



PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S COTTAGE
AT THE SOLDIERS' HOME

President Lincoln's Cottage at the Soldiers' Home – Frequently Asked Questions

What is President Lincoln's Cottage?

President Lincoln's Cottage at the Soldiers' Home in Washington, DC is the most significant historic site directly associated with Abraham Lincoln's presidency aside from the White House. The 34-room Gothic Revival style house is located three miles north of the White House on the grounds of the Armed Forces Retirement Home.

Why haven't I ever heard of it?

Over time, the historical significance of President Lincoln's Cottage was largely forgotten, and it was adapted for a variety of uses by the Soldiers' Home. In the 1990's, it was "re-discovered," and in 1999 the National Trust for Historic Preservation entered into a formal agreement to restore the Cottage and open it to the public for the first time.

Why is President Lincoln's Cottage significant?

Abraham Lincoln and his family lived here for a quarter of his presidency. While living here, Lincoln plotted Union wartime strategies, developed his policy of emancipation and determined to include the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery in the Republican platform of 1864. Life at the Soldiers' Home offered Lincoln both a respite from some of the pressures of war, and direct contact with the soldiers he met on his daily commute between the White House and the Cottage.

Why did President and Mrs. Lincoln move to the cottage?

The Lincoln family moved to President Lincoln's Cottage in June 1862 to escape the heat, congestion and noise of wartime Washington. They were also grieving the death of their young son Willie who had died in February 1862.

When did President Lincoln reside at the cottage?

President Lincoln first visited the Soldiers' Home three days after his first inauguration on the recommendation of President Buchanan. The Lincoln family moved from the White House to the Cottage between mid-June and early July in 1862, 1863 and 1864, and stayed until the cooler weather of early November. White House staff transported some 19 wagonloads of the family's belongings, including toys, furniture and clothing. Lincoln last visited the Cottage the day before his assassination.

Was the President ever in danger while living at President Lincoln's Cottage?

While Lincoln remained unconcerned, Secretary of War Stanton and others feared for his safety. John Wilkes Booth plotted to kidnap Lincoln on his commute in late summer of 1864. In August 1864, a sniper attempted to assassinate the President as he traveled by horseback to the Cottage alone late at night. His hat was later retrieved with a bullet hole through the crown. It was also while Lincoln was living at the Cottage that he became the first sitting U.S. President to come under enemy fire when at Fort Stevens he observed the

battle with Jubal Early's forces as they tried to take Washington. During that battle, the family was evacuated back to the White House in the middle of the night.

Did the President accept visitors while at the cottage?

While living at the Cottage, the Lincolns were remarkably accessible to the public and entertained both invited guests and unexpected visitors at nearly any time of the day or night. The degree to which the Lincolns lived an ordinary life – free of the formality and security now associated with the presidency – is surprising today. Those who visited the Lincolns, whether at the White House or at the Cottage, commented on President Lincoln's willingness to sit and chat casually with anyone who dropped by.

When was the house built?

The Cottage was built in 1842 in the then-popular Gothic Revival style for George Washington Riggs, a prominent Washington banker.

How did the U.S. government acquire the property?

In 1851, Riggs sold the house and 256 acres to the federal government, which was preparing to establish a veterans' retirement home. Between 1851 and 1862, when the Lincolns took up residence, the government had enlarged the Riggs house, built a dormitory for the veterans, and constructed quarters for officers and administrators.

When did the home become a presidential retreat? What presidents resided there?

In 1857, President James Buchanan became the first president to live at the Soldiers' Home. Lincoln resided there for three seasons in 1862, 1863 and 1864. President Rutherford B. Hayes also enjoyed the Soldiers' Home setting, and stayed in President Lincoln's Cottage during the summers of 1877-80. President Chester A. Arthur stayed there in the winter of 1882 while the White House was being repaired.

When did President Lincoln's Cottage open?

After a seven-year restoration project, President Lincoln's Cottage opened to the public on February 18, 2008.

What is there to visit at President Lincoln's Cottage?

In addition to President Lincoln's Cottage, the Robert H. Smith Visitor Education Center adjacent to the Cottage, features related exhibits and media presentations exploring the history of the Soldiers' Home, wartime Washington, Lincoln as Commander-in-Chief, and a special exhibitions gallery.

How can I visit President Lincoln's Cottage?

Because President Lincoln's Cottage is located on the grounds of the Armed Forces Retirement Home, please follow these guidelines when planning a visit:

- Reservations are strongly recommended and can be made online at www.lincolncottage.org, or by phone at 1-800-514-ETIX (3849). For groups of 10 or more call (202) 829-0436. All tours are guided and limited space is available; therefore, we cannot guarantee entry to President Lincoln's Cottage without a reservation.

- Bring photo identification.
- Arrive 15 minutes before your tour is expected to start.

How much did restoring President Lincoln’s Cottage and establishing the Robert H. Smith Visitor Education Center cost?

Over \$15 million has been raised by the National Trust for Historic Preservation from individual, corporate and federal sources.

Who funded the restoration of President Lincoln’s Cottage and the Robert H. Smith Visitor Education Center?

Major donors to the Project include Robert H. Smith, the U.S. Congress, United Technologies Corp., Save America’s Treasures, Matthew and Ellen Simmons, the National Endowment for the Humanities, AT&T Foundation, 1772 Foundation, Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, DC. Commission on the Arts and Humanities, Goldman Sachs, John F.W. Rogers, Mark Taper Foundation, Textron Inc., Winnick Family Foundation, Civil War Preservation Trust, Linda B. Bruckheimer, HGTV, Kiplinger Foundation, National Park Service, PEPCO, and Tourism Cares/Trip Mate Insurance.

How can I get to President Lincoln’s Cottage?

For directions and information on public transportation please visit our website – www.lincolncottage.org. For GPS use address 140 Rock Creek Church Road, NW Washington, DC 20011. There is ample free parking on the grounds.

What makes the Robert H. Smith Visitor Education Center “green?”

The Robert H. Smith Visitor Education Center is the first National Trust for Historic Preservation Historic Site to receive Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. The National Trust for Historic Preservation rehabilitated the historic building in a way that minimized adverse environmental impact. This meant restoring as much of the existing fabric of a building as possible, rather than generating new materials and sending the existing materials to a landfill. It also meant updating systems to make them more energy efficient, monitoring indoor environmental quality, and improving storm water management. Securing LEED certification for this building is just one aspect of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s broader initiative to help decision makers, developers, homeowners and others appreciate how historic preservation can contribute to sustainable design.

About the National Trust for Historic Preservation

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a non-profit membership organization bringing people together to protect, enhance and enjoy the places that matter to them. The National Trust for Historic Preservation helps revitalize communities, spark economic development and promote environmental sustainability. With headquarters in Washington, DC, six regional offices, 29 historic sites and partner organizations in all 50 states, the National Trust for Historic Preservation provides leadership, education, advocacy and resources to a national network of people, organizations and local communities committed to saving places, connecting us to our history and collectively shaping the future of America's stories.

For more information visit www.nationaltrust.org.

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