



# Foundation Document Overview

## Eisenhower National Historic Site

Pennsylvania



### Contact Information

For more information about the *Eisenhower National Historic Site Foundation Document*, contact: [eise\\_superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:eise_superintendent@nps.gov) or (717) 338-9114 or write to:  
Superintendent, Eisenhower National Historic Site, 1195 Baltimore Street, Gettysburg, PA 17325

## Purpose



*The purpose of EISENHOWER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE is to preserve and interpret the home and farms of the Eisenhower family as a fitting and enduring memorial to the life, work, and times of General Dwight David Eisenhower, 34th president of the United States, and to the events of far-reaching importance that occurred on the property.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Eisenhower National Historic Site resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The only home ever owned by General and Mrs. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the buildings and land at Eisenhower National Historic Site served as a working farm, temporary White House, presidential retreat, and retirement home for them.
- A career soldier, Dwight D. Eisenhower rose from West Point cadet to a five-star general, having a major influence on world history in his roles as the supreme allied commander in Europe during World War II and later as the first supreme commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.
- During his two-term presidency, 1953–1961, President Dwight D. Eisenhower guided the nation through complex and profound changes during the second half of the 20th century, including the end of the Korean War, establishment of the interstate highway system, the Army–McCarthy hearings, the beginning of the civil rights movement, heightening international Cold War tensions, and a period of unprecedented economic prosperity for many Americans.
- With its peaceful, pastoral setting adjacent to the Gettysburg battlefield, the Eisenhower farm was for President Dwight D. Eisenhower a much-needed respite from Washington, DC, as well as a backdrop for international diplomacy in his efforts to reduce Cold War and other tensions among the prominent world leaders he brought to visit the farm.
- The Eisenhower museum collections of objects, furnishings, artwork, and diplomatic gifts is a tangible connection to the personal lives of Dwight D. and Mamie Eisenhower and provides an intimate view into the home that the Eisenhower family made for themselves at their Gettysburg farm.
- Early in his military career, then-U.S. Army Captain Dwight D. Eisenhower commanded Camp Colt, a tank training site located on the historic Gettysburg battlefield during World War I. General and Mrs. Eisenhower would return to this battlefield 33 years later to purchase their Gettysburg farm.
- In his retirement, General Dwight D. Eisenhower spent 15 years improving and restoring the lands of his Gettysburg farm by introducing sustainable agricultural practices and maintaining a successful livestock enterprise of award-winning Angus cattle.

## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Eisenhower Farm Cultural Landscape**
- **Presidential House (Residence)**
- **Farm 2 Cultural Landscape**
- **Sense of Home and Personal Refuge**
- **Museum Collections**
- **Archeological Resources**

Eisenhower National Historic Site contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Natural Communities**
- **Cattle Herd**



## Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- As a key architect of Allied victory during World War II, and as the 34th president of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower's actions and choices had a profound and long-lasting impact on this nation and the world.
- As a soldier, general, president, and private citizen, Dwight D. Eisenhower exemplified many of the qualities that defined an effective leader—a legacy of leadership that continues to educate and inspire us today.
- As president of the United States from 1953 to 1961, Eisenhower's leadership as president influenced the growth of the nation and American society. He steered the nation through the complexities of his time, including international tensions associated with the Cold War and emerging domestic issues such as the growing civil rights movement.
- As the nation experienced a new era of prosperity and leisure time during the 1950s, the lives of Dwight D. and Mamie Eisenhower reflected the popular culture of their era, both leading the way and following national trends.
- Their Gettysburg farm, home, and furnishings provide a window into the daily lives of both Dwight D. and Mamie Eisenhower, as well as offer a tangible reflection of their personalities, interests, and values.
- As a career soldier Eisenhower had a personal history with and appreciation for Gettysburg, first coming to the battlefield as an army cadet to study tactics and leadership, then returning as the commanding officer of Camp Colt. Later in life he retired to this pastoral setting as an older soldier with a profound understanding of the cost and sacrifices of war.
- Exposed to the struggles of farmers during his childhood in Kansas, Eisenhower developed a lifelong interest in soil conservation and farming that is illustrated through his work to leave a part of the earth better than he found it. His Gettysburg farm continues to serve as a model for mid-20th-century agricultural practices and sustainability.

# Description

Eisenhower National Historic Site, near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, preserves the home and farm of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the 34th president of the United States. Consisting of 690 acres, the site includes four distinct farms: the Allen Redding farm, purchased in 1951 by General Dwight D. and Mamie Eisenhower and expanded over the next two decades; two adjoining farms purchased by Eisenhower's associate W. Alton Jones and farmed in partnership with General Eisenhower; and an additional adjoining farm donated to the government to preserve the historic setting.

Drawn to Gettysburg by his memories of commanding Camp Colt along with the rich Civil War history and rural atmosphere the area provided, General and Mrs. Eisenhower purchased the 189-acre Redding farm adjacent to Gettysburg National Military Park in 1951, with plans of turning the aging farmhouse and agricultural lands into a retirement farm. While General Eisenhower's time as the commander of the new North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces and campaigning for the presidency in 1952 delayed his plans, Mamie convinced him to proceed with renovations during his presidency so that the couple could use the farm while General Eisenhower was president.

In August 1955, General and Mrs. Eisenhower moved into the renovated farmhouse, visiting often during Eisenhower's presidency. As president, he used the house as a weekend retreat, a stage for international diplomacy, and a place to recuperate, with the farm becoming the "temporary White House" in 1955 while General Eisenhower recovered from a heart attack. Following his tenure as president, General Eisenhower finally retired to the farm in 1961, keeping an office at Gettysburg College and focusing on writing his memoirs and spending time with family and friends. The Eisenhower family made a gift of their farm to the federal government in 1967.

Secretary of the Interior Stuart Udall subsequently designated the farm, with the concurrence of President Lyndon B. Johnson, as a national historic site on November 27, 1967.

Although the General and Mrs. Eisenhower's initial intent was simply to purchase a quiet retirement home in the country, in the end the farm at Gettysburg provided much more than this. The farm was a weekend getaway from the pressures of Washington, D.C. It provided a place to host friends, family, and visiting dignitaries from around the world. It afforded General Eisenhower the opportunity to explore interests in sustainable agriculture and cattle production. Finally, it allowed the Eisenhower family to establish a true home for themselves amid the pastoral fields and extensively landscaped grounds surrounding their farmhouse.

Today Eisenhower National Historic Site is maintained as it was during the Eisenhower years, and the Eisenhower family's home retains nearly all of its original furnishings. The Reception Center, located next to the Eisenhower Farm barn, offers a short introductory video as well as an exhibit highlighting General Eisenhower's life from his boyhood days in Abilene, Kansas, through his military and presidential years, to retirement at his Gettysburg farm. Ranger-led programs are offered seasonally, and children can participate in the Junior Secret Service Agent Program.

Since the establishment of Eisenhower National Historic Site in 1967, the site has been under the administration of Gettysburg National Military Park. This relationship was established because of the geographic relationship of the two national park units, the historic relationship of the Eisenhower farm with the Battle of Gettysburg, and the efficiency in providing Eisenhower National Historic Site the administrative, resource management, protection, interpretive, and maintenance support that Gettysburg National Military Park has to offer.

