

The David Wills House

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Gettysburg National Military Park



In July 1863 the American Civil War came to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Four months later, President Abraham Lincoln followed to honor the fallen.

Here you will experience life with the Wills family as the Battle of Gettysburg threatened their home. You will learn how a simple invitation from David Wills resulted in the most famous speech in American history. And you will stand in the room where President Lincoln revised the Gettysburg Address and explore why it still resonates to this day.

The David Wills Story



David Wills was born eleven miles from here in 1831. He attended Pennsylvania (now Gettysburg) College and by 1854 was an attorney and superintendent of Adams County's schools. Two years later he married Catherine Jane "Jennie" Smyser and by the summer of 1863 the Wills had three children. Among many accomplishments, David Wills was appointed

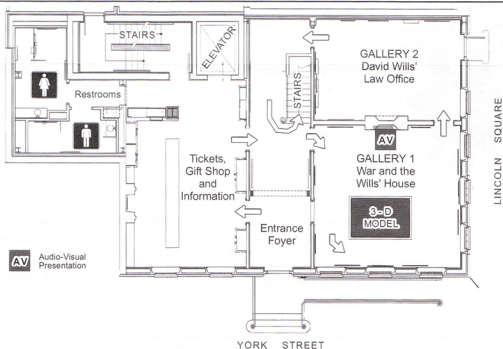
president of the Gettysburg Borough Council in 1872, and became Adams County Judge two years later. He also served on numerous boards of directors including that of the Bank of Gettysburg and the Gettysburg Railroad Company. But history would remember Wills for his efforts after the 1863 battle.

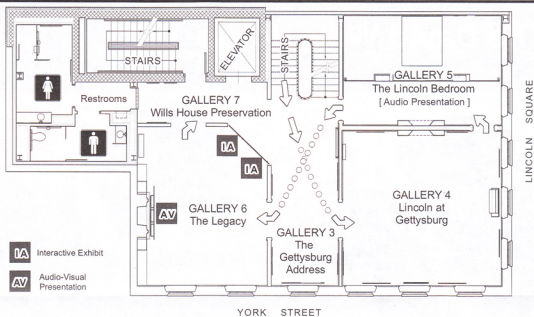
War and the Wills House

The Civil War came to the doorstep of the Wills home in 1863. Confederate soldiers first came to Gettysburg in search of supplies on June 26. During the Confederate occupation of the town, Wills saw "a group of rebels with an axe break open the store door" of one of his tenants. Local citizens huddled in his cellar.

After the battle the Wills home filled quickly with wounded and dying soldiers. Local women acting as nurses tended to these men, and the U.S. Sanitary Commission (an early version of the American Red Cross) established a temporary warehouse here. The U.S. Provost Marshall used the home as headquarters, and Gettysburg's leading citizens met here to make plans for proper burial of the dead.

First Floor





THE PRESIDENT IN GETTYSBURG

As many as 20,000 people converged upon Gettysburg to attend the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery and to catch a glimpse of visiting dignitaries.

President Lincoln arrived in Gettysburg on the evening of November 18 and was escorted to this house. The galleries of the second floor follow the events of Lincoln's visit through his immortal address on November 19. Here you will hear the story of how Gettysburg accommodated the vast number of visitors and how David and Catherine accommodated the distinguished guests who spent the night at their home. You will stand in the bedroom where Lincoln finished revising the Gettysburg Address and learn why this speech continues to endure.

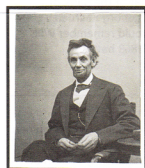


Lincoln's Room Key



Lincoln's Saddle Cover

November 19, 1863



November 19, 1863 was Gettysburg's most momentous day. By 10 a.m. dignitaries were assembled outside of the Wills House for the procession to the new Soldiers' National Cemetery. The ceremony began with music and an invocation. Edward Everett's two-hour oration was followed by a funeral dirge, and then the President arose to deliver his "few appropriate remarks." He spoke for about two minutes. The brevity of Lincoln's speech surprised many, but his words were long remembered.

As the death toll mounted during the first two years of war, many wondered whether any cause was worth the awful price. The Gettysburg Address was Lincoln's effort to define and defend the war's objectives and the need to see them through—whatever the cost. The war, he said, was a test of whether a nation "conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal" could survive and remain true to its founding ideals.

It is desired that, after the Oration, you, as Chief Executive of the Nation, formally set apart these grounds to their Sacred use by a few appropriate remarks.

—Wills to Lincoln, November 2, 1863



The David Wills House is part of Gettysburg National Military Park, and is operated by Main Street Gettysburg, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the historic preservation and economic revitalization of Gettysburg.

David Wills House Mission:

To preserve, protect, and provide understanding of the resources associated with David Wills, as well as the words and meaning of President Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

Getting there:

The house is located at 8 Lincoln Square in downtown Gettysburg. For more information contact Main Street Gettysburg, 866-486-5735 or www.davidwills.house.org or Gettysburg National Military Park, 1195 Baltimore Pike, Suite 100, Gettysburg, PA, 17325 or www.nps.gov/gett.

Hours and Tours:

Summer operating hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. In spring and fall the hours are Tuesday through Sunday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Winter hours are Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Visits include an approximately one-hour, self-guided tour that with two films, two interactive stations, seven galleries of which two are recreated rooms – Wills' law office and the Lincoln bedroom.

Entrance fees are \$6.50 for Adults (13 and up); \$5.50 for Seniors; \$4.00 for Youth (6-12); and children 5 and under are free. For group tour reservations call toll-free: 866-486-5735.