



Foundation Document Overview

Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site

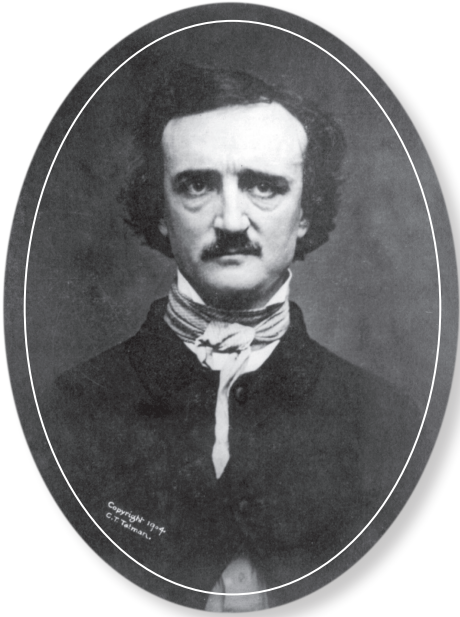
Pennsylvania



Contact Information

For more information about the *Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site Foundation Document*, contact: inde_superintendent@nps.gov or (215) 597-7120 or write to: Superintendent, Independence National Historical Park and Associated National Historic Sites and Memorials 143 S. 3rd Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106

Purpose



EDGAR ALLAN POE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE commemorates Poe's literary legacy by preserving and interpreting the Poe House complex in Philadelphia where he lived during his most prolific period.



Significance

Significance statements express why Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site 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.

- **Literary Achievements:** Edgar Allan Poe attained great success as an author, poet, editor, and critic during the six years he lived in Philadelphia. Poe pioneered many literary styles, created the detective story genre, and published some of his classic tales, including “The Gold Bug,” “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “The Tell-Tale Heart,” and “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” while living in the city.
- **Tangible Connection to Edgar Allan Poe:** Of Poe’s several Philadelphia homes, only this one survives, serving as a tangible link to the author’s height of literary power and time in Philadelphia. Poe drew inspiration from his surroundings, and the basement of this house is reflected in one of his best known stories, “The Black Cat.”
- **Philadelphia, Publishing Capital of the U.S.:** Poe’s residence in Philadelphia, one of the literary and publishing capitals of 19th century America, was no accident. He chose to live in Philadelphia in order to influence his career and enhance his success.



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.

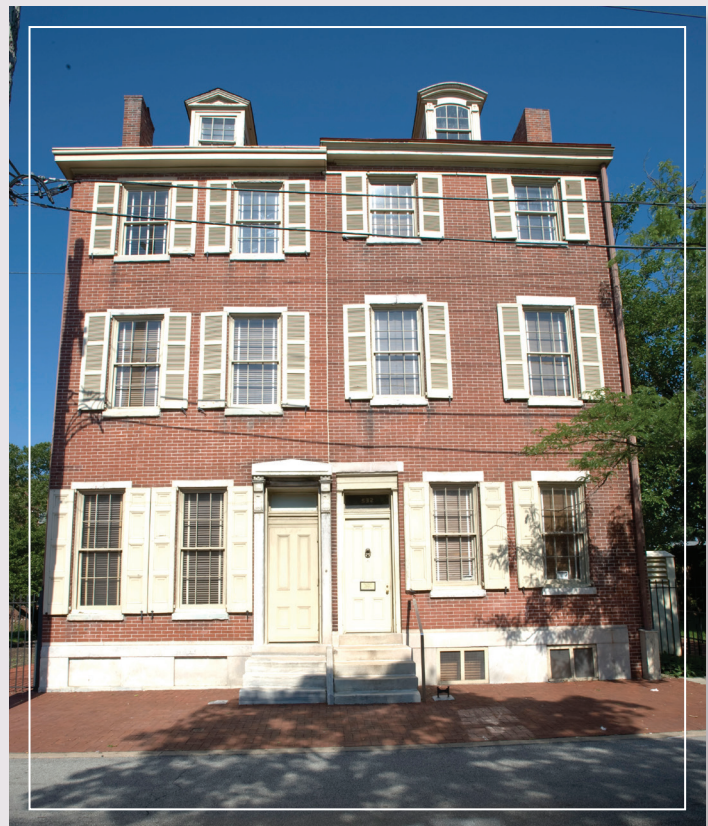
- **Poe House Complex:** While living in Philadelphia, Edgar Allan Poe rented the house at 532 N. 7th Street from 1843 to 1844. Once a free-standing structure, this house was both inspiration and home for Poe who lived at this location with his wife and mother-in-law. Today, the unfurnished house is the focal point of the national historic site, providing a glimpse into Poe's private life and serving as a tangible connection to his time in Philadelphia. Along with the three-story brick building where Poe resided, the Poe House complex also includes the adjoining mid-19th century brick townhouse and the north and south gardens outside the buildings. This townhouse functions as the site's visitor contact station as well as exhibit space highlighting the life and time of Edgar Allan Poe.



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.

- **Poe's Body of Work:** Edgar Allan Poe demonstrated the breadth of his creative inspiration by pioneering and mastering a variety of literary forms.
- **Poe's Continuing Literary Influence:** Edgar Allan Poe's influence on literary expression, art, and popular culture began during his lifetime and continues today.
- **Poe's Life and Times:** Edgar Allan Poe's personal life and the literary world in which he made his living affected his creative expression.



Description

Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site preserves the only surviving Philadelphia residence of acclaimed 19th century author, Edgar Allan Poe. Located in the Spring Garden neighborhood of Philadelphia, the national historic site was authorized as a unit of the National Park Service in 1976 and is currently managed by Independence National Historical Park. The site includes the original home and grounds where Poe and his family lived in about 1843–1844 as well as adjoining homes that serve as the site’s visitor center and exhibit space. Although the Poe house remains unfurnished, the building itself provides many connections to the environment in which the author lived and drew creative inspiration for many of his best known tales. Exhibits at the site explore Poe’s personal and family life as well as his literary and publishing career. The national historic site offers guided tours of the Poe house as well as opportunities to enjoy his stories in the Reading Room, a space with furnishings based on his fictional essay, “The Philosophy of Furniture.”

Described as horrifying, mystifying, and full of genius, Edgar Allan Poe’s writing has engaged generations of readers all over the globe. The six years Poe lived in Philadelphia, the publishing capital of America at the time, are often considered his happiest and most productive. Not only did Poe edit and provide critical reviews for very successful magazines, but he also invented the modern detective story. While in Philadelphia, Poe penned such classics as “The Gold Bug,” “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Fall of the House of Usher” and poems such as “The Haunted Palace” and “To Helen.” Yet Poe also struggled with bad luck, personal demons, and his wife’s tuberculosis. In Poe’s humble home, visitors are given the opportunity to reflect on the human spirit surmounting crushing obstacles, and celebrate Poe’s astonishing creativity.

