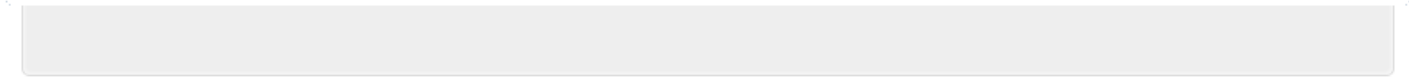


- [Home](#)
- [Funding](#)
- [Reference](#)
- [Subscribe](#)
- [About](#)



National Trust Historic Sites Weblog

[Entries RSS](#) | [Comments RSS](#)

• Recent Posts

- [You're Not Alone: Non-profits in Massachusetts overstretched, underfunded](#)
- [London's Benjamin Franklin House](#)
- [Cells and Sites: How Historic Sites are Using Cell Phone Tours](#)
- [Calendar of Events for NTHS at the 2008 National Preservation Conference](#)
- [Reports from the \(English\) field](#)

• Pages

- [About](#)
 - [Contributors](#)
- [Funding](#)
 - [Interpretation and Education Fund](#)
 - [Past Awards of Interpretation and Education Fund Grants](#)
- [Reference](#)
 - [Accessions at National Trust Historic Sites](#)
 - [Chronology of the National Trust Historic Sites by Date](#)
 - [Conservation at National Trust Historic Sites](#)
 - [Deaccessions at National Trust Historic Sites](#)
 - [How Many National Trust Historic Sites? 29!](#)
 - [How many NTHS are NHLs? 18!](#)
 - [Insurance at National Trust Historic Sites](#)
 - [Loans at National Trust Historic Sites](#)
- [Subscribe](#)

• Category Cloud

[Buildings](#) [Collections](#) [Disaster planning](#) [Education](#) [Fundraising](#) [Governance](#)
[Historical research](#) [Internet](#) [Interpretation](#) [Landscape](#) [Marketing](#) [Museum Store](#)
[PreservationNation](#) [Resources](#) [Staff](#) [Sustainability](#) [Training](#) [Uncategorized](#) [Visitor Research](#)

• Top Posts

- [Cedar Rapids \(Iowa\) flood update: Museum of Art](#)
- [Can Sites use Exercise to Boost the Learning Experience?](#)
- [Cells and Sites: How Historic Sites are Using Cell Phone Tours](#)
- [Teaching and Research in the New Media: Practice](#)
- [You're Not Alone: Non-profits in Massachusetts overstretched, underfunded](#)
- [The Classics at Brucemore reinvented for 2008](#)
- [Funding](#)
- [New Five Dollar Bill debuts at President Lincoln's Cottage](#)

[Cells and Sites: How Historic Sites are Using Cell Phone Tours](#)

Posted on July 3, 2008 by Stephen Neuhauser

Cell phones have revolutionized the way people communicate, affecting many areas of life, including historic sites. A popular application of cell phone technology is now being used at several of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's historic sites. Chesterwood, Decatur House, and Woodrow Wilson House provide cell phone tours, similar to standard audio tours offered by many museums, but with several differences. Perhaps the biggest advantage that cell phone tours have over audio tours is that the listener does not have to be physically present at the place to access the information. Cell phone tours have a similar function to standard audio tour "wands," the listener enters a number that corresponds to a location/piece/exhibit and hears information relating to the exhibit. However, in order to use an audio tour the listener has to be physically present at the site and holding the wand. This limits the access to the information to people who can visit the museum or site. An advantage of the cell phone tour over the audio tour is that it is accessible to a broader range of people, those who are interested in a site but are not able to visit. This is beneficial for both the historic site and the public. Historic sites using cell phone tours can expand the number of people that have an interest in there site, while people that are interested in a site can have access to information that they would not have had before.

Using a cell phone tour is very easy, and the ones used by National Trust historic sites follow this pattern. The tour is accessed by the visitor by calling a designated number just like any other phone number. The visitor is then connected to an introduction to the site and instructions for using the tour. The instructions for the historic sites' tours are the same, information is accessed by dialing a number on the phone's keypad followed by the # sign. These numbers are very short, often 1#, 2#, 3#, ect. and the tour can be turned off and on at any time by simply hanging up the phone and re-calling. The numbers associated with each stop/piece/exhibit can be found on handouts that are generally easily available at the site.

In addition cell phone tours have several other benefits. Many people who have participated in a cell phone tours have cited the fact that they can use their own cell phone, instead of a standardized wand, during the tour. This is seen as a benefit as many people are more comfortable and familiar with their own personal cell phone than they are with audio wands. The ability of the visitor to pick and choose which topics to listen to allows the tour to be customized for each visitor with minimal effort. Cell phone tours are free of charge for users beyond the normal operating fees for a cell phone.

Cell phone tours also offer a great deal of flexibility and creativity in their design and use. Three National Trust Historic Sites offer cell phone tours, and each take a different approach, showing the versatility of the cell phone tour. One aspect that is used by Decatur House and Woodrow Wilson House is the ability of the cell phone tour to link a historic site with its surroundings. This is especially beneficial for sites located in urban areas as it helps to put the site in the context of the area instead of being isolated both physically and historically.

Chesterwood, the home and studio of sculptor Daniel Chester French in the Berkshire region of Western Massachusetts, has taken an innovative approach to the modern by pairing cell phone tours with a modern art exhibit. Daniel Chester French is a celebrated American sculptor, perhaps most admired for his sculptor of Abraham Lincoln that is the centerpiece of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Chesterwood has always had a tie to sculptor and is currently hosting an exhibition of contemporary sculptures. The sculpture exhibit incorporates a cell phone tour that showcases one of the many benefits of the cell phone tour is the opportunity for the visitor to listen directly to artists. At Chesterwood the cell phone tour meshes seamlessly with the sculpture exhibit. Each sculpture has an associated number which, when dialed, provides the visitor with a personal message from the artist. The artist's message includes a brief background of him/herself, their style, and the motivation behind the sculpture. The artist explains the meaning of the sculpture and how it should be viewed. This is a great benefit to visitors as it both provides a personal connection to the artist, and helps the visitor make sense out of the sometimes very confusing world of modern art.

Contemporary Sculpture at Chesterwood runs from June 28-October 15, 2008, and is open daily from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. The cell phone tour is accessible by calling (413) 726-9496. For more information contact Chesterwood at (413) 298-3973 or [visit their website](#) .

Decatur House, a historic home located adjacent to the White House on Lafayette Square in Washington, D.C., utilizes the cell phone tour to teach visitors about the African American history of Lafayette Square. Decatur House was originally built by Stephen Decatur, a naval hero during the War of 1812, and was used as a residency for many influential American and foreign politicians. Likewise, Lafayette Square has a fascinating history that spans from the creation of Washington, D.C. to the present. The cell phone tour run by Decatur House is entitled “The Half Had Not Been Told Me,” and focuses on the history of African American on Lafayette Square from slavery to civil rights. The tour incorporates many stories about African American places and people on historic Lafayette Square, and includes an introduction by Washington, D.C. mayor Adrian M. Fenty and is narrated by the Honorable Togo D. West, Jr. The tour is accompanied by a map of Lafayette Square which provides the tour numbers. The tour is a great way to explore the area and learn more about an area that has influenced American history. Great for a warm summer afternoon, bring a picnic!

“The Half Had Not Been Told Me” is available by calling (202) 595-1859. More information is available from Decatur House at (202) 842-0920 or [visit their website](#) .

Woodrow Wilson House, the home of President Woodrow Wilson in Washington, D.C., is another National Trust historic site that utilizes the cell phone tour’s versatility. Woodrow Wilson House is located in the historic Kalorama neighborhood, adjacent to Massachusetts Avenue, Washington’s “Embassy Row.” Although this area is fascinating, it is located away from major public transportation routes. Woodrow Wilson House has solved this problem by tailoring their cell phone tour to provide interesting information about the area between the closest subway stop and the site. What was once a pleasant but relatively uneventful walk is now an exciting opportunity to learn about the many interesting buildings in the area. The tour includes information about the area in general as well as messages from local museums and embassies. Of particular interest are the messages from international diplomats explaining their embassies and countries. The Woodrow Wilson House tour is currently under construction and should launch in Fall 2008.

For more information contact Woodrow Wilson House at (202) 387-4062 or [visit their website](#) .

Possibly related posts: (automatically generated)

- [Investing in Historic Sites?](#)

Filed under: [Education](#), [Internet](#), [Interpretation](#), [PreservationNation](#) | Tagged: [cell phones](#), [Decatur House](#), [Chesterwood](#), [Woodrow Wilson House](#), [Tours](#)

« [Calendar of Events for NTHS at the 2008 National Preservation Conference](#) [London’s Benjamin Franklin House](#) »

One Response to “Cells and Sites: How Historic Sites are Using Cell Phone Tours”

1. [oncell](#), on [July 6th, 2008 at 7:31 pm](#) Said:

Cell phone tours can be managed online and you’ll get to see real-time visitor / caller statistics. While audio continues to be the primary feature, you can also sent text alerts, images and streaming video as part of a cell phone tour program. OnCell is the fast-growing cell phone tour host. Contact Kevin Dooley at OnCell 585-419-9844 x102 for additional info.

Leave a Reply

You must be [logged in](#) to post a comment.

•

July 2008

M T W T F S S

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) 4 5 6

[7](#) [8](#) 9 10 11 12 13

14 15 16 17 18 19 20

21 22 23 24 25 26 27

28 29 30 31

[« Jun](#)

• Archives

- [July 2008](#)

- [June 2008](#)
- [May 2008](#)
- [April 2008](#)
- [March 2008](#)
- [February 2008](#)
- [January 2008](#)
- [December 2007](#)
- [November 2007](#)

• [PreservationNation](#)

- [Lost in the Flood: The Vavra House, Cedar Rapids](#)
- [It's Rally Cap Time for Tiger Stadium](#)
- [Restoring New Orleans: National Trust Volunteers](#)
- [Oklahoma's capital, Guthrie. Or, not.](#)

• Blogroll

- [Cultural Heritage Tourism](#)
- [Lincoln's Cottage](#)
- [Montpelier Restoration](#)
- [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#)
- [National Trust Historic Sites](#)
- [NTHP Grants Office](#)
- [PreservationNation Blog](#)
- [Preserve the Modern](#)
- [The Latest Dirt](#)
- [Villa Finale](#)
- [WordPress.com](#)

• Meta

- [Log in](#)
- [Entries RSS](#)
- [Comments RSS](#)
- [WordPress.org](#)

[Blog at WordPress.com](#). Theme: Digg 3 Column by [WP Designer](#)

»