



Ike's Sanctuary

The Eisenhower Farm in Gettysburg,
An Oasis from the Pressures of the Presidency

William C. Kashatus



In the spring of 1915 Dwight D. “Ike” Eisenhower (1890-1969), a cadet at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, visited the Gettysburg battlefield along with the rest of his class. The cadets had come to study Union and Confederate troop movements in an engagement that represented the farthest penetration of Gen. Robert E. Lee’s army onto northern soil before the Army of the Potomac repelled them.

Gettysburg was the turning point of the American Civil War and arguably the greatest battle in United States history. Its significance was not lost on the Class of 1915, later known as “the class the stars fell on” because 59 of its 100 members achieved the rank of general. Eisenhower, who eventually became one of the few five-star generals in American history, was profoundly influenced by the visit. Many years later Ike would write that the experience represented for him the “excitement of battle, desperate assaults, and the courage of thousands of men who fought and died there.” But he also viewed Gettysburg as a poignant reminder of the “quiet and industrious farmers who lived there and improved the land a century before the battle and a century after.”

Three years later during World War I, Eisenhower returned to Gettysburg, this time with wife Mamie (1896-1979) and their one-year-old son Doud Dwight (1917-21). Although he had hoped for overseas duty, Captain Eisenhower was appointed commander of Camp Colt, the U.S. Army Tank Corps Training Center located on the site of Pickett’s Charge. Ordered to “take in volunteers, equip, organize, and instruct them and have them ready for overseas shipment when called upon,” Eisenhower performed admirably. He displayed excellent organizational skills, as well as an ability to accurately assess junior officers’ strengths, earning himself the rank of brevet lieutenant colonel.

Opposite, The Eisenhower house in Gettysburg.

EISENHOWER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Above, Ike and Mamie at the farm on July 1, 1956, their 40th wedding anniversary.

EISENHOWER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, ENHS 3577

Left, Captain Eisenhower, on the left, at Camp Colt, Gettysburg, in 1918 with other officers.

EISENHOWER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, ENHS 1021



Again in 1950 the Eisenhowers returned to Gettysburg, this time to plant permanent roots. In 34 years of marriage, the couple never owned a house, and Mamie wanted one very much. Fond memories of their days at Camp Colt inspired Ike, then president of Columbia University, to purchase a 189-acre farm adjoining the Gettysburg battlefield. Here the couple would entertain Republican leaders and court their support for Eisenhower's run for the presidency in 1952, escape the pressures of the presidency on weekends during Ike's eight years in office, and retire after nearly half a century of service to the country.

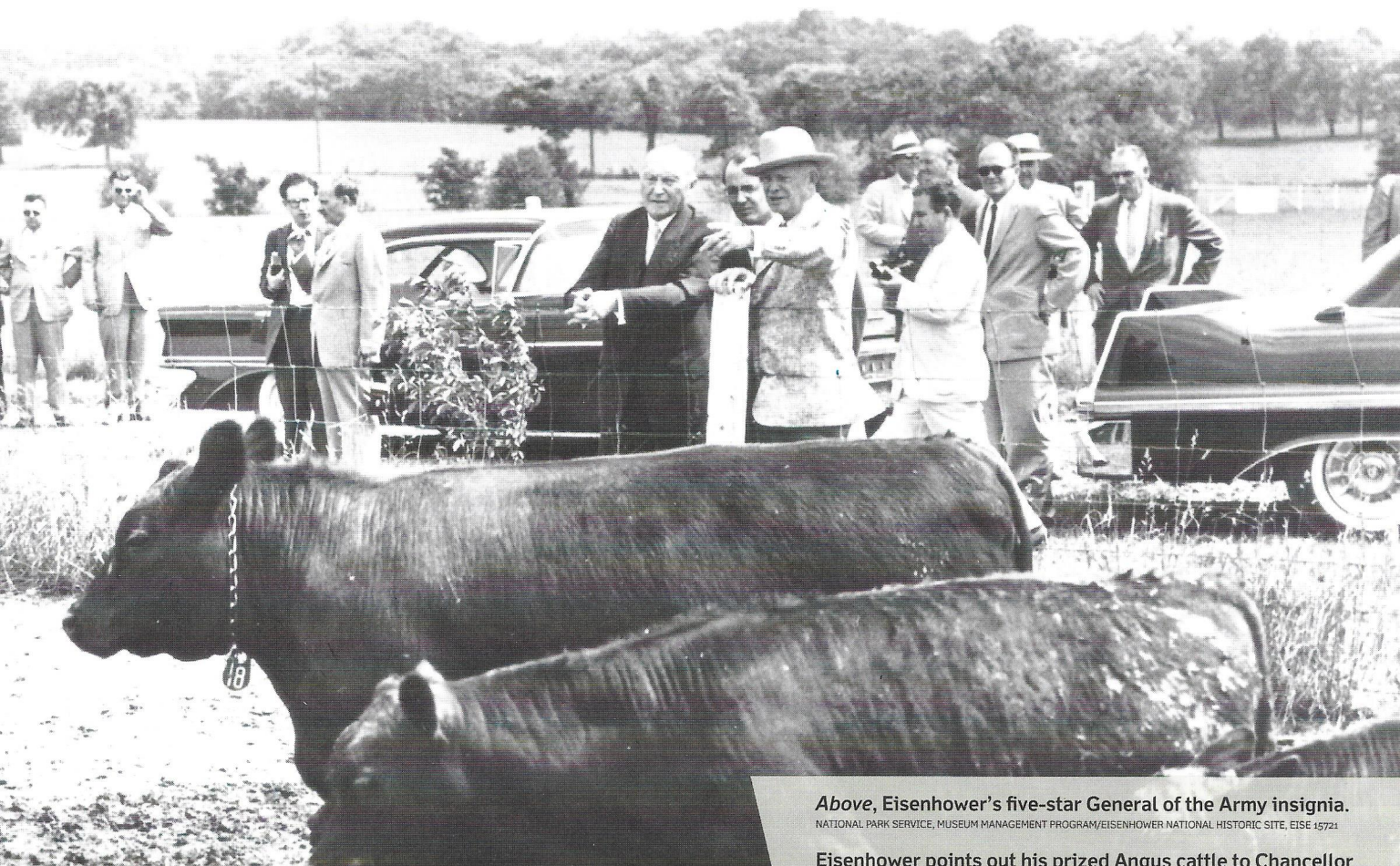
With its peaceful setting and inspiring view of South Mountain, the Central Pennsylvania home and farm, now the Eisenhower National Historic Site, offers visitors a fascinating glimpse into the public and private lives of the former president and first lady. It is also a reflection of the 1950s, a bygone era of peace and national prosperity.



No other place was better suited to Eisenhower's background, interests and personal tastes than his Gettysburg farm. His ancestors were of Pennsylvania Dutch origin and made their living by farming the rich soil of the Keystone State for five generations before relocating to the Midwest in the 1880s. Growing up in Abilene, Kansas, at the turn of the century, Eisenhower witnessed first-hand the plight of farmers scraping out a meager living from depleted

soil. As a young man, he discussed the horrid conditions of the Depression-era Dust Bowl with his brother Milton (1899-1985), Director of Information for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and this strengthened his resolve to address the environmental challenge. Ike was drawn to the depleted farmlands of Central Pennsylvania not only by his ancestral roots but also the challenge of soil conservation.

In 1950 Eisenhower purchased the Gettysburg farm of Allen Redding as a retirement home where he could pursue these interests. He paid \$44,000 for the property, the highest price to that date for an Adams County farm. Located just 30 miles from his ancestral home of Elizabethville, Dauphin County, the farm once served as a camp for Confederate troops during the Battle of Gettysburg and was a considerable acquisition. It consisted of 189 acres of land, a house, a barn and outbuildings, with all of the farm equipment, a herd of 24 dairy cattle and 500 chickens. After Ike was



Above, Eisenhower's five-star General of the Army insignia.

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Eisenhower points out his prized Angus cattle to Chancellor

lected president in 1952, W. Alton Jones (1891-1962), a close friend and businessman, became his partner and purchased the adjacent properties to protect Eisenhower's privacy. Managed together as the Eisenhower Farms, the partnership ultimately had 495 acres.

The Eisenhowers' retirement plans were interrupted in December 1950, however, when Ike assumed command of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Europe. He relied on one of his wartime staff officers, retired Brig. Gen. Arthur Nevins (1891-1979), and his wife, Ann, to maintain the farm as a dairy and egg operation while he was overseas.

Eisenhower made sure he was involved in the management of the farm through a regular correspondence with Nevins, providing directions, comments and suggestions. When Ike returned home to run for the presidency in 1952, Nevins was retained to manage the dairy farm.

Eisenhower also set out to rejuvenate the soil, which had been depleted of nutrients from decades of corn planting. One of his primary goals was to increase the productivity of the farm and "leave the place better than I found it." He employed contour plowing to control erosion and crop rotation to avoid depleting the soil of nutrients.

Following recommendations from the Soil Conservation Service and Pennsylvania State University Extension Service, Eisenhower used most of the land to feed livestock. In 1954 he partnered with another friend, George Allen (1896-1973), to raise purebred Aberdeen Angus for the show circuit. To that end, about half the farm was allotted to pasture and the other half to crop fields, and a show barn, maternity barn and loafing shed were erected. The operation witnessed a big boost in 1956 when Bob Hartley, a recent graduate of Pennsylvania State University with a fine eye for cattle,

joined the farm as a herdsman. That same year Ike purchased Ankonian 3551, a huge but gentle Angus, which became principle herd bull and sired a long line of prizewinning offspring.

For Ike pure-bred cattle breeding involved much more than turning a good bull loose in a field with cows. He wanted his show herd to be "as near to the ideal as possible" and to have "continuous improvement" of the breed. Accordingly, each animal was studied for its best characteristics, and bloodlines were traced back at least three generations before determining particular matches. Initially, breeding was done

beef cattle. Together with Ike's success in restoring the soil of his farm, the impressive cattle breeding earned for him the Pennsylvania State Farmers Association's very first Honorary Master Farmer award. Bestowed upon Eisenhower in July 1963, the accolade was the most personally meaningful honor of his lifetime.

During the presidential years the Gettysburg farm served as the Eisenhowers' retreat. According to park ranger John Joyce, an 18-year veteran at the historic site, the farm "provided the Eisenhowers with a

refuge from the challenges, demands and tensions of the Cold War era, as well as a source of pride, recreation and relaxation." The original farmhouse was actually a brick veneer encasing a decaying log cabin that was built sometime in the mid-18th century. "The logs were so moldy and worm-eaten," recalled Ike many years later, "that there was nothing to do but tear the place down." Nevertheless, Mamie insisted on retaining as much of the original structure as possible. As a result, the builders reused some of the original brickwork, timber and planks



1952 campaign button.

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naturally, but soon artificial insemination was employed. The new technology opened up a wider range of prospective matches. Promising calves were separated from their mothers at four months, housed in sand-filled stalls and fed hand-mixed grains, cooked barley, sugar beet pulp, molasses and supplements to encourage growth. Holstein dairy cows nursed the young calves on high-quality milk. Each animal received a daily brushing and a weekly bath. Immediately before a show, each animal was rubbed down with oils to give luster to the coat to win the approval of the judges.

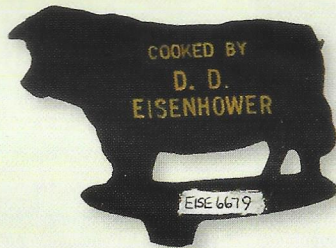
Between 1954 and 1966 the Eisenhower Farm developed a nationally recognized show herd of Angus, leaving a permanent mark on the specialized world of breeding

in constructing the new two-story Georgian house. Completed in March 1955, the structure cost the Eisenhowers an additional \$215,000, which included materials and union labor. The new farmhouse had eight bedrooms, nine bathrooms, a stately living room, a formal dining room, a kitchen, a butler's pantry and a glassed-in porch. Defined by its relative modesty, the farmhouse was decorated by Mamie with assistance from interior designer Elisabeth Draper (1900-93). It remains an eclectic arrangement of middle-class 1950s appliances, family heirlooms, expensive state gifts and modest furnishings dating from the early years of the couple's marriage, all of which reflect both Ike and Mamie's down-to-earth nature and public stature.



Ike liked to cook for pleasure in this 1950s-era kitchen, but most meals were prepared by cook Delores Moaney.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, MUSEUM MANAGEMENT PROGRAM/EISENHOWER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



Personalized Angus-shaped steak markers were used by the president after he grilled steaks for guests.

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The kitchen is a fine example of the 1950s style. It is especially large and outfitted with a Crosley refrigerator, linoleum counters and period cookware. Here Eisenhower enjoyed preparing his specialties, which included beef stew and various soups. Mamie, who was not quite as adept in the kitchen, joked that she “could only make fudge and mayonnaise.” Most meals, however, were prepared by the cook, Delores Moaney, who seldom made gourmet dishes because the Eisenhowers favored basic American fare. Consistent with their modest tastes, the couple preferred to dine on television trays on the porch where they could enjoy each other’s company or lively conversation with just a few friends.

On holidays and other special occasions, dinner was served in the dining room, which could comfortably seat a party of 14. Mamie purchased the dining room suite in 1927, and it traveled with the couple during their many and frequent relocations in the military. On the sideboard is a silver tea service set that Eisenhower purchased for his wife piece-by-piece when he was a young major with his poker winnings and savings

accrued by rolling his own cigarettes. Each piece is engraved with “DDE to MDE.”

Cocktails were served before formal dinners. Ike enjoyed Scotch and Mamie typically drank a Manhattan. Occasionally, beer and wine were served. After dinner, guests might enjoy cigarettes, along with Mamie who preferred the Phillip Morris brand. Although Ike smoked four packs of Camels a day during World War II, he quit cold turkey in 1948 and never resumed the habit. Since the hazards of smoking were not widely known, many Americans indulged in the practice, and the Eisenhowers as good hosts had smoking accessories around the house for their guests to use.

The porch was the couple’s favorite room as well as the center of life at the farm. “We have learned that one room can constitute a home,” wrote Ike near the end of his life. “At Gettysburg, the important room is a glassed-in porch, not much larger than a modest living room, where we spend hours from early breakfast to late evening. Both Mamie and I find it an oasis of relaxation.” Family members, friends and other guests felt at home on the comfortably furnished porch. It was also the venue for marathon bridge games.

A large, remote-controlled television set sat on the porch as well. TV was an integral part of the Eisenhowers’ everyday life at Gettysburg. They regularly watched the CBS *Evening News* with Walter Cronkite and enjoyed *The Lawrence Welk Show* and *I Love Lucy*. Ike liked westerns, such as *Gunsmoke* and *Bonanza*, and Mamie enjoyed game shows and afternoon soap operas. The couple often spent New Year’s Eve watching Guy Lombardo and His Royal Canadians on television live from the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City.

The porch was where Ike indulged in his hobby of oil painting. He experimented with both portraits and landscapes. Some of the nearly 250 paintings he completed were used to make prints given as Christmas gifts to White House staff members and friends. In addition, the porch provided Eisenhower with an informal setting conducive to one-on-one discussions with foreign dignitaries, something that allowed him to “take the measure of the man.” He also liked to sit on the porch and contemplate the Civil War, an epic conflict that wove like a thread throughout his life.

Located adjacent to the Gettysburg battlefield, the Eisenhower farm was a constant reminder of the Civil War, as well as the courage and sacrifice of the soldiers who fought in it. Inspired by those qualities as well as by his voracious reading of the subject, Ike became an excellent student of the battle and regularly walked the battlefield. According to Mamie he knew “every rock out there.”

As president, Eisenhower gave battlefield tours to visiting world leaders and World War II associates, as well as family and friends. Among those who accompanied him were Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery (1877-1976) of Great Britain in 1957, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer (1876-1967) of West Germany in 1957, ex-Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965) of Great Britain in 1959 and President Charles de Gaulle (1890-1970) of France in 1960.

Now that Eisenhower harbored his own experiences of war, the Battle of Gettysburg assumed a different meaning and evoked a wider range of feelings that he often shared with his guests. For example, the president developed strong opinions about the various officers who led their men into battle. He sympathized with Union Gen. George G. Meade for not pursuing Lee’s army immediately after the great battle and with Confederate Gen. Richard Ewell for



his hesitation in attacking the Army of the Potomac when he had the opportunity to do so. Ike believed both officers were acting in the best interests of their troops. On the other hand, Eisenhower was critical of Confederate Gen. J.E.B. Stuart, whom he considered to be more interested in garnering personal glory than winning the war. Worse, he detested Union Gen. Daniel E. Sickles for not only disobeying orders at Gettysburg but also having the audacity to claim he was the “hero of the battle” and Meade a “coward.” Ike reserved his greatest admiration for President Abraham Lincoln, whose compassion, humility, patience, sense of humor and single-minded determination to win the war made an indelible impression on him. Naturally, Eisenhower considered it a great honor to deliver the address for the ceremonies commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg and Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address in 1963.

Like other American presidents, Eisenhower was showered with gifts from around the world. Many can still be found in the formal living room of the farmhouse,

which reflects the public stature of the president and first lady. Among the gifts received from heads of state are a mother-of-pearl-inlaid black lacquer coffee table from the Republic of Korea and a silk Tabriz rug from the Shah of Iran. The marble fireplace, removed from the White House in 1873 by President Ulysses S. Grant, was an anniversary gift from the Eisenhower White House staff. The painting of Prague, Czechoslovakia, above the mantel was presented to the general by that country’s citizens at the end of World War II.

Ike considered the living room “too stuffy” with its pouf, or circular sofa, baby grand piano and formal portraits of himself, Mamie and her mother, Elivera Doud (1878-1960). The living room was more reflective of the first lady’s tastes. A natural musician who played by ear, Mamie loved to entertain family and friends on the piano, and she treasured the pouf, which was similar to the one in the White House.



Top, The Eisenhowers’ “oasis of relaxation” was this glassed-in porch, where they often dined on TV trays, played cards, watched TV and entertained guests.

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EISENHOWER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Bottom, *The Mexican*, an oil-on-canvas portrait by Eisenhower, completed in 1953, was one of Mamie’s favorites.

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Perhaps the most important world leader to visit Eisenhower at Gettysburg was Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev (1894-1971) of the Soviet Union. In the autumn of 1959 the Soviet premier traveled to the United States to discuss Cold War differences. On September 26 he visited the Gettysburg farm where the two world leaders took a break from the arduous diplomatic meetings at Camp David, just a 15-minute helicopter ride over the Pennsylvania-Maryland border. At Gettysburg they had a pleasant conversation as they walked the grounds. Khrushchev presented Ike with a handsome wooden case filled with Russian wines and asked the president to visit his country. Unfortunately, the Soviet premier rescinded the invitation the following year when, on May 1, 1960, the Soviets shot down a U-2 reconnaissance airplane flying over its airspace.

Eisenhower was updated on the incident at his farmhouse on May 7. Seated behind the sturdy pine desk in his first-floor office,

the president took the phone call on a direct line to the White House. He was informed that the U-2 pilot, Francis Gary Powers, a CIA spy, was alive and being held by the Soviets. The news couldn't have come at a worse time. In a few days, leaders of the U.S., Soviet Union, England and France were to meet in Paris for a summit conference. When Khrushchev demanded an apology and Ike refused, the Soviet premier condemned U.S. spy activities and stormed out, putting an end to the conference. Nevertheless, Eisenhower remained firm. On May 25, he defended the reconnaissance mission on national television explaining that aerial surveillance can help assure humanity "that they are safe from any surprise attack." The U-2 conflict ended the president's efforts at securing an arms control agreement with the Soviet Union and closed the seven months of détente enjoyed by the two Cold War adversaries.

During stressful periods like this, Eisenhower retreated to his den where he

spent many hours reading, relaxing or playing bridge with friends. The leather armchair and ottoman were his favorite pieces of furniture and he vowed that the set "will be with me as long as I can have a home of my own." Ike's personal interests can still be seen in the den in the Civil War pike and musket above the fireplace, the red lamp decorated with fishing flies and his collection of art books in the bookcase. Together with the small adjoining office, the two rooms became a "temporary White House" while he recuperated from the heart attack he suffered in 1955.

Mamie enjoyed her own "office" upstairs in the master bedroom. She spent the morning hours there meeting with staff members, writing letters and planning her social agenda. All of this was done while in bed propped up on pillows, a reflection of her belief that after age 50 a woman was entitled to stay in bed until noon. Mamie's deep devotion to family is evident from the paintings and photographs on display here.





They include an image of second son John (1922-2013), his wife Barbara (1926-2014) and her grandchildren, David (1948-), Barbara Anne (1949-), Susan (1951-) and Mary Jean (1955-). But the photo that meant the most to her was one of her husband as a West Point cadet. Inscribed “To the dearest, sweetest girl in the world,” it stands alongside the pearl necklaces and perfumes that cover the table of the adjoining dressing room.

The first lady’s dressing room also showcases her flair for fashion. Mamie had her own simple but elegant style, accessorizing the colorful cotton and polyester dresses of the era with dime store jewelry and inexpensive mail-order hats. She even bought dresses at J.C. Penney, which she pronounced “J.C. Penné” in a mock French accent. Despite her modest taste, Mamie made the list of “Best Dressed Women” each of the eight years she served as first lady.

Until 1959, when son John and his family moved into a neighboring house, the young grandchildren were frequent visitors to the farmhouse, staying overnight in the two second-floor guestrooms. The Eisenhowers loved their grandchildren and spent considerable time engaging them in lively conversation, playing scrabble and watching movies together on the porch. The president also took a great interest in his grandchildren’s schoolwork. According to his grandson David, “several nights, long past midnight, Mamie fell asleep while Granddad

pored over texts of the ‘new math’ then being introduced in public schools.” Eisenhower became especially close to his only grandson, who began working on the farm at age 10 and continued to return to Gettysburg during his summers in college.

When Ike finally retired from the presidency in January 1961, he adopted a more staid lifestyle. John, who was shocked by the sudden change, wrote, “His movements were slower, his tone less sharp, and he had time to indulge in casual conversation.” Initially, John “feared for his

Opposite, Winston Churchill visited the farm on May 6, 1959, and was treated to a tour in the Eisenhowers’ compact Crosley Runabout.

EISENHOWER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, ENHS 1581

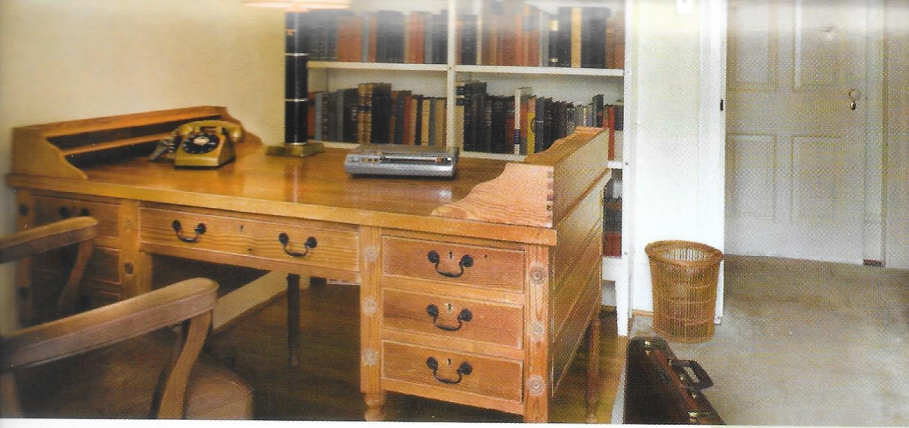
Above, The Living Room is furnished with numerous gifts presented to the Eisenhowers, including the marble fireplace from White House staff.

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Below, During his visit in September 1959, Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev of the Soviet Union presented this wooden case of Russian wines to President Eisenhower.

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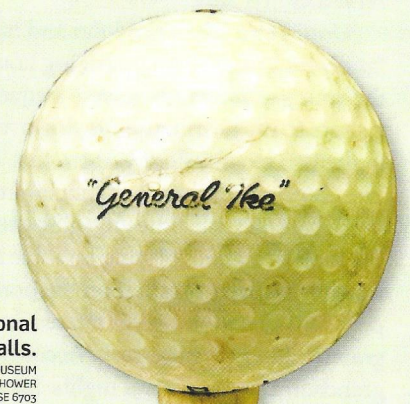




[father's] health," but soon realized that Ike's slower pace was the result of his "being totally relaxed" for the first time in more than 20 years as a commanding officer and president. Now, the former president finally had the time to pursue his favorite outdoor hobbies. He hunted pheasant and quail in the fields and honed his shooting skills on his own skeet range, regularly hitting 20 of 25 clay birds. Fly fishing was another favorite sport he pursued at nearby streams. But golf, in particular, appeared to have the strongest hold on him. He played several times a week, either practicing on the putting green at his farm or playing a round at the Gettysburg Country Club.

Politics also continued to be part of his life. As an elder statesman, Eisenhower advised President John F. Kennedy on the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile crises and President Lyndon B. Johnson on the Vietnam War. As the senior member of the Republican Party, Ike also provided advice and counsel to rising young stars and hosted campaign picnics on the farm. Despite his slower pace, the ex-president admitted that he was "busier than I've ever been."

Except for the winters, which were spent in Palm Desert, California, Eisenhower resided at the farm until his death. He passed away at age 78 at Washington's Walter Reed Hospital on March 28, 1969, and was buried in the chapel near the Eisenhower Library and Museum at his birthplace of Abilene, Kansas. Two years before, Ike donated the Gettysburg farm and 230 acres of land to the United States government for preservation as a historic site. At that time, the National Park Service assumed operation of the property. The agreement insured Ike lifetime occupancy rights, a consideration later extended to Mamie until her death in 1979. Today the Eisenhower National Historic Site is open to the public and interprets the lives of this remarkable president and first lady as well as Ike's historical legacy, which continues to evolve.



One of Ike's personal Spalding golf balls.

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Top, The desk in Eisenhower's office was built with pine boards salvaged from the White House renovation of 1948-52.

Middle, Ike's den includes a hearth and oven recovered from a nearby summer kitchen.

Bottom, The upstairs master bedroom was Mamie's domain.

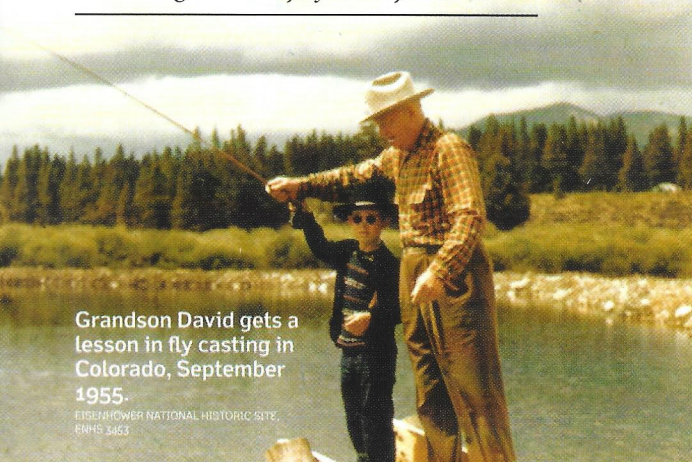
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"General Eisenhower's significance to Allied success in World War II has never been questioned by historians, unlike his achievements as president. But today's scholars are realizing that he brought tremendous stability not only to the presidency, but to the world stage. Another president might've been more heavy-handed in his treatment of the Soviet Union. Instead, President Eisenhower kept the Cold War from escalating and, in his farewell address, warned Americans of the dangers of a growing military-industrial complex. That is a very important legacy coming from one of our nation's greatest military leaders."

To be sure, President Dwight D. Eisenhower was extremely successful at keeping the United States at peace without diminishing its prestige. In foreign affairs, he made an earnest effort at détente, striving to reduce tensions with the Soviet Union, and negotiated an armistice in the Korean conflict. At home Eisenhower balanced the federal budget, launched the space program, established the Interstate Highway System and made significant gains in civil rights by enforcing desegregation in public education and in the Armed Forces. What endeared the president and the first lady to the American people, however, was their devotion to family, a modest rural lifestyle, and traditional middle class values, all of which can still be seen at their beloved Gettysburg homestead.

The author wishes to thank Carol Hegeman, Supervisory Historian of the Eisenhower National Historic Site, and her staff for their assistance with this essay.

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Grandson David gets a lesson in fly casting in Colorado, September 1955.

EISENHOWER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, EINE 3453



Eisenhower, a cadet at West Point, circa 1915.

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Visiting Eisenhower National Historic Site

Eisenhower National Historic Site, the home and farm of President Dwight D. Eisenhower and First Lady Mamie Doud Eisenhower, is located in Gettysburg, Adams County, adjacent to Gettysburg National Military Park. Administered by the National Park Service, the site contains 690 acres and includes the house and three farms, maintained as they were during the Eisenhowers' residency. The house features most of its original furnishings, and in December it is decorated for Christmas. Visits begin with an orientation of the grounds and continue with a tour of the house. Visitors are invited to take self-guided walks of the grounds, which include a P.G.A. putting green, rose gardens, a guest house, a show barn, a skeet range and a garage housing the presidential limousine, golf carts and a station wagon. A reception area offers exhibits and an informational video. The site is open year-round. Visits can be made only by shuttle buses that depart from the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum and Visitor Center at 1195 Baltimore Pike. For more information call 717-338-9114 or visit nps.gov/eise.