

Ulysses S. Grant

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Historic Site
Missouri





WHITE HAVEN, JEFFERSON NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION; GRANT, THE WHITE HOUSE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION.

White Haven today. Inset: Ulysses S. Grant, 1875.

"I gave up all the property owned by General Grant: some in Chicago . . . in Philadelphia, and last, though not least, the dear old homestead in Missouri, White Haven. When I signed this last deed, it well-nigh broke my heart." —Julia Dent Grant

Exploring Grant's Legacy

Many sites commemorate Ulysses S. Grant or lay claim to his legacy. On the hallowed ground of Civil War battlefields like Shiloh and Vicksburg, at the magnificent statue in front of the U.S. Capitol, or in the tranquil eminence of his New York tomb, Grant's mark on the nation is remembered in profound ways. He was one of the most famous Americans of his era: the savior of the Union and a two-term president of the United States.

But beyond these famous roles, who is Ulysses S. Grant? Several key elements defined the man and his character—loving devotion to his wife Julia and their four children, a genuine affection for family and friends, a keen sense of duty to country, and a deep concern for humanity. It is his legacy as a person that resonates so strongly at his White Haven home, now known as Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site.

Without question, the relationship shared by Ulysses and Julia Grant was special, and White Haven served as an anchor in their life together. It was here, at Julia's family home, that they first met and courted in the 1840s, and then raised a family and farmed the land in the 1850s. The couple lived in many other places due to Grant's military career, especially during the upheaval of the Civil War, but their emotional attachment to White Haven remained strong, and they purchased White Haven from Julia's father and siblings in the 1860s. In 1869 they began their stay in the White House, while continuing to make plans to retire here following Grant's second term as president in the 1870s. After a world tour that lasted more than two years, the Grants finally settled in New York to be closer to their children. Through it all, however, they continually returned to White Haven, and it remained the place they called home throughout their lives.

Today White Haven is a National Historic Landmark and the centerpiece of this National Park Service site. It is a place where visitors may encounter Ulysses and Julia Grant as ordinary individuals facing the joys and challenges of life, shaped by the times in which they lived. You can also learn about the many other individuals who lived and worked at White Haven. These people and their experiences are important to White Haven's story, as well as to the story of Ulysses and Julia Grant, two extraordinary people whose actions helped shape the nation.



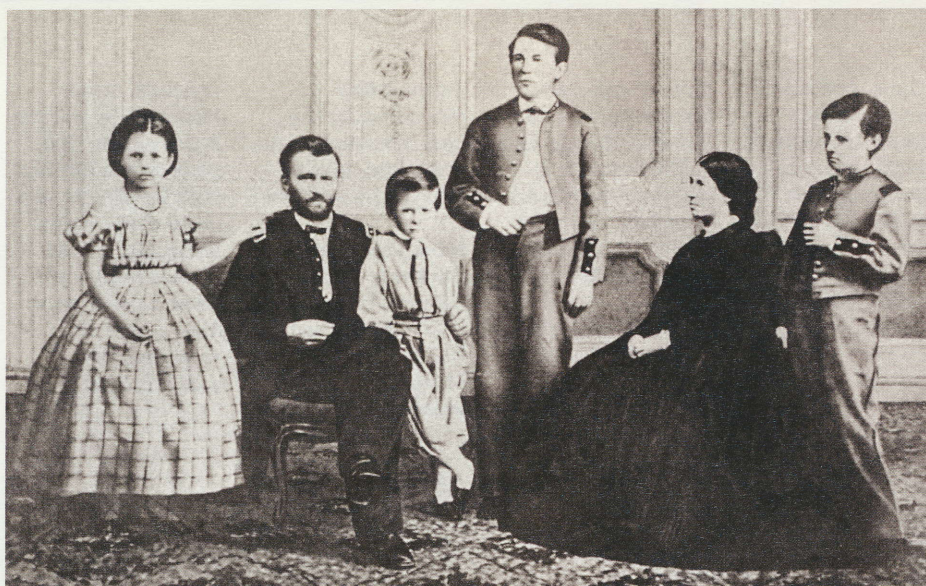
BOTH: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



Ulysses S. Grant in 1866, about the time he received the rank of General of the U.S. Army, "conferred by Act of Congress, and the will of the President of the United States."

Julia Dent Grant later recalled that this 1864 photograph "was taken by Brady in New York when I was on my first visit to N.Y. the spring that General Grant first came East."

The Grant family ca.1866: Ellen (Nellie), Ulysses, Jesse, Fred, Julia, and Ulysses Jr. (Buck).



ULYSSES S. GRANT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Hardscrabble, the house that Grant built on the White Haven property in 1856.



NPS

White Haven: A Microcosm of National Issues

Different backgrounds and opinions strained relations between Ulysses, Julia, and their respective families, mirroring tensions throughout the country that would eventually tear the nation apart in the mid-19th century. At the root of these differences was the institution of slavery. Ulysses was born and raised in the free state of Ohio. His father Jesse Grant was very outspoken against slavery, and instilled in young Ulysses the belief that it was morally wrong. Julia Dent was born and raised in the slave state of Missouri. Her father, known as “Colonel” Frederick Dent, stood at the opposite end of the spectrum from Grant’s father, and taught his children that slavery was the proper relationship between whites and blacks.

Political debates over slavery and its expansion had existed since the founding of the nation. Missouri’s statehood, part of the Missouri Compromise in 1820, was another stage in this ongoing argument. By the time Grant arrived in St. Louis in 1843, slavery had long since become a central part of the social, political, and economic fabric of the United States, and a way of life at White Haven.

The enslaved workers owned by Colonel Dent—upwards of 30—were vital to his wealth, status, and the successful operation of the farm. Grant recognized that slaves were considered “property” under the law, but his actions and attitudes were shaped by the fundamental notion that slaves were people and should be treated accordingly.

Ulysses and Julia increasingly found any discussion of politics a major strain on their family life. As the nation’s political turbulence escalated, Julia’s father, a southern Democrat, supported secession over the issue of slavery, while Grant was an outspoken supporter of the Union. Grant’s father disliked the slaveholding Dents and refused to visit his son at White Haven. Events like the Supreme Court’s 1857 Dred Scott decision fanned the flames of dissent at White Haven and throughout the country.

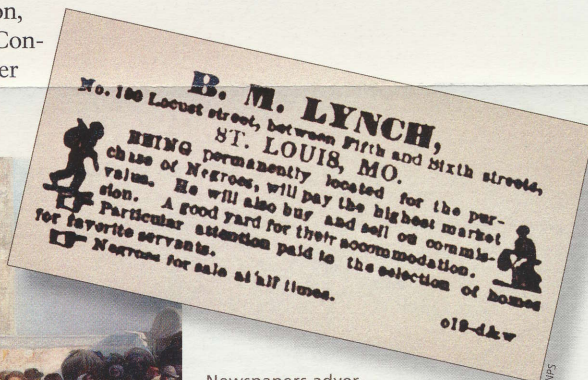
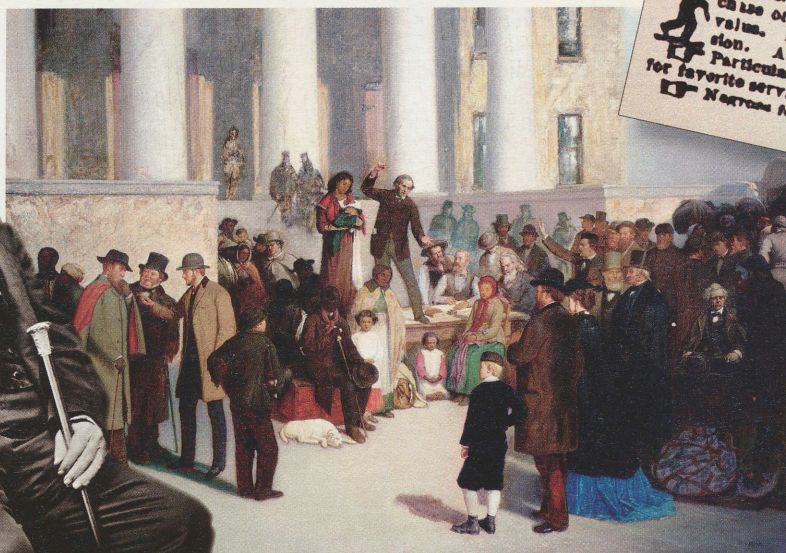
When the Civil War finally broke out, family divisions became even more tangible, as Julia’s brother Fred fought for the Union, while her brother John sided with the Confederacy. Colonel Dent remained a bitter

opponent of what Grant was fighting for, while Jesse Grant strongly defended his son’s actions—often embarrassing Ulysses in the process.

Julia was caught in the midst of these conflicting viewpoints. Comfortable in the lifestyle wrought in large part by enslaved labor, Julia still felt strongly that the Dent slaves were “family,” to be cared for as children, and content in their servitude. Yet the far-reaching changes brought about by the war and then Reconstruction challenged her beliefs. Like many Americans of the day, she learned to adapt to the radically new makeup of society.

At White Haven you can experience the nation’s political turbulence over the issue of slavery and its aftermath through one family’s perspective. The same arguments that divided the Dents and Grants were repeated in homes throughout the country and would lead to secession and civil war.

Frederick Dent, Julia’s father, was a slaveholder and considered himself a Southern gentleman.



Newspapers advertised the buying and selling of slaves in St. Louis.

The last slave auction in St. Louis was held on the steps of the Old Courthouse on January 1, 1861. Thomas Satterwhite Noble produced this painting of the event in 1871.

St. Louis and White Haven

St. Louis was a flourishing city in the 19th century. From its 18th-century roots as a French colonial town, it had grown to become a center for trade, culture, and military activity, and by 1850 it was the eighth largest city in the United States. Extensive steamboat traffic on the Mississippi River, a steady flood of trappers, gold miners, and settlers heading west, a growing industrial presence, and the influx of German and Irish immigrants combined to make the Gateway City a bustling and diverse community.

White Haven, originally acquired by the Dents as a summer home in 1820, was far enough away for the family to escape the pollution and disease prevalent in the city, yet still close

enough so that they could enjoy all the thriving city had to offer. White Haven eventually became the Dents' primary residence, though much of Colonel Dent's wealth and influence remained centered in St. Louis. He maintained many business connections there, and the markets for White Haven's farm goods were in the city.

Following Ulysses S. Grant's graduation from West Point, the army assigned him to the 4th Infantry Regiment, stationed at Jefferson Barracks, south of St. Louis. This large post was integral to the army's defense of the western frontier, and many officers later famous in the Civil War were posted there sometime during their careers. The



White Haven in 1860.

barracks also played a central role in the St. Louis social scene, as its officers attended parties and cotillions in the city and hosted many of their own events. Julia Dent was among the many upper class young ladies who attended these functions and enjoyed the company of the officers, including Lieutenant Grant, whom she met in 1844.



The bustling St. Louis riverfront in 1853, as portrayed by Frederick Hawkins Piercy, one of the many travelers who passed through the city on their way west.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, HAROLD B. LEE LIBRARY, BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

St. Louis, considered a southern city, played a key role early in the Civil War, and events in the city helped decide the fate of Missouri, a pivotal border slave state. Decisive action by Federal troops suppressed secessionist voices and kept St. Louis, and ultimately the state, in the Union. Colonel Dent, refusing to adapt to the changing times, isolated himself at White Haven.

Today, St. Louis is a large metropolitan area. The 10-acre historic site remains a small haven in the midst of suburban development and a place to experience 19th-century country life.

A Working Farm



White Haven, President Grant's farm, as it appeared in the October 16, 1875, issue of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*.

White Haven remained a working farm throughout the 19th century. The property, about 850 acres, included cleared fields, orchards, large wooded areas, and hills cut by streams and creeks. A variety of grains, vegetables, fruits, and other crops were produced at White Haven and then taken to markets in the city. Cleared timber from the property was sold as firewood or to nearby coal mines as bracing for the mine shafts.

Following Ulysses' resignation from the army in 1854, he returned to White Haven to become a farmer. He approached the venture with characteristic determination and worked side-by-side with the Dent slaves in the fields. In 1856, desiring a home of his own, Grant built a log cabin about a half-mile north of the

main house. The Grants facetiously named it Hardscrabble. They lived there only briefly, however. When Julia's mother passed away, they moved back to the main house at Colonel Dent's request.

Grant and neighboring farmers faced a number of challenges between 1854 and 1859. Unseasonably bad weather and a severe economic depression thwarted their efforts, and prolonged illness further hampered Grant. Having farmed only for a few years, he lacked the financial resources that enabled long-term farmers to survive these difficult times. In 1859 he was forced to abandon farming.

After the Civil War, Grant's responsibilities as general of the army and then president kept

him in Washington D.C. He hired caretakers to manage White Haven in his absence but continued to take great interest in the property. During this period, Grant fulfilled a long-held dream by shifting the farm's focus to breeding and raising horses. Even as president, Grant still found time to send explicit instructions to his caretakers about how he wanted the farm managed and the property developed.

Today, several historic structures remain as tangible links to farming at White Haven. The large horse stable, ice house, and chicken house were vital parts of the farm operation. The Hardscrabble cabin, another reflection of Grant's farming days, is next to the site at Anheuser-Busch's Grant's Farm.

About Your Visit

Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site is at 7400 Grant Road in south St. Louis County, just 1/3 mile off Gravois Road (Hwy 30). The park is open 9 am to 5 pm daily, except Thanksgiving Day, December 25, and January 1. Admission is free.

The visitor center includes a theater, exhibits, information desk, sales area, restrooms, and park offices. Historic structures display varied interpretive exhibits.

Free visits inside the historic home are offered on a ticket-

ed basis. Additional interpretive programs and children's activities are available throughout the year. Groups of 15 or more require reservations; please call 314-842-1867 for information.

During inclement weather please call 314-842-1867 to find out if the park is open, on a delayed schedule, or closed, and to learn about tour availability.

For firearms laws and policies see the park website.

Accessibility
Most areas in the park are wheelchair-accessible. Service animals are welcome.

More Information
Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site
7400 Grant Road
St. Louis, MO 63123
314-842-1867
www.nps.gov/ulsg

Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, please visit www.nps.gov

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