

# Vintage Girl Scout Online Museum



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## Girl Scout Little Houses



To understand the Girl Scout Little House it's good to know a bit of the history leading up to the opening in 1924. In the early 1920's a National Council of Better Homes in America, an advisory group with (future US President) Calvin Coolidge and (future US President and then-current US Secretary of Commerce) Herbert Hoover on the board. The current US President Warren G Harding and several state governors supported the council.

The goal was to create a general improvement in the quality of homes across America and for more Americans to become homeowners.

One of their ideas was to create "demonstration homes" in many communities to show average Americans what the newest features in building, safety and care of a home were available and to encourage builders and communities to improve the standards of home building.

Thus, the General Federation of Women's Clubs in Washington DC had such a house built, believe it or not, in time for the Shriner's Convention. The architect was Donn Barber and was inspired by the boyhood home of John Howard Payne, who wrote the 1823 opera that included the song "Home Sweet Home." Payne was from Easthampton, Long Island (NY).

A great fuss was made over such things as which books would be displayed on the bookshelves, and - in another believe it or not moment - using chloroformed rose bushes, gassed to make the roses think they've wintered over and therefore bloom during the Shriner's Convention. Apparently President & First Lady Harding were impressed with their visit on opening day, June 4, 1923.

After the Shriner's Convention the demonstration home was closed except for special tours.

The house, though well designed and built, was always just temporarily located on government property south of the US Treasury Building. In fact, by December 1923 there were grumblings in DC to get it moved before it was demolished. The General Federation of Women's Clubs of Washington D.C. had to act.

So, that is how the first Girl Scout Little House came to be.

The "Better Homes in America" campaign was launched by an Advisory Council composed of Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, the various secretaries of the Cabinet, Mrs. Thos. G. Winter and others of national prominence. It is endorsed by President Harding, twenty-five governors of the States and is being carried on over the entire nation by its representative women.

The idea is to present to the American people a type of the ideal house, fully equipped, properly furnished and adorned, and to encourage that longing to possess a home which exists in every human breast.

It is conceded that the environment in which a child is reared has a lasting influence in moulding its character. All the more important then is it that even the most modest abode should be as attractive as the means will allow that our children may grow into the highest type of citizens.

Herald the coming of the demonstration week and work for its success to the end that America may lead the world in happy, character-building homes,—the foundation and the bulwark of society and civilization.

01 Sep 1922,

# HOME, SWEET HOME HOUSE TO BE BUILT

## Replica of John Howard Payne Dwelling to Be Erected for Campaign.

A replica of the famous "Home, Sweet Home" house, immortalized by John Howard Payne, will be built in the triangle south of the Treasury Department to aid in the Better Homes in America campaign, it was announced last night. The campaign for better homes will run during the week of June 4 to 10—the same week that the Shriners will hold their national convention here.

The "Home, Sweet Home" house is to be used not only as a model during the Better Homes campaign, but also as a bureau of information for the Shriners.

### Will Be Built Soon.

The house is to be erected and maintained under the auspices of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, co-operating with the "Better Homes" movement. The furnishing will follow the styles of the long ago, and the Department of Agriculture will plant shrubs and climbing vines to cover the building.

Work on the house, it was announced by Miss Lida Hafford, chairman of the Washington committee for better homes in America, will begin tomorrow, and the house will be complete within three weeks.

The house will cost about \$10,000 and will be built on a wooden foundation. After the demonstration is completed the house will be moved to a permanent site as the property of the General Federation of Women's Clubs and will serve as a permanent demonstration house for better homes in America under the auspices of the federation.



The Girl Scout Little House of Washington D.C. slowly being moved down the street to its new location on New York Street, after the General Federation of Women's Clubs transferred ownership to the Girl Scouts. The move was paid for by the Girl Scouts.

*As First Lady Mrs Coolidge "laid the cornerstone" for the foundation to the house that would later be moved to that location, she tucked in a Girl Scout handbook, several Girl Scout related papers and a newspaper.*

*After this ceremony, all the adult Girl Scouts left to have lunch and a meeting at the Girl Scout Tea House on Haines Point, D.C.*

March 25, 1924



THE GIRL SCOUT LITTLE HOUSE  
1750 NEW YORK AVENUE  
WASHINGTON  
D. C.

## Mrs. Coolidge Lays Cornerstone For Girl Scouts "Little House"



Mrs. Coolidge, wife of the President, laid the cornerstone of the "Little House" yesterday at Washington. The house was the former "Home, Sweet Home" and was turned over to the Girl Scouts by the Federation of Women's Clubs. The picture shows Mrs. Coolidge laying the cornerstone.

So, once the house was moved to its new location at 1750 New York Ave. NW in Washington D.C. it quickly became a focal point for Girl Scouting. Training classes were being offered as early as 1925. Many people came to visit the Little House and have

their photos taken with perfectly uniformed Girl Scouts. Famous people sent in gifts – such as plants and trees – to be planted onsite. Someone was hired on to "live" in the home – sort of a den mother – to make sure every looked just so. One room was set aside for sewing – for Girl Scouts to sew while in uniform while dignitaries wandered through. The kitchen was photographed for the newspapers several times, most famously with Eleanor Roosevelt watching perfectly uniformed Girl Scouts cooking. Library of Congress photographs show that there was a fully functioning cafeteria in the basement. Outside there was a Rock & Memory Garden planted, where such things as a foundation stone from Mary Todd Lincoln's childhood home was set.

The 3,153 square foot house was considered to be a "modest-sized" home for the Washington set. The "Better Homes in America Week" continued to use the Little House yearly to promote the Better Homes program. Also, the Washington D.C. Girl Scout headquarters was in the Little House for sometime.



**SPRING TRAINING COURSES AT GIRL SCOUT LITTLE HOUSE IN WASHINGTON**

IF EIGHT OR MORE PEOPLE REGISTER FOR EACH COURSE, the following courses will be given this spring at the Girl Scout Little House in Washington:

- 1) March 27-29. WEEK-END COURSE ON GIRL SCOUTS AS HQMEMAKERS. First Meeting, Friday, 8 P. M. (Director not yet chosen)
- 2) April 13-18. NATURE TRAINING WEEK. First Meeting, Monday, 10 A. M. Dr. Bertha Chapman Cady, Director

It is hoped that these dates will prove convenient for those whose spring vacations fall either in the last week in March or in Easter Week, April 13-18. Please send suggestions and requests for further information to

ELIZABETH KEMPER ADAMS, Educational Secretary

670 Lexington Ave., New York City

PLEASE SEND REGISTRATIONS BEFORE MARCH 20, enclosing ONE DOLLAR Registration Fee for Week-end Course; TWO DOLLAR Registration Fee for Nature Training Week to

Mrs. G. L. Bowman

Girl Scout Little House

1750 New York Ave., Washington, D. C.

(Mrs. Bowman will supply information about rooms and meals near the Little House, as well as about hotel rates.)

S. D. C., SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 1930.

**"BETTER HOMES" TREE PLANTED BY WILBURS**



Flowering crabapple tree which will brighten the grounds of the Girl Scouts' Little house at New York avenue and Eighteenth street, planted by Secretary of the Interior Ray Lyman Wilbur and Mrs. Wilbur. —Star Staff Photo.

**Girl Scouts Give Hoover 24-Cent Meal**

LUNCHEON FOR EIGHT GUESTS COSTS \$1.89 AT LITTLE HOUSE.



President and Mrs. Hoover were among the eight guests served at a 24-cent luncheon today at the Girl Scouts' Little House, Eighteenth street and New York avenue. The three Girl Scouts pictured above were the cooks for the occasion. Left to right: Miss Betty Leake, Miss Betty Jane Oswald and Miss Helen Sheets.



If the Depression-era 24 cent lunch (left) didn't suit you, there was a cafeteria in the basement.

# SOCIETY

The President and Mrs. Coolidge Were Guests at Luncheon Today at the Girl Scouts' Little House.



Another VIP poses with perfectly uniformed Girl Scouts

## Girl Scouts Have Distinguished Guests

MRS. DALL SLICES CAKE IN "LITTLE HOUSE" HERE.



YESTERDAY was a big day at the Girl Scouts' "Little House" here—with the widows of two former Presidents, Mrs. Woodrow Wilson and Mrs. William Howard Taft; the President's daughter, Mrs. Anna Roosevelt Dall, and a "cabinet wife," Mrs. Cordell Hull, on hand to help the youngsters celebrate. Although Mrs. Wilson is honorary president of the organization, it was her first visit to its headquarters, which is modeled after Payne's "Home, Sweet Home." The Brownies, little sisters of the Girl Scouts, were hostesses, and the distinguished guests were given an exhibition of bandaging, bedmaking and sewing. In the photograph Mrs. Dall is shown cutting a cake in honor of the birthday anniversary of Mrs. Juliette Low, founder of the organization, as Mrs. Taft and two of the girls look on. The youngsters are Janet Clark (left) and Elizabeth Mariow. —A. P. Photo.

Famous people were always "dropping in" on perfectly uniformed Girl Scouts. Here the Crown Princess of Norway visited in 1939.

Girl Scout Leader magazine



Crown Princess Martha of Norway  
On her visit to the National Girl Scout Little House, Princess Martha received from the Girl Scouts of Washington, D. C., a set of hand-woven towels that earned Dorothy Kramer (left) the Weaving badge.

Evening Star (Washington, District of Columbia) • 02 Oct 1930,



This Little House dollhouse was gifted to the Girl Scouts from Mrs. Hoover at the 1930 Girl Scout Convention in Indianapolis. This image came from the Hoover website, but is no longer available.

## DOLL HOUSE GIFT OF MRS. HOOVER

Reproduction of Girl Scout  
Headquarters Shown at  
National Convention.

BY SUE McNAMARA,  
Associated Press Staff Writer.

An unique doll house, the gift of Mrs. Herbert Hoover, preceded the President's wife to Indianapolis for the sixteenth annual convention of the National Girl Scouts, which opened there yesterday.

It is an exact reproduction of the Girl Scouts' little house here at Eighteenth street and New York avenue, and will be exhibited throughout the week.

Mrs. Hoover is spending two days at the convention, which lasts until Saturday. She probably will give an informal talk, although she is not on the program. The First Lady will wear the cotton stockings, gray-green uniform and green felt hat of the Girl Scouts.

### House 24 Inches High.

The doll house, about 24 inches high, faithfully reproduces the little house, even to the paper on the walls. It was made at National Girl Scout headquarters in New York after a craftsman had visited the little house here. The dolls in it are dressed in Scout uniform.

After the Indianapolis convention the house will be sent over the country to various Girl Scout camps.

### Patterned After Payne House.

The little house is patterned after the old home of John Howard Payne, author of "Home, Sweet Home," with its green shutters, white woodwork, shining brass knocker and harmonious furnishings. It has become nationally known.

The President's wife often drops in for a cup of tea in the restful Colonial living room with its outlook on the rock garden which she helped plan.

## GARDEN MRS. HOOVER HELPED BUILD



The garden about the Girl Scouts' Little House at Eighteenth street and New York avenue. Many of the selected plants were sent to the garden by Mrs. Hoover. —Star Staff Photo.

## FIRST LADY TO VIEW GARDEN ADDITION

Will See Stone From Mary Todd  
Lincoln's Home, at Girl  
Scout Home.

Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt will be among the first to view one of the newest acquisitions of the Rock and Memory Garden at the National Girl Scouts' "Little House" at 1750 New York avenue when she visits there around 4 p.m. today—a rock from the foundation of the Mary Todd Lincoln Home in Lexington, Ky.

Mary Todd Lincoln lived in the house until her marriage to the President, and, with her husband, often visited there. The stone was sent by Troop 6, Girl Scouts of Lexington.

The garden also contains a copper stone, from the Butte, Mont., Girl Scouts; a paving stone from the old part of New Orleans, which was once used as ballast in early sailing ships, sent by New Orleans Girl Scouts; a buckeye tree from the Ohio Girl Scouts and a Mary Wallace rose, named after the sister of the Secretary of Agriculture. Flowers and shrubs from many parts of the country have been sent by Girl Scouts, to be placed in this Memory Garden.

## OLD PAVING BLOCK ADDED TO GARDEN

Ancient Granite Stone Is Gift of  
Girl Scouts of New  
Orleans.

A historic granite paving block, which was brought to New Orleans as ship ballast during the earliest days of the settlement there and which has seen service for two centuries under four flags, this afternoon will be added to the rock garden collection at the National Girl Scouts' "Little House," 1750 New York avenue.



The Girl Scout Little House was not single place, but a movement across America. Starting in Washington DC, the very first Little House was a model for hundreds of Little Houses in every Girl Scout town and city that could manage one.

The Washington DC Little House was a focal point for Girl Scouting and many publicity photos were taken there. A pamphlet published by the Girl Scouts, likely in the 1930's summed up the purpose of the Little House this way; **"the Little Girl Scout House is the half-way step between the playhouse of children and the home that every mother wants to be sure that her daughter can make for herself."**

Domesticity and housekeeping skills were promoted in the beginning. Later, Little Houses became simple meeting places and a "face" for Girl Scouting in the community. Gradually, Little Houses fell out of favor and for some Girl Scouts Councils are only a vague memory.

The Little House of Washington D.C. literally disappeared from the newspapers after 1938, but one photo was found in the Girl Scout Leader magazine of the Crown Princess of Norway visiting in 1939 (see above).

**Plaque marks site of GS landmark**

For years, the Little House was a Washington, D.C. landmark. Built in 1923 by the General Federation of Women's Clubs, patterned after the New York house which inspired the song, "Home Sweet Home," the Little House was donated to the Girl Scouts in 1924. The Girl Scouts used the house as a center for hospitality, training, and friendship. From 1945 to 1955, it also served as headquarters for the national branch office. Now the eight-story United Unions building occupies the site in Washington where the Little House once stood.



At unveiling of plaque—left to right: John Pecoraro, Mrs. William McLeod Ittmann, and William A. Duval.

1973

Recently, the International Brotherhood of Painters and Allied Trades honored the nation's Girl Scouts with a plaque in the lobby of their new headquarters building, the United Unions building. The plaque was unveiled in a ceremony by Mrs. William McLeod Ittmann, National President of the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., and marks the spot where the Little House used to be. Mrs. Ittmann was welcomed by the Brotherhood's director of legislation, John Pecoraro, and presented with a bouquet of red roses by its general vice president, William A. Duval, as a "symbol of the enthusiastic support the Girl Scouts will always have from us."

My understanding is that this plaque is now in custody of the Girl Scouts of Nation's Capital Historical Department.

However, some councils have continued the tradition of Little Houses...



The Girl Scout Little House of Burnside, KY offered this ceramic plate. 9" diameter in a creamy white with brown design, it was made by Morgan Hopper China of Somerset, KY.

The current GS Council doesn't have much info on this Little House.



Kansas Historical Society Photo

Don't know if you'd be interested, but the Ashland Kansas Girl Scout Little House was placed on the National Historic Register this year.

Sally Shattuck

Of course I'm interested!

448 W. 6th Ave. in Ashland in Clark County, Kansas



Dailyitem.com

344 Third St, Northumberland, PA

Recently renovated

Photo from online Dailyitem.com - local news source



The "Old Girl Scout House" located in Massa Harbinson Park, New Kensington, PA. Apparently it can be rented out.

The Girl Scout trefoil is on the fireplace mantle.

Google Site images



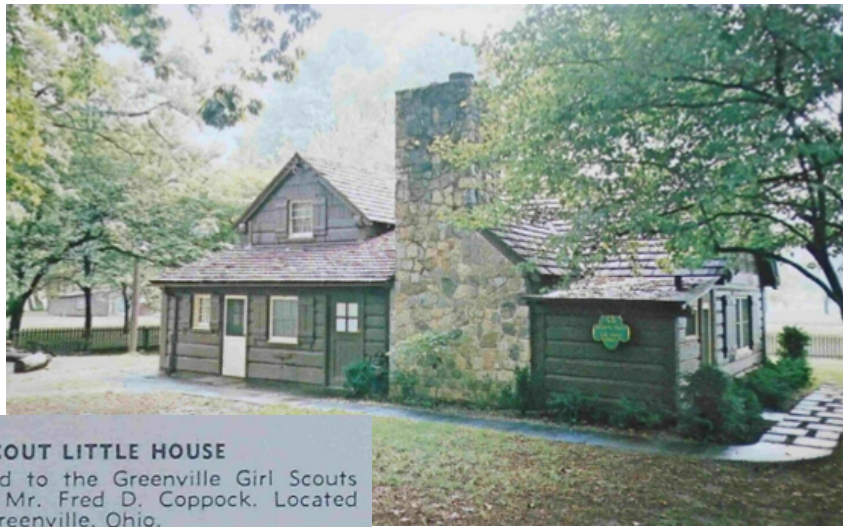
119 N McGee St., Borger, TX

Google Street View



hmdb.org

By Bill Kirchner, March 15, 2016



**GIRL SCOUT LITTLE HOUSE**

Built and presented to the Greenville Girl Scouts in June, 1941 by Mr. Fred D. Coppock. Located near City Park in Greenville, Ohio.



No. 49—Girl Scout "Little House," Garden City, Kansas



Girl Scout Community House, City Park, Fairbury, Nebraska



Celia Lane Little House patch,  
Girl Scouts of Citrus Council

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Girl Scout Tea Houses | Camp Andree Clark - The Early Years

Rockwood National Camp | National Center West

Girl Scout Headquarters | University of the Woods - MACY | Girl Scout Little Houses

Girl Scout National Training Schools

Juliette Gordon Low Girl Scout National Center (Birthplace).

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