

HISTORIC HOUSE TRUST
NEW YORK CITY

Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre Anniversary Improvement Initiative

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MN CB8 Meeting
April 13, 2026

Who is the Historic House Trust?

23 sites
5 boroughs
370+ years of history

Mission: In partnership with NYC Parks, we advocate for, promote, and provide expertise to preserve 23 publicly-owned historic sites located throughout New York City's five boroughs.



Our Work



Historic Building Conservation



Community Engagement



Museum Support & Development

Why is there a Swedish Cottage in Central Park?

About the Swedish Cottage

History

- Built by the Kingdom of Sweden as a schoolhouse exhibit at the **1876** Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia.
- On the recommendation of Frederick Law Olmsted, New York purchased the structure and reconstructed it in Central Park at West 79th Street in **1877**.
- Since **1947**, it has been the headquarters of the Marionette Theatre. It housed workrooms and offices, with marionette performances being held primarily in parks around the City.
- In **1973**, a small theater was constructed in the original larger schoolroom so that performances could be done in the building as well as in parks.
- The last restoration was completed in **1996**.
- **2027** marks 150 years since the Swedish Cottage came to Central Park.

Designations

- Designated a NYC Landmark in 1974.
- Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.

Stewardship

- Owned by NYC Parks
- Located in Central Park
- Member of the Historic House Trust of NYC
- Operated by City Parks Foundation


SCHWEDISCHES SCHULHAUS.
EDIFICIO DE ESCUELA DE SUÉCIA.
ECOLE SUEDOISE.
SWEDISH SCHOOL HOUSE.


1876, Philadelphia


2020, Central Park



1937, Central Park



1880, Central Park



1937, Central Park



2025, Central Park



1876, Philadelphia



1956, Central Park



2023, Central Park

The Cottage at 150: What's next?

Exterior Restoration

Funding: $3.5M (City Council, Mayoral)
Project Manager: Historic House Trust

Scope:

- Full roof replacement
- Facade repair & new wood stain throughout
- Structural reinforcement at select roof and balcony framing
- Replacement of balcony decking
- Repair of stairways & installation of new wood handrails
- Reconstruction of wood “skirt” around building exterior
- Installation of additional exterior lighting

Add-On:

- Design for HVAC replacement



Timeline & Impacts

- **Groundbreaking:** March 20, 2026
- **Kickoff Meeting:** March 24, 2026

The Cottage will remain open for shows while final permits and material approvals are completed.

- **Construction Fence:** May 2026 (projected)

Once the construction fence is constructed, the Cottage will be closed during weekdays for the safety of visitors. CPF will still have access to program on the weekend whenever possible.

- **Anticipated Completion:** April 2027

A substantial portion of the work is expected to be completed before cold weather hits in fall/winter 2026.



Interior Renovation

Funding: $6.8M (City Council, Borough President, Federal)
Project Manager: City Parks Foundation

Scope:

- Auditorium upgrades
  - Flexible stage and puppetry bridge
  - New seating
  - New A/V systems
  - Enhanced acoustical treatment
  - Updated backstage areas
  - Improved public spaces with digital signage and museum displays
  - Improved technical systems

Timeline:

- Design is in development, and CPF is actively seeking addition funds for this transformative project.



