

Lyndon B. Johnson

National Historical Park
Texas

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



The land that nourished Lyndon Johnson.

Photo by David Muench



The reconstructed birthplace house.



A working chuck wagon is part of the park's living history program.



The restored boyhood home.



The LBJ Ranch.

Lyndon Johnson's Texas

The Hill Country of Texas, which had 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.

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 man and nature blend gently together. Snug houses made from the limestone of the hills symbolize this partnership.

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 men 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.

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 A man sometimes withdrawn, in lonely battle with his own blizzards and droughts.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.

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 labor and 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 this strife-filled period has run the gauntlet of these terrible forces unscathed, either in action or in reputation.

President Johnson's origins and temperament put him in direct confrontation with these powerful currents. He was a man who refused 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 who, despite his powerful will, sustained inevitable tragedy. 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.

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 5 when his father moved the family into the comfortable house on 9th Street in 1913. Growing up in Johnson City was a mixture of hard reality and boyhood 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 the few college-educated women in the country and took her family and civic responsibilities seriously. She imparted to Lyndon, his brother, and three sisters a devout 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 finally left for college in 1927, he had already begun to shape his ideas and values

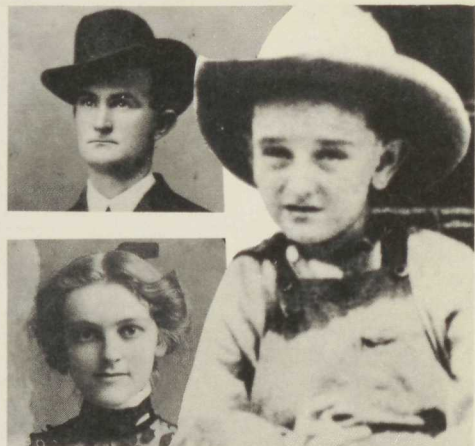
about the world around him. They were the foundations that sustained his later beliefs and purposes as he wrestled with the incredible complexities of modern America and the world as President.

The years in the house on 9th 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.

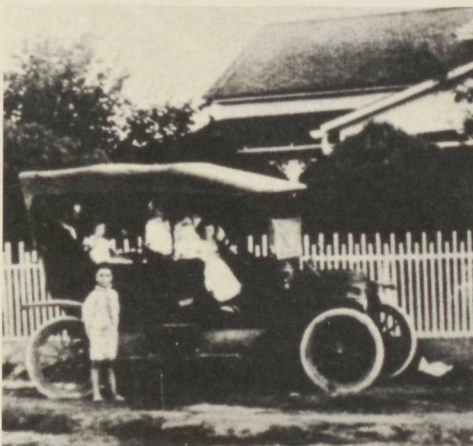
But this homestead was much more than a showplace for power and pride. It was an operating ranch, where events could be controlled. Here a man who loved action could set a task, get it going, and get it done. It was a healing place far removed from the turbulence of Washington. Here, too, was the ancestral 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.

Scenes from the life of LBJ



His father, Sam Ealy Johnson Jr., and mother, Rebekah Baines Johnson.



Lyndon at age 4.

Standing alongside his father's Model T.



As a sandlot player.



Editor of the student newspaper at college.



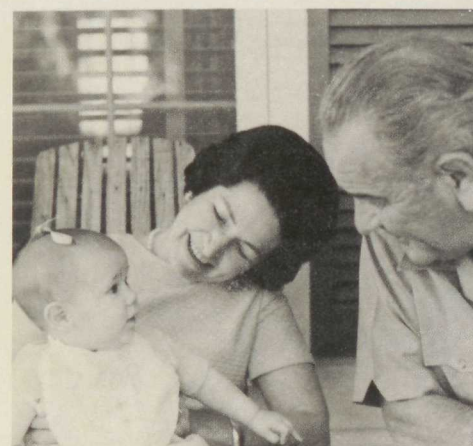
With his grade school class at Cotulla in 1928 (above),



and speaking on his front porch during his first congressional race.



Chief Executive



The Johnsons with one of the grandchildren.

About Your Visit

Memorial to a President

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park and Lyndon B. Johnson State Historical Park represent a flourishing cooperative effort that is the work of President and Mrs. Johnson. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department operates the State park located across the Pedernales River from the LBJ Ranch. The National Park Service administers areas on the opposite side of the river and within Johnson City, 14 miles east. Together the two parks interpret the Texas Hill Country, its influence on Lyndon Johnson, and the life of the President. To a degree unparalleled among presidential parks, they are a physical documentation of the origins, ancestry, and full life span of a President.

Johnson Family Cemetery



On January 25, 1973, Lyndon Johnson was buried as he wished, with simple ceremony, beneath the great live oaks in the family cemetery on the banks of the Pedernales River.

Austin to Fredericksburg



Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park contains two distinct areas: Johnson City and the LBJ Ranch. In *Johnson City* the principal points of interest are the Boyhood Home of Lyndon Johnson and the Johnson Settlement. A visitor center provides information about the park, exhibits, and publications.

From the Boyhood Home you can walk to the nearby Johnson Settlement.

This complex of restored historic structures traces 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 exhibit center tells this story in pictures and artifacts.

LBJ Ranch Go first to the State Park Visitor Center to find out how best to see the State park and the

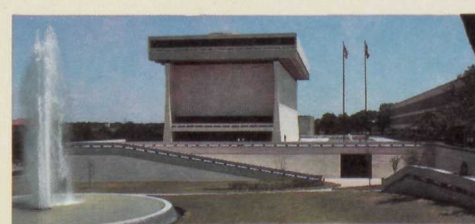
national park. Regularly scheduled tour buses operated by the National Park Service leave the visitor center for the ranch tour, which includes the one-room country school first attended by Lyndon at 4, his birthplace, (reconstructed), the Johnson Family cemetery where the President is buried, and views of the ranch and its registered Hereford cattle. Access to the LBJ Ranch is by tour bus only.

Related Sites

The Lyndon B. Johnson State Historical Park has a visitor center with exhibits and programs. The park also operates the Sauer-Beckmann living historical farm and provides facilities for outdoor recreation and nature study. The facilities include a swimming pool, tennis courts, a baseball field, hiking trails, and picnic areas.

The Lyndon B. Johnson Library, 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 reflects the rich cultural legacy of German immigrants who first arrived in central Texas in the 1840s. Its many historic structures and German food and festivals perpetuate a European atmosphere. In the Pioneer Museum on Main Street are many artifacts associated with the early days. The Admiral Nimitz Center, housed in one of the most venerable buildings in central Texas, commemorates the life and achievements of World War II Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, whose grandfather was one of the early German settlers.



The LBJ Library in Austin contains a great part of the record of Johnson's 40 years of public life. "It's all here," Johnson said proudly at the dedication, "the story of our time—the story of our time—the story of our time."

Safety

We want your visit to be pleasant and rewarding. Please observe a few safety precautions: ☐ Do not pet or feed the draft animals, climb corral fences, or approach the longhorns. Remain seated on bus tours. ☐ Children under 14 must be accompanied by a responsible adult on buses and in all buildings. ☐ Bus tours may be shortened on days when heat and humidity exceed predetermined comfort levels.

Administration

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park 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.

