholarly research and family lore suggests who the purchasers may have been. Particularly, a certain group of Washington, DC, residents could have been the buying parties for the majority of the Bellangé suite at auction.

Washington, DC, has always been a city of transience: elected officials and their staffs change every few years. The dynamics of political control shift quite often, but a small group of individuals held multi-generational ties to the city and were well-connected in socially prominent circles. This powerful association ultimately led to the development of an elite and exclusive social club, honored by social standing, community involvement and, most importantly, family history. The self-proclaimed "Cave Dwellers" included individuals like Charles Francis Adams, Violet Blair Janin, and Benjamin Henry Tayloe. Through successive generations, the Cave Dwellers continued as a major influence on society and politics, both locally and nationally well into the twentieth century.

Why would this group, so exclusive and powerful, be drawn to second-hand furniture, tossed out from the White House? The utilitarian aspect of the Bellangé suite was moot, the gilded surface had probably worn off, and by now the upholstery was tattered and faded. The chairs, stools, and settees could barely be looked at as furniture. Instead, they functioned now as relics: the remnants of what the White House and Washington once were. The symbolic nature of the furniture now monopolized its meaning. It is unlikely that the furniture was purchased for everyday use in the home, but rather bought as cherished, historical objects for display. The primary reason this furniture left the White House was due to its outdated aesthetic, poor condition, and depletion of the set's original quantity. Additionally, if any furniture had to leave, and possibly fetch a fair price, the Bellangé furniture would sell well. The chairs, settees, and stools sold with the blue upholstered settees going for a total of \$35.00, twelve armchairs for \$135.50, six footstools for \$15.20, and four tabouret stools for \$27.50.<sup>lxv</sup> The furniture upholstered in green included four armchairs at \$34.50, and twelve side chairs at \$38.50.<sup>lxvi</sup> Although out-of-date and in disrepair, these objects still held a great deal of Presidential history. It is certain that the owners valued the furniture's for its White House context, but also its ability to physically link themselves to Washington history and the Presidency. Whether the purchasers were aware of the furniture being one-of-a-kind objects made by an esteemed Parisian cabinetmaker is uncertain.

The industrial age and Victorian aesthetic produced a generalization of decor and taste with identical mass produced items appearing over and over again in



homes. The advent of mechanically produced furniture also meant more people could now afford well-made furniture. Subconsciously, the Bellangé furniture reflected a more elite and segregated history for the Cave Dwellers, when their ancestors were the handful of Washingtonians with the finest possessions. A Washington resident, Benjamin Ogle Tayloe, referred to the Monroe-Era as the social zenith of Washington, “[T]his was the period of the best society in Washington, the first term of Mr. Monroe’s administration, from 1817 to 1821.”<sup>lxvii</sup> Granted, in 1860 these individuals were still the elite in Washington society, but the shrinking economic gap of the rising middle class minimized their prestigious lead. This furniture was the last gasp of the “old” Washington. Members of the oldest Washington families gathered the Bellangé pieces as though they deserved such mementoes for their own homes.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the White House furniture of the early nineteenth-century styles was largely removed from fashionable interiors and had lost its importance in the historical context of America as a country. The new furniture trends of the mid-nineteenth century differed in aesthetics, size, and production methods. No longer were individual craftsmen and their workshops, like Bellangé, the producers of fine furniture. Machine produced furniture was equal in visual beauty to pieces made by hand, but it was made at a much faster rate, less expensive to produce and therefore cheaper to buy. New, hand-carved, gilt, beechwood furniture from France became a rare and almost unheard of occurrence.

There was an extremely popular movement in design at this time with the resurrection and coexistence of other historical movements like Neo-Grec, Rococo,

Renaissance, and Gothic. In Marshall B. Davidson's "Those American Things", the author suggests the culture of mid-nineteenth-century America was moving in fast forward, focusing so much on what would develop next, that society, as a whole, began to forget its Colonial past:

Americans were slow to realize the interest and importance of their colonial heritage. For several generations following the conclusion of the Revolutionary War they were preoccupied with the growing pains of their new nationhood, the implications of a booming democratic spirit, and the advancing conflict of their interests and feelings that led to the Civil War. The lure of the West and the promise of a rapidly expanding economy also led them to look more intently to the present and future than to the past.<sup>lxviii</sup>

This mindset may have been a burden and blessing for the Bellangé suite. Its removal from the White House separated it from its historical relationship with the building. The Bellangé's original context was now lost. Under new ownership, the chairs, stools, and sofas developed a new relationship, connecting the social prestige of its purchasers to Washington history and vice versa.

The Bellangé furniture represents a unique approach to the critical turning point a piece of furniture undergoes within its lifespan once it has exhausted its usefulness. The change in ownership, from the White House to private homes, created an immediate change in value and overall meaning for the furniture: shifting from ineffectual objects to sacred relics. The action of the furniture's removal from the White House is what social historian Michael Ettema describes as, "the placement of an artifact on a scale of aesthetic desirability by employing socially defined value systems."<sup>lxix</sup> Typically, in the life cycle of a piece of furniture when the well-made and coveted object has been exhausted and worn down, it is discarded in favor of an entirely new and aesthetically different style. This new style, so different

looking than previous ones, convinces the owner that their old object should be discarded and replaced with the far more sophisticated and new. Ettema characterizes this as the owner's "aesthetic impulse," whereby the owners make decisions about their furnishings based on their description: beauty, quality, and fineness.<sup>lxx</sup> New objects, which replace the old, must fit favorably into each of these three descriptive qualities and will then reflect the owner's taste and refinement. Ettema suggests that history of furniture tends to be homogeneous, but the Bellangé suite is an exception to this generalized statement.<sup>lxxi</sup>

In the White House, the Bellangé suite was discarded by Lane to make room for Vernon's Rococo Revival furniture. The old Bellangé furniture transcended an unfortunate fate when purchased, and immediately regained value. However, they did lose their utilitarian qualities. These objects served as sacred pieces of American history with the ability to define an era of the nation's story. Religious relics, such as tattered strips of cloth from a saint, are preserved and cherished as family keepsakes, reinforcing one's proximity to God. The furniture ordered by Monroe acted as family keepsakes as well. Instead of faith, the Bellangé suite reinforced one's patriotism and proximity to power. In some instances, the Cave Dwellers were current or former neighbors of the President. Fortunately, there were forty pieces for the taking, selling as single items and, in some instances as pairs. It is uncertain whether there was any collusion among bidders, but the present day provenances associated with almost every piece leads back to individuals with associations to high social rank.

Although long-time Washington resident and Cave Dweller member, Benjamin Ogle Tayloe, did not purchase Monroe's furniture, the accounts in his diary provide a blueprint for the collecting spirit of Washingtonian's, like the Cave Dwellers, when purchasing objects of Americana. Tayloe was the son of Colonel John Tayloe, III and Ann Ogle, both coming from wealthy, well-known Virginia and Maryland families, respectively. Tayloe's childhood was split between one of Virginia's finest plantations, Mt. Airy, and Washington, DC, "Octagon House."<sup>lxxii</sup> According to his memoirs, published in 1872, he spent his youth, "with the most polished and refined society in America; with gentleman of the old school who had stood shoulder to shoulder with Washington in the war of the Revolution, and with Hamilton, Jay, Marshall, and Pinckney, in the councils of the nation."<sup>lxxiii</sup> Tayloe, being friends with many of Washington's elite, was well versed on the popular happenings of the time.

Tayloe may not have purchased anything at the 1860 auction, but he probably attended, as he frequently went to others. In one such instance, Tayloe described the sale of Secretary of State Henry Clay, a boarder at the home of the late Commodore Stephen Decatur on Lafayette Square—across from the home Tayloe built for himself in 1828 (Figure 50). Upon moving out from the Decatur House, Clay sold many belongings at auction. His account serves as a template for how other Cave Dwellers may have viewed the purchase of furniture from prominent figures of the day. Tayloe recorded the contents for sale and his own purchases:

His furniture [Henry Clay's] was handsome. At his sale of it, on his retirement from office, in 1830 (as I was then about going housekeeping in my house on the Square), I bought, as a reminiscence, the centre-table and the card-table of the drawing room.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

Tayloe, much like his peers, collected objects with Washington association and took great pride in where and whom they came from. He found in obtaining these objects, that the physical form provided a personal link to historical events or people. Other historical artifacts Tayloe owned were a card-table from General Washington, the drawing-room chairs of Alexander Hamilton, Hamilton's portable escritoire from the Revolution, Sèvres plates bought at Dolley Madison's sale, previously owned by Empress Josephine and Queen Marie Antoinette, one of Napoleon I's canes, and a Madonna, bought in Paris which Napoleon seized while taking over the Pitti Palace of Florence.<sup>lxxv</sup> Although Tayloe's accounts of such sales are the only widely known to exist, his actions reflect the behaviors of his peers.

One member of Washington's elite class had a direct genealogical connection to the presidency. Charles Francis Adams, Sr. followed in the political footsteps of his grandfather, John Adams, and father, John Quincy, serving as a foreign ambassador and also a Representative for the State of Massachusetts. At McGuire's 1860 auction of the White House furnishings, the Adams family had more than just the Bellangé suite as a reason to attend. First and foremost, they reacquired President John Quincy Adams's desk, used to furnish his Paris apartment while acting as secretary to John Adams during the negotiations of the Revolutionary War's end in 1783 (Figure 51). President Adams took the desk with him to the White House, but left it after losing reelection in 1829. At the same auction the Adamses also purchased two of the side chairs from the Monroe era Bellangé suite – proving that the newspaper advertisements contained a misprint, neglecting to mention the side chairs (Figure 52).

Although no physical evidence was needed for the Adamsses to link themselves to the Presidency, or Washington, perhaps these two chairs served more as fond memories of time spent in the White House. Whether their acquisition was based on sentimental or social purposes, the Adams chairs went first to their Washington home, the Slidell House on H and 16<sup>th</sup> Streets (Figure 50), and then to the family home in Quincy, Massachusetts (Figure 53). Later in the mid-twentieth century, the home opened to the public as a museum and shrine of the Adams family's accomplishments in their service of the United States. There is no known family record indicating when the chairs came to Massachusetts from Washington. The move may have revolved around Charles Francis Adams Sr.'s relocation to London as the American Minister in 1861, taking Henry, his son, with him as a secretary.<sup>lxxvi</sup> They may have been shipped north after their departure for London. Charles Francis, Sr. was fifty-three, and his sons, John Quincy, Jr., Henry Adams, Charles Francis, Jr., and Brooks were twenty-seven, twenty-five, twenty-two, and twelve respectively. While Henry traveled between Rome, Quincy, and Washington at the time, John, Charles and Brooks were all in Massachusetts. Charles, Sr. was most likely responsible for the auction acquisitions. As an Adams, he may have felt it appropriate to purchase two chairs—honoring his father and grandfather.

Another of the President's neighbors was from a long line of Washingtonians with a direct connection to many Presidential administrations. Violet Blair, later Violet Janin, thought herself to be from one of the original and most well-connected Washington families.<sup>lxxvii</sup> Although there is no proof Violet ever purchased the

Bellangé furniture, the history of a *bérgère* and armchair has association with her family. The last private owner acquired these chairs just after her death in 1933.

Violet was the daughter of James and Mary Jessup Blair. Mary was the daughter of General Thomas Sidney Jessup, a well-known General in the US Army, and she later inherited both 716 and 718 Jackson Place - just across from the White House (Figure 50).<sup>lxxviii</sup> James was the son of Francis Preston Blair, who lived at 1651 Pennsylvania Avenue, what is now known as the “Blair House.” Francis Preston was an ally and friend to President Jackson and was greatly involved in the van Buren and Lincoln administrations through his work as the editor of the *Washington Globe*. Aside from his famous Blair name, James Blair was the developer of a successful steamboat company, which made him a very wealthy man. After Janin’s father, James, died, she and her mother lived at 718 Jackson Place while 716 acted as a rental property. Violet married Albert Janin in 1874 and the two occupied the same house until their deaths in the early twentieth century.<sup>lxxix</sup> In 1860, she was a young, wealthy, unmarried woman and very sociable. Her name was synonymous with Washington society and politics, largely due to the legacy both her mother and father’s families left behind. Her proximity and association with the Presidency surely favored her as a strong female counterpart in social gatherings.<sup>lxxx</sup>

Kemper Simpson, a Washingtonian, eventually owned two of the Bellangé pieces, the armchair and a *bérgère*. Simpson, a well-respected economist and author, was of a good friend of Janin’s son, James. According to former White House Curator Betty Monkman’s book, *The White House: Its Historic Furnishings and First Families*, Simpson acquired the armchair from the Union Trust Company of

Washington, DC, around 1933.<sup>lxxxix</sup> The Union Trust Company also executed Janin's estate following her 1933 death. Whether Janin willed the armchair to Simpson, or he purchased it from the estate is unknown. How Simpson came to own the *bérgère* remains somewhat of a mystery because the date Simpson acquired it is not recorded anywhere. Peter Hill, administrator and dealer for United States Antiques, believed the *bérgère* also came from the Janin estate.<sup>lxxxii</sup> Simpson most likely frequented the Janin residence, and perhaps expressed affection for the chairs. It is possible James Janin may have taken note of Simpson's interest and interceded with Violet to include him in her will.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> There is also the possibility Violet never owned either the armchair or *bérgère*. Regardless of how Simpson came to own one or both, he valued the two chairs and the history they presented, owning them until his death in the 1970s.<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

Although they never lived in the White House neighborhood, the Galt family was intimately connected to the President in other ways. Matthew Galt, purchaser of a Bellangé armchair at the 1860 auction, was the founder of Galt & Brothers Jewelers in Washington, DC. Galt & Brothers was a successful company specializing in silver, silver plate, fine jewelry and gifts (Figures 54 & 55). During the nineteenth and twentieth century, Galt & Brothers supplied Presidents and First Ladies with gifts for various Heads of State, as well as objects for the First Family.<sup>lxxxv</sup> The honor to work with the First Family elevated the Galt family's status and wealth in Washington. Matthew must have decided his relationship with the Presidency should be represented in more than just commissioned work. While the President bought from him, he was now buying from the President. The two generations of



Galts who owned the chair did not record where it was kept in their home, or how it was used. After Matthew Galt's death, the armchair passed on to his daughter, Annie Galt Fendall, who kept it until she passed away. Fendall's chair resided in her Washington, DC home, but again, with no record of its use or recognition of a Monroe connection. Upon her death in 1934, she left the chair to her former sister-in-law, Edith Bolling Galt Wilson (Figure 56). Edith married Norman Galt, son of Matthew and sister of Annie, in April of 1896 in Wythesville, Virginia. The two were married only twelve years as Norman died at the young age of forty-four in 1908. Following his death, Edith married the recently widowed President Woodrow Wilson in 1915. She kept close ties with the Galt family and received the Bellangé chair upon Fendall's death.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> It is uncertain whether Edith had personal attachments to the armchair, but it is certain she cared for it enough to preserve it. Fendall most likely felt it appropriate to give the chair to Edith because of her former role as First Lady. Edith displayed the chair at her 2340 S Street in Washington along with an assortment of other Presidential memorabilia she inherited after President Wilson's death in 1924 (Figure 57).

Far north of Washington, Catherine Bohlen of Villanova, Pennsylvania, possessed a Bellangé armchair she inherited from her paternal grandfather. Bohlen's family also owned another Bellangé piece, which her Aunt Tina owned for a time. After Tina's death and the sale of her home in Ipswich, Massachusetts, her chair went missing.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> Bohlen was the last member of her family to own the surviving Bellangé chair. Her understanding of its history was distorted as it had not been carefully recorded or communicated. However, she suspected the chair had an

important historical association. Because of her grandfather's collecting behavior, Bohlen deduced, "the fact that my grandfather never bought any other 'antiques', and would undoubtedly not have bought these except for their association."<sup>lxxxviii</sup> Bohlen's mother, Margaret Cassels Bohlen, was a Cave Dweller and a student of history. She took an interest in the chair once her daughter inherited it. Bohlen credited her mother with the chair's preservation.<sup>lxxxix</sup>

The Bohlen armchair is one of only two surviving examples of the seating furniture with the maker's stamp "P. Bellangé" under the front seat rail. Additionally, "John Wagner," the 1840 regilder, was stenciled four times on the back rail.<sup>xc</sup> Wagner's mark is significant because it accounts for this specific armchair being in the White House past 1840, when he regilded them. In the 1849 inventory of the White House, several chairs were unaccounted for, but Bohlen's example would have been present.

Two side chairs of the suite became property of a Washington doctor with an esteemed military family history, yet far removed from the 1860 social scene. Dr. John Moore McCalla, Jr., son of War of 1812 hero General John McCalla, was a collector of Americana and objects embodying rich national history. His wife, Helen Varnum Hill, whom he married in 1864, was of a politically connected family. Hill's family had relatives in Congress and many real estate holdings in Washington. McCalla was fresh out of medical school working in Liberia at the time of the 1860 auction.<sup>xc</sup> Although there is no evidence when McCalla came to own the two side chairs, and examples of the *bérgère's* White House fabric, his granddaughter, Helen McCalla Goldsborough, suggested he may have purchased the chairs and other

effects at another auction: the May 25, 1875 estate sale of Christian Hines.<sup>xcii</sup> At this very auction, McCalla recorded some of his purchases of other presidential memorabilia. His account of the sale and others, though incomplete, were written in a ledger labeled “things bought at auction,” which Goldsborough discovered when cleaning out McCalla’s attic. One entry stated the following: “May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1875, Bought at the sale of effects of late Christian Hines, antiquarian, one arm chair was the property of Thos. Jefferson \$ 1.50.”<sup>xciii</sup> In his own notes, McCalla describes the Jefferson chair as once, “owned and used by Marie Antoinette at the Manon; was bought by Thomas Jefferson at the time of the Revolution with the others of the set and brought to this country and used at Monticello” (Figure 58).<sup>xciv</sup> Another of McCalla’s entries in this ledger reveals information about Monroe’s chair, writing it as, “[the] chair used in the Blue room of the President’s House from, Monroe’s administration until almost the end of Buchanan’s.”<sup>xcv</sup>

If the chairs came from Christian Hines, it would not be a surprising fact. Hines was born in Georgetown in 1781, before Washington, DC, was a city and witnessed all of the great transformations since the city’s founding in 1791. Hines was fortunate enough to have met many of the most prominent residents of Washington, including several Presidents. He spent many intimate occasions with Major Pierre Charles L’Enfant and purchased land from Thomas Thornton.<sup>xcvi</sup> Hines was also one of the first members of the “Association of Oldest Inhabitant” of Washington, securing his spot among people like the Tayloes, Blairs, and other Cave Dwellers.<sup>xcvii</sup> The “Association” was founded in 1865 and continues today, but today qualifying members are required to have Washington residency for only forty

years.<sup>xcviii</sup> Hines, like Tayloe, kept a collection of memoirs which revealed the evolution of the area according to Washington historian, Thomas Carrier: “he [Hines] dictated an oral history providing a detailed account of where every building, house, and government building was located in early Washington, DC.”<sup>xcix</sup>

In the same case as McCalla, Hines left no documentation as to how he acquired any of the historical furnishings he owned or sold in his furniture store. Indeed, it is likely he purchased the two side chairs at the 1860 auction. The furniture store he owned with his brother had great financial success at the time. Hines bought the Bellangé chairs because of their ability to connect his long running relationship to the city and the Presidency. Hine’s high status as a long-time resident probably afforded him many opportunities to visit the White House. Upon hearing of the 1860 auction, he probably knew, without any visual aid, exactly what furniture was for sale (Figure 59). As one of the city’s oldest residents, Hines certainly would have wanted a piece of the history he had witnessed.

McCalla’s reason for purchasing the side chairs at Hines’s auction had nothing to do with any association he or his family had with the President. He was, instead, a simple “collector” of Americana. In addition to the Monroe side chairs and the chair with a Thomas Jefferson provenance, McCalla also had a piece of President Jackson’s sleeve, the noose used to hang Charles Julius Guiteau for the assassination of President Garfield, a fire screen once owned by George Bancroft, author and United States Secretary of the Navy, and a portrait of Joseph Bradley Varnum, the seventh Speaker of the United States House of Representatives that originally hung in the Speaker’s Gallery at the United States Capitol (Figure 58).<sup>c</sup> The many relics