



FACT SHEET

For over a quarter of his presidency, Abraham Lincoln lived on an uplifting hilltop in Northwest Washington, D.C., where he made some of his most critical decisions. While in residence at the Cottage, Lincoln visited with wounded soldiers, spent time with self-emancipated people, and developed the Emancipation Proclamation. Today, “the Cradle of the Emancipation Proclamation” is open to the public daily to experience guided tours, award-winning exhibits, and innovative programs.

President Lincoln’s Cottage is a nontraditional “museum of ideas” that examines new perspectives on Lincoln and engages our audience in groundbreaking scholarship and historical debates over human rights and cultural issues of relevance today. We use Lincoln’s example to inspire visitors to take their own path to greatness and preserve this place as an authentic, tangible connection to the past and a beacon of hope for all who take up Lincoln’s unfinished work.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- President Lincoln’s Cottage is a private, non-profit operation located in northwest Washington, DC on the historic Armed Forces Retirement Home campus.
- President Lincoln’s Cottage first opened to the public in 2008.
- The site is open year-round and offers a variety of experiences for the public.
- President Lincoln’s Cottage is designated a National Monument, National Historic Landmark, and site of the National Trust for Historic preservation; it is the only National Monument in the country that receives no federal operating support.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- President Lincoln and his family resided from June to November of 1862, 1863 and 1864 – more than a quarter of his presidency – in a Gothic Revival house just three miles north of the White House on the grounds of the Soldiers’ Home, known today as the Armed Forces Retirement Home.
- During Lincoln’s first season at the Soldiers’ Home, he nurtured his ideas on emancipation and drafted the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. Throughout his summers at the Cottage, Lincoln plotted war strategy, hosted political meetings, and welcomed visitors including Cabinet members, political allies and adversaries, and foreign dignitaries.
- Lincoln commuted daily to the White House on horseback or by carriage, often passing poet Walt Whitman, who then resided in Washington, DC. Kidnappings during the commute were a constant concern, and Lincoln even survived a possible assassination attempt during an evening ride home.
- Lincoln interacted with soldiers daily during his commute between the White House and the Cottage, gathering first-hand news from the front lines and gauging their opinions on current issues. He was also observed visiting the



self-emancipated men, women, and children living as refugees in the “contraband camps” close to the Soldiers’ Home.

- The Soldiers’ Home was established in 1851 as the first federal institution to provide care for retired or disabled army veterans. During Lincoln’s time, there were 100-200 disabled veterans living there. Today nearly 500 retired servicemen and women reside on the grounds. The Soldiers’ Home was used as a presidential retreat by Presidents Buchanan, Hayes, and Arthur. Today the campus is known as the Armed Forces Retirement Home.
- The first National Cemetery for military is adjacent to the Soldiers’ Home and was clearly visible to Lincoln during his time at the Cottage. Approximately 8,000 Civil War dead were buried there during the war and over 5,000 Civil War burials remain in the cemetery to this day. It was after the portion of this cemetery made available to the Army during the Civil War reached capacity that Arlington National Cemetery was established. The cemetery, now known as the USSAH National Cemetery, is managed by the Department of the Army as an active cemetery, open to the public.
- Over the 19th century, the historical significance of President Lincoln’s Cottage faded from public memory, correlating with a time when the public had little to no access to the grounds and the Cottage was adapted for a variety of uses by the Soldiers’ Home. In the 1990’s, the significance of Lincoln’s life here was “re-discovered,” with the help of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In 2000, President Bill Clinton declared the Cottage and the surrounding 2.3 acres a National Monument. Following an eight-year restoration, President Lincoln’s Cottage opened to the public in 2008.

TOURING THE COTTAGE AND PLANNING A VISIT

- Small groups of visitors experience President Lincoln’s Cottage through tailored, conversational, guided tours, enhanced by award-winning multimedia technology. Tours are led by highly-trained museum staff who bring visitors through the authentic, historic house where they examine the ideas Lincoln developed here, and the enduring impact of Lincoln’s legacy and the Civil War. For details and ticket purchase, see our [Hours, Tickets, Location, and Directions page](#).
- Exhibits in the Robert H. Smith Visitor Education Center are self-guided and allow visitors to further customize their experience, exploring the history of this place and its impact on our lives today. Four permanent galleries provide knowledge and imagery of the history of this remarkable place and Lincoln’s time here. Temporary exhibits engage visitors in groundbreaking scholarship and connect Lincoln’s values and ideas to contemporary human rights issues. Civil War prints and maps line the main corridor and an award-winning interactive exhibit gallery, *Lincoln’s Toughest Decisions*, allows visitors to peruse digital primary sources on the issues facing Lincoln and his cabinet.
- Visitors can experience the vista of the Capitol and downtown Washington D.C. from the grounds surrounding President Lincoln’s Cottage. We invite our guests to enjoy the grounds we steward immediately surrounding the Cottage, as well as the picnic tables and ample lawn behind our Robert H. Smith Visitor Education Center.
- Our guests are provided with a map at check-in that outlines the boundaries for visitation. Access to the rest of the property is restricted to Armed Forces Retirement



Home residents, staff, and their visitors. Each year we host special events, with permission of the Armed Forces Retirement Home, to give our community opportunities to experience other aspects of this historic campus on specific days. For information on these opportunities, see our Programs page.

- Reservations are strongly recommended and can be made online at www.lincolncottage.org/tickets/ or by phone 1-800-514-ETIX (3849). Adult tickets are \$15, and discounted rates are available for children, school groups, military, and all groups of ten or more. All tours are guided and limited spaces are available for each tour. For more information, call 202-829-0436 or visit www.lincolncottage.org.
- We provide free on-site parking and a bike rack for our visitors' use. The site is .75 miles from the Georgia Ave/Petworth Metro station and directly across from a bus stop for the 60 and H8 lines. Directions and additional information are available at www.lincolncottage.org.

PROGRAMS

- Education programs, guided tours, and exhibit activities at President Lincoln's Cottage are offered for students and teachers of all grades. Our interactive programs inspire participants to consider the impact of Lincoln's exemplary leadership on their own lives and on contemporary issues, and to view his example as a model for their own creative ideas and problem-solving skills.
- In addition to daily tours and self-guided exhibits, we host several signature annual public programs as well as occasional partnership and commemorative programs each year for the public. Annual events include our free Family Day, the Freedom 5K race through the grounds, citizenship ceremonies hosted by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services here, and Memorial Day and Black History Month programs held in partnership with the Armed Forces Retirement Home. For more information, see our Programs page.

RECOGNITION

- President Lincoln's Cottage is the recipient of various awards and honors for exemplary work in preservation, interpretation, and education. Past awards have come from a range of organizations and corporations including: The American Alliance of Museums, US Distance Learning Education, the American Association of State and Local History, the U.S. Green Building Council, TripAdvisor, Groupon, the Society for Experiential Graphic Design, and The Lincoln Forum.
- Our work has been covered by a variety of local, national, and international press including: *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, NPR, BBC, PBS, Al Jazeera America, Huffington Post, C-SPAN, *The Washington Post*, USA Today, Travel + Leisure, and CNN.

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