

# Logan House

## A Memorial to General and Senator John A. Logan

### Champion in the Struggle to Preserve the Union and to Achieve Racial Justice in America

Built in 1877, #4 Logan Circle was the 1880's home of Senator John A. Logan, whose statesmanship and military valor had helped to save the Union and who became in post-Civil War America an unwavering force in the effort to achieve full black emancipation and equal rights.

John Logan was born in 1826 in southern Illinois of Scot-Irish parents. After a rural boyhood and early military service in the Mexican-American War, Logan studied law, gained professional success, and won a seat in Congress in 1858.

As a pre-war Douglas Democrat, Logan initially opposed abolitionism in favor of appeasing the Southern states. But when the South seceded in 1861, Logan enlisted, politically and militarily, in loyal support of President Abraham Lincoln.

Resigning from Congress, Logan returned home to organize and lead a Union regiment. His prestige and powerful oratory played a pivotal role in securing Illinois' allegiance to the Union cause.

As the Union searched for military leadership, Logan quickly distinguished himself, gaining the admiration of the North's senior general, Ulysses Grant. Logan's troops revered him as "a commander we can trust." His dark features gave rise to the nickname "Black Jack," which became their battle cry.

Logan first led a brigade, then a division, later a corps, and finally an army, serving in eight major campaigns. Some called him the most inspiring battlefield leader in the Union army. At Fort Donelson, his gallantry while badly wounded secured the Union's first decisive victory. For valor at Vicksburg, he received a Medal of Honor.

Logan was also a "political general" in a sense much admired by President Lincoln, who repeatedly called upon Logan to return to Illinois long enough to buttress public support for the war aims of Union and emancipation.

Logan tempered his dynamic leadership with restraint. After Lincoln's assassination, Logan single-handedly saved Raleigh by standing down a vengeful mob of Union soldiers bent on torching the North Carolina capital.

By 1865, Logan's prestige neared that of Grant himself. Later, as President, Grant recalled that "no corps was more bravely led than John Logan's." Grant's successor, President Rutherford Hayes, hailed Logan as "clearly the most eminent and distinguished of the volunteer soldiers."

At war's end, Logan founded the organization of Civil War veterans – 400,000 strong – known as the Grand Army of the Republic. In 1868, as Grand Army commander, Logan initiated the nation's annual observance of Memorial Day to honor those who had died defending their country.

Logan meanwhile returned to Congress as a Republican, eventually winning three terms in the U.S. Senate. There he advocated public education and championed soldiers' pensions and aid to the war's wounded, widows and orphans.

Senator Logan's support for education focused particularly on the challenge of improving the plight of black Americans, which he saw as a central cause in American democracy. The preeminent black leader Frederick Douglass compared him to the world's newest architectural marvel, saying that Logan had a "backbone like the Brooklyn Bridge."

In 1884, Logan sought the presidency but took second place on a ticket headed by James Blaine. After Democrat Grover Cleveland defeated Blaine, Logan's stature made him a logical Republican choice for 1888.

For black Americans, a Logan-led Republican ticket was a welcome prospect. On June 12, 1885, a group of 5,000 African Americans assembled here to honor and serenade Logan. After hours of speeches and songs, the Senator and former General welcomed a stream of some 1,000 visitors into this home.

Only a year later, Logan died suddenly when old war injuries brought fatal complications. He was among the first Americans to lie in state in the Capitol Rotunda and was interred at Soldiers' Home.

Later, this house became the residence of Methodist Bishop John Fletcher Hurst, who lived here while founding American University in 1891.

In 1901 President William McKinley presided as the Logan statue was placed at the center of what was then Iowa Circle. Its bas-reliefs depict Logan's military and political careers. In

1930 Congress renamed the circle in Logan's honor.

The triangle formed by Logan Circle, Dupont Circle and the White House is a central feature of Pierre L'Enfant's original 1791 design for the nation's capital. As late as the Civil War, the areas around both Circles were still farmland. Each neighborhood then developed quickly during the capital's exuberant growth in the 1870's and 1880's.

Builders in that "Gilded Age" were fearless in blending architectural styles. Logan House offers a prime example with its Victorian body, a front porch imitating the Italian Renaissance and a side porch described as "American steamboat Gothic."

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Logan Circle was home to many of the city's prominent black professionals, but slowly fell victim to urban blight. After the riots of the 1960's, Logan Circle was threatened both by neglect and by the kind of redevelopment that defaced nearby Thomas Circle.

In 1975 the house at #4 Logan Circle, long vacant and dilapidated by exposure to the elements, was nearly lost when an outer wall collapsed and fell onto P Street. The derelict building was then partially restored and reoccupied. Its full restoration came in 2009.

Logan House recalls an extraordinary man who, in the era of America's gravest crisis, rose to become a military leader second only to Grant and a champion of African Americans second only to Lincoln. The building's central gallery and its suite names honor Logan, Frederick Douglass, Grant and Lincoln – allies in America's monumental struggle for justice.

