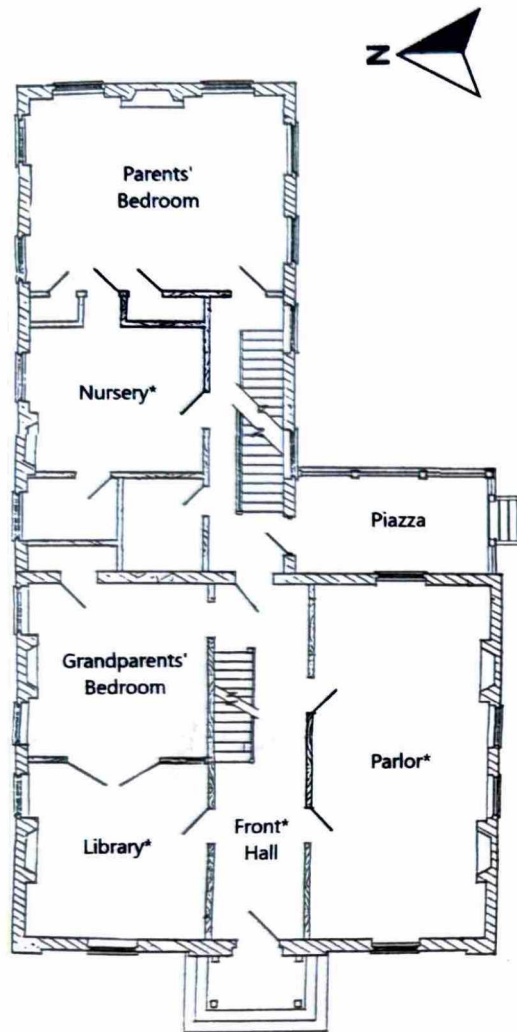




This floor plan above depicts the layout of the first floor of the Taft house in the 1860's. The Tafts frequently rearranged the home and changed the location of bedrooms and sitting rooms. After the family sold the home in 1899, subsequent owners also made major modifications. Rooms that are historically furnished (*) can be found on the floor plan and include the parlor, library front hall and nursery.

Purchased by the Taft family in 1851, the William Howard Taft National Historic Site is the birthplace and boyhood home of William Howard Taft, 27th President and 10th Chief Justice of the United States.

Touching of artifacts, smoking and foods and drinks are prohibited in the Taft house.

Photography, including flash, is welcome.

In letters to friends and family and in dairies, William's grandpa, Peter, and mother, Louise, provided information on wallpaper and flooring, art and furniture, design and décor. The family's detailed and meticulous descriptions of the objects that once adorned the home were critical to its restoration; Park Service researchers combed through these priceless historical documents to aid in the reconstruction process. Today, the house reflects family life on Auburn Street during the period of William's childhood.

More Information:

William Howard Taft National Historic Site
2038 Auburn Ave.

Cincinnati, Ohio 45219

513-684-3262

www.nps.gov/wiho



Self-Guided Tour of the William Howard Taft Birthplace



U. S. Department of the Interior

National Park Service

William Howard Taft

National Historic Site

2038 Auburn Ave.

Cincinnati, Ohio 45219

The Parlor

The center of the Tafts' social life, this elegant double parlor would be the first room a visitor to the house would see. Due to its social importance, the parlor was the most elaborately decorated and exorbitant room in the house. Vibrant colors and extravagant décor reflect the social status and affluence of the desirable Auburn Street, "Cincinnati's Fifth Avenue." Situated amongst the who's who of Cincinnati, the prominent Tafts hosted many social engagements and parties in the parlor. The large room boasted formal gatherings with live music, popular games and dances. Lively discussions and conversations on the topics of the day filled the room, ranging from abolition and suffrage, to the Civil War and law and politics. Solemn events also took place, 6 funerals were held in the room, the last being Alphonso's in 1891. Painted in the home in 1857 and 1859, the original family portraits that adorn the walls depict the adults of the household, above the east mantle hangs Alphonso, William's father and Secretary of War and Attorney General for President Grant. Louise, William's mother, is gracefully positioned over the opposite fireplace. Alphonso's parents, Sylvia and Peter, hang along the front wall of the parlor.

The Library

Each evening after school, the Taft children could be found working on homework around the library table. Alphonso and Louise instilled the importance of education onto the children by being deeply involved with their learning; William attended Public School 16 before graduating second from Woodward High School. The children read many of the volumes found in the library. The Tafts inventoried many of the books contained in their private collection. Alphonso was widely known throughout the city for his vast holdings that included works by Shakespeare, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Charles Darwin and Charles Dickens, plus volumes on science, astronomy, religion and theology, philosophy, law, classical history, archaeology, and travel; a portion of the collection was lost during the 1877 house fire, which destroyed the second floor and roof. As the children studied diligently, Alphonso would read his mail and newspapers while finishing that day's law work at his mahogany desk, Louise would be close by, sewing and helping the children with their work. Above Louise's sewing table, the family prominently hung a photograph of William, taken on his 3rd birthday in 1860. As the day came to a close, the gas lighting installed in the house in 1864 allowed for the reading to continue past dusk. Prior to the addition to the home, which doubled the size of the house in 1851 to 6,000 square feet, the library space initially served as the dining room, the adjoining room, connected via the large double doors, was the original kitchen.

The Nursery

Alphonso married Fanny Phelps of his native Vermont in 1841; the happy couple had 5 children of which 2, Charles and Peter, survived infancy. After Fanny passed away in June of 1852, Alphonso remarried on December 26, 1853 to Louise Torrey of Millbury, Massachusetts. Between 1854 and 1865, Louise gave birth to 5 children, the first of which, Samuel Taft, passed away at 14 months. Her other children, William, Henry, Horace, and Fanny, grew up in the happy home on Auburn Street. The nursery was shared by the youngest of the children, who slept in the crib or the larger bed, and their nanny, who slept in the trundle bed, until they were old enough to move to a room on the second floor. A black horse hair lounge was placed in the room in 1855 for Louise to use while spending time with Samuel while he was ill. Hanging to the left of the fireplace is a pullcord, attached to a bell in the servants' area, the rope could be pulled to notify the servants which room they were needed in. In total, the Tafts typically had 4 hired people on staff: a nanny, a housekeeper, a cook and a hired laborer. Placed beside the fireplace is a period whicker chamber pot, which was used to potty train the young children. Toilet training was completed around age 4.