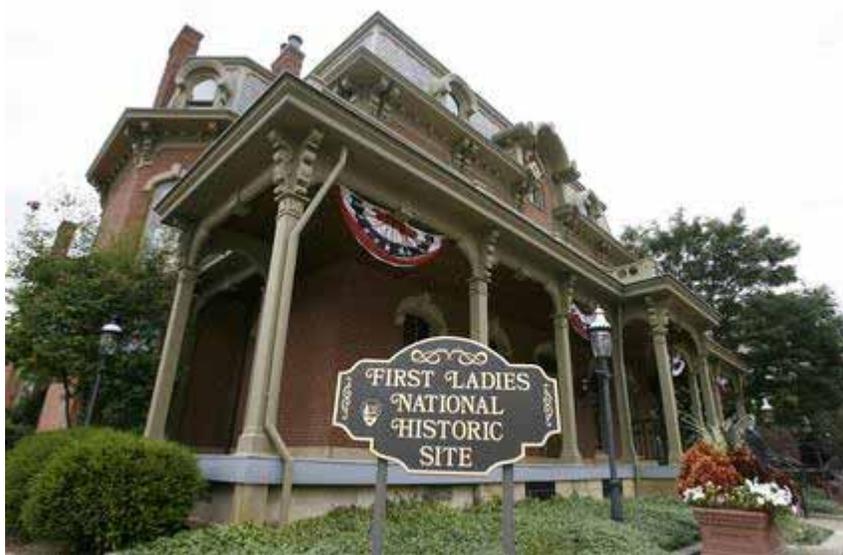


Saxton House to be designated as ‘McKinley Home’

By Gary Brown

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Already deemed a First Ladies National Historic Site, the Saxton-McKinley House will be designated during a ceremony Thursday as the William McKinley Historic Home.

CANTON —

William McKinley slept there.

The frequency of the late president’s sleepovers at the Saxton House, and the duration of the period in which they occurred, are two reasons that the National First Ladies’ Library is designating the restored house — once owned by Ida McKinley’s family — the William McKinley Historic Home.

Gov. Ted Strickland will preside over a ribbon-cutting and the revealing of a plaque noting the new name at 1 p.m. Thursday in front of the home, which had been referred to by the library as the Saxton-McKinley House. Expected to be on hand are U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown and Canton Mayor William J. Healy.

The event also will recognize the historical significance of the house to the 1880 reunion of the 23rd Ohio Infantry regiment. On Aug. 31, 1880, incumbent President Rutherford B. Hayes and future

presidents James Garfield (then a Republican presidential candidate) and William McKinley all stayed at the Saxton-McKinley House. It's recorded as the only time three presidents slept in the same private home at the same time.

"It is a historic presidential home," said Mary Regula, founder and president of the National First Ladies' Library. "It's the home where Ida and William McKinley lived for a grand total of 28 years," she said, adding that McKinley lived in the better-known Market Avenue N home, which first was moved and then was torn down, for fewer than five years.

TALE OF TWO HOMES

The First Ladies' Library does not ignore the existence of the home that sat just north of the site of the Stark County District Library. Indeed that house is referred to as "The McKinley Home" in display cases in the Saxton-McKinley House's third floor ballroom — the McKinleys' bedroom when U.S. Rep. William McKinley returned from Washington during recesses of Congress.

Those displays tell how Ida and William McKinley leased the Market Avenue N home from his father-in-law, James Saxton, and lived in it for a little more than two years after they were married in 1871.

The couple lived there again after his tenure as governor of Ohio, a period in 1896 during which he conducted his "front-porch campaign" for president.

And the display also notes that McKinley eventually bought the home while he was president and was remodeling so he might live in it during his stays in Canton.

"Now, I shall have a home, what I've wanted for so long ... a place I can get away any time," he is quoted as saying. "We could conduct all the executive business there."

Although his widow would live in the home after the president's assassination in 1901 until her own death in 1907, McKinley himself resided in the Market Avenue N after the purchase only three months in 1900 and two months in 1901, according to research done by Carl Sferrazza Anthony, National First Ladies' Library historian.

BROCHURE TELLS HISTORY

But exhibits in the Saxton-McKinley House also depict the years that the McKinleys spent on Market

Avenue S.

A room off the ballroom-turned-bedroom is exhibited as McKinley's office, which he kept close to the bedroom so he could watch over his wife during her frequent illnesses. It is there that McKinley drafted the tariff bill that would carry his name, Anthony said.

Anthony has researched extensively the Saxton-McKinley House and has detailed his findings in a booklet entitled "The President At Home: The Life of William McKinley in The Saxton-McKinley House."

In his writing, Anthony notes that the Saxton-McKinley house had been called "the McKinley residence" by The Repository as early as 1888.

Anthony writes that the Market Avenue N home, although the McKinleys lived in it at the time, was much a political prop for the 1896 "front- porch" campaign — a more spacious place in which to organize the campaign and to receive a multitude of visitors.

"During the four years and six months of his administration, whenever President McKinley returned to Canton for short visits, his official residence was the Saxton-McKinley House," writes the historian.

Anthony notes that among the historic houses of Ohio's presidents, the William McKinley Historic Home will be the only one never actually owned by the president, but rather by his wife's family. But Patricia Krider, executive director of the National First Ladies' Library, compares the McKinley historic site to the Harry S. Truman National Historic Site — also called the Gates-Wallace House — in Independence, Mo. That mansion was owned by Bess Truman's family.

"The William McKinley Historic Home is a bonafide presidential home," says Regula, "just as much as Washington's Mount Vernon and Jefferson's Monticello.

"William and Ida always returned to it when they were in Washington. But they also returned to it when there was great sorrow, such as after the death of their second child. It was almost as if it was their shelter."

Anthony notes that March 18, 1901, was McKinley's last full day in "the house he called home for the longest period of his life."

"And, indeed, McKinley did consider the Saxton House his home," writes Anthony, claiming that

McKinley said as much during “an earlier triumphant return to Canton in August of 1899.”

On that day, McKinley ascended the steps of the Saxton-McKinley House, and “paused to look at the crowd which surrounded the residence,” recalls Anthony.

“‘There is no place like home’ he told them, just before he stepped inside, ‘And this is my home.’”

ABOUT THE EVENT

WHAT: Dedication of the Saxton McKinley House as the William McKinley Historic Home.

WHEN: 1 p.m. Thursday (Information has been corrected to fix an error. See correction at the end of story. 8:45 a.m./Sept. 2).

WHERE: In front of the Saxton McKinley House at 331 Market Ave. S in Canton.

WHO: National First Ladies’ Library.

WHY: To acknowledge the home’s significance as the primary Canton residence of President William McKinley.

HOW: The ceremony will include a ribbon-cutting, speeches about the historical nature of home, and words about the reunion of the 23rd Ohio Infantry that brought three presidents together in the home for a night on Aug. 31, 1880.