

Lyndon B. Johnson

Lyndon B. Johnson
National Historical Park
Texas

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



LBJ State Park and Historic Site



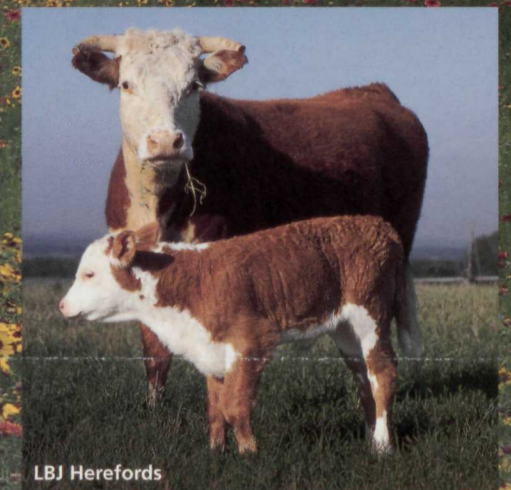
The Hill Country of Texas, which has been the home of the Johnson family for more than a century, is an in-between place. To the east are softer, more humid lands. To the west stretch high plains, plateaus, and deserts. The Hill Country partakes of both regions.



Barnyard, Sauer-Beckmann Living History Farm



Texas White House, LBJ Ranch



LBJ Herefords

In season, flowing streams lace terraced hills covered with wildflowers. Small valleys with scattered farms and fat cattle nestle below ragged skylines of rock and cedar. It is a pastoral paradise, a middle landscape where nature blends gently with snug houses made from the limestone of the hills, symbolizing a partnership between inhabitants and land.

But there are other seasons and other cycles. Summer storms sweep violently through these hills, battering them with thunder and hail, ripping the valleys with cloudburst floods. Winter winds come down from the plains, whipping the ridges, driving people and animals to shelter. Heat and drought smite this borderland. When dry spells last too long, the ever-green Texas oaks drop their leaves and languish for a while, dormant until the rains come back.

A Landscape Shapes the Man Out of this place came a man who personified these many, often conflicting moods. A man of great gentleness and violent energy. A man sometimes effusive and joyous, at home in a crowd. A man sometimes withdrawn, in lonely battle with his own blizzards and droughts. He was the 36th President of the United States, 1963–69.

Lyndon Baines Johnson was doubtless the last President whose roots and early experience bridged the gap between the old America of local frontiers, crossroads, and close neighbors, and the new America of world power, big cities, and unknown neighbors. His deepest motive as a public man was to make people neighbors again. His greatest monument is his 40-year record of achievement in serving this goal—as teacher, public official, and elder statesman.

In the perspective of history, his Presidency came during an era of national stress. The era began long before he assumed office and is with us yet, a time of transition from old orders to new ones still undefined, a time born of potent forces that resist control. No man exercising power during any strife-filled period has run the gauntlet of such forces unscathed.

President Johnson's origins and temperament put him in direct confrontation with these powerful currents. He was a man who denied the notion that problems cannot be solved. In the spirit of his frontier heritage, he joined the battle with optimistic faith that solutions and controls would follow from his efforts. History as tragedy was foreign to his nature.

From these different arenas of an action-filled life—arenas he could control and those he could not—emerged a man who strove mightily, who won great successes, and yet, despite his powerful will, sustained great disappointments. Here, in the land of his birth and youth—the place he kept coming back to—are some reminders of this man, the places and things and people he loved, the home to which he returned.

The myths and realities of Lyndon Johnson's frontier heritage helped shape both his life and what was written about him. History was a present force in the Johnson family. The forebears who had made that heritage tutored the child. He sat in the lap of a cattle-drover grandfather who had "pointed them north" on the Chisholm

Trail. He peered under the log cabin where his own grandmother and infant aunt had hidden from raiding Comanches. Heroes who had wrested homes from the wilderness reminisced on his front porch.

A Hill Country Boyhood His boyhood home in Johnson City and the settlement of his ancestors a short walk away embody a part of this older America that nourished the child and molded a large part of the man. Here are the places and the images that helped structure President Johnson's view of how the world ought to be.

Lyndon was five when his father moved the family into the comfortable house on Elm Street in 1913. Growing up in Johnson City was a mixture of hard reality and childhood adventure. Besides the never-ending chores, he found time to do the things most kids did: breaking his arm falling out of the barn, playing first base and pitcher on sandlot and school teams, riding a borrowed donkey to the Pedernales River, and occasionally getting into trouble.

Lyndon's mother and father each had a profound influence on the lanky youngster. Rebekah was one of few college-educated women and took her family and civic responsibilities seriously. She imparted to Lyndon, his brother, and his three sisters a belief in the necessity of education and a compassion for human needs. His father, Sam Johnson, was a State legislator who taught his sons the facts of political life in the tradition of agrarian liberalism. When Lyndon left for college in 1927, he had already begun to shape his ideas and values about the world around him. They were the foundations that sustained his later beliefs and purposes as he wrestled with the incredible complexities of modern America and the world as President.

A Sense of Belonging The years in the house on Elm Street were formative for young Lyndon, but it is at the LBJ Ranch—the Texas White House—that the full impact of Lyndon Johnson's energy and power can be felt. Here as President, as entrepreneur, as lord-of-the-manor rancher, he surrounded himself with family and friends. Within this inner circle, he used yarns and anecdotes to proudly proclaim the virtues of good upbringing and hard work, the virtues that helped him create this grand spread in the center of his ancestral homeland. He regaled visitors with his own sense of place, made real by green pastures, prize cattle, and an imposing ranch house. Some guests, perhaps because of their host's unstinting joy and hospitality, went away a bit envious of this man who so obviously belonged. But this homestead was much more than a showplace for power and pride. It was an operating ranch, where events could be controlled. Here a man who loved action could set a task, get it going, and get it done. It was a healing place far removed from the turbulence of Washington. Here, too, was the ancestral cemetery, the place where Lyndon was born, the house where he visited his revered grandfather, the one-room school where he started the long trek from rustic lad to world leader.

At the LBJ Ranch one senses the contrasts that lived on in the man: the child who chewed a blade of grass and wondered if it would rain and if the river would rise, the man who strode forth on the world stage, came back to work his ranch, and finally joined his ancestors.

Background and cattle photos—NPS/Sherry Justus; sheep farm and Texas White House photos—Texas Parks and Wildlife; black-and-white photos—courtesy Lyndon B. Johnson Library; photos of family and LBJ on ranch with Lady Bird—Yoichi R. Okamoto



Like all things, human beings change throughout the course of a life. Each age reveals a different person from wide-eyed, to idealistic, to wise, to reflective. Here, from left to right, a variety of images reveals Lyndon Johnson in that passage: at age five; as a student (back row, fifth from left) at

Johnson City High School; as a young U.S. Representative in Washington; with his family—Lynda, Luci, and Lady Bird—as President; with Lady Bird on the LBJ Ranch; and pondering an issue as President.

Texas youngster to 36th President

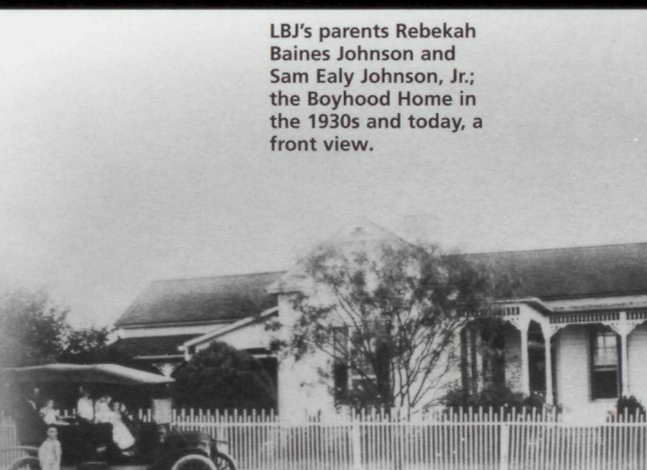
Visiting Lyndon Johnson's Texas



Texas bluebonnets, the Sauer-Beckmann farm, and Hill Country produce.



LBJ's parents Rebekah Baines Johnson and Sam Ealy Johnson, Jr.; the Boyhood Home in the 1930s and today, a front view.



A Johnson Vision for Two Parks

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park and LBJ State Park and Historic Site represent a flourishing cooperative effort that was the vision of President and Mrs. Johnson. Their hope was that these historic properties on both sides of the Pedernales River near Stonewall and in Johnson City would be preserved for local communities and the visiting public. Texas Parks and Wildlife operates the state park on the Pedernales River opposite the LBJ Ranch. The National Park Service administers two areas: the LBJ Ranch and sites within Johnson City, 14 miles east. Together the two parks interpret the Texas Hill Country, its influence on Lyndon Johnson and his political career. To a degree rare among presidential parks, these properties are the physical documentation of the origins, ancestry, and full life span of a President.

The National Historical Park

At Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park in Johnson City go first to the visitor center, where you can get information about the park and see exhibits and two films produced for the park: *LBJ, the President*; and *Lady Bird*. A sales area offers a variety of edu-



cational materials. From the visitor center you can walk to Lyndon Johnson's Boyhood Home and to the nearby Johnson Settlement. The settlement features restored 19th-century structures that trace the evolution of the Texas Hill Country from the open range cattle kingdom days of Lyndon Johnson's grandfather Sam Ealy Johnson, Sr., to the local ranching and farming of more recent times. An un-staffed exhibit center tells this story in pictures and artifacts.

LBJ Ranch bus tours begin at the LBJ State Park. Buses are operated by the National Park Service and provide regularly scheduled interpretive tours. Tours include the one-room Junction School first attended by four-year-old Lyndon, the President's reconstructed birthplace, the Johnson family cemetery where the President is buried, and the ranch and its registered Hereford cattle, descendants of LBJ's original herd. Access to the LBJ Ranch is by tour bus only; a fee is charged. For reservations and information, call 830-868-7128, ext. 231; or visit www.nps.gov/lyjo.

The State Park and Historic Site

LBJ State Park lies in the Texas Hill Country. Many cultures contributed to the region's history, most notably American Indians, Spanish and German immigrants, and settlers from the American South. Numerous American Indian groups roamed the Hill Country, leaving behind abundant artifacts that show evidence of their lives. The Spanish conquistadors and later Mexican settlers left imprints

of their culture in place names, language, and traditions of the area, as they did throughout Texas. German and other European immigrants settled here in the mid-1800s, and their descendants still call this area home. Visitors can explore the history of early German immigrants by viewing the 1840s Danz log cabin and the dog-trot style Behrens cabin connected to the visitor center. The contributions of many people have shaped the development of the region and the park itself.

Highlighting the influences of the German Texas culture, the Sauer-Beckmann Living History Farm is an example of the day-to-day life in this area at the turn of the 20th century. Park interpreters, dressed in authentic costumes, go about their farm chores as they talk with visitors about the activities in progress at various farm buildings. For group tours, call 830-868-7128, ext. 231.

For a glimpse of nature, state park visitors can view live animals at enclosures containing bison, longhorn cattle, and white-tailed deer. A nature trail, marked with interpretive stops, winds past the pens and through fields of spring-blooming wildflowers. Park facilities also include a visitor center complex, an indoor auditorium, and outdoor amphitheater as well as picnic areas, playgrounds, a pool complex, two lighted tennis courts, and a baseball field. Groups may rent a dining hall and picnic area.

Related Sites

The Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Museum, on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin, is operated by the National Archives and Records Service of the General Services Administration. It is both a center of scholarly research and a historical museum. There are three floors of exhibits highlighting President Johnson's long public career.

Fredericksburg, west of the park, reflects the rich cultural legacy of the German immigrants who first arrived in central Texas in the 1840s. Located here is the National Museum of the Pacific War, a World War II exhibit that commemorates the hard-fought Pacific campaigns and honors the career and achievements of Adm. Chester Nimitz.

Safety

We want your visit to be pleasant and rewarding. Please observe a few safety precautions:

- Enjoy looking at the animals but do not pet or feed them. Stay off the corral fences and keep a safe distance from the animals.
- Children under 14 must be accompanied by a responsible adult on buses and in all buildings.
- Texas summers are hot; drink plenty of fluids.
- Fire ant stings are painful; stay on marked trails.

Assistance Programs

For the hearing impaired scripts are available for all Johnson City locations and for the LBJ Ranch bus tours. All facilities in the park are accessible to persons in wheelchairs.

More Information

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park is one of more than 380 parks in the National Park System. The National Park Service cares for these special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. Visit www.nps.gov to learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities. Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park P.O. Box 329 Johnson City, TX 78636, 830-868-7128 ext. 244 www.nps.gov/lyjo

LBJ State Park and Historic Site P.O. Box 238 Stonewall, TX 78671 830-644-2252 www.tpwd.state.tx.us

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