

The View-Master Presidential Giftset

The View-Master presidential giftset is the rarest ever, made solely for presidential use. The luxury set was a special state gift from the White House on visits, travels and for special guests and occasions.



The Presidential Giftset consists of a beautiful wooden box, made from wormy chestnut, with a gold embossed seal and brass fittings. Inside there are 6 reel containers with 10 reels each. There is one reel for for each of the 50 United States, 5 reels for the Space Program and 5 reels of Washington DC. The reels have green printing on them, to match the interior of the wooden box. The photography in the reels was probably already available, but the reels were especially put together and printed for this unique set. The reels, in full color and on Kodachrome film, have a numbering from PG01 to PG60. PG stands for Presidential Gift. The reel containers also have

the presidential seal on them. There are 5 reel containers (holding 10 reels each) for each region of the country and one reel container for the Space Program and Washington DC.



Inside the wooden box is also a regular model D, the nicest official View-Master viewer of its time (and ever). The viewer, produced between 1955 and 1972, is made of bakelite and offers 7x enlarging glass lenses and a focusing mechanism.

The viewer and reel canisters sit in a green felt-covered inlay. In the lid of the box there is a gold-lined map on green felt of the United States. It shows the 6 numbered regions portrayed on the View-Master reels.

The Presidential Giftsets (measuring 36 cm wide, 20 cm deep and 14 cm high) were made with a blank plate for personal engraving. It is expected that only a small number of these sets were produced, about 50 pieces. Because these were given away during state visits and on special

occasions, only a few ever made it onto the open market. Renown view-master collectors have only come across 1 or 2 in 25 years.

The sets were all made by GAF in 1971. The first one was officially given by GAF management to Mrs. Nixon (in behalf of the president) in the White House in early 1971. Richard Nixon was already associated with View-Master long before, in 1953, being pictured on reel 222.



The Presidential giftsets were only available as a gift from a USA president. However, it is known that a set was given away by Ronald Reagan in 1995 (when he was no longer president) to a family in San Diego. So it seems possible that presidents Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush and even Bill Clinton used the viewmaster sets as a gift. Although it comes to expect that most of the sets were given away in the first few years after production.

The full story, names and owners history, of the individual presidential giftset gifted by Ronald Reagan in 1995, are only available with the actual set, for the recent owner. In the images shown here, the name plate has been made unreadable.

Wormy Chestnut

Wormy Chestnut is not a distinct species of Chestnut, but refers to American Chestnut trees that were killed by the chestnut blight of the early 1900s. Subsequently the trees were damaged by insects, leaving holes and discoloration. The trees were made into lumber. Because of the blight wiping out nearly all mature American Chestnut trees, its lumber became both rare and valuable. Wormy Chestnut is nowadays salvaged from for example old barns and other structures and sold as reclaimed lumber. Between the nail holes, discoloration, worm and insect damage, wormy chestnut was and is preferred in applications where a rustic or unpolished appearance is desired.

Sources for information:

- **The article 'Presidential Gift Set' by Wolfgang and Mary Ann Sell in Stereo World, Vol.27 No. 6, january/februari 2001.**
- **The book View-Master Reels and Packets, Volume 2: USA and Canada, by Harry zur Kleinsmiede.**
- **Information available on the Internet and information collected through personal communication with several collectors/sellers.**
- **Information that came with/from the giftset that Reagan gifted in 1995.**









