

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

1. STATE Ohio	2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO. Theme XXI, Political and Military Affairs, 1865-1912
3. NAME(S) OF SITE William Howard Taft Home	4. APPROX. ACREAGE
5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) 2038 Auburn Avenue, Cincinnati	
6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER (Also administrator if different from owner) Charles P. Taft, President, The William Howard Taft Memorial Association, 712 Broadway, Cincinnati 2.	
7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant)	

America has produced few men who have led such a varied and successful life as William Howard Taft. Who else has been the Solicitor General of the United States, A Federal judge, an eminently successful proconsul in the American Empire, a vigorous Secretary of War, a good President and an excellent Chief Justice of the Supreme Court? And a Yale man?

Taft, from the moment of his birth on September 15, 1857, in Cincinnati, appeared destined for a life devoted to the law. Shortly after he was graduated from Yale in 1878, he entered a law school in his home town and in 1884 he became judge of Cincinnati's Superior Court. Married two years later to Helen Herron, he became Solicitor General of the United States on February 4, 1890. In 1892 President Benjamin Harrison appointed him to the Federal Circuit Court. Seemingly, Taft's career was now set for life, especially as he cherished the legal life and his seat on the court. But the Spanish-American War produced a revolution in his career, just as it did for the Nation.

America, in addition to defeating the Spanish in 1898, gained an empire. Not all Americans approved of our imperialism, especially the retention of the Philippine Islands. Taft himself opposed keeping these islands, peopled with an alien race and thousands of miles from North America. President William McKinley thus astounded Taft when he requested in February, 1900, that the judge head American rule in the Philippines. It was like asking a non-church member to take over a church's pulpit. McKinley's urging and a sense of duty finally triumphed over Taft's protests and his reluctance to leave his court. His acceptance not only boded well for the Philippines, but also presaged a career of increasing national significance.

Taft arrived in Manila in 1901 and departed in December, 1903. Taft's farewell to this possession left a void in the hearts of most of the Filipinos, for he had established the supremacy of civil rule and he had laid the basis for self-government. Displaying

8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Give best sources; give location of manuscripts and rare works)

Herbert S. Duffy, William Howard Taft (New York, 1930), 5, 14-15, 24, 34, 66, 71-72, 77, 80-81, 131, 137, 153-154, 162-163, 166, 168, 186ff, 196ff, 203-204, 271-272, 303-304, 308-310, 314-315, 326; Margaret Leech, In the Days of McKinley (New York, 1959), 484-485; Henry F. Pringle, The Life and Times of William Howard Taft (2 vols.; New York, 1939), I, 182-183, 191-192, 200-201, 205, 212-213, 246-247, 255, 283-284, 381-382, 378, 383,

9. REPORTS AND STUDIES (Mention best reports and studies, as, NPS study, IABS, etc.) (cont'd)

10. PHOTOGRAPHS * ATTACHED: YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	11. CONDITION Fair	12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) Historic House Museum	13. DATE OF VISIT May 15, 1963
14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature) S. Sydney Bradford	15. TITLE Historic Sites Historian	16. DATE August 20, 1963	

\* DRY MOUNT ON AN 8 X 10 1/2 SHEET OF FAIRLY HEAVY PAPER. IDENTIFY BY VIEW AND NAME OF THE SITE, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH, AND NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER. GIVE LOCATION OF NEGATIVE. IF ATTACHED, ENCLOSE IN PROPER NEGATIVE ENVELOPES.

(IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED USE SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET, 10-317a, AND REFER TO ITEM NUMBER)

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SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

This sheet is to be used for giving additional information or comments, for more space for any item on the regular form, and for recording pertinent data from future studies, visitations, etc. Be brief, but use as many Supplement Sheets as necessary. When items are continued they should be listed, if possible, in numerical order of the items. All information given should be headed by the item number, its name, and the word (cont'd), as, 6. Description and Importance (cont'd) . . .

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7. Importance and Description (cont'd)

a confidence in the islanders that others lacked, especially the military, Taft, with McKinley's backing, had inaugurated an American policy that could only end in independence. This is not to say that we made no mistakes, nor displayed quite a bit of self-interest in our rule of those islands. Even so, Taft and the Nation went about governing the Philippines in a manner that contrasted sharply with the less generous imperialism of England, France and Holland.

Because of McKinley's assassination in 1901, Taft gained a new boss, Theodore Roosevelt. The President recalled Taft early in 1903 to become the Secretary of War and by 1908 Taft had become Roosevelt's heir apparent. The two had become fast friends as Taft had ably performed many tasks, expediting progress on the Panama Canal for one thing and establishing temporary American rule in Cuba in 1906 for another. As Roosevelt's second term ended, the President supported the nomination of Taft by the Republican Party for the presidency. With that blessing, Taft easily won the nomination. The voters also agreed with "Teddy," sending Taft to the White House.

To some, Taft's succession after Roosevelt was like the substitution of a single piccolo player for a blaring brass band. Even now, many do not realize the accomplishments of the Taft administration. Desiring to further reform and to end the abuse of economic power, Taft's program produced much in the way of beneficial legislation. The Congressional session that began in December, 1909, approved so many acts that up until that time ". . . , it is quite true, as was remarked at the end of the session, that more constructive legislation was enacted than by any previous Congress since Reconstruction."<sup>1</sup> Taft also prosecuted trusts with vigor, much more so than Roosevelt had. Two notable triumphs in this respect were the dissolutions of the Standard Oil Company and the American Tobacco Company.

8. Bibliographical References (Cont'd)

II, 654-655, 666, 670, 672-675, 796-797, 856, 911, 951, 994; Edward Stanwood, A History of the Presidency from 1788 to 1897 (2 vols.; Boston, 1898), II, 220-223, 232-233, 253.

<sup>1</sup> Edward Stanwood, A History of the Presidency from 1788 to 1897 (2 vols.; Boston, 1898), II, 222.

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It was inevitable that conflict should break out between Taft and Roosevelt. Retaining a proprietary interest in the presidency, Roosevelt was angered by the President's independence and by some of his policies. By 1912, the break was complete. So complete, as a matter of fact, that Roosevelt ran as a third candidate for the White House in 1912, thus ensuring his own and Taft's defeat. In later years the old friendship was renewed, but the earlier ardor was dead.

Even when elected President, Taft had indicated that he would have been happier if he had entered the Supreme Court. For years he had longed to sit on our highest court, and he had almost accepted an appointment to it in October, 1902. Only a feeling that he should stay in the Philippines had kept him from accepting the offer. Returning to Yale as a professor of law after leaving the White House, Taft never lost sight of what he termed the "sacred shrine."<sup>2</sup> Could he have been happier then, when on June 30, 1921, the President appointed him chief justice? As head of the court, Taft capped his long career. He carried to it dignity, learning and experience, to both its and the Nation's benefit.

Taft died on March 8, 1930.

Condition of the Site: Taft was born and lived in the Auburn Avenue residence until he was twenty-five. Now obscured by the trees in front of it, the house's handsome front is hidden from view. Moreover, time has not been kind to the building, for it is quite rundown, and the house has been divided into a number of apartments. Constructed of brick and painted grey, the house, however, appears to be of generally sound condition.

The William Howard Taft Memorial Association possess a perpetual lease on the building. The Association hopes to restore it in the future.

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<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Henry F. Pringle, The Life and Times of William Howard Taft (2 vols.; New York, 1939), II, 951.