

Lyndon B. Johnson

Lyndon B. Johnson
National Historical Park
Texas

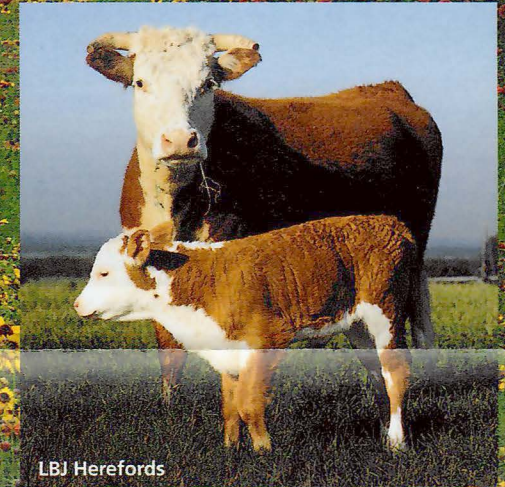
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



The Hill Country of Texas, home of the Johnson family for over a century, is an in-between place. To the east are softer, well-watered lands. To the west stretch high plains, plateaus, and deserts. The Hill Country bears the traits of both regions.



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 A man sometimes withdrawn, in lonely battle with his own blizzards and droughts.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

His presidency came during an era of national stress bred by the Vietnam War and the social upheavals of the sixties. 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 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, a state legislator, taught his children the facts of political life in the tradition of agrarian liberalism. By 1927, when Lyndon left for college, 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 proclaim proudly 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, were the ancestral cemetery, the place where Lyndon was born, the house where he visited his revered grandfather, and the one-room school where he started the long trek from Texas Hill Country boy 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.

Each of us is transformed over the course of a life, every stage revealing a different person—wide-eyed, idealistic, reflective. These images track Lyndon Johnson's passage as the years and the demands of office leave their traces.



As a student (back row, fifth from left) at Johnson City High School



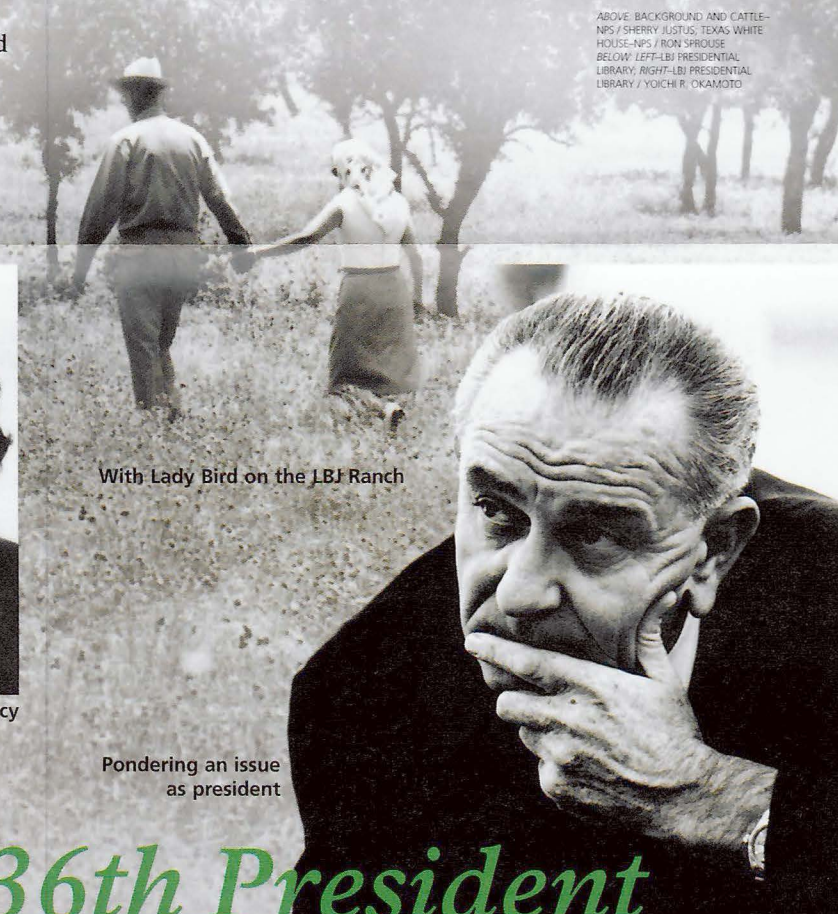
At age five



As a young US representative



With (left to right) Lynda, Luci, and Lady Bird during his presidency



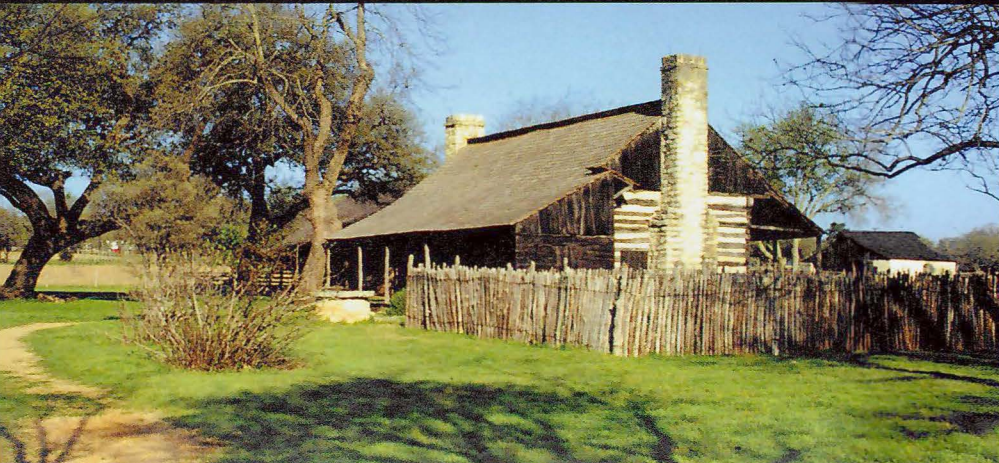
With Lady Bird on the LBJ Ranch

Pondering an issue as president

ABOVE: BACKGROUND AND CATTLE—NPS / SHERRY JUSTUS; TEXAS WHITE HOUSE—NPS / IRON SPINDLE; BELOW: LEFT—LBJ PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY; RIGHT—LBJ PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY / YOUNG R. CHAMBERS

Texas youngster to 36th President

Visiting Lyndon Johnson's Texas



Sam Johnson, Sr.'s log cabin at the Johnson Settlement



President and Mrs. Johnson's gravesites



LEFT AND ABOVE: NPS



LBJ's parents Rebekah Baines Johnson and Sam Ealy Johnson, Jr.; the Boyhood Home in 1915 and today



LEFT: HISTORIC PHOTOS, LBJ PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY ABOVE: NPS / ART MUSE

"All the World is Welcome Here"

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park includes many properties associated with President Johnson's life. The Johnson family's hope was to preserve these properties for visitors from around the world and local communities.

The park's two districts—one in Johnson City and another at the LBJ Ranch near Stonewall—document the origins, ancestry, and life of the 36th President of the United States.

LBJ Ranch

The famous **LBJ Ranch** is about 14 miles west of Johnson City. Visits to the ranch are by self-guiding driving tour. Get a driving permit and tour route map at the LBJ State Park and Historic Site Visitor Center on Highway 290 east of Stonewall. You may purchase an audio tour on CD at the bookstore. On your drive through the ranch you will see sites that help tell Lyndon Johnson's life story.

First is the one-room **Junction School** that Lyndon attended at age four. A quarter of a mile away is the reconstructed **LBJ Birthplace**. Across the road lies the **Johnson Family Cemetery**, where generations of Johnsons are buried, including President Johnson and Lady Bird Johnson. Stop also at the home of **Sam Ealy Johnson, Sr.**, LBJ's

grandfather. At the **Show Barn** visit with staff who manage the ranch and care for the registered Hereford cattle, descendants of LBJ's original herd.

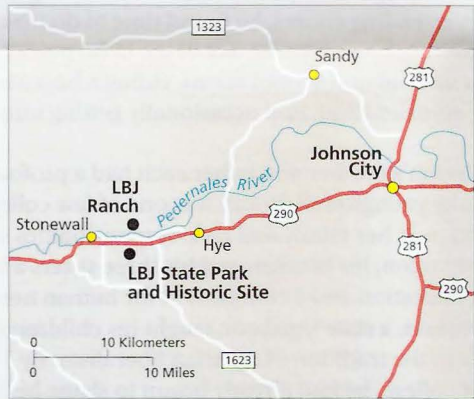
A visit to the ranch isn't complete without visiting the **Texas White House**, where the mat at the front door reads: "All the World Is Welcome Here." Access to the house is by ranger-guided tour only (fee). Tour tickets are sold in the **Airplane hangar** that now serves as the National Historical Park visitor center.

For reservations and information, call 830-868-7128, ext. 231 or visit www.nps.gov/lyjo.

Johnson City

Stop first at the park visitor center for information about the park and to see exhibits and two films: *LBJ the President* and *Lady Bird Johnson*. A sales area offers educational materials. Then walk to Johnson's **Boyhood Home**, where lessons learned by the young Lyndon would impact his presidency.

Walk to the nearby **Johnson Settlement** where restored 1800s structures provide a glimpse of Texas Hill Country history and President Johnson's frontier heritage. An unstaffed exhibit center includes pictures and artifacts. Also within easy walking distance is the **Withers & Spauldings General Store**, where exhibits showcase Johnson City's influence on the budding politician.



Related Sites

LBJ State Park and Historic Site

The park, on the south side of the Pedernales River, is the gateway to the LBJ Ranch. The ranch is on the north side. The park includes the Sauer-Beckmann living history farm, a museum, amphitheater, walking trails, and a wildlife viewing area; and a swimming pool (seasonal), tennis courts, baseball diamond, and other recreational opportunities like fishing and kayaking. The park is on US Highway 290 between Johnson City and Fredericksburg. For reservations and information call 830-644-2252 or visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

LBJ Presidential Library and Museum

The National Archives and Records Administration operates the LBJ Presidential Library on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin. It is both a center of scholarly research and a historical museum. Three floors of exhibits highlight President Johnson's long public career: www.lbjlibrary.org.

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Lady Bird Johnson and actress Helen Hayes founded an organization in 1982 to protect and preserve North America's native plants and natural landscapes. This special place in southeast Austin introduces people to the beauty and diversity of wildflowers and other native plants. The wildflower center brings Mrs. Johnson's vision to life with public gardens, woodlands, and sweeping meadows, and hosts international research: www.wildflower.org.

Nearby Attractions

Pedernales River Nature Park, managed by the Lower Colorado River Authority, is in Johnson City just off US Highway 281 North. The park provides a serene picnicking spot. Other recreational activities include walking, jogging, fishing, and kayaking: www.lcra.org/parks.

Pedernales State Park, Blanco State Park, and Enchanted Rock State Natural Area provide various recreational opportunities and camping: www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

Fredericksburg, west of the park, reflects the rich cultural legacy of the German immigrants who arrived in central Texas in the 1840s. Here is the National Museum of the Pacific War, whose exhibits commemorate the hard-fought Pacific campaigns of World War II and honor the achievements of Fredericksburg native and wartime Pacific Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz.

Luckenbach is a short drive from the LBJ Ranch. An eclectic blend of bikers, cowboys, and tourists enjoy live music events at this popular Hill Country spot.

About Your Visit

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 in all buildings.
- Texas summers are hot; drink plenty of fluids.
- Fire ant stings are painful; stay on marked trails.
- For firearms regulations check the park website.

Emergencies call 911

Accessibility

We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all; call or check our website. Service animals are welcome.

More Information

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, visit www.nps.gov.

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