

# Center for State of the Parks

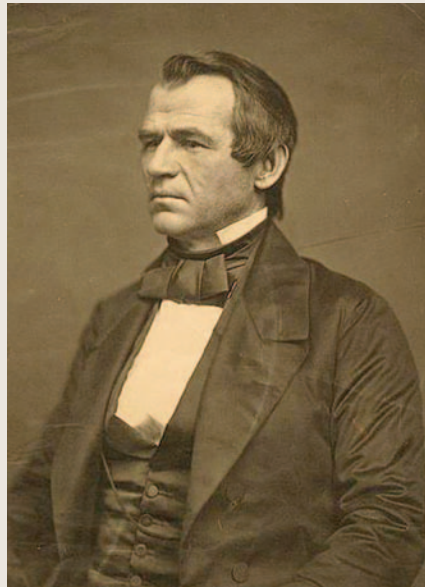


## ANDREW JOHNSON NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

### SNAPSHOT

Andrew Johnson National Historic Site in Greeneville, Tennessee, was established to commemorate the life of Andrew Johnson, the 19th-century politician who became the 17th president of the United States. From 1828 until his death in 1875, Johnson held public offices at nearly every level of government—from alderman and then mayor of Greeneville, to state representative and then state senator, to U.S. congressman, to Tennessee governor, to U.S. senator, to U.S. vice president, to U.S. president. During his time in public office Johnson supported the passage of the Homestead Act; purchased Alaska from Russia for \$7.2 million (about two cents per acre); annexed Midway Island; oversaw the completion of the transatlantic cable from Europe; pardoned all Confederate soldiers who had not been convicted of war crimes; and emancipated all enslaved peoples in Tennessee—among other actions.

Although a Southerner by birth and a slave owner who supported pro-slavery legislation in Congress and later campaigned against the 14th amendment (intended to secure rights for former slaves), Johnson is best known for his unwavering support of the U.S. Constitution and his refusal to leave his Senate seat when Tennessee seceded from the Union.



Andrew Johnson National Historic Site commemorates the nation's 17th president.

Johnson's tenure in the White House remains one of the most controversial in the history of the United States. Faced with the task of reconstructing the South, he became engaged in a battle with the Radical Republicans of the Northern states who had taken control of Congress. In response to Johnson's veto of several pieces of legislation, including the Civil Rights Act of 1866, and his later violation of the Tenure of Office Act, which stated that the president could not dismiss appointed officials without congressional approval, the Radical Republicans in the House of

Representatives impeached Johnson. He was acquitted by one vote in the Senate.

Johnson left the White House in 1869, but it was not the end of his political career. He continued to run for seats in Congress, suffering defeats until being reelected to the U.S. Senate shortly before his death in 1875. He is the only U.S. president, to date, who has returned to the Senate.

Each year, about 50,000 people visit Andrew Johnson National Historic Site to learn more about the life and times of the 17th president and the role he played in shaping the nation's future.

### PARK HISTORY

Several of Johnson's descendants lobbied for creation of a park to preserve his legacy. In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Andrew Johnson National Monument under the purview of the National Park Service. It now encompasses Johnson's early home/tailor shop, his homestead, Andrew Johnson National Cemetery (which contains his gravesite), and a visitor center (built in 1958). In December 1963, Congress changed the name of the park to Andrew Johnson National Historic Site.

Andrew Johnson National Cemetery is the final resting place for Johnson, his family, and thousands of U.S. veterans. It is one of only two active burial sites operated by the National Park Service (the other is Andersonville National Cemetery in Georgia).



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## CHALLENGES

- Cultural resources at Andrew Johnson National Historic Site are in good condition overall, but park staff are concerned they will be unable to maintain them in this condition without additional funds and staff. Existing cultural resources management staff already must take time away from their duties to assist with interpretive and maintenance needs.
- The park currently has just two full-time maintenance employees, an insufficient number to care for all resources, especially during the growing season when the grass surrounding more than 1,800 headstones in the national cemetery must be mowed. In addition, placing headstones above recent interments is substantially behind schedule because of the lack of staff.
- Historic structures are the park's most important resources for interpreting the life and times of Andrew Johnson, so preserving those structures is crucial to the park's mission. Historic structures needing immediate attention include the 100-year-old wall surrounding the cemetery; the monument Johnson's family erected in the cemetery in 1878; and several other monuments in the family burial site. The park must receive funds before this work can be done. Funds are also needed to repair and rehabilitate portions of other historic structures to mitigate safety hazards to visitors and staff, and to prevent the resources from further deteriorating.
- Operational funding shortfalls prevent the park from purchasing new computers, updating and enhancing exhibits, and covering increas-

ing utility and maintenance costs, as well as from filling five permanent positions.

- Hiring a staff person to design and manage an educational program would help ensure schoolchildren and other visitors receive the best educational experience possible.

## WHAT'S BEING DONE

- Park staff completed a number of important projects recently, including replacing the roofs on the Homestead and Early Home, replacing the porch deck at the Homestead, rehabilitating sidewalks in the national cemetery, and straightening headstones in the cemetery. However, additional funding is needed to complete projects that include improving safety and accessibility at the national cemetery, rehabilitating the cemetery wall, and replacing the porch ceiling at the Homestead.
- Park staff recently completed a museum collection management plan and are working on an updated administrative history. In addition, a professional conservator from Tuckerbrook Conservation prepared a draft maintenance plan for the national cemetery monuments, though the park needs funds to implement the plan.
- Andrew Johnson National Historic Site has a strong preventative maintenance program, which helps ensure historic structures get regular care and small problems do not turn into big ones. The park's chief of operations has hosted on-site preservation training for all staff as well as for Student Conservation Association volunteers.

## ABOUT NPCA AND THE CENTER FOR STATE OF THE PARKS

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. NPCA, its members, and partners work together to protect the park system and preserve our nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage for generations to come.

NPCA initiated the State of the Parks program in 2000 to assess the condition of natural and cultural resources in the parks. The goal is to provide information that will help policymakers, the public, and the National Park Service improve resource conditions in national parks, celebrate successes as models for other parks, and ensure a lasting legacy for future generations.

## CONTACT US

For a copy of NPCA's full report on Andrew Johnson National Historic Site, to get copies of reports on other parks, or for more information about the Center for State of the Parks, visit [www.npca.org/stateoftheparks](http://www.npca.org/stateoftheparks) or contact Dr. James Nations, vice president for the Center for State of the Parks, at [jnations@npca.org](mailto:jnations@npca.org).

For more information on Andrew Johnson National Historic Site, contact NPCA's Southeast Regional Office at 865.329.2424 or [southeast@npca.org](mailto:southeast@npca.org), or visit the park online at [www.nps.gov/anjo](http://www.nps.gov/anjo). For media inquiries, please contact Shannon Andrea, NPCA senior media relations manager, at 202.454.3371 or [sandrea@npca.org](mailto:sandrea@npca.org). To learn more about what the public and our elected officials can do to help improve the health of this park, visit [www.npca.org/take\\_action](http://www.npca.org/take_action).