McCalla acquired over his years of collecting became quite an assemblage of historical objects, with various connections to the history of Washington. McCalla had a much deeper sense of appreciation for the Bellangé chairs. He took great care in preserving the chairs, never removing the 1837 upholstery, dating to the van Buren blue satin (Figure 60).  

This conscientious treatment of the Bellangé furniture by McCalla serves as the primary example of owners who idolized the Bellangé suite as a cast of relics. McCalla’s also had the full upholstery from one of the two bérgères: the seat back, seat, covered arms, and space between the seat rail and arm. McCalla kept the fabric in a complete state, keeping it in a box removed from light and dust. McCalla passed on the history of these objects to his children. One of his daughters affixed labels to objects noting their historical significance; one of them being a scrap of paper pinned to the bérgère fabric, mentioning its White House connection. Lorraine Pearce, former White House curator, believes McCalla’s respect for historical objects saved the fabric: “I think it rather that a friend of Dr. McCalla’s must have purchased it [the bérgère fabric] and not having quite as much preservation instinct, wanted to reupholster it and Dr. McCalla, to our eternal gratitude, kept it for posterity.” According to Goldsborough, the McCallas took excellent care of the chairs and all of the memorabilia they accumulated: the majority displayed in the parlor of their Washington home at 820 17th Street, NW Washington, DC, displayed but rarely shown.

After McCalla’s death in 1897, his daughter, Isabella McCalla Thompson, inherited the home and one of the Bellangé side chairs. The other side chair went to
Goldsborough’s mother and continued then to Goldsborough. Thompson owned the second side chair until her death. At her husband’s death in 1958, he divided the home and its contents between his siblings, Dr. Thompson and Helen Thompson Fisher, with the chair going to Fisher.\textsuperscript{cvi} Both Fisher and Goldsborough kept their chairs until the early 1960s.

Many members of the Bellangé suite have been lost and otherwise forgotten. In the late twentieth century, one of the armchairs surfaced in the Office of the Clerk for the United States House of Representatives. Benjamin Brown French, a former Clerk (1845-1847), had the armchair in his home on East Capitol Street, according to a photo, and the chair was then placed in the Clerk’s office.\textsuperscript{cvii} After French served as the Clerk, he was made the Commissioner of Public Buildings under Presidents Pierce (1853-1855), Lincoln (1861-1862) and Andrew Johnson (1865-1867). In this position, French maintained the Capitol building, the White House, and the city of Washington’s roads, parks and bridges.\textsuperscript{cviii} As Commissioner in the time of Pierce, prior to the Bellangé’s sale, French had a familiarity with the White House furniture as he was charged with its care.

In addition to his professional obligations, French made it his business to be a part of the Washington social scene, attending many functions including auctions. Betty Monkman, believes he attended the 1860 auction and most likely purchased his chair at the sale. If, in fact, he did not attend the sale, upon returning to his post in the White House in 1861, under Lincoln, he would have seen Lane’s replacement furniture. France could have tracked down the Bellangé pieces and later purchased his example. Monkman confirmed its location at the Office of the Clerk in 1993.\textsuperscript{cix} At
the time, French’s chair had been painted white with gold highlighted sections, cut
down legs, and porcelain casters added onto the feet. Unlike Adams, Galt, or
McCalla, the French example of Monroe’s furniture for the White House was
significantly altered, making it almost unrecognizable.

The Presidential connection the Bellangé suite embodied was, for the most
part, kept alive but incomplete. One armchair example, however, lost the Monroe
association for a time. It took on a different historical significance due to a
generational disconnect between its former owners and historians. This armchair is
currently in the collection of the Daughters of American Revolution (DAR) Museum
in Washington, DC, bequeathed by Colonel Richard Hardesty Thompson of
Baltimore (Figure 61). To the DAR, this chair’s original historical significance had no
connection to President Monroe. The Presidential link came to light in the mid‐
twentieth century when the curator of the museum, Frank Klapthor, determined its
history. Klapthor probably came to this conclusion once the Ralph E. W. Earl
portrait of President Jackson, seated in a Bellangé chair, entered the DAR Museum’s
collection in the late 1950s (Figure 38).

The chair’s prior provenance came from Commodore Joshua Barney, a
Revolutionary War and War of 1812 naval hero for both France and the United
States. According to the DAR Museum collections records, a Barney heir bequeathed
the armchair to Colonel Thompson. Thompson then gave the chair to the DAR in
1919. Later, the DAR Museum suspected the chair was a gift from Monroe to
Barney before his death in 1818. The DAR Museum’s object file stated the following:

This one (chair) was given by President Monroe himself to Commodore
Joshua Barney who saved Monroe’s life by holding the British at Bladensburg
in the War of 1812, August 12, 1814 while Monroe escaped to safety from the Hill above where he had come to watch the Battle; Barney had lost a leg in the encounter. Monroe made frequent regular visits to Commodore Barney who lived about eighteen miles from Washington....

The account of Barney at the battle of Bladensburg, Maryland, is historically accurate according to Barney's biography in the 1887 publication of *Appletons' Cyclopaedia of American Biography*. Barney's valor, however, was recognized with a sword from the city of Philadelphia, not a chair from the President. Barney lived in Elk Ridge, Maryland, until 1818, but died in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on December 1st of that year. He was buried locally the day after his passing.

Following Barney's death, Mrs. Barney and daughter Adelee continued on to Kentucky, where Barney purchased land for retirement. They stayed there until their deaths as Barney had sold their Maryland homes.

Although several of the original eighteen armchairs were never fully accounted for in the inventories past their 1817 arrival in the White House, Barney’s death and places of residence after the arrival of the Bellangé furniture in 1817 makes the gift unlikely. At this time he frequently traveled between Maryland and Kentucky, where he planned to retire. Monroe may have visited Barney when he returned to Maryland, but he would not have given away a Bellangé chair. It would have been an inappropriate gesture, especially since Monroe’s total spending came in well over budget to furnish the President’s House.

The “John Wagner” mark, signifying the 1849 repairs and regilding, as seen on the Bohlen example, is also on the DAR’s chair. Thomas Gentle Consultants of North Adams, Massachusetts, conserved the chair in 2000 and discovered two of the Wagner stamps on the back seat rail. This discovery contributed to amendments
in the DAR accession records: “[it is] very unlikely that chair left White House before mid 19th c.... perhaps a member of Barney family bought it then [at auction].” If the Barney family purchased the armchair at the 1860 auction, which is more likely than the alternative, the desire to preserve the family’s Presidential relationship continued, much like the other owners of the Bellangé suite. It is unknown whether the other Barney children, beside Adele, resided in Maryland, or near the Washington area, around 1860.

A good number of chairs from the Bellangé suite survived over the variety of stools and the two settees. Perhaps their size and identifiable utility made them less apt to destruction. As smaller objects, in weight and dimension, both foot and seating stools are more susceptible to damage. They can be moved and handled easily, and therefore more frequently, making for rapid rate of deterioration. The settees were large pieces of furniture measuring 9’3” long, 2’8’ deep and 3’6” high, with a unique curved back making their placement in an interior, other than the elliptic room of the White House, very awkward. The impracticality of something so large may have contributed to the survival of only one settee.

In 1930, Henry Ford, of the Ford Motor Company, purchased one of the settees for display at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan from an auction in Washington, DC. Ford followed in the footsteps of some of his fellow moguls, like John D. Rockefeller or Henry Francis du Pont, and invested some of his wealth in the preservation of America’s past. Instead of recreating a place like Colonial Williamsburg or the Winterthur Estate, Ford moved various historical buildings to Greenfield Village, creating a mid to late nineteenth-century town. Here
he showcased American life during its first great era of growth, the Industrial Revolution. In addition to the town, Ford created the Henry Ford Museum showcasing the lives of great innovators and their innovations. Included in this museum were examples of American furniture and craftsmanship. Ford, however, had a particular knack in acquiring furniture with very unique qualities: dimension, style, construction, or history (Figures 62 & 63). The Bellangé settee, although being French, had many of these quirky characteristics with its unique curved back and ornate carving, making it a must-have object for Ford. Whether Ford knew the settee’s Presidential history before acquisition is uncertain, although, as a collector, he acquired many other objects associated with the Founding Fathers. He was the owner of a John Trumbull portrait of Alexander Hamilton, which he and his wife donated to the White House in 1961. Regardless, whether Ford knew about the Monroe association, he certainly appreciated the settee for its distinct qualities.

The only other surviving chairs were in the property of a man from Maryland and an antiques dealer from Long Neck, New York. Eugene Douglas Birchby lived just outside of Washington in Kensington, Maryland. Little is known about him or his life, except for his career as the Assistant Vice President of First National Bank in Kensington, Maryland and as the organist for St. Paul’s Church in Washington, DC. In 1972, he wrote the then White House curator, Clement Conger, stating that he owned, “one of the Boulange arm chairs ordered by President Monroe for the White House.” According to Birchby, the chair was given by President Van Buren, “to his physician, through whose family it came to me.” The current White House Assistant Curator, Melissa Naulin, however, does not believe this to be
an accurate story. In correspondence with the then White House Assistant Curator Betty Monkman, Birchby mentioned, “'Dr. Jones or Dr. Connelly.' Presumably these names refer to the name of person whose family the chair supposedly descended in. It’s not clear to [Melissa Naulin] from his letter whether Mr. Birchby was a descendant of the physician or not, but his suggestion of two names suggests that he was not, and had simply acquired the chair from the family of the doctor.”

Birchby also mentioned in this correspondence that the surface gilding on the chair had been stripped fifty years ago, around 1920. Although Birchby had information of the chair’s history, how the Birchby family actually came to have the chair is still unknown.

Well over 200 miles north of Washington, in Long Neck, New York, Shirley Austin, of Shirley Austin Antiques, was looking to sell a Bellangé armchair from her company in the early 1960s. How Austin acquired it is also unknown, but the White House purchased this example in the same manner as the Birchby chair: by private funding. These two chairs, along with the other missing pieces of the suite, leave gaps in the lifespan of the Bellangé suite, and how and why they were acquired.

Fortunately, one lone Bellangé piece remained continuously as a part of the White House collection: the pier table. The pier table was the heaviest piece of furniture in the Bellangé suite with its marble top and glass panel, and it may be because of that it never left the property. In 1945 it was used in the Diplomatic Assembly Room on the ground floor. No White House records explain why the lone object stayed. Perhaps it still served its utilitarian function without major conservation work; as opposed to the seating furniture, which constantly needed
reupholstering. Perhaps Lane adapted the table to her decorative scheme to save money. Whatever the circumstance, the continued presence of the pier table secured the survival of the Bellangé suite’s legacy in the White House. Years after Lane left the White House, the pier table would act as inspiration for Theodore Roosevelt’s 1902 furnishing scheme and then lead to the Kennedy White House rehabilitations in 1961.

By removing the Bellangé suite from the White House, the furniture may have escaped a worse fate: destruction. However, its new placement in private ownership obscured the original meaning and use of Monroe’s furniture. The furniture took on a new life as enshrined American relics to be displayed and admired. This great shift benefitted both the purchasers and the furniture. As the first generation of owners died off, or simply forgot to pass on the furniture’s importance, the Bellangé furniture’s impact in their new homes diminished. However, late nineteenth-century America discovered a renewed cultural interest in the country’s past. The pier table’s continued presence in the White House eventually revived the original importance of the Bellangé suite and inspired the creation of imitations and the infusion of historical elements back into the elliptic Blue Room.
Chapter 4: A Sign of the Times

The various parties who collected the Bellangé suite acquired these Presidential objects as homage to national or personal family history. In acquiring the chairs, stools, and settees, the collectors were probably unaware their purchase of Presidential furnishings was about to become part of a major social movement in the United States. The competitive collecting of “Americana” blossomed in the mid nineteenth century and boomed with the upcoming Centennial celebration in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Figure 64). This event marked more than just the 100-year anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. The time around the Centennial, both before and after, was an era of revived interest in American history and preservation.

Just after the sale of the Bellangé pieces came the Civil War, which lasted from 1861 to 1865. Public and private structures of Washington, DC, became temporary barracks and posts for the war effort (Figure 65). Homes on Lafayette Square were temporarily occupied by the Union for special operatives. The Square, itself, became an area filled with stables, shanties, and dumping piles. The era following the end of the war between the North and the South must have been the second hardest recovery for Washington, following its burning in 1814.

As the Civil War came to an end, momentum built for the Centennial exhibition in Philadelphia. The Centennial celebration was meant to be the American version of England’s renowned 1851 “Great Exhibition” at the Crystal Palace (Figure 66). Whereas the Great Exhibition in England was geared more towards a celebration of Britain’s design and industrial achievements, as a
movement away from its past, the American Centennial celebration was a reflection of America’s history: its conception, birth, and maturation into one of the largest and most powerful countries in the world. In addition to the growing national interest in American history, the excitement over celebrating the Centennial fueled an even greater awareness of antique objects associated with historical American events and people. The owners of the Bellangé suite surely saw themselves as a part of the trend in owning and preserving historic objects. Although it is not likely Charles Francis Adams, Violet Janin, Matthew Galt, Benjamin French, or Christian Hines intentionally purchased the Bellangé suite as a rescue mission, their competitive bidding at auction unwittingly resulted in one of the greatest preservation achievements of White House history.

The influence of the Centennial’s focus on America’s past was not limited to preserving antiques such as furniture. A major motivator for the development of this national nostalgic mindset was in reaction to industry and machine-produced goods. Industry was still celebrated at the Centennial, and pride in American-made goods and history became a defining force of late nineteenth-century America.

The newly heightened emphasis on collecting Americana furniture also affected the Bellangé furniture, although it was not American-made. American-produced Jacobean, William and Mary, Queen Anne, and Chippendale, were the first styles of cabinetmaking to dominate this period of collecting, followed later by the Federal and Empire styles, because they were expressions of American culture (Figure 67). The notion of the Bellangé suite being French and not American probably had no affect on their survival. First, the chairs, stools, and settees were
still associated with American history; and, second, European, especially French, goods were still in vogue in America in the mid-nineteenth century.

Americans imported objects, ideas, and designs from France and England, although American-produced goods also had favor amongst consumers. The acknowledgment of both American and European objects, such as furniture, came from more than an aesthetic viewpoint. The nostalgia many American collectors felt for their culture and tradition motivated them to save these relics. Hillary Murtha, a Doctoral candidate from the University of Delaware, addresses this collecting trend in relationship to the museum period room invention of the early twentieth century, “[s]ome felt a xenophobic desire to ensure that America was defined by the ideals and strivings of her earliest settlers.” Murtha further emphasizes that the collectible memorabilia, furniture, ceramics, and architectural elements were from American colonial roots, she continues, “an almost equally noxious invasion was that of the nouveau riche. In moving the ‘halls of their ancestors’ into the interiors of museums, these colonial revivalists preserved a sacralized, mythologized past and placed their families and those of like origin in a sphere forever beyond that of the newcomers.” (Figures 68 & 69) This era of social paranoia was beginning at the time of the Bellangé suite sale in 1860 and continued as the economic gap shrank that separated American social classes. Organizations like the Daughters of the American Revolution (1890), National Society of the Colonial Dames of America (1891), and the Hereditary Order of Descendants of Colonial Governors (1896) formed for the descendents of the earliest settlers and revolutionaries. These groups
and organizations created an official designation for Americans who descended from the first “Americans” in contrast to those who later immigrated.

With many historical objects fleeing for the welcoming spaces of museums, reproductions of historical American furniture were made. Soon an entire industry of all decorative medium reproductions began: furniture, ceramics, glass, and textiles. The historical connotations of the furniture made them desirable, and their machine-produced price made them attainable. Also developing concurrently were the academic fields of American historical research and scholarship. Antiquarian societies, like the Walpole Society, formed in 1909 for the research, discussion, and appreciation of American decorative art, fine art, and architecture. The publication of these topics rapidly developed both on a scholarly level as well as for entertainment. Esther Singleton’s 1900 publication, *The Furniture of Our Forefathers*, brought together images and anecdotes of how objects were used in early-America (Figure 70). The academic popularization of historical objects through resources, like Singleton’s book, grew at a similar rate as a number of other publications featuring the use of historical furniture within modern interior decoration.

The 1898 publication of Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman’s *The Decoration of Houses* spurred a wide appreciation for the use of antiques in the modern home (Figure 71). A medley of European and American aesthetics was used in Wharton and Codman’s book, along with their own designs for some of the wealthiest Americans at the time. Books, such as this, circulated widely, impacting the adaptation of the “colonial” aesthetic into various domestic designs of all economic
levels. In the first chapter of *The Decoration of Houses*, ”The Historical Tradition,” the authors explored the major changes in the late nineteenth century taking place in architecture and decoration:

> [t]he last ten years have been marked by a notable development in architecture and decoration, and while France will long retain her present superiority in these arts, our own advance is perhaps more significant than that of any other country. When we measure the work recently done in the United States by the accepted architectural standards of ten years ago, the change is certainly striking, especially in view of the fact that our local architects and decorators are without the countless advantages in the way of schools, museums and libraries....

Wharton became an authority on decorative taste, influencing other designers charged with looking to the past, specifically antique furnishings, to create something modern. Many decorative styles coexisted at the same time, and the end of the nineteenth century also saw the rise of the Arts & Crafts movement. Architects like Frank Lloyd Wright and the Greene brothers created entire domestic environments, both interior decoration and architecture, that were sleek, simple, and inspired by nature (Figure 72). Wharton and Codman’s designs took inspiration from English country houses and French chateaus by infusing texture, shape, and dimension into their plans (Figure 73). Although they looked to history with the use of antiques in their decorative schemes, the two designers were creating an entirely new American domestic interior.

The many owners of the Bellangé furniture came from well-to-do families who kept up with the current trends like those of Wharton and Codman. Their investments in the Bellangé furniture, now forty years old, evolved into something more than a relic, or mere symbol, of historic connectivity to the Presidency. The aesthetic of the Bellangé furniture was now chic in American interior design. In
addition to incorporating antique furniture into interiors, many new furniture
designs were based off of surviving examples like the empire style of the Bellangé
suite. Wharton and Codman cited this in their book,

[many of the most popular features in modern house-planning and
decoration... have been revived by the archaeologizing spirit which is so
characteristic of the present time, and which so often leads its possessors to
think that a thing must be beautiful because it is old and appropriate because
it is beautiful.]

this spirit of incorporating older furniture into high-style interior decoration meant
the antiques would be actively used, but many owners of the surviving Bellangé
examples did not to use them. White House condition reports from the 1960s and
1970s for the furniture, along with the accounts of the donors, suggest these pieces
acted more as statues in the home rather than seating instruments. This lack of
use directly contributed to their survival.

The Bellangé suite had once again taken on a symbolic new life—after its
initial idolized, then demoralized, and now glorified life phases. This time, however,
only their generalized empire aesthetic inspired contemporary interior designs.
Wharton and Codman cited an example of the empire style furniture and interior
with an image in their book of the Grand Trianon at Versailles, where Bellangé
received a commission (Figure 74). In this photo are examples of chairs that may
very well be Bellangé’s work.

This contemporary trend inspired the 1902 restoration of the White House
interiors under Theodore Roosevelt. The timing of the restoration and this interior
design trend allowed the Bellangé suite to reenter the White House spotlight. For
many years prior to Roosevelt’s inauguration, an expansion or possible relocation of
the White House had been under consideration. President McKinley hired Colonel Theodore A. Bingham in 1897 to move the planning along (Figure 75). Bingham was the head of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, overseeing the planning and later execution of the White House construction. McKinley’s assassination in 1901, however, forced the presidency and planning onto Roosevelt. Under his administration, the structure underwent major transformations. In 1860, Harriet Lane focused only on the modernization of the White House through the newest fashion in decoration and furniture. Little of the interior decoration history was left intact to preserve. Now, like Wharton and Codman’s aesthetic, history returned to the White House, showcasing a take on the house’s early nineteenth-century decoration.

As a student of American history, Roosevelt found the creaks and quirks of the White House to be fascinating historical mementos. He admired the existing furniture despite its outdated appearance, and even insisted on personally using the “Lincoln” bed. Although he respected the house for the history it could tell, the importance of keeping the structure in presentable shape was a major concern. Updating the house for sound structural reasons was also a necessary factor. His determination to protect and preserve the White House resulted in a 1901 executive order officially naming the structure the “White House.” Under his authority, and with major influence by his wife, Edith, Charles McKim, of the New York architectural firm McKim, Mead and White, was made the lead architect and designer of the enormous project. The expansion and construction was the grandest update to the White House since the rebuilding under Monroe in 1815. Out went all
of the eclectic Victorianism that came in as the Bellangé furniture exited, including
the famous Louis Comfort Tiffany glass partitions of 1882 (Figure 76). The bulky
“revival-style” furniture, and decorative details were replaced with designs and
objects of a more accurately revived colonial aesthetic.cxliii

Prior to the official hiring of McKim as lead designer for the project, he,
Daniel H. Burnham, famed architect and city planner, landscape architect Frederick
Law Olmsted, and sculptor August Saint-Gaudens sailed to Europe together on
behalf of the United States government to study the plans of European capitol cities
in the hopes of improving Washington. According to Seale “[t]hey sailed from home,
traveled for seven weeks, visiting chateaux, palaces, public squares, parks, and great
gardens and studying city plans they found relevant to Washington. Already in late
July, when they sailed for home, the architects were making sketches for a revised
Mall.”cxliv The journey took the architects, planners, and artists through England and
France, showing them the influence of political propaganda in the great urban
planning and design of Versailles, Le Louvre, Buckingham Palace, and Windsor
Castle.cxlv Most likely, while visiting these places, the group witnessed examples of
Bellangé’s furniture at several of these locations: the Musée Marmottan at Versailles,
Palais de Tuilleries at Le Louvre, and Windsor Palace.cxlv

McKim respected the history of the White House with his plans, but did not
intend to rebuild what existed before. His design did not copy those of James Hoban,
but they were similar in symmetry and unified spaces. Colonel Theodore Bingham,
in overseeing the project, wanted to make sure thorough plans were made to
modernize the structure, but that the history of the White House remained intact
and preserved as much as possible. Bingham therefore researched the documents, plans, and bills from the White House relating to its many alterations and decorative changes. In his search, he found the original 1817 documents for Monroe’s purchases, including Pierre-Antoine Bellangé’s bill for furniture (Figure 77).cxlvii

The combination of Bellangé’s name now associated with White House furnishings, McKim’s exposure to the palatial furniture abroad, and the contemporary increase in decorative arts scholarship, all culminated in the decision to produce imitations of the original Bellangé furniture for the White House. Of course, having examples of the original Bellangé suite would have been helpful, but with no buyer documentation from the 1860 sale, their recovery must have seen inconceivable. Fortunately, in 1902 while Glen Brown, the lead project architect, cleaned out the attic of the White House in preparation for construction, he found the lone Bellangé marble-topped pier table (Figure 78).cxlviii Uncovering this authentic piece of Bellangé furniture was a surprising find. It was also the most important resource for restoring historical authenticity to the White House. In the absence of any original seating furniture, the reproductions were modeled after a suite made for Napoleon I at the Château de Compiègne by Jacob-Desmalter, a contemporary of Bellangé producing furniture in Paris (Figure 79).cxl The understanding of the White House State Floor and the formal roles each room played. Among the Blue, Red, and Green Rooms, the Blue Room still had a central role in White House receptions and entertaining. McKim charged three separate design firms to create the furniture for
each space: New York’s Herter Brothers dressed the Red Room, A.H. Davenport & Company of Boston outfitted the Green Room and State Dining Room, and Leon Marcotte & Company of New York took on the Blue Room by making the Bellangé reproductions based on the Jacob-Desmalter furniture. \(^{cl}\)

McKim’s recognition of the Blue Room’s role in receiving guests, both historically and currently, resulted in his design to make it the richest room on the State Floor, complete with the new reproduction furniture. A curved couch, footstools, series of armchairs, and two variations of side chairs were made (Figure 80). The one side chair variation had an almost identical backsplat detail and similar exterior construction to the original Bellangé chairs (Figure 81). The other variation had a shield-shaped backsplat, covered with caning. The carved detail, however, on all of the furniture was in no way reminiscent of the original Bellangé chairs or pier table. When the Bellangé pier table was found, it retained its original gilding and carved detail, but the Marcotte reproductions were painted white with only highlights of gold. Marcotte must have decided to reproduce the exact likeness of the Jacob-Desmalter chairs, which had the same color choices.

The other furniture producers and designers employed to work on the White House project outfitted their rooms with objects of the early-American aesthetic as well. Davenport’s furniture-style-era for the Green Room came a little earlier than the empire with, “two neo-Georgian tables, one large and one small, with pedestals and broad, cross-banded border.”\(^{cl}\) Davenport also outfitted the family dining room, above the State Floor, with Federal style furniture\(^{clii}\) These pieces were simply made to look like older furniture, used in the time of our Founding Fathers, whereas
Marcotte’s creations were inspired by a singular suite original to the house: the legacy of Bellangé, and Monroe, persisted.

The White House’s renovation in its architecture and interior design were published in an extremely popular two volume work, *The Story of the White House*, in 1907. Undoubtedly, it was McKim’s most well-known commission and perhaps his most challenging. Due to the attention the commission received, McKim and his firm’s popularity expanded greatly; and they went on to become the foremost designers of the early-twentieth century. The White House project had also received great fame in the process. Images of the most recognizable building, and now interior, circulated widely in the United States. The Herter Brothers Red Room aesthetic was a nod to American-made mid nineteenth-century plush Victorian furniture (Figure 82). Their production of the furniture for the State Dining Room was a conglomeration of William and Mary, Queen Anne, and Regency forms (Figure 83). Davenport’s Green Room was modeled on Anglo-French classicism, with white painted neoclassical-style furniture (Figure 84). Following the end of construction, the White House opened for a public viewing on New Year’s Day 1905. What the public saw, through publications and in-person, influenced and reflected American style at the time.

Actual historic furniture of the Bellangé suite’s empire style, and others, was viewable in public spaces other than the White House. Wealthy Americans, who reaped the benefits of the Gilded Age’s economic boom, began collecting mass amounts of historic furnishings in the late nineteenth century. At the turn of the twentieth century, institutions like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Pennsylvania
Museum and School of Industrial Art, later the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago were founded. Their collections were formed by the donated objects and money from wealthy Americans. The way in which these objects were considered museum-quality depended on their age. Michael Ettema believes at the turn of the century museum quality pieces depend on their age: the older an object, the rarer, and therefore, “more worthy of aesthetic consideration regardless of any other qualities it may possess or lack.”

In the case of furniture, Charles L. Pendleton’s bequest of eighteenth-century American decorative arts to the Rhode Island School of Design in 1904 was the first major donation of its kind. Pendleton specified his objects were to be displayed in a Georgian architectural setting. This museum arrangement, later known as a “period room” or “period setting,” was a relatively new concept to an American museum-goer. During the twentieth century the American museum “period room” flourished in museums across the country such as the Brooklyn Museum and St. Louis Art Museum.

Although the public now had wide exposure to historical furnishings in the twentieth century, and museums became a destination for the American public, the privately owned Bellangé furniture was not exploited for its significance in any known museum setting. Their existence went unpublicized, which could have been for many reasons. By the beginning of the twentieth century, most of the first generation owners were either elderly or had since passed. In many instances the furniture’s historical association was not emphasized or even explained to its inheritors. The nine examples of the suite that are known today were fortunate to survive, whereas the majority of the original fifty-three piece suite has disappeared.