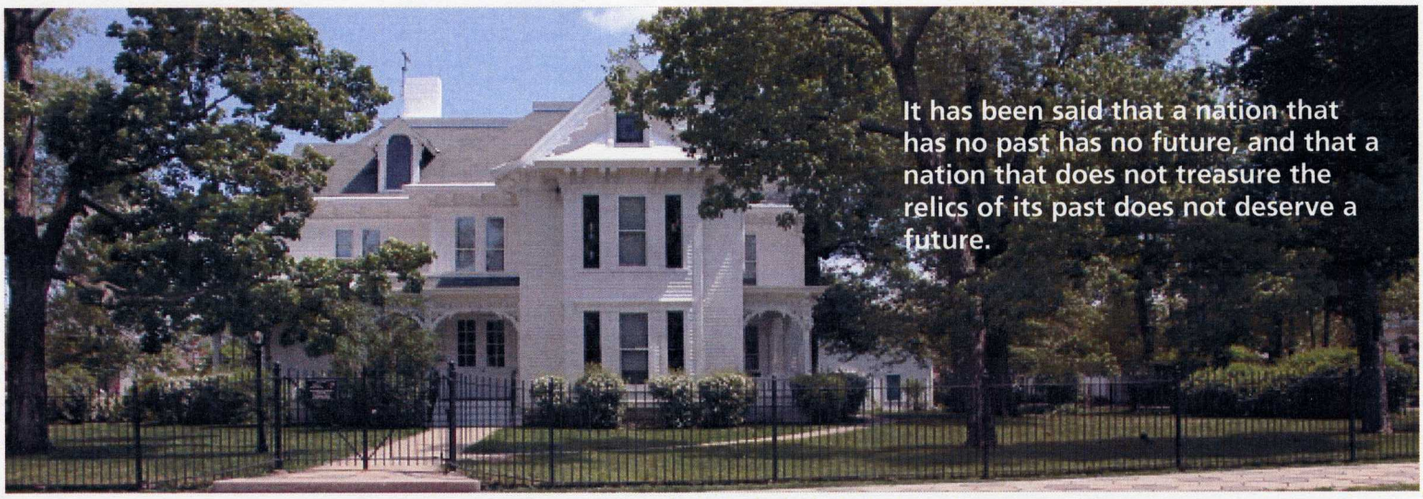
# Harry S Truman

National Historic Site
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

## Preserving A President's Home:
## A Full-Time Challenge




### About the Home

Welcome to Harry S Truman National Historic Site. The home of Harry and Bess Truman and the adjacent homes of their family provide a glimpse into the private life of the 33rd President of the United States. Here Harry Truman courted Bess Wallace, witnessed the birth of his beloved daughter Margaret, faced the terrible news of the invasion of South Korea, and lived an unpretentious retirement.

The four homes which comprise the site memorialize the Truman story. Without care and understanding, the homes and their contents can be easily damaged. The Truman home is the most susceptible to damage. Given by Mrs. Bess Truman to the United States, the house contains the accumulations of the Trumans' lifetimes. Today more than 50,000 of the historic belongings remain here—books, photos, furniture, and much more—testaments to the family interests and lifestyle. These objects all demand specific care so that they may be preserved for you and future visitors to learn from and enjoy.

### Staff Preservation Techniques

Tour groups are kept small to reduce weight load stress on the structure, and to maintain security for the objects in the home.

Visitors to the home walk on a path of non-historic dark gray carpet, thus preventing wear, tear and soiling of the original floor coverings. The staff wear surgical booties over their shoes to keep historic carpets clean.

Our museum staff wear white cotton gloves when handling objects. This prevents transfer of body oils, salts, water and acids - all of which are present on even the cleanest skin - to historic objects We ask you not to touch or lean on anything inside the home for the same reason.

Because dirt damages objects in several ways, we must clean to preserve. When cleaning and waxing, we use mild preparations and gentle methods. Bleach-free cotton diapers make great dust cloths; they do not scratch. Linoleum is hand washed with a mild detergent, and doorknobs and woodwork which must be touched are protected by a thin layer of a gently applied wax.

## Additional Techniques

All light, especially ultraviolet (UV) light, damages and fades fabrics, wallpapers, woodwork, paintings, and other materials. The use of low-wattage light bulbs and UV filters on the windows help to minimize damage. The home's window shades are three-quarters drawn to reduce light. Bess Truman did this as well, but not for the same reason; she liked her privacy. You will also be asked to help; photography is prohibited, in part, to protect against the light damage from flash bulbs.

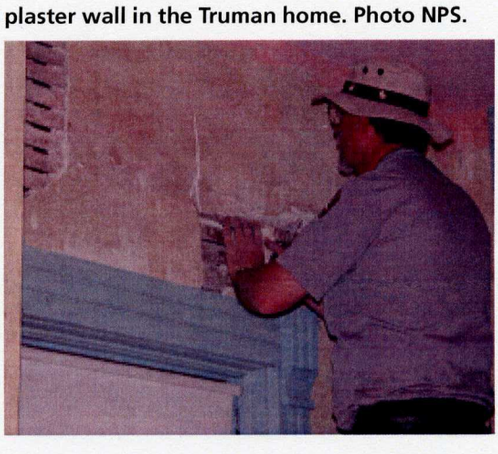
Sticky traps catch insects to help us monitor and prevent infestations. Please leave food, drinks and gum outside so that pests are not attracted inside the home, and to protect furnishings against the damage these materials can cause.

The lawn is kept historically accurate (not weed free!), as are the shrubs (generally overgrown and bushy). Dead plantings are replaced with the same species.

Damage to historic materials can occur from fluctuations in temperature and humidity. To prevent these fluctuations a modern climate control system has been installed. We protect against the entrance of moisture by monitoring and repairing roofs, foundations, and exterior walls. Umbrellas are prohibited inside the home to prevent dripping water on furnishings and to prevent physical damage to the interior. Special electronic monitors, called data loggers are used throughout the home to record temperature and relative humidity levels. The monitors collect information and the data is downloaded to computer and graphed every three weeks. Collecting such data keeps us informed of environmental changes in the home. Rapid fluctuations in temperature and humidity can damage artifacts.

When maintenance staff and contractors repair and replace materials as much of the original material as possible is retained. Non-historic replacement materials are marked as such. Representative examples of historic materials are kept in the museum collection for documentation and future study.

**Maintenance staff member repairs damaged plaster wall in the Truman home. Photo NPS.**



## How You Can Help

Follow the instructions the park ranger provides at the Truman home—stay on the dark gray carpet inside and the sidewalks outside. Do not touch or lean on the furnishings, walls or woodwork of the home, keep food outside, and do not use your camera in the home. Human wear and tear is cumulative and noticeable.

Understand the need for historic preservation measures, and please be patient with our efforts.

Appreciate the uniqueness of each historic site you visit and help pass that appreciation on to others.

**For More Information Contact:**
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