

School Resource

Kensington Palace: A building history

Chronology

1686	William III and Mary II bought Nottingham House to escape the grime of Whitehall. They instructed Sir Christopher Wren to improve the house and it became Kensington Palace.
1691	A fire destroyed part of the southern range of the Great Court. This led to a complete remodelling of the approach to the Royal Apartments.
1695	William added The King's Gallery.
1704-1705	Queen Anne improved the gardens of Kensington Palace and built the Orangery.
1714-1727	The core of the old Nottingham House was replaced with three new state rooms; the Privy Chamber, the Cupola Room and the Withdrawing Room. William Kent devised decoration and hung pictures in nearly all the royal apartments as well as painting the King's Grand Staircase.
1727-1760	Kensington Palace changed little structurally during this period, however following the death of Queen Caroline in 1737 large parts fell into disuse.
Early 1830s	The Duchess of Kent extended her apartments into the unused State Apartments on the second floor.
1832	The Duchess of Kent partitioned the King's Gallery into three rooms for the use of Princess (later Queen) Victoria.
19 th Century	The State Apartments were sadly neglected during the 19 th Century. They were used as stores for various paintings and furniture from other palaces.
1897	Queen Victoria's love for the palace she grew up in saved Kensington. Parliament was persuaded to pay for the restoration of the State Apartments on the condition that they should be opened to the public.
1899	The State Apartments were opened to the public on Queen Victoria's 80 th birthday (24 May 1899).
1911	The State Apartments were given over to the newly founded London Museum.



1914	The London Museum moved and the State Apartments were closed. During World War I (1914-1918), Kensington Palace was used as offices by charitable organisations.
1923	The Palace re-opened.
1932-1933	The three rooms associated with Queen Victoria were restored.
1939-1945	Bomb damage during World War II left the State Apartments badly affected, particularly the Queen's Apartments and the Palace was closed.
1949-1950	The Palace reopened and the London Museum returned. It remained a Kensington for a quarter of a century.
Today	Kensington Palace continues its long history as a residence for members of the Royal Family.

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