

Christmas decorations honor presidential pets

WASHINGTON (AP) — At the White House, Christmas this year will go to the dogs. And cats. Even an alligator.

First lady Laura Bush announced Wednesday that holiday decorations at the White House will celebrate the pets who have lived in the executive mansion over the years.

Workers in the White House residence have toiled since July 25 on replicas of various first family pets that will adorn the State Floor during the upcoming holidays.

"Our pets have been such a source of comfort and entertainment to us," Mrs. Bush said in a written statement released while she was in Europe with the president. "This holiday season I thought it would be fun and interesting to learn about the animals that belonged to other presidents over the years, and there are some very interesting ones."

Of course, the Bush pets — dogs Barney and Spot, and cat India — will be featured.

So, too, will the alligator John Quincy Adams received as a gift from Marquis de Lafayette, the French soldier and statesman. Other offbeat White House pets that could make the cut: Old Whiskers, the pet goat belonging to President Benjamin Harrison's son, Russell, and Caroline Kennedy's pony, Macaroni, a gift from Lyndon Johnson.

For the Washington state Noble fir selected to grace the Blue Room, Mrs. Bush, an avid bird-watcher, asked artisans to create nearly 400 ornaments depicting birds indigenous to their home states.

The tree, topping 18 1/2 feet, was grown by Ed and Cindy Headlund of Elm, Wash., and will arrive at the White House by horse-drawn wagon on Monday.

Atlanta artist Zhen-Huan Lu designed the Bushes' official Christmas card, depicting a 1938 Steinway piano in the Grand Foyer of the White House.

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