

# TIME

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## AMERICAN NOTES

### The President's Front Yard

The Watergate hearings have added a little to the rich historical lore of Lafayette Square, the graceful public park across the street from the White House. John Dean and Herbert Kalmbach, the President's personal counsel and lawyer respectively, strolled there in July 1972 to discuss hush money for the Watergate defendants.

Being the front yard of American power, the park has seen a lot of casual history. Thomas Jefferson walked over to the Madison house on one occasion to pay a call on his successor. Lincoln's Secretary of State, William Seward, was gravely wounded in his house on the square the night that Lincoln was shot. F.D.R. and others worshiped in the President's pew in St. John's Episcopal Church on the park's northeast corner.

Bernard Baruch, the adviser to Presidents, gave counsel from his seat on a park bench. Harry Truman liked to walk there. In recent years the park has been a rallying ground for demonstrators, and sometimes tear gas wafted through the tall elms.

These days, a tourist might recognize Melvin Laird talking on a bench with Kentucky's former Senator John Sherman Cooper, or former White House Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman striding briskly between points of exile. Here and there, among the office workers brown-bagging lunch on the grass, may be seen other men talking quietly in the sunshine beyond the White House gates—because only there could they be sure they were speaking only to each other. Or so they may think. In 1947 a reporter from the *Washington Post* discovered a microphone concealed in the bushes behind one park bench, with the wires leading to a tiny park-maintenance station 30 yards away. No one ever figured out what that primitive bug was intended to hear, and everyone, from the FBI down, denied having installed it.