

## Power in Check: Chess and the American Presidency *Exhibition Opens at the World Chess Hall of Fame*

November 7, 2012 (Saint Louis, MO) -- The American presidency is power defined. Questions of war, peace, attack, retreat, sacrifice and strategy are answered daily in a continuous struggle to dominate opponents both foreign and domestic.

No wonder so many U.S. leaders have been avid chess players.

***Power in Check: Chess and the American Presidency*** is the latest exhibition to open at the World Chess Hall of Fame (WCHOF) and will run through April 21, 2013. Visitors get a fascinating glimpse at the relationship that U.S. leaders have had with the game for over 200 years.

On display are correspondence, memorabilia, and personal possessions – including George Washington’s set. Items demonstrate how these leaders used the game to escape the pressures of a stressful job, how it has provided a metaphor for many of their political challenges, or perhaps how it helped them gain new perspective on the issues of the day.

“The struggles Presidents have faced take on interesting new facets when cast in the light of a game of chess. It is intriguing to wonder how Kennedy – who was a player – might have been influenced by the game as he dealt with the Cuban missile crisis or the Civil Rights movement. Or how Washington might have played out his military strategies on his set,” said Susan Barrett, executive director of the WCHOF.

### Points of Interest:

- George Washington’s ivory chess set is the only he one owned, dating to the 1770s. It has remained in the family and is on loan from a direct descendant of Martha Washington.
- An 1824 copy of Benjamin Franklin’s essay “Morals of Chess” is the second known writing on the game in the U.S. Franklin is a member of the U.S. Chess Hall of Fame and frequently challenged Presidents Adams, Jefferson, and Madison to games.
- One of the newest pieces in the exhibition, the Staunton Chess Set was carved in 2011 from a tulip poplar tree grown at Monticello and believed to have been planted by Thomas Jefferson.
- Politically-themed chess sets have been popular subjects during many modern elections. The exhibition includes a set from 1952 pitting Eisenhower against Stevenson, a 1972 set with McGovern facing off against Nixon, and a recently-produced set casting popular party leaders through the decades in the roles of kings and queens (Kennedys vs. Reagans), bishops (Clinton/Roosevelt vs. G.H.W. Bush/Nixon), knights (Truman/Johnson vs. Eisenhower/G.W. Bush), rooks (RF Kennedy/Carter vs. Ford/Lincoln), and pawns (donkeys vs. elephants).

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**About the World Chess Hall of Fame**

4652 Maryland Avenue St. Louis MO, 63108 (314) 367-WCHF [www.worldchesshof.org](http://www.worldchesshof.org)

The World Chess Hall of Fame is a nonprofit organization committed to building awareness for the cultural and artistic significance of chess. It opened on September 9, 2011, in the Central West End after moving from previous locations in New York and Miami.

The WCHOF is housed in an historic 15,900 square-foot residence-turned-business and features the U.S. and World Chess Halls of Fame, displays of artifacts from the permanent collection, and temporary exhibitions highlighting the great players, historic games, and rich cultural history of chess.

Currently, the WCHOF is also pleased to present *Screwed Moves*, a completely original wall drawing created on-site by the Screwed Arts Collective, and *Everybody's Game*, a colorful exhibition exploring the role of chess in popular culture.

The WCHOF partners with the Chess Club and Scholastic Center to provide innovative programming and outreach to local, national, and international audiences.

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