



LBJ's Texas White House: "Our Heart's Home."

Hal K. Rothman

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If Lyndon Baines Johnson was larger than life, the family ranch with which he identified, which he and Lady Bird fondly called their "heart's home," and which he made the Texas White House during his five years as president, was part of the reason. In this innovative history of the Johnson Ranch, its ethos and operation, Hal K. Rothman has told a story unlike any other in western history. It is a story of national and even international dimensions, yet truly grounded in the Texas earth. It is a story of the relationship between power and place in American culture.

The Johnson Ranch, to which LBJ took foreign dignitaries and national political leaders and to which he himself returned often while in office for renewal and perspective, represented the "real" America to many of its visitors. For many Americans (and perhaps for Johnson himself), the Texas White House evoked the national ethos about rural America and family ties, yet it also had rapid access by jet and the most sophisticated communications system in the world.

In this detailed and engagingly written account of the way the ranch was used during Johnson's years in public office, readers will learn who visited, how they were fed and entertained and how LBJ conducted the nation's business while there. Readers will also get a fascinating interpretation of the role of the ranch in forming Johnson's own self-image, in promoting Johnson and his rags-to-riches story to the voting public, and in offering Johnson in retirement the one thing he truly craved: control. The Johnson Ranch offers a fascinating insight into the meaning of place in American politics and culture.

After the president's death, and in accordance with Johnson's wishes, parts of the ranch were incorporated into the Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park, which now consists of the Boyhood Home in Johnson City, the Birthplace, the Johnson Settlement, and the Texas White House. Through the experiences it represents, which are an integral part of Johnson's legacy, it has become one more way in which this dynamic president has influenced U.S. history.

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