

Scope and Purpose

Homes and Libraries of the Presidents is primarily a traveler's guide to almost one hundred presidential homes, libraries, and museums in the United States — and one in Canada — that are open to the public. As such, it is designed to assist visitors to experience and appreciate the many places important to our history and national heritage by providing basic information about the sites' historical significance and interpretive facilities, as well as about access, admission fees, dining facilities, tours, web sites, and facilities for the disabled. Easy-to-read maps have been provided to show the location of the various sites.

The book also attempts to put each presidential life and home into personal and historical context — the colonial gentry lifestyle of Thomas Jefferson at Monticello; the hardscrabble farm life of Abraham Lincoln; the all-American, small-town background of Ronald Reagan — by describing not only the places and the era in which these presidents lived, but their families, communities and education, the fundamental environments, and experiences that helped to shape the forty-three men who have become President of the United States. Thus the book is intended to open windows onto the deeper understanding of the accomplished but different men who have led our nation through more than two centuries to its position of leadership in today's world.

The book is divided into three sections. Section I presents an overview of the historical significance of presidential homes, libraries, and museums; it delineates the history of restoration and preservation efforts directed toward presidential homes and other related structures, and it eulogizes the singular woman who, in the mid-nineteenth century, organized the first great restoration of a president's home, George Washington's Mount Vernon. This section further pays tribute to the local, state, and national historic preservation organizations that have resurrected, restored, reconstructed, or replicated the many presidential buildings and that continue to maintain these

American treasures, efforts that enable us to visit, observe, learn, and honor the distinguished Americans who have lived in them. The first section also traces the role of the federal government, carried out by the National Park Service and the National Archives and Records Administration, in administering and maintaining humble cabins, splendid mansions, ordinary houses, and great modern libraries.

Section II contains a short anecdotal biography of each president, followed by a description of the home, museum, or library with which he is associated; a map showing the location of the site; visitor information; and sources of additional information.

Section III provides brief information about other sites associated with presidents and sources of additional information about the lives, homes, museums, libraries, and other aspects of presidential history. Included in this section are lists of presidential birthplaces, burial sites, and selected historical societies, along with a bibliography of recommended readings dealing with the presidents and structures that commemorate them.

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in the book, visiting hours, phone numbers, admission fees, and facilities for the disabled are subject to change. When planning a visit to any of the sites identified in this book, it would be prudent to call or write the facility, or consult its web site, in advance to obtain the most up-to-date information.



This book is not a text on architecture. Nevertheless, there are references to eras and styles of architecture that should be defined, if only to identify some of the basic design elements of architectural styles and to delineate time frames of architectural popularity.

The earliest American homes, those dating from about 1625 to 1700, are called Colonial. Utilitarian in design, their construction was influenced by weather conditions, availability of building material and familiarity with construction methods rather than by artistry. The materials and geometric details of Colonial structures varied from region to region. New England Colonial homes, for example, were characterized by a box-like look — two stories of small rooms built around a central chimney, tiny casement windows, a steeply pitched roof, and an exterior siding of clapboard or shingles. In the Virginia Colony, Colonial more often describes brick houses of a story or story and a half, with two end chimneys and a sloped roof. The southern houses usually featured more extensive decorative touches than the northern houses.

The eighteenth century brought the Georgian style of domestic architecture from England. This style was named for the four kings George who ruled from 1714 to 1830. At that time, England was becoming urbanized, and its architecture was beginning to reflect a balanced view of life, with the accent on towns and neighborhoods. Georgian styling was marked by symmetry in both the interior floor plan and the exterior façade, a gabled roof, and a central chimney. The period was noteworthy, too, for the introduction of landscape gardening as part of overall home design, its purpose being to display the house and grounds in aesthetic harmony. The Georgian style was in no small measure influenced by the Palladian style, a product of the sixteenth-century Italian designer Andrea Palladio, who recognized connections between nature and architecture and consequently linked his buildings with the countryside.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century, Thomas Jefferson returned from a European diplomatic assignment and brought back ideas about neo-classic building designs influenced by the architecture of ancient Greece and Rome. The style was free, open, columned, and symmetrical; the columns were not merely decorative, but intrinsic to the geometry of the design and the practicality of construction.

At the same time, America was beginning to develop its own unique style of domestic architecture that came to be called Federal, in honor of the newly federated republic. The Federal style paralleled the Georgian but used more delicate classical elements to define entrances and practical gambrel roofs with dormer windows to minimize heat loss. The style was sometimes called Adam Federal, after the brothers Adam, Scottish-English architects known in the United States primarily for elements of interior design — low-relief plaster decorations on ceilings, elaborate door trim, decorated cornices, and slender end chimneys.

Other styles followed, including Greek Revival (ca. 1825–1860), which combined Greek and Roman forms of low-pitched pediments, simple moldings, rounded arches, and shallow domes; Gothic Revival (ca. 1830–1880) that borrowed ideas from castles and vaulted churches in the use of arched windows and expensive carved woodwork; Italianate (ca. 1840–1880), characterized by multiple stories, a low-pitched roof, cupolas, towers, decorative window treatments, and narrow doors; and Folk Victorian, with an overall simplicity of form and decorative treatment in porch and gable trim.

A few other terms that appear throughout the text may seem interchangeable, but they in fact have important differentiating nuances of meaning:

Restoration, according to decorating expert Martha Stewart, means “putting things back the way they were,” not to be confused with *renovation*, or “making something new again. . . . Making an old house more livable for today,” as when indoor plumbing or air conditioning is added. *Replication* is copying or reproducing, as when a house that has been destroyed by fire or time, is rebuilt. *Redecorate*, according to language maven William Safire, means to “redo the style of interior furnishings, lying somewhere between the old-fashioned *refurbish* and *spruce up*.”