

constant clatter of cavalry that escorted the president between the cottage and the White House were jarring and incessant reminders of conflict raging in the land. Battle sounds at times drew nigh, as in September 1862 when the first family heard the cannonading at Antietam. When 15,000 Confederate troops crossed the Potomac River into Maryland in July 1864, defeated a smaller Union force and turned toward Washington, the Rebels were a mere four miles from the Old Soldiers' Home, where the Lincolns were staying. Secretary of war Edwin Stanton cautioned the president "that your guard be on the alert tonight," as a mysterious horseman had been spotted shadowing the Lincoln's carriage. Stanton's worry was well placed, for a month later a bullet was fired through the president's hat as he rode one night from the White House to the cottage.

Visitors on a guided tour of the cottage will nonetheless understand why the Lincolns were so enamored of it "We are truly delighted, with this retreat," wrote Mary Lincoln, who loved "the drives & walks around here." The focus of the cottage visit is on the Lincoln's time in it, rather than on the material objects that may have graced this seasonal retreat. The structure itself is almost entirely original, and visitors can walk in the same spaces and touch the same bannisters Lincoln himself did. The tour includes audio and visual recollections of incidents that occurred in specific rooms, such as a visitor's contemporaneous description of the president, clad in carpet slippers, entering the living room through the huge set of wood-paneled doors. Particularly striking is the dark wood paneling in Lincoln's study—after preservationists removed twenty-three layers of paint to expose the panels, the horizontal marks of the spots where shelves that held Lincoln's many books met the walls are plainly visible. Much of the furniture in the cottage is donated, period nineteenth-century (though not original to the Lincolns or the cottage), and the woodwork is original. Elements of the cottage exterior that suffered extensive deterioration over time, such as the veranda and stucco, have been restored to match pictures of it from Mary Todd Lincoln's family album.

Two miles north of the Old Soldier's Home is Fort Stevens (on Quackenbos Street, N.W.), a small earthen fort that was part of a circle of Civil War fortifications around Washington that stretched thirty-seven miles. Named for Brig Gen Isaac Ingalls Stevens, it stood watch over the Sev-

en
fr
of
me
Riv
me
rou
ing
fro
gra
libe
car
pea

ing
July
to P
even
men
not l
and
still
I
that l
near
ing a
range
in the
of Sec
presid
arm a
ers ma
secret
down
claimi
ident,