



Foundation Document Overview

First Ladies National Historic Site

Ohio



Contact Information

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Purpose



The purpose of FIRST LADIES NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE is to preserve, interpret, and honor the role and history of First Ladies for the benefit, inspiration, and education of the people of the United States, and to provide global public access to information about how the accomplishments of America's First Ladies shaped our nation's history.

Significance

Significance statements express why First Ladies National Historic Site's 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.

- First Ladies National Historic Site is the only place in the world dedicated to providing accurate, non-partisan information about the lives and accomplishments of the First Ladies of the United States.
- First Ladies National Historic Site maintains the nation's most comprehensive electronic bibliography about the First Ladies of the United States.
- The Saxton McKinley House, located in Canton, Ohio, is the only remaining private residence associated with President William and First Lady Ida Saxton McKinley. The home illustrates the public and private lives of this First Family and provides a setting in which to interpret the evolving role of the First Lady.



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.

- The National First Ladies' Library—the organization and its collection of original museum objects, archives, and primary source material.
- The Saxton McKinley House as a representation of a First Lady/First Family story.
- The American First Lady's role, status, platform, and gender history are not static. First Lady is not defined in the US Constitution, yet has a history; it is ceremonial, not paid, yet there are expectations which are ever changing.

First Ladies 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.

- National First Ladies' Library secondary resources and reproductions
- Education and Research Center
- Park and garden area—the grounds adjacent to the Saxton McKinley House



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.

- **Role:** The role of the First Lady (Ladies) changes to reflect the times in which she (they) serves.
- **Impact:** The First Ladies of the United States of America have an impact across a broad spectrum of the political and social history of our nation.
- **Personal Life/Public Image:** As women in an extraordinary situation, individual First Ladies rely on their personal interests, abilities, and experiences to define their presence in the public forum, while maintaining private lives.
- **First Families:** The Saxton McKinley family home provides an opportunity to explore the public and private lives of a First Family.



Description

First Ladies National Historic Site was established in October 2000 to educate the public about the lives and contributions of our nation's First Ladies. Not simply silent companions of the nation's presidents, American First Ladies have national and global impact in a range of areas from fashion and trend-setting to women's rights and medicine. The role of First Lady has evolved to be unique in the world, and continues to change with every new administration.

The site consists of two buildings located approximately one block apart on Market Avenue South, one of the main thoroughfares of downtown Canton, Ohio. The Saxton McKinley House was the family home of First Lady Ida Saxton McKinley and was the private residence where Ida and her husband William lived the longest. The house was built in 1841 and expanded in approximately 1865. The home has been renovated and decorated in the Victorian style typical of the late 1800s when the McKinleys lived there.

The Education and Research Center is a seven-story building that was constructed as the City National Bank in 1895. The building was completely renovated in 2003 and now houses exhibit space, a research library, a small theater, conference space, archival processing and storage rooms, and administrative offices for the site.

Additionally, the National First Ladies' Library, the managing partner of the site, owns a small urban park adjacent to the Saxton McKinley House that is used by visitors to the site.

