

= Eisenhower National Historic Site =

Eisenhower National Historic Site preserves the home and farm of Dwight D. Eisenhower , the 34th President of the United States , and its surrounding property of 690 @. @ 5 acres (279 @. @ 4 ha) . It is located in Cumberland Township , Adams County , Pennsylvania , just outside of Gettysburg . Purchased by then @-@ General Eisenhower and his wife Mamie in 1950 , the farm served as a weekend retreat for the President and a meeting place for world leaders , and became the Eisenhowers ' home after they left the White House in 1961 .

With its putting green , skeet range , and view of South Mountain and the Gettysburg Battlefield , it offered President Eisenhower a much @-@ needed respite from the pressures of Washington . It was also a successful cattle operation , with a show herd of black Angus cattle . Some of the more notable of Eisenhower 's guests were Premier Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union , President Charles de Gaulle of France , Prime Minister Winston Churchill of Britain , and Governor Ronald Reagan of California .

= = History = =

Dwight D. (Ike) Eisenhower had a long history with the Gettysburg area . His graduating class from West Point had visited the battlefield in 1915 . In 1918 , he was assigned to nearby Camp Colt in his first independent command as an army officer , commanding a tank training unit ; he and Mamie Eisenhower were newly married .

Throughout his long army career , Dwight Eisenhower and his wife never had a house to call their own , with the couple moving from army post to army post . After he became Columbia University 's president in 1948 , Mamie requested that they finally have a place to call their own . A married couple that were friends with the Eisenhowers , George and Mary Allen , had recently purchased a small farm around Gettysburg , and recommended the area . In 1950 , they found a " run @-@ down farm " on the outskirts of Gettysburg , and purchased the farm and its 189 acres (76 ha) for \$ 40 @, @ 000 (equal to \$ 393 @, @ 416 today) from one Allen Redding , who had owned the farm since 1921 . Eisenhower stated that he could feel the " forgotten heroisms " that occurred on the grounds as the Battle of Gettysburg .

When purchased , the 189 acres (0 @. @ 76 km²) included 600 chickens , 25 cows , and many dilapidated buildings dating back to the 18th and 19th centuries . Renovation of the property was delayed when Eisenhower became supreme commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1951 . After he had attained the presidency of the United States in 1953 , Mamie had him rebuild the old house . Much of the original building had to be torn down , due to its deterioration . The total cost of renovation was \$ 250 @, @ 000 (equal to \$ 2 @, @ 211 @, @ 132 today) . This large expense was due partly to Mamie 's whims , but also to Eisenhower 's employment of union labor ; he spent \$ 65 @, @ 000 (equal to \$ 574 @, @ 894 today) for union workmen who came each day from Washington , D.C. (75 miles (121 km) away) to work on the farmhouse . On their 1955 wedding anniversary , the Eisenhowers held a party to celebrate completion of the work . The entire staff of the White House were invited , attending in two shifts , so that the White House would not be unstaffed . The staff were forever grateful to the Eisenhowers for including them in the festivities .

From its completion in 1955 to the end of Eisenhower 's second term on January 20 , 1961 , the President spent 365 days total on the Gettysburg farm . The longest of these stays was 38 days in late 1955 , while recovering from a heart attack he had suffered that September . After 1955 , the Eisenhowers spent most weekends and summer vacations at the Gettysburg farm . They sometimes went to both the Gettysburg farm and Camp David , prompting one person to call Camp David " an annex to Gettysburg " .

The Gettysburg farm provided a few headaches . Democrats chose the amount of time the Eisenhowers spent at the Gettysburg farm as another way to attack him . Paul M. Butler , head of the Democratic National Committee , called him a part @-@ time president due to his many stays in Gettysburg . When his World War II colleague Bernard Montgomery visited the farm , Eisenhower commented to Montgomery (speaking as military commander to military commander) that he would

have fired a subordinate that would initiate Pickett 's Charge . Many Southerners saw this as disrespect toward Robert E. Lee , and protested . Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev visited the farm in September 1959 , and was " grandfatherly " to the Eisenhower grandchildren . David Eisenhower said that Khrushchev was such a nice guy , he (David) could become a Communist if he did not know better , causing much embarrassment to the Eisenhowers .

The Eisenhowers donated their home and farm (230 acres (93 ha) total at the time) to the National Park Service in 1967 , with lifetime living rights for the former president . Two years later , Eisenhower died at the age of 78 . Mamie Eisenhower rejected the idea of moving to Washington to be closer to family and friends and , with Federal permission , lived on the farm until her death in 1979 , although the living area for Mamie was reduced to 14 acres (5 @.@ 7 ha) . The National Park Service opened the site in 1980 .

= = Grounds = =

The plans for decoration and construction of the house were dictated by Mamie Eisenhower . At one point , Eisenhower told the contractor " For God 's sakes , just give her what she wants and send me the bill . " His main concern was personally mixing the paint to recolor the barn , which had a red coat he thought was hideous , so he painted it a light gray @-@ green . Mamie , meanwhile , was delighted in being able to use everything they always had in storage , and decorated more for sentimentality than for aesthetics .

Cattle were raised at the farm . Eisenhower would often poke the rump of a bull with his shotgun to show what quality of steak the animal would eventually produce , alarming the Secret Service agents that were protecting him . Once , while barbecuing (something he loved to do on the farm) , he made the mistake of announcing which cow he was cooking . As it had been the favorite cow of his granddaughter Susan Eisenhower , she was brought to tears .

A row of fifty Norway spruce trees lines the main driveway leading to the farm . These trees represent the fifty U.S. states , and were given to Eisenhower as birthday presents from each of the state Republican Party chairmen in 1955 . The furthest one from the house was the tree representing Texas , and it was seen as a mark of Eisenhower 's recovery that he was able to walk that far after his heart attack .

The Eisenhowers (especially Dwight in the beginning) spent most of their time in a glass @-@ covered porch overlooking Seminary Ridge . Reading and playing cards with friends were popular pastimes on the porch , it was said that he would sit for hours reflecting on his life and legacy .

In his book *The Lost Continent : Travels in Small @-@ Town America* , Bill Bryson said of the site that it was the most fun he could remember having in a Republican household , and described the decor of the house as " 1960s Republican " . Bryson did express dismay in discovering that the last book such an important man ever read was Zane Grey 's *West of the Pecos* .

= = Today = =

The Eisenhower National Historic Site is open daily from 9 : 00 am to 5 : 00 pm , except for Thanksgiving , Christmas and New Year 's Day . The home , grounds , barns and cattle operation are available for public tours . Visitors may reach the site via a shuttle bus which departs from the Gettysburg National Military Park Visitor Center . The total land area is 690 acres (280 ha) . Two different films cover the grounds and President Eisenhower 's life .

Eisenhower National Historic Site