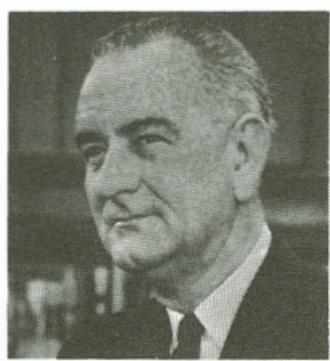


# Lyndon B. Johnson

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE • TEXAS



National Parks Centennial 1872-1972



\* Amtlich gemeldete Geburten:  
Sohn von Sam Johnson, geboren am  
27. August. —

"Official announcement of birth: A son to Sam Johnson born August 27th." Thus Lyndon Baines Johnson's birth was announced in the September 9, 1908, issue of the German-language weekly, *Fredericksburger Wochenblatt*. This simple report made no predictions for the future of the first child of a young Texas legislator, Sam Ealy Johnson, Jr., and his wife, Rebekah. But the baby's grandfather did: "I have a mighty fine grandson, smart as you find them. I expect him to be a United States Senator before he is forty." This prediction missed by only 4½ months. Lyndon Johnson became 40 years old on August 27, 1948, and took his seat in the Senate on January 3, 1949. He surpassed even his grandfather's expectations when he became Vice President of the United States in 1961 and the Nation's 36th President on November 22, 1963.

The Texas Hill Country has been home to the Johnson family for well over a century. Sam Ealy Johnson, Sr., President Johnson's grandfather, was born in Georgia in 1838. In 1846 the family moved to Texas and settled near Lockhart. Together with his older brother, Tom, they began organizing cattle drives to Kansas' railheads in the late 1860's. In a rather loose partnership with the two brothers were three nephews, Jesse, John, and James Johnson. Johnson City was laid out on James' land.

After returning from service with Company B, 26th Texas Cavalry, Confederate States Army, Sam Johnson met and courted Eliza Bunton. They were married on December 11, 1867. Almost anything could happen on the frontier to which Sam brought Eliza. In August 1869, a band of Indians killed and scalped a husband and wife who lived a short distance from the Johnsons. A group of men was organized to chase the Indians and a fight took place at Deer Creek. Three men were wounded and carried back to the Johnson home where Eliza cared for them. This fight, however, did not end the Indian menace. A short time later Eliza, alone with her baby daughter, saw an approaching band of Indians. Hiding beneath the house, she stuffed a diaper into the baby's mouth so they could not hear her crying. The Indians ransacked the house and ran off with the horses. It was hours later before Eliza heard her husband's voice, signaling all was safe.

On October 11, 1877, Eliza Johnson gave birth to her fifth child and first son, Sam Ealy, Jr., near Buda, Tex. Always ambitious, he studied hard so

that he could pass the examination for a teacher's certificate. He was always proud of having scored 100 percent in Texas and U.S. history. After teaching for 2 years, he turned to farming and the study of law. In 1904, he was elected to the State legislature and served 12 years. He worked hard to preserve the Alamo, to aid victims of drought, and to provide pensions for Confederate veterans and their widows. In 1907, he married Rebekah Baines, a native of McKinney, Tex. She had worked her way through her final year at Baylor University and was teaching in Fredericksburg when she met Sam Johnson.

The young couple settled in Sam Sr.'s old home on the banks of the Pedernales River. The next year their first son, Lyndon Baines, was born there. Two daughters, Rebekah and Josefa, also were born in that house. In 1913 Sam Johnson, Jr., moved his family to Johnson City to provide a better education, in which he strongly believed, for his children. The house they chose was a small Victorian structure, complete with gingerbread trim and lightning rods. Two more children, Lucia and Sam, were born here. The Johnsons lived in this house until the children graduated from high school except for a brief period when they returned to the farm along the Pedernales.

The years in this house were happy ones for the Johnsons. A constant stream of political and family acquaintances passed through the home. Often there were last-minute guests who sat down to one of Mrs. Johnson's country dinners. On a quiet summer evening, hide-and-seek, kick-the-can, and baseball—the games that are the basis of childhood memories—were played.

Lyndon's mother made sure that he was a good student:

*Many times I would not catch up with the fact that Lyndon was not prepared on a lesson until breakfast time of a school day. Then I would get the book and place it on the table before his father and devote the whole breakfast period to a discussion of what my son should have learned the night before, not with Lyndon but with my husband.*

*Of course Lyndon was too well trained to interrupt this table talk and, forced to listen, he would learn. That way, and by following him to the gate nearly every morning, and telling him tales of history and geography and algebra, I could see that he was prepared for the work of the day.*

In May 1924, Lyndon Johnson graduated from high school as president of his class of six. Unde-

ecided about his future, he went with several friends to California to seek his fortune. He returned home in a few months after having worked at odd jobs up and down the coast to pay his room and board. When he could not find a job, he went hungry, or as he called it, "that was the time I went on a diet." Back in Texas, he got a job driving a tractor for a road construction crew. Gentle prodding from his parents and the stirrings of ambitions eventually persuaded him that he should continue his schooling.

In February 1927, he enrolled in Southwest Texas State Teachers College in San Marcos. While in college, he worked as a janitor and as an assistant in the president's office. He edited the school newspaper and was a member of the college debating team. The *Dallas Morning News*, speaking of his college days, once reported:

*He recited his lessons aloud as he worked alone after other students had left the school. He practiced oratory in the halls which he kept clean. He made speeches to walls as he wiped them down. He told tales of the ancients to the door mats which he shook free from dust.*

In need of money, he took a year out to teach the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades at the Welhausen Grade School in Cotulla, Tex. He returned to Southwest Texas State Teachers College and graduated with a B.S. degree in August 1930. The next month, he began teaching public speaking at Sam Houston High School in Houston. He stayed there 1 year and was then offered an opportunity which opened up a new field to him.

In November 1931, Richard M. Kleberg, one of the owners of the King Ranch, won a seat in the House of Representatives in a special election. Johnson had worked hard in the campaign, and Kleberg asked Johnson to go to Washington with him as his secretary. Johnson accepted the offer and resigned his teaching position.

He began learning the intricacies of national politics and found the atmosphere to his liking. He plunged into the affairs of the "Little Congress," an organization of Congressmen's secretaries and in his second year won election as its speaker—a notable feat for a newcomer. Vice President John Nance Garner presented Johnson with a gavel, made from a tree planted by Gen. Sam Houston, as the symbol of his office.

During a return trip to Texas in September 1934, he met an East Texas businessman's charming daughter, Claudia Alta Taylor—known as Lady Bird. On November 17, 1934, they were married.

In 1935, Lyndon Johnson returned to Texas as State Director of the National Youth Administration. Under his leadership, programs were de-

veloped that aided the State and benefited the youth during the Depression. Young people were put to work building roadside parks, repairing school buildings, and learning trade skills. More than 75,000 students were able to continue in Texas colleges because of NYA assistance. Johnson had a good background for this job. "Sure, I guess I know a little bit about youth's hard lot in life," he said at the time.

*Received my early education in a country school in the Hill Country. After schooling, I got a job as a day laborer on the highways. I chopped weeds, earned a dollar here and a dollar there, always with an idea in my mind of finishing a college education.*

In early 1937, Representative James P. Buchanan died. Johnson announced for the special election to fill the House seat, campaigned as a staunch supporter of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and won. He took his seat on April 10, 1937. As a young Congressman, he brought rural electrification to the people of the Hill Country, increased water reserves by helping build a series of dams on the lower Colorado River, and obtained for poor families in Austin the first federally supported low-cost housing project in the United States.

In 1941, Johnson ran for the Senate seat vacated by the death of Morris Sheppard. In a closely fought election, he lost to former Texas Gov. W. Lee O'Daniel—the only race Johnson lost in his political career. But he tried again and was elected to the Senate in 1948. Johnson soon assumed increasing responsibilities and powers—Democratic Whip in 1951, Minority Leader in 1953, and Majority Leader in 1955—and exercised in each position a talent for bringing together people of diverse interests. Elected Vice President in 1960 as the running mate of John F. Kennedy, Johnson traveled as America's spokesman to many trouble spots in the world. The assassination of President Kennedy on November 22, 1963, brought Lyndon Johnson to the Nation's highest office.

The American electorate in November 1964 gave President Johnson a full 4-year term with the largest percentage of the popular vote ever received. During his administration three major civil rights bills were passed, Medicare began, and Federal aid to education grew rapidly. A treaty to halt the spread of nuclear weapons was negotiated and signed by President Johnson. The Senate ratified it in early 1969. In March 1968, he coupled a strong peace bid with an announcement that he would not run for re-election. In January 1969, President Johnson returned to his beloved Hill Country, the country that helped mold his character.

## **WHERE LYNDON JOHNSON WAS BORN AND GREW UP**

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historic Site includes the Birthplace and Boyhood Home of the 36th President of the United States. Both of these houses, their furnishings, and the necessary lands were donated to the U.S. Government by the Johnson City Foundation.

### **BIRTHPLACE**

This small two-bedroom farmhouse, which is about one-half mile east of the LBJ Ranch, is typical of the homes built in the late 1800's and early 1900's in this region of Texas. Its open hallway, or "dog-trot," provided ventilation in hot weather. The Johnson family lived here from 1907 until 1913 when Lyndon was 5 years old. The original house was torn down in the 1930's and a smaller house was built near the site. In 1964 the present structure was reconstructed on the original foundation, using some stone and lumber from the old building. Family photographs and recollections of kinfolk and friends supplied information regarding the floor plan and its furnishings.

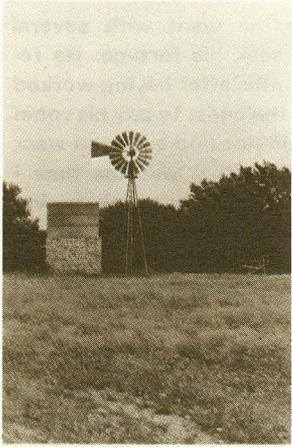
### **BOYHOOD HOME**

This one-story, victorian, framehouse was built in 1901. Sam Ealy Johnson, Jr., purchased it and moved his family here in 1913. Lyndon Johnson maintained this as his residence until he married in 1934. After his marriage, he and Lady Bird returned for frequent visits. Portions of it were restored and refurnished in 1964 by the Johnson City Foundation so that it could be developed into a community center for Johnson City. During the refurbishing, some partitions were removed to allow for group meetings. The remainder of the house, including the bedrooms and kitchen, will eventually be restored and opened to the public. Other than these changes, every attempt has been made to restore the home as it was during President Johnson's boyhood years.

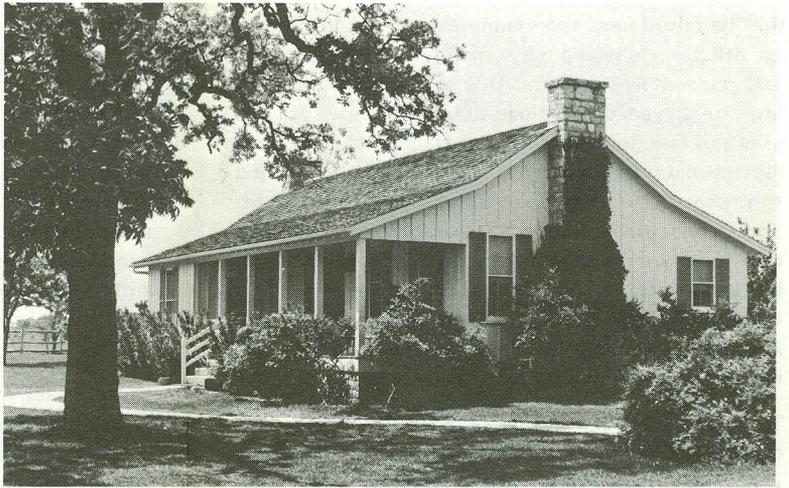
This house and the birthplace have been refurnished with many pieces of furniture belonging to Rebekah and Sam Ealy Johnson, Jr., and with other Johnson family heirlooms. Other furnishings representative of the period were purchased for the house.

### **ADMINISTRATION**

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historic Site, authorized on December 2, 1969, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is P.O. Box 329, Johnson City, TX 78636, is in immediate charge.



Windmill.



Lyndon Johnson was born here in 1908.



East bedroom.



East bedroom fireplace.



Kitchen.



Young Lyndon.



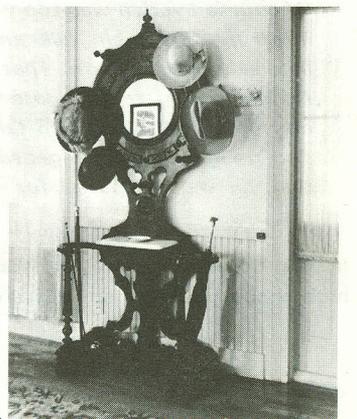
The Johnsons moved to this house in 1913.



Parlor.



Dining room.



Hatrack.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

**National Park Service**

**U. S. Department of the Interior**