



No Other Place **Your Friends Newsletter**

Dear Friend,

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Message from the Board Chair

This fall newsletter is focused on exciting activities related to the restoration of the Texas White House. I hope you enjoy our articles on the recent groundbreaking ceremony, the award of a National Park Foundation grant to the Friends, and an update on the ongoing Cabinet Oak project to help fund our creation of a new Texas White House Complex visitor experience.

We are committed to supporting the National Park Service (NPS) in this complex project. As LBJ himself said, "There are no problems we cannot solve together, and very few that we can solve by ourselves."

I want to also update you in a few other areas. This summer we reported that Clint Herriman, Supervisory Range Specialist, was to serve as interim Acting Superintendent, for up to 120 days prior to naming the Acting Superintendent. In late August NPS announced that Herbert Young, Chief of Resource Management at Big Bend National Park, will serve in the acting role. We have already had the opportunity to work with Herbert and his NPS experience has been a significant asset during this transition period. NPS has closed the application period for the Acting Superintendent and we eagerly await their decision.

I'm excited to announce that two new members have joined the Friends board. Alisa Sell accepted our invitation to join in August. Alisa brings significant professional and non-profit experience in the areas of board leadership, event management, and fundraising. She also brings an intimate personal history of the ranch and the Johnson family as the daughter of Dale and Jewel Malechek. In addition to having lived on the ranch, her father was LBJ's ranch foreman and her mother served as LBJ's assistant. Alisa lives in Dallas.



Adding to this excitement is the introduction of our newest board member, Tina Melcher. She's an experienced educator, curriculum coordinator, and manager in the area of social studies on the K-12 and higher education level. Tina is skilled in instructional design, curriculum development, public speaking, and teacher training. We're looking forward to having her professional perspective on how we communicate and educate our members and the public about the Park and our mission. Tina lives in Stonewall.

These new members bring our total number of board members to ten. We are actively seeking to increase our board to twelve members and are particularly interested in candidates who have experience and interest in finance, law, and fundraising. If you, or someone you know, has interest in joining us on this journey please contact [Sam Childers](#).

In gratitude,
Terry

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Annual Wreath Laying Ceremony Held

Dozens of friends, colleagues, and family members of President and Mrs. Johnson gathered at the Johnson Family Cemetery on a warm August 27 to commemorate the 115th anniversary of President Johnson's birthday and the 50th anniversary of the annual wreath laying ceremony. Following a reception sponsored by the Friends at the restored birthplace, guests moved across the road to the cemetery for the presentation of the red, white, and blue wreath at President Johnson's gravesite.

Following the presentation of the colors, the national anthem and the playing of "Taps," Ranger Heidi Dietz welcomed the group and introduced Brigadier General Russell Driggers, Commander of Joint Base San Antonio. In his remarks, General Driggers praised President Johnson's commitment to equal rights and the environment and noted that the world continues to struggle with these very relevant issues today.

General Driggers was followed by former Speaker of the Texas House and Lieutenant Governor Ben Barnes. Speaker Barnes recalled the personal side of President Johnson and regaled the assembled group with several humorous anecdotes about his relationship with President Johnson, particularly his work in helping to establish the Lyndon B. Johnson State Park.

The program concluded with the singing of "America the Beautiful."

Please enjoy these photographs from the ceremony.







Friends Awarded Capacity Building Grant

The Friends of Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park were recently awarded a 2023 National Park Foundation Capacity Building Grant for the project, *A Capital Campaign for the Texas White House*. The grant, in the amount of \$45,000, will be directed to the establishment of a capital campaign to raise funds towards the visitor experience and the restoration of the Texas White House complex.

NPF received its highest demand in history for capacity building investments, with requests totaling over \$2 million from 120 organizations. Of those 120 organizations, 35 were selected to receive funding, including the Friends of LBJ National Historical Park. Board chair Terry Casparis, notes that “to be chosen for this grant given the significant competition reflects the importance of our work and the strong partnership we’ve developed with our NPS and NPF partners.”



The need for philanthropic investment and partnerships has never been greater for all national parks. Changing demographics, changing climate, increased visitation, and demand for the many benefits the National Park Service provides are putting pressure on the entire system. Significant increases in federal funding sources are beginning to address deferred maintenance and provide capital infusions. However, significant philanthropic funding is needed to address other critical needs and ensure that national parks can thrive well into the future. The recipe for effective partner organizations includes engaged board leadership, resource management and development, a strong case for support, a clear constituency, and visibility to prospective supporters. It also calls for a close relationship with NPS colleagues and an understanding of the pressures and processes inherent in working to support a large, federal agency.

The Friends were also recently awarded a travel stipend to allow Operations Director Sam Childers to attend the annual Friends Alliance Meeting in Cleveland, OH, in October. At the conference, Childers was able to meet with and discuss plans for the grant with National Park Foundation leaders and engage with other partner groups and NPS leadership. "I feel very fortunate and grateful that the Friends were one of 35 groups selected out of 120 applicants," he said. "This grant will enable us to pursue a capital campaign for the restoration of the Texas White House Complex and enhancing the visitor experience for modern museum visitors."

Groundbreaking Ceremony Marks Start of Texas White House Restoration

On the crisp morning of November 1, Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park staff, National Park Service regional leaders, the Friends of Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park, and Johnson family friends gathered under the Cabinet Oak Tree at the Johnson family home to ceremonially break ground and mark the start of construction of the Texas White House Rehabilitation Project, funded by the Great American Outdoors Act.



After being closed to the public since 2018 due to structural and mold issues, the long-anticipated rehabilitation work on the Texas White House will begin in January. In the five years since its closure, Park staff has conducted numerous environmental and structural investigations, mold remediation, conservation of historical artifacts, and completed a year-and-a-half long design process for the Texas White House and surrounding structures. The restoration will follow Texas Historical Commission standards to ensure compliance with all historical regulatory requirements.

Acting LYJO Superintendent Herbert Young welcomed the guests to the ceremony and introduced Rhonda Brown, the Park Project Manager for the restoration. She expressed what an honor it was for her and the Park staff to be able to care for a presidential home. "The project is not just about rehabilitating buildings and utilities, it's about keeping the story of the 36th President of the United States alive and relevant. It's about re-establishing and sharing with all the world, that sense of place that President Johnson and Lady Bird referred to as their Heart's Home."

NPS Associate Regional Director for Facilities and Lands Aaron Roth, spoke next. "The name of the fund in the Great American Outdoors Act is the Legacy Restoration Fund. That is a fitting name to be talking about here," he said. "We're here in the shadow of a huge legacy—the Johnson family giving us this place for the American people, for everyone to enjoy. What excites me about this project is that legacy restoration."

Friends Board Chair Terry Casparis reflected on the President and Mrs. Johnson's gift to the American people saying, "This house, this ranch, this history truly belong to the people and it is our duty as citizens to remember and repay Lyndon Baines and Claudia Alta "Lady Bird" Johnson for their service to our nation." Editor's note: Please see Terry's full remarks below.

Finally, John Fawbert, General Manager, KOMAN Construction, LLC, recounted his experience of working on important historical structures all over the world. "This is an important project historically," he said. "And with communication and partnerships, it will be successful."

Following the ceremony, guests visited over coffee and cookies followed by a tour of the

first floor of the Texas White House led by the Park's Rhonda Brown and Niki Ryan.

The Texas White House Complex is anticipated to reopen to the public in late 2025, after construction is completed and the buildings can be restaged. Design of an updated Interpretive experience and new exhibits for the Hangar is ongoing and will be incorporated in the future as well.

This project is being funded in part by the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) passed by Congress in 2020 as part of a concerted effort to address the large maintenance backlog in national parks. Supported by revenue from energy development, GAOA's Legacy Restoration Fund provides up to \$1.3 billion per year for five years to make significant enhancements in national parks to ensure their preservation and provide opportunities for recreation, education, and enjoyment for current and future visitors.

The LBJ Ranch tour route will remain open throughout construction; however, fencing will be installed at the TWH Complex for safety purposes to keep visitors from entering the construction zone.

Board Chair Terry Casparis's Remarks at Groundbreaking Ceremony

Editor's Note: Friends Board Chair Terry Casparis made the following remarks at the groundbreaking ceremony.



The Friends of Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park are honored to participate in this historic occasion. All national parks belong to the

people. Congress and the National Park Service have done their part to restore the Texas White House by committing \$10 million for this purpose. The staff of the park have worked diligently and tirelessly to prepare for this moment and to protect the priceless artifacts that the house contains. But this house, this ranch, this history truly belong to the people and it is our duty as citizens to remember and repay Lyndon Baines and Claudia Alta "Lady Bird" Johnson for their service to our nation.

This place represents a different time and a different sense of who Americans are. A time when the priority of public service was to build and preserve democracy – when compromise was a tool of that service and not seen as a sign of weakness – when partisanship could be set aside to do what was right for all Americans and for our world. We remember one of this president's favorite quotes from the bible, "Come, let us reason together" and demand that our leaders remember the power of those words and understand what can be accomplished when we heed them.

LBJ was the greatest master of legislation in American history. We remember the ultimate example of his mastery, the multiple legislative victories that resulted in the Great Society. We wonder if he would be successful in Congress today. But where we find doubt we should also find hope and commitment that all Americans will put pettiness aside and unify with the knowledge that we all have a bit of LBJ and Ladybird inside of us. We honor them by doing our part to help America thrive.

This house represents all of these things and we are excited that it will be restored to its glory. Our help is still needed to raise money for exhibits that will illuminate its history. By remembering what came to be here on the banks of the Pedernales, all the friends of this park will do our part to assure that this story and its lessons will be here for all Americans and for the world.



Debuts at Echo in Blanco

The Friends have partnered with Echo Gallery in Blanco to present “The Cabinet Oak Project Branches Out,” featuring artwork from the Cabinet Oak Project, a juried art show and auction held earlier this year.

The Cabinet Oak Tree, estimated to be 300 years old, lost a large branch several years ago. The Friends staged an art

competition and auction using reclaimed wood from the historic tree.

The artwork in this exhibition was accepted and juried by Katie Robinson Edwards, Executive Director and Curator of the Umlauf Sculpture Garden & Museum. Thirteen highly accomplished artists have donated this work for this show and proceeds from their sales will be used to enhance the visitor experience at the Park and fund a future Artist-In-Residence program.

Echo Gallery in Blanco held its October “Noche en Blanco” (White Night) on Saturday, October 21, with the Cabinet Oak art featured as the centerpiece of the event. Co-hosted by the Friends, the event included art from the Cabinet Oak Project and other artists, brisket sliders and tacos by The Ranch: Burgers and Grill, beer, wine, and a performance by Texas music legend Al Staehele who recently released his latest album, “Somewhere in West Texas.”

Gallery co-owners Linda Haddock and John Sone stated, “It’s is a privilege to host ‘The Cabinet Oak Project Branches Out.’ This was a ‘Noche en Blanco’ to remember.”

If you missed out on owning a piece of Cabinet Oak art earlier this year, this is your opportunity. The artwork will be on display at Echo in Blanco through March 31 of next year.

For more information on the exhibition, please visit Echo’s website [here](#).

Sixty Years Ago, Johnson Family’s Thanksgiving Under Cloud of Grief

Thanksgiving for President Johnson and his family traditionally was spent at the LBJ Ranch in Stonewall. Sixty years ago, however, in the dark days following the assassination of President Kennedy less than a week before, the new first family remained in Washington for the holiday. Mrs. Kennedy had not yet finalized her plans to move from the White House, so the Johnsons quietly celebrated the holiday at The Elms, the Washington home they had purchased after the 1960 election.

The six days leading up to Thanksgiving were traumatic for the country and unimaginably full for the new president and



11A-3-53 November 25, 1963
Pres. Johnson posing for photographers before his speech to the nation.

“President Johnson prepares to deliver a Thanksgiving message to the country on November 28, 1963. Photo Courtesy of LBJ Presidential Library”

his family.

On Monday, the day of President Kennedy's funeral, President and Mrs. Johnson led the country in a day of national mourning. He greeted dozens of foreign leaders assembled for the funeral while monitoring the investigation and was on the telephone constantly.

Following his national security briefing on Thanksgiving morning, President and Mrs. Johnson, along with daughters Lynda and Luci, posed for a photographs in front of the fireplace at The Elms, a spot that the *New York Times* noted, was "central to the parties given by Mrs. Perle Mesta, who owned the house before the Johnsons bought it in 1961." The photographs appeared on the front pages of newspapers across the country on Friday morning. It was the first "introduction" of the new first family to the nation. "I know I'm keeping you all busy," he said to the photographers. "I hope I didn't ruin your Thanksgiving," he added.

The Johnsons then departed the White House for an 11:00 service at the nearby Mount Vernon Place Methodist Church. The press noted that the President wore "a dark grey suit and black tie" and Mrs. Johnson was simply described as "in black." The service was interdenominational, with six Washington congregations joining together: in addition to the Methodist host church, ministers and rabbis from Baptist, Christian, Jewish and Unitarian faiths led the service. After the service, President Johnson said that the service "could not be more fitting. Mrs. Johnson said, "We want you to know that it helped."

After returning to The Elms, the president spent much of the afternoon on the phone, speaking with various congressional leaders and aides and putting the final touches on a televised message of thanksgiving which he delivered that evening from the Oval Office. In the speech, the president said:

"All of us have lived through seven days that none of us will forget. We're not given the divine wisdom to answer why this has been, but we are given the human duty of determining what is to be—what is to be for America, for the world, for the cause we lead, for all of the hopes that live in our hearts. A great leader is dead—a great nation must move on."

Before he concluded his brief remarks, he announced that Cape Canaveral, site of the country's space launches, would thereafter be known as Cape Kennedy.

Following the speech, the president returned to The Elms for a subdued but traditional Thanksgiving dinner consisting of roast turkey with cornbread stuffing, giblet gravy, sweet potatoes, French green beans, cranberries and fruit dessert.

It would be the last Thanksgiving spent in Washington. Each of the following Thanksgivings as president, the Johnsons celebrated the holiday under happier times at their beloved LBJ Ranch.

News From the Park

With the impending closure of the Texas White House Complex on December 20, interns on the Park's interpretation team have been working to shift the focus to other areas of the Ranch in order to interact with visitors and provide them with new activities and interpretation. One of these areas is the Show Barn. The Team has refreshed the space with three new interpretive areas and activities.

One exhibit enables the visitor to learn about the history of cattle branding, and eventually will be able to design their own brand designs. Another displays tools used by President Johnson's ranch hands to care for the cattle, including horn weights. Upgrades to the exhibit include a repainted table and refreshed interpretive text.

The "Simon the Vaquero" is a fun exhibit that shares with visitors the history of cowboys and their origins as vaqueros. Interpretation includes stories of the various pieces of clothing and tools used by our classic vision of a cowboy.

The interpretation team reports that more additions are coming soon. Other sites planned

as sites to engage with visitors include the reconstructed birthplace and the Junction School.



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The park need our support now more than ever! Make a gift, join the Friends for yourself, or give the gift of a sustaining membership. Your generosity supports educational programs, historic preservation, and conservation initiatives throughout the Texas Hill County! Thank you for helping to preserve the Johnson legacy.

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