



# GEORGE W. BUSH CHILDHOOD HOME

## Reconnaissance Survey

Midland, Texas



*Front cover: President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush speak to the media after touring the President's childhood home at 1421 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas, on October 4, 2008. President Bush traveled to attend a Republican fundraiser in the town where he grew up. Photo: SAUL LOEB/AFP/Getty Images*

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*George W. Bush's childhood bedroom at the George W. Bush Childhood Home museum at 1421 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas, 2012. The knotty-pine-paneled bedroom has been restored to appear as it did during the time that the Bush family lived in the home, from 1951 to 1955. George W. Bush was a Cub Scout, and a Cub Scout uniform is displayed on the bed. Photo: Savant Photography, courtesy of the Midland Convention & Visitors Bureau, [www.VisitMidlandTexas.com](http://www.VisitMidlandTexas.com)*



## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

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This reconnaissance survey was prepared by the National Park Service (NPS) at the request of U.S. Representative K. Michael Conaway, who asked the NPS to conduct an assessment of the George W. Bush Childhood Home in Midland, Texas, as a potential new unit of the NPS. Although the NPS cannot initiate comprehensive studies of potential new units of the National Park System, which are known as “special resource studies”, without specific Congressional authorization, Congress does permit the NPS to conduct preliminary resource assessments and gather data on potential study areas or sites. The term “reconnaissance survey” is used to describe this type of assessment. The purpose of this reconnaissance survey is to make a preliminary assessment as to whether the George W. Bush Childhood Home meets NPS criteria for national significance, suitability, feasibility, and need for NPS management, and therefore warrants further study by the NPS. This report and its recommendations will be delivered to the requesting Congressman.

George W. Bush’s childhood home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas, is owned and operated as a museum by the nonprofit organization, George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc. The mission of George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc. is to “express and interpret the history of one of America’s great families by telling the story of the Bush Family and the childhood of George W. Bush in Midland, Texas, and celebrating the lives of two presidents, two governors, and two first ladies.”<sup>1</sup> The



*George W. Bush on a trip with his father to the oil fields, Midland, Texas, ca. 1955. Photo: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum (HS586).*

George W. Bush Childhood Home was listed on the National Register of Historic Places at a national level of significance in 2004 and recorded as a Texas Historical Landmark that same year.<sup>2</sup>

The Bush family and U.S. Representative K. Michael Conaway requested that the NPS conduct a reconnaissance survey to determine if the home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue “should be elevated to national status and become part of the National

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<sup>1</sup> bushchildhoodhome.org

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<sup>2</sup> Dealey Herndon and C. Lynn Smith, “George W. Bush Childhood Home,” National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, 2004.

Park System, Presidential Sites.”<sup>3</sup> According to NPS criteria, national significance is ascribed to buildings “that possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States in history, architecture, archeology, engineering and culture and that possess a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.” In the case of childhood homes of American Presidents, the evaluation includes such factors as length of residency, family memories and sentiments regarding the home, and formative events that took place during the residency that significantly influenced the characteristics and values of the future President.

This reconnaissance survey also assesses the George W. Bush Childhood Home in terms of its suitability, feasibility, and need for NPS

management. To be suitable for inclusion in the National Park System, a property must represent a natural or cultural theme or type of recreational resource that is not already adequately represented in the National Park System or not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by another land-managing entity. To be feasible as a new unit of the National Park System, an area must be of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure long-term protection of the resource and accommodate public use. The site must also have the potential for efficient administration by the NPS at a reasonable cost. NPS criteria also require that a potential new unit must demonstrate need for direct NPS management, and that such management must be clearly superior to other possible options. ☺

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Representative K. Michael Conaway to Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar, August 27, 2012, National Park Service files.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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This reconnaissance survey has determined that the George W. Bush Childhood Home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas, appears to meet NPS criteria for national significance for its strong historical association with the childhood of George W. Bush and because it represents an exceptionally important and formative period in his life. In addition, the house at 1412 West Ohio Avenue appears to meet NPS criteria for suitability, feasibility, and need for NPS management as a new unit of the National Park System.

In terms of national significance, the house at 1412 West Ohio Avenue was the home of two future Presidents – George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush, and one First Lady – Barbara Pierce Bush (wife of George H.W. Bush). George H.W. Bush became the 41st President of United States (1989-1993), and George W. Bush became the 43rd President of the United States (2001-2009). George W. Bush also served as Governor of Texas (1995-2000), and his brother Jeb Bush, who also lived in the West Ohio Avenue home, was Governor of Florida (1999-2007). Although First Lady Laura Welch Bush (wife of George W. Bush) did not live at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, she was a Midland, Texas, native who attended the same junior high school as her future husband.

While living in this small, unpretentious home on West Ohio Avenue, George H.W. Bush launched his successful career



*George W. Bush, 43rd President of the United States, 2004.  
Photo: U.S. Government, Department of Energy*

in the oil and gas industry while his son George W. Bush developed his life-long passion for baseball and acquired many of the core values and principles that would later find expression as “compassionate conservatism” during his Presidency. Here, George W. Bush welcomed the first of his three younger brothers and stood by his parents through the tragic death of his younger sister.

During the childhood of George W. Bush, the Bush family moved a remarkable number of times. During his first 18 years, George W. Bush lived in at least 14 different homes, three different states, and eight different cities. The home on West Ohio Avenue in Midland is the one where George W. Bush lived the longest (four years) during his childhood, and is the home most frequently mentioned in family memoirs. In Midland, George W. Bush developed his personal identity as a Texan and a set of fundamental principles

that helped shape his adult life and his path to the Presidency. “The seeds of that decision, like many others in my life, were planted in the dusty ground beneath the boundless sky of Midland, Texas”he wrote.<sup>4</sup> The building at 1412 West Ohio Avenue also possesses a high degree of physical integrity. The George W. Bush Childhood Home has been restored to the time period of 1951-1955, when it was occupied by the Bush family. To help maintain the historic residential character of the neighborhood, the nonprofit organization also acquired two adjacent homes in 2001; both of these homes were present during the time that the Bush family lived at 1412 West Ohio Avenue. The residence at 400 East Broadway is used by the nonprofit organization for administrative purposes, while the house at 402 East Broadway provides rental income for the museum.

The George W. Bush Childhood Home appears to meet NPS criteria for suitability, feasibility, and need for NPS management. In terms of suitability, the home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue would fill an important

gap in the National Park System with regard to the childhood of President George W. Bush. No unit of the National Park System currently tells the story of the life, career, and presidency of the 43rd President of the United States. And although George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc. has accurately restored the home and made it available for public use, there are unmet needs at the site in terms of interpretive and curatorial staffing and capacity. In terms of feasibility as a unit of the National Park System, the George W. Bush Childhood Home appears to be of sufficient size and configuration to protect key historic resources and public use. In addition, acquisition and operational costs appear to be at reasonable levels.

As such, this reconnaissance survey determines that the George W. Bush Childhood Home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas, appears to meet NPS criteria for national significance, suitability, feasibility, and need for NPS management and that further study through a Congressionally authorized special resource study is warranted. ★

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<sup>4</sup> George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Random House, 2010), 37.



# RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY PROCESS

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Dr. Steven C. Baker, associated with the University of Colorado, Boulder, conducted much of the historical research for this reconnaissance survey of the George W. Bush Childhood Home, in cooperation with the Intermountain Regional Office of the NPS. This research was completed through a task agreement between NPS and the University of Colorado Boulder, under the auspices of the Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU) Cooperative Agreement.

Data collection for this reconnaissance survey included research at Norlin Library (University of Colorado Boulder), Arthur Lakes Library (Colorado School of Mines), Penrose Library (University of Denver), and the NPS Denver Service Center Library in Lakewood, Colorado. Internet sources and databases were also consulted.

Dr. Baker contacted archivists at the George W. Bush and George H.W. Bush presidential libraries. Through consultation, it was determined that no pertinent records were available for review at the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum in Dallas. The George Bush Presidential Library and Museum in College Station, Texas, has exhibits and records related to the family's time in Midland, and NPS staff visited the museum on November 12, 2014. Many of the historic photos in this report are from the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum.

Documentary research was supplemented by a visit by Dr. Baker and NPS historians to the George W. Bush Childhood Home on March 18, 2014. Museum Director Paul St. Hilaire provided a tour of the site. He also



*Location Map*

granted access to documents and pertinent information for this report.

As noted above, the focus of this reconnaissance survey is the George W. Bush Childhood Home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas. NPS evaluations of national significance require consideration of related properties within a specific historic context – in this case, the life and Presidency of America's 43rd President. George W. Bush lived in at least 14 residences as a child, and a dozen homes as an adult, including his time in the Texas Governor's Mansion and the White House. This reconnaissance survey centers on the Bush family private residences in Texas. There are two reasons for this focus. First, George W. Bush's residency outside Texas (excluding his time in the White House) was either brief, or associated with his education at Andover, Yale, and Harvard. Second, President George W. Bush has always stressed the importance of his identity as a Texan. Therefore, as a group, the Texas



*1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas. Photo: George Bush Childhood Home, Inc.*



*1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas, view of east side of building, 2014. The office building of George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc., at 400 East Broadway is be seen in the background, across the street. Photo: National Park Service*

homes most clearly reflect his formative years and maturation.

This report includes reconnaissance-level information on all of George W. Bush's residences, with the exception of his childhood homes in California, where the Bush family lived in four cities in one year (1949-1950), the Texas Governor's Mansion (1995-2000), and the White House (2001-2009). The childhood homes in Midland, Texas, are covered in most detail, but the report also includes information on the Houston, Texas, home where George W. Bush lived for two years with his family

before attending boarding school in Andover, Massachusetts, beginning in 1961. After graduating from Harvard Business School in 1975, Bush returned to Midland, Texas, to begin a career in the oil and gas business. The reconnaissance survey provides information on the Midland homes where he lived during this period, including a residence at 1405 West Golf Course Road, the first home where George and Laura Bush lived after their marriage and where they were living when their twin daughters, Barbara and Jenna, were born in 1981.

While the focus of this survey is the George W. Bush Childhood Home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue in Midland, it should be noted that this reconnaissance survey also indicates that at least one other Bush family home may also meet NPS criteria: Prairie Chapel Ranch near Crawford, Texas, which served as President George W. Bush's "Western White House" during his Presidency, and where he entertained numerous heads of state. However, the Bush family still uses Prairie Chapel Ranch, and has requested that it not be considered for National Park System designation. ★

# NPS CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

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This reconnaissance survey offers a preliminary evaluation of national significance, a necessary step in the consideration of a potential new unit of the National Park System. National significance for cultural resources is evaluated by applying the National Historic Landmark criteria contained in 36 CFR Part 65. National significance is ascribed to districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States in history, architecture, archeology, engineering and culture, and that also possess a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Finally, they must:

1. be associated with events that have made a significant contribution to, and are identified with, or outstandingly represent, the broad national patterns of United States history and from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained; or
2. be associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States; or
3. represent some great idea or ideal of the American people; or
4. embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen exceptionally valuable for the study of a period, style or method of construction, or that represent a significant, distinctive and exceptional entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

5. be composed of integral parts of the environment not sufficiently significant by reason of historical association or artistic merit to warrant individual recognition but collectively compose an entity of exceptional historical or artistic significance, or outstandingly commemorate or illustrate a way of life or culture; or
6. have yielded or may be likely to yield information of major scientific importance by revealing new cultures, or by shedding light upon periods of occupation over large areas of the United States. Such sites are those which have yielded, or which may reasonably be expected to yield, data affecting theories, concepts and ideas to a major degree.

Historical significance for any historic property is determined by placing the resource in an historic context that thematically links the resource to important historic trends. In this way historic contexts provide a framework for determining the significance of a property and its eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and as a National Historic Landmark.

A determination of national significance is further facilitated through the use of theme studies. These studies, sometimes mandated by Congress and other times determined by the NPS and prepared by governmental entities or private organizations in partnership with the academic community, independent scholars or others knowledgeable about the subject, provide national-level historic contexts of important trends in United States history



*Future Presidents George H.W. Bush (1989-1993) and George W. Bush (2001-2009) with their family dog, Mark, on the steps of their home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas, circa 1954. Photo: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum (HS603).*

and comparative analyses of associated properties.

Theme studies are the most effective way of identifying and nominating properties because they provide a comparative analysis of properties associated with a specific area of American history, such as the fur trade, earliest Americans, women's history, Greek Revival architecture, or space exploration, for example.

Many of the theme studies, however, are outdated and fail to reflect contemporary scholarship. Therefore, evaluation of historic properties for national significance often requires that theme studies be supplemented, on a case-by-case basis, by more detailed contextual information.

## **National Historic Landmark Criterion 2**

The George W. Bush Childhood Home's national significance is best evaluated under National Historic Landmark Criterion 2 because that is the criterion that evaluates properties that are "associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States." Mere presence in a home, however, is not enough for national significance. In order to be nationally significant in association with George W. Bush, a property must represent the time period when George W. Bush achieved national significance or reflect a formative period that shaped the future President's national significance.



## NPS Theme Studies on Presidential Sites

The NPS has prepared two National Historic Landmark studies that deal with Presidential sites. The first study, *Presidential Sites: An Inventory of Historic Buildings, Sites, and Memorials Associated with the Former Presidents of the United States* was published in the 1980s.<sup>5</sup> This study is essentially an inventory of sites associated with former Presidents. The report contains a brief description of each site, structure, building or object and its designation (unit of the National Park System, National Historic Landmark, evaluated and eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places at the local or state level, or unevaluated).

The second study, a National Historic Landmark theme study, is more useful for this evaluation. *Historic Places Commemorating the Chief Executives of the United States* was first published in 1977 as *The Presidents: From the Inauguration of George Washington to the Inauguration of Jimmy Carter*. It was updated in 2004 to include all Presidents up to George W. Bush.<sup>6</sup> The theme study includes a historical narrative of the Office of the Presidency and the Presidents, and biographical sketches of each President. Most of the historical sketches describe the Presidents' childhoods and, either implicitly or explicitly, note how their formative experiences influenced their political careers. George W. Bush's biographical sketch is limited to one paragraph and does

not directly address his childhood. The study also includes an inventory of sites associated with the Presidents, many of whom have childhood homes or birthplaces represented. There are no resources listed for George W. Bush, who was still serving as President when the study was updated in 2004.

Further useful guidance is provided by National Historic Landmark evaluations and National Historic Site designations focusing on the childhood homes of Presidents. These studies are particularly useful because they address a core consideration of this reconnaissance survey, which is the relationship between the childhood home of a nationally significant person and their national significance. In other words, they address the individual's history prior to that person achieving national significance. Specifically, the evaluations address the ways in which time in the childhood homes formed the character of the future Presidents. The surveys and nominations of the Ulysses S. Grant Boyhood Home, the Richard M. Nixon Birthplace, the Lyndon B. Johnson Boyhood Home, and the William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace share certain thematic elements that are germane to the evaluation of the George W. Bush childhood home.<sup>7</sup> Length of residency was considered, but not necessarily pivotal to the level of significance. Ulysses S. Grant lived in the Ulysses S. Grant Boyhood Home for 16 years, essentially his entire childhood. Similarly, Lyndon B. Johnson lived in the Lyndon B. Johnson Boyhood Home

<sup>5</sup> National Park Service, "Presidential Sites: An Inventory of Historic Buildings, Sites, and Memorials Associated with the Former Presidents of the United States," accessed August 23, 2013, [http://www.nps.gov/nhl/learn/specialstudies/PresidentialSites\\_ListOfNHLS.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/nhl/learn/specialstudies/PresidentialSites_ListOfNHLS.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> "Historic Places Commemorating the Chief Executives of the United States," last modified February 4, 2004, [http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online\\_books/presidents/index.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/presidents/index.htm).

<sup>7</sup> Edwin C. Bearss, "U.S. Grant Boyhood Home," National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, 1984; John D. McDermott, "Richard M. Nixon Birthplace," National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, 1969; National Park Service, "The Lyndon B. Johnson Boyhood Home," National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, 1966.



from his early childhood (age six) until he graduated from high school. Richard Nixon, by contrast, only lived in the Richard M. Nixon Birthplace for the first nine years of his life. And President Clinton resided in the Hope, Arkansas, house that became the President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace National Historic Site for four years. Length of tenure, therefore, does not necessarily equate to historical importance. The Presidents' own memories of childhood are also considered in varying degrees, especially in the Presidents Clinton,

Nixon and Johnson documentation. Presidents Nixon, Clinton, and Johnson all clearly stated that the time spent in the homes were formative to their future political careers.

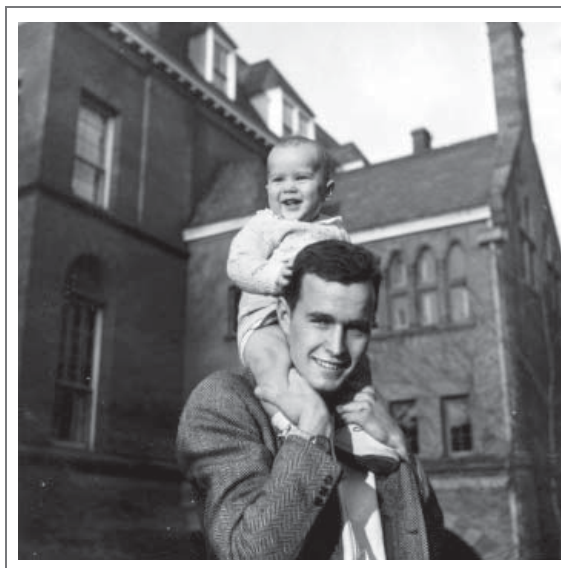
In all cases the homes are placed within the biographical context of the Presidents, though they focus on the childhood and do not address the actual Presidencies in detail. All argue that the Presidents' formative events and experiences while in the childhood homes helped shape their Presidencies. ♀

## GEORGE W. BUSH: A CHILDHOOD IN MIDLAND

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Although born in New Haven, Connecticut, on July 6, 1946, George W. Bush's first childhood memories began in the oil-rich country of West Texas. "My first memories are of Midland," he recounted in his memoirs.<sup>7</sup> In 1948, when he was only two years old, his father, George H.W. Bush, set out for Texas the day after graduating from Yale University. Bush had been offered an entry-level job as an equipment clerk in the Odessa, Texas, warehouse of Dresser Industries (now Halliburton), making \$375 a month.<sup>8</sup> The offer came from Henry Neil Mallon, the company CEO who was a longtime friend and classmate of George H.W. Bush's father, Prescott Bush. Prescott Bush was a prominent business leader who held executive positions in banking and industry. He was also active in the Republican Party and, in 1952, was elected United States Senator from Connecticut.

George H.W. Bush could have remained in Connecticut where his family connections were strong, but he did not. "And one thing was for certain: He would be on his own," George W. Bush wrote of his father. "Prescott Bush and [George H.W. Bush's grandfather] G.H. Walker cast a long shadow, but it didn't reach Odessa, Texas."<sup>9</sup> Barbara Bush told how her husband headed for Odessa, Texas, "in a little, two-door, red Studebaker."<sup>10</sup> She and her son remained behind at G. H. Walker's summer home in Kennebunkport, Maine, until her husband found a place for them



*George W. Bush sits on his father's shoulders in New Haven, Connecticut, April 10, 1947. Photo: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum (H075-03).*

to live.<sup>11</sup> In her memoirs, Barbara Bush remembered that her husband's decision to leave New England and move west came during World War II, while he was serving as a Navy pilot. The decision came after he was shot down by Japanese anti-aircraft fire over the Pacific on September 2, 1944, and rescued from the ocean by a U.S. submarine crew. "He told me he had thought about it a great deal while standing night watch on the submarine deck after being rescued. He had decided he did not want to work with intangibles; he wanted a product he could see and feel. I think that meant he did not want to be in the investment or banking business like so many of his family."<sup>12</sup>

Odessa and nearby Midland, about halfway between Dallas and El Paso, were the principal communities in the semi-arid plains of West Texas when George

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<sup>7</sup> George W. Bush, *A Charge to Keep: My Journey to the White House* (New York: Harper Collins, 1999) 15.

<sup>8</sup> George W. Bush, *41: A Portrait of My Father* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2014), 40

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Barbara Bush, *Barbara Bush: A Memoir* (New York: Scribner, Reprint Edition, 2003), 31.

<sup>11</sup> Bush, *41: A Portrait of My Father*, 42

<sup>12</sup> Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 30.



George W. Bush, wearing cowboy boots, with his mother, Barbara Bush; father, George H.W. Bush; and grandparents, Dorothy and Prescott Bush, in Midland, Texas, March 7, 1949. Photo George Bush Presidential Library and Museum (H076-02).

H.W. Bush arrived in 1948. The towns sit atop the Permian Basin, a geological stratum formed more than 250 million years ago and containing an incredibly rich reservoir of oil and natural gas. The Basin's oil reserves were first commercially developed in the 1920s, then revitalized during World War II. During the 1950s, in a booming post-war America, the Permian Basin accounted for about 20 percent of America's oil production. George W. Bush remembered vividly the West Texas landscape surrounding the two towns. "The ground was flat, dry and dusty. Beneath it sat a sea of oil."<sup>13</sup> His father was intent on tapping into this sea and the newly vibrant oil industry in Texas.

The Bush family moved into a small apartment at 1519 East Seventh Street in Odessa, where, according to George W. Bush, they "shared a bathroom with – depending on whom you ask – either one or two prostitutes."<sup>14</sup> Barbara Bush, who grew up in Rye, New York, recalled her first impressions of the small town. "We stepped off the plane – after a twelve-hour flight in those days – to a whole new and



George W. Bush and friend, Sammy, Odessa, Texas, circa 1948. Photo: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum (HS750).

very hot world. Odessa is flat as a pancake and as different from Rye, New York, as any place imaginable," she wrote. "Nothing comes easy to West Texas. Every tree must be cultivated, and every flower is a joy."<sup>15</sup> Unlike Rye, which is on Long Island Sound and within an easy commute of New York City, Odessa and Midland were a day's drive from any big city and even farther from any large body of water. Even the air was different. One night, Barbara Bush awoke to the smell of gas in their apartment. "Thinking the house was at risk of explosion," wrote George W. Bush, "she grabbed me and hustled me out to the curb. A neighbor who witnessed the evacuation kindly explained that a shift in winds had brought the scent of oil fields wafting in."<sup>16</sup>

Despite his family connections and degree from Yale, George H.W. Bush insisted on learning all aspects of the oil business from the "bottom-up." He was not to be disappointed. His first boss, Bill Nelson, told him he was the "best warehouse-

<sup>13</sup> Bush, *Decision Points*, 5.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 32.

<sup>16</sup> Bush, 41: *A Portrait of My Father*, 44.





Midland, Texas, circa 1959. Photo: George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc.

sweeper-outer he had ever seen.”<sup>17</sup> Although brief, the “blue-collar” job made a lasting impression on the young and aspiring George H.W. Bush, as did the Texas lifestyle in general. “George and I learned a whole new outlook on life,” Barbara Bush recalled. “One day at work a man said to George, ‘Say, you’re a college grad, aren’t you?’ When George told him he had gone to Yale, the man thought a minute and said he’d never heard of it. He mumbled something that sounded like, ‘Too bad.’ George got the distinct impression he felt sorry for him. So much for eastern elitism. It didn’t count much in West Texas.”<sup>18</sup>

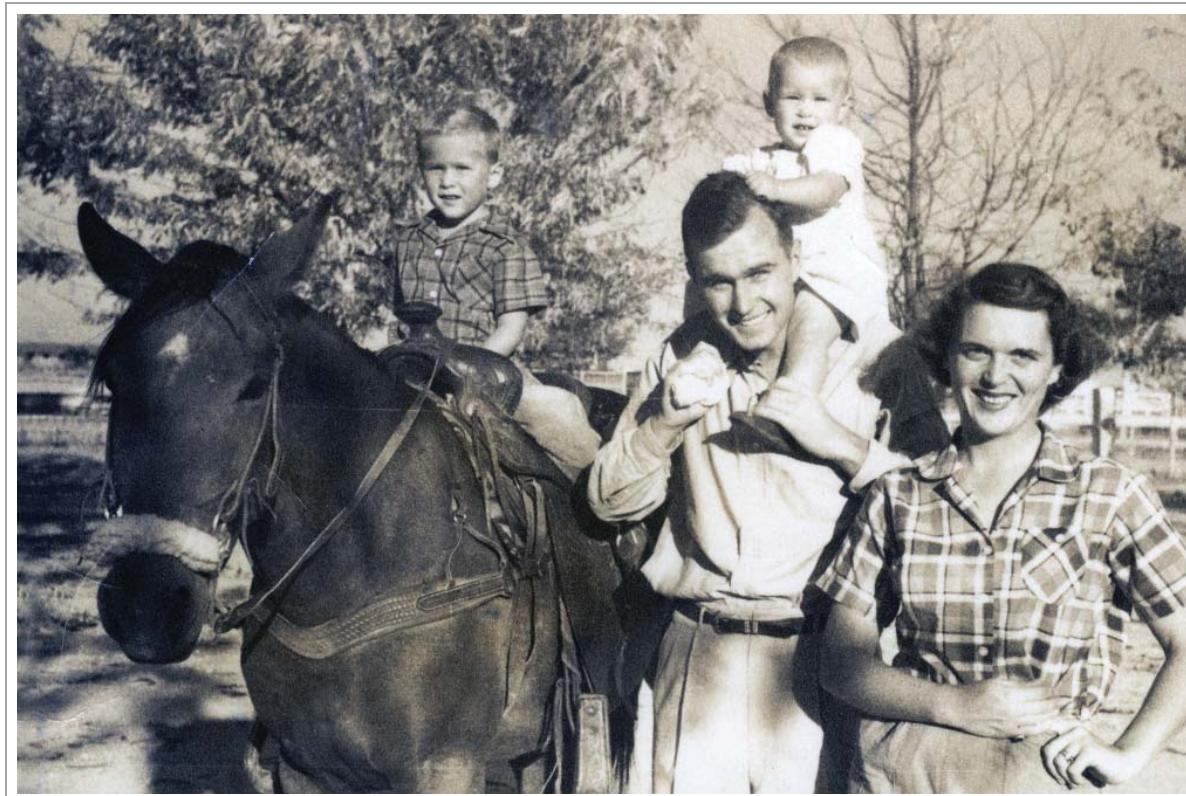
The young Bush family moved around a lot in these years. During their brief stay in Odessa they also lived at 1523 East Seventh Street and 916 East 17th Street. In 1949 George H.W. was transferred to California. Working as a traveling salesman for the Ideco division of Dresser Industries, an oil and natural gas development equipment company,<sup>19</sup> he spent much of his time on the road selling Ideco drill rigs. Within a year’s time, the family lived in Whittier, Ventura, Bakersfield, and Compton, California. While living in Compton in 1949, the Bushes’ daughter Pauline Robinson “Robin” Bush was born.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 31.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>19</sup> The Ideco division specialized in oil drilling equipment.

<sup>20</sup> George Bush and Victor Gold, *Looking Forward* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1987), 56; Ronald Kessler, *A Matter of Character: Inside the White House of George W. Bush* (New York: Sentinel, 2004), 15.



*George H.W. and Barbara Bush with their children, George and Robin, at the rodeo grounds in Midland, Texas, October 1950. Photo: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum (HS1173).*

Still, the Bushes were intent on returning to Texas, where, George H.W. Bush later explained, “the oil boom was on.” Their hopes were fulfilled in 1950 when the elder Bush was transferred to Midland, a town he described as having “the money” in contrast to Odessa, which had “the muscle.” The town’s residents included a large group of mostly college-educated newcomers – engineers, geologists, investors, and speculators – who came in search of their fortunes. So many transplants came from New England that some of Midland’s new neighborhood streets, such as Princeton and Harvard avenues with their new, ranch style homes, were named after the Ivy League schools the residents had only recently left.<sup>21</sup>

Midland, in the 1950s, was the “white-collar” center of a booming economy. Every

major oil company and so many smaller companies and new start-ups had located there that there was not enough office space to go around, and a downtown building boom was in full swing. Moreover, a huge influx of new residents needed homes, fueling a residential construction boom. Midland’s population grew dramatically, from under 25,000 in 1950 to over 60,000 in 1960. Laura Bush’s father, Harold Welch, was an independent contractor who built homes in Midland during this dynamic period. By 1960, Midland was one of the richest communities in the United States, per capita. It counted an estimated 600 millionaires when the average annual income in the United States at the time was \$7,000.<sup>22</sup>

While Midland was somewhat isolated, Laura Bush writes that it was “far from

<sup>21</sup> Bush and Gold, *Looking Forward*, 21, 56; Christopher Anderson, *George and Laura: Portrait of an American Marriage* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), 27-28.

<sup>22</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 47.





*George W. Bush celebrates younger brother Jeb's first birthday in the kitchen of their home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas, February 11, 1954. Photo: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum (HS577).*

a cultural wasteland” in the 1950s. The community had a symphony and a theater that regularly staged musical performances, and people dressed up to go to church or out to a restaurant. But Midland also retained a small town feeling: “It was a place of ice cream sundaes at the Borden dairy and Saturday morning pony rides.” The sky was extraordinary, arcing overhead “in one enormous dome of blistering blue,” Laura Bush wrote. And, with night, came the endless stars and “the piercing call of the train whistles as miles of freight cars rolled past Midland on the rails.”<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, the wind and the sand were relentless. During the 1950s, Texas was experiencing the worst drought since the Dust Bowl years. All through the decade, Laura Bush remembered, “Acres of rough, reddish sand would blow straight down into Midland, riding in thick swirls on the wind. People latched their windows tight, not to keep out

the heat or the desert cold, but to hold back the billowing sand.”<sup>24</sup>

George H.W. Bush continued working for Ideco as a local salesman after the family arrived in Midland in 1950. The Bushes briefly stayed in George’s Courts, a motel on Main Street, then purchased a small home for just under \$8,000. The house, at 405 East Maple Street, was in a brand new suburban development in the Loma Linda subdivision. Built by an Arizona company, the subdivision was the first post-war suburb built in Midland. The Bush house, like most of the homes, was rather small at 840 square feet. Each home in the development, except for color and orientation on the lots, was quite similar. Local residents called the neighborhood “Easter Egg Row” because all the homes were brightly painted in different colors. The Bush family home was light blue.<sup>25</sup>

The neighborhood was close-knit. George H.W. Bush describes weekly neighborhood gatherings on Easter Egg Row as “straight out of Norman Rockwell: kids playing, dogs barking, and . . . either a touch football or softball game to round out the festivities.” This sociability extended into the community where the Bushes found time for community service and grassroots political organizing. George H.W. Bush assisted in Republican campaigns in Midland and Odessa, but his political career would not begin in earnest until he left Midland for Houston.<sup>26</sup>

About this time George H.W. Bush decided to strike out on his own and start his own company. He went into business with his neighbor across the street, John

<sup>23</sup> Laura Welch Bush, *Spoken From the Heart* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 16, 44.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>25</sup> Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 37; Bush and Gold, *Looking Forward*, 58.

<sup>26</sup> Bush and Gold, *Looking Forward*, 59; Anderson, *George and Laura*, 28-29; Jacob Weisberg, *The Bush Tragedy* (New York: Random House, 2008), 43.



*George W. Bush, age 8, as a Central Midland Cub Little Leaguer, 1954. Photo: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum (HS482).*

Overbey. Educated as a lawyer, Overbey was the son of an oil field worker and had extensive field experience in his own right. In Midland, Overbey worked as an independent operator trading oil leases and royalties. Bush brought an equal measure of financial connections and sales experience to the partnership. The two friends named their new company the Bush-Overbey Oil Development Company, Inc.<sup>27</sup>

In November of 1951, the Bush family moved into a larger house for their growing family. Located at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, the new home was nearly twice as large as the one on Easter Egg Row. George W. Bush was five years old, and Robin was two. Their younger brother John Ellis “Jeb” Bush



*George W. Bush and dog, Mark, at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas, February 11, 1954. Photo: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum (HS576).*

was born in 1953, while the family lived in the home.

The oil business proved a good fit for George H.W. Bush. He and Overbey expanded their operations in 1953 when they joined forces with the Liedtke brothers, the sons of the chief counsel for Gulf Oil. The four men formed Zapata Petroleum and decided to gamble \$800,000 on one tract of land. Hugh Liedtke was convinced that vast oil deposits were located under a section of dry soil known as the West Jameson Field, about 70 miles east of Midland. They spent all their money drilling the area, and every hole they drilled produced oil. By the end of the year Zapata Petroleum was operating 71 wells producing more than 1,200 barrels of oil per day. The lease eventually yielded 127 producing wells, making George H.W. Bush a millionaire before he was 30 years old.<sup>28</sup>

Midland left a deep and lasting imprint on George H.W. Bush’s son George W.

<sup>27</sup> Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 38.

<sup>28</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 33; Weisberg, *The Bush Tragedy*, 34.

Bush. Years later, when campaigning for the presidency, whenever George W. Bush referenced the “American Dream,” it was Midland that he had in mind. Among other things, his lifelong passion with baseball began on the windy and dusty sandlots of Midland. “My friends and I would play baseball for hours, hitting each other grounders and fly balls until Mother called over the fence in our yard to come in for dinner,” he recalled later in life. His favorite team was the New York Giants. “To this day,” George W. Bush recounted in his autobiography, “I can recite the starting lineup of the 1954 Giants team. Willie Mays was my hero.”<sup>29</sup> His father, who had been an outstanding player and captained the baseball teams at Andover and Yale, often “came out to play.” One of the proudest moments of George W. Bush’s childhood came when his father fired a fastball, which he snagged with his mitt. “Son, you’ve arrived,” his father said. “I can throw it to you as hard as I want.”<sup>30</sup> When George W. Bush was running for President and an interviewer asked him about his fondest childhood memory, he did not hesitate with an answer: “Little League baseball in Midland,” he replied. He played for the Central Midland Cubs, and his father managed the Little League team. A former teacher at George W. Bush’s elementary school recalled how he was always ready to play baseball and, mitt in hand, organized games at recess.<sup>31</sup> Although never making it to the “Big Leagues,” George W. Bush’s passion for the game continued well into adult life. In April of 1989, he purchased a share in the Texas Rangers baseball franchise, serving as managing partner for five years. “Owning a major League



*George W. Bush, in his Cub Scout uniform, in front of 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas, Spring 1954. Photo: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum (HS579).*



*Cub Scout pack with George W. Bush, far right, circa 1954. Photo: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum.*

Baseball team was a-dream-come-true,” he later stated.<sup>32</sup>

George W. Bush attributed some of his later success in business and politics to his years playing baseball as a child in Midland. “To come to the ballpark every day, you have to believe you can win. Baseball is a pursuit for optimists, just like drilling for oil or running

<sup>29</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 18.

<sup>30</sup> Bush, *Decision Points*, 6.

<sup>31</sup> Carl M. Cannon, ed., “American President: George Walker Bush,” The Miller Center, Charlottesville, Va. <<http://millercenter.org/president/gwbush/essays/biography/2>>

<sup>32</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 201.





Robin and George W. Bush, sitting on the front porch of their home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas, Easter Sunday, 1953. The Bush family moved into the house in November 1951, when George W. Bush was five years old, and Robin was two. Photo: George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc. (HS605)

for office. . . To run for office, especially after losing, you have to believe you can win.”<sup>33</sup>

George W. Bush acquired other lifetime interests and values while growing up in Midland. The family regularly attended the First Presbyterian Church, where both parents taught Sunday school. Also on the weekends, George H.W. Bush often took his son out to the oil fields surrounding Midland. “Those trips helped spark an interest in the oil business that I would later pursue by becoming an independent oil man in the mid-1970s,” recalled George W. Bush.<sup>34</sup>

It was while living at the 1412 West Ohio Avenue house that George W. Bush became a member of the Cub Scouts, for which Barbara Bush served as den mother, and the Roy Rogers Riders’ Club.<sup>35</sup> The clubs taught traditional values and mores that resonated with the future President, including honesty, compassion, hard work, patriotism, and

an appreciation for faith, family, and friendship. George W. Bush felt surrounded by these values in Midland. “Midland was a small town, with small town values,” he later stated. “We learned to respect our elders, to do what they said, and to be good neighbors.” It was, he said, a town where people regularly went to church and where children felt safe to walk to school or ride their bike downtown to take in a movie. “Texas is a place where people hold fast to basic values,” he wrote. “Give an honest day’s work for an honest day’s wages; don’t lie, cheat or steal, respect others, respect their property, and respect their opinions.”<sup>36</sup>

An important moral lesson was learned when George W. Bush was six years old, and went with some friends to the Midland general store. A jar of plastic toy soldiers on the shelf proved irresistible to the youngster, and he pocketed them and walked out of the store without paying. That afternoon, when his father saw him playing with the toy soldiers, he asked where they came from. “After a little soul-searching, I confessed,” recalled George W. Bush. His father then drove him back to the store, and ordered him to return the toy soldiers and apologize to the store manager. “When I got in the car, Dad didn’t say another word. He knew he had made his point.”<sup>37</sup>

His parents and neighbors also emphasized the importance of education. “Texas is a place where most people know they can improve their lives through hard work and education,” George W. Bush wrote in his autobiographical *A Charge to Keep*. “Our homework and schoolwork were important,” and parents and their neighbors sought “to attract the best teachers to our schools.” In many ways, the education of George W. Bush followed closely that of

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>34</sup> Bush, 41: *A Portrait of My Father*, 49.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>36</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 10, 18.

<sup>37</sup> Bush, 41: *A Portrait of My Father*, 51.

his father. Like his father, George W. Bush attended the Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, and after graduation was accepted into Yale University. He carried a passion for education with him to the Governor's Mansion in Austin, Texas, and later to the White House. As Governor of Texas, believing that new educational standards were needed in order to "make public education work for our kids and their parents," Bush made reading a top priority.<sup>38</sup> As President, he successfully pushed for passage of the No Child Left Behind Act, which set standards and benchmarks for proficiency. The standardization required by the No Child Left Behind Act, he believed, would ensure that all children received the help they needed. It was an essential part of his "compassionate conservatism," in which he "hoped to restore [to America] the kind of small town goodness he had experienced growing up in Midland."<sup>39</sup>

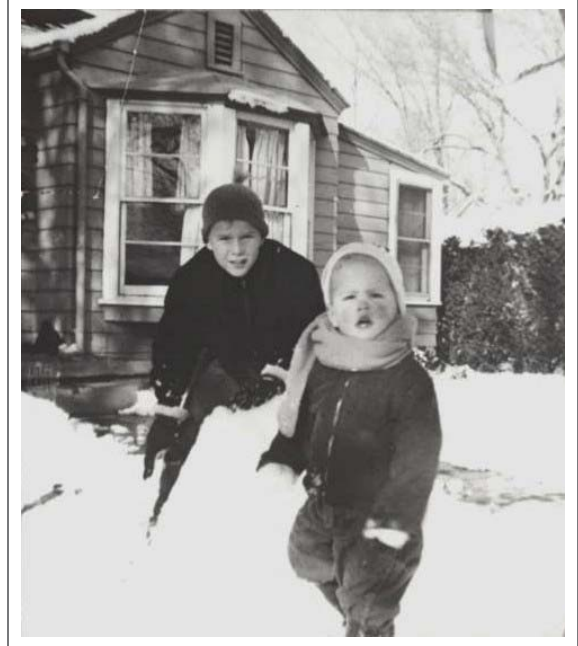
The happy life in Midland was not immune from sorrow. When Jeb Bush was only a few weeks old, sister Robin woke up in March of 1953 complaining that she was too tired to get out of bed. A trip to the pediatrician's office brought terrible news: Robin had advanced-stage leukemia. The doctor, predicting that Robin had only weeks to live, told the Bushes to "forget that [she] was sick, make her as comfortable [as possible], love her – and let her gently slip away."<sup>40</sup> Barbara and George H.W. Bush had never even heard of leukemia. Believing the doctor "just had to be wrong," they were determined "to do everything we could to save our beautiful child."<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 18, 30.

<sup>39</sup> Dan P. McAdams, *George W. Bush and the Redemptive Dream: A Psychological Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9.

<sup>40</sup> Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 39-40.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.



*George W. Bush and Jeb Bush playing in the snow in the front yard of 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas, February 1955. Photo: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum (HS616).*

The day after Robin's diagnosis, George H.W. and Barbara, with their daughter, boarded an airplane for New York City, where George H.W.'s uncle, Dr. John Walker, was the director of Memorial Sloan Kettering Hospital, the premier cancer center in the nation at the time. When tests confirmed Robin's grave condition, she was immediately admitted to the hospital and put on medication. Barbara and George moved into his grandparents' New York City apartment, where they resided on and off for the next seven months until Robin passed away. During this time, the parents of George H.W. Bush sent a trusted family nurse down to Midland, Texas to care for the boys.

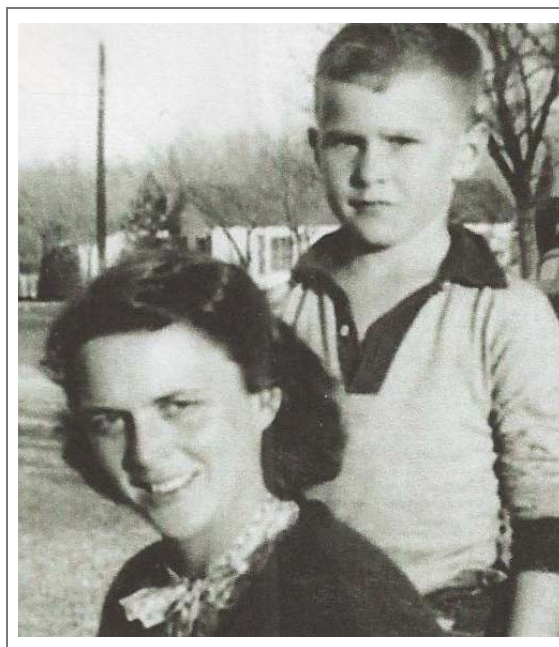
The ordeal was devastating. A few months after Robin's diagnosis, George H.W. Bush wrote to his long-time friend Thomas "Lud" Ashley that he had "stopped asking 'why' [Robin became ill]," and that while a few "tougher days will probably lie ahead. . .



I don't believe many will be rougher than those first couple of weeks." There was apparently a glimmer of hope in August 1953 when Bush optimistically wrote in a letter to another friend, Fitzgerald Bemiss, that "Robin is . . . making headway, or at least has not lost ground," and that "[she] will [hopefully] come back to Texas in the next couple of days." At the same time he understood the gravity of Robin's condition by "[hoping] that she will have many more months of active life." Sadly, this was not the case. Robin Bush died at Sloan Kettering Hospital on Columbus Day 1953, with her parents at her side.<sup>42</sup>

George W. Bush knew his sister was sick, but did not realize that she was dying. His parents, partly on the advice of doctors, kept the fact that Robin had leukemia a secret from her older brother. Returning from New York, George H.W. and Barbara flew to Midland and drove directly to George W. Bush's elementary school to take him home and let him know that "Robin wasn't coming home." "To this day," George W. Bush wrote, "I am certain I saw her, her small head rising barely above the backseat of my parent's green Oldsmobile as it drove up in front of Sam Houston Elementary School. . . I got to the car, still certain Robin was there, but of course, she was not." Her death stunned and saddened the seven-year-old. Years later, the tragedy remained "the starkest memory of my childhood, a sharp pain in the midst of an otherwise happy blur." He suffered from nightmares for years after Robin's death.<sup>43</sup>

Barbara Bush was devastated by Robin's death. "I fell apart time after time during the next six months," she remembered,



Barbara and George W. Bush at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas, Spring 1954. Photo: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum (HS676).

"and George [H.W. Bush] would put me together again."<sup>44</sup> "At 28 years old, her dark brown hair started to turn white," recalled George W. Bush.<sup>45</sup> Young George also tried to console his mother. While his father was away on business, he recalled, "I spent almost all my time at her side, showering her with affection and trying to cheer her up with jokes." One day, Barbara Bush overheard her son talking to a neighborhood friend who was asking him to come over to play. George replied that he wanted to, but couldn't leave his mother because she needed him. "That started my cure," Barbara wrote. "I realized I was too much of a burden for a little seven-year-old boy to carry."<sup>46</sup> Even though George was exceedingly helpful to his mother at home during this time, his rambunctiousness could irritate his father, who wrote: "Georgie aggravates the hell out of me at times (I am sure I do the same to him), but

<sup>42</sup>Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 40, 46-47; Bush, *All the Best, George Bush: My Life in Letters and Writings* (New York: Touchstone, 1999), 76.

<sup>43</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 14; McAdams, *George W. Bush and the Redemptive Dream*, 61-62.

<sup>44</sup> Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 45.

<sup>45</sup> Bush, *41: A Portrait of My Father*, 56.

<sup>46</sup> Bush, *Decision Points*, 7; Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 46.



Bottom to top: George W. Bush, Dick Sears, Mike Proctor, Fred Frawley and Steve Light of Den 5 Pack 7 of the Cub Scouts, at 1412 West Ohio Avenue. Jeb Bush is on the left. 1954. Photo: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum (HS598)

then at times I am so proud of him I could die.”<sup>47</sup>

Robin’s death brought mother and son closer. George W. Bush discovered that they shared much in common. “We like to needle to show affection, and sometimes to make a point,” he said. “We both have tempers that can flare rapidly. And we can be blunt, a trait that gets us in trouble from time to time.” During his gubernatorial campaign, he told people that he had his “daddy’s eyes and my mother’s mouth. I said it to get a laugh, but it was true.”<sup>48</sup>

The Bush family moved into their last Midland home in 1955 when George W. Bush was nine years old. Located in Midland’s most exclusive neighborhood, the new home was a testament to George H.W. Bush’s success. The house at 2703 Sentinel Drive was a 3,000-square-foot brick ranch with a swimming pool and two-car

garage, both rare architectural attributes in 1950s Midland. The home backed up to a park where George W. Bush spent countless hours playing baseball and recreating.

He also entered seventh grade at San Jacinto Middle School. Laura Welch, his future wife, attended the school at the same time, but the two never met. While living in the house on Sentinel Drive, Barbara and George H.W. Bush had two more sons: Neil Mallon Bush, born in January 1955, and Marvin Pierce Bush, born in October 1956. Their youngest child, Dorothy “Doro” Bush, was born after the family moved 550 miles to Houston in 1959.

George W. Bush was 13 years old when the family moved to Houston to be closer to the Gulf of Mexico where his father would manage Zapata’s new offshore oil venture.<sup>49</sup> The family experienced mixed emotions as they left Midland. “My life changed after the seventh grade, when our family moved from Midland to Houston,” George W. Bush wrote. The small town boy was now living in a city of nearly one million residents, and the climate was dramatically different. The new house “was in a lush, wooded area that was often pelted by rainstorms,” he recalled, “the exact opposite of Midland.”<sup>50</sup> “It felt like living in a tropical jungle compared to our time in Midland,” George wrote.<sup>51</sup> However, he soon made a new set of friends and found himself learning to play golf. The move was more difficult for Barbara Bush, who told of having “a sinking feeling” when her husband suggested the move to Houston. “I loved Midland and our friends and did not want to leave that cocoon of warmth and love,” she writes in her memoir. Even after the move, she “awakened several

<sup>47</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 44-45; Bush, *All The Best*, 79.

<sup>48</sup> Bush, *Decision Points*, 7.

<sup>49</sup> Bush, 41: *A Portrait of My Father*, 63-64.

<sup>50</sup> Bush, *Decision Points*, 11

<sup>51</sup> Bush, 41: *A Portrait of My Father*, 65.

times feeling almost nauseated over leaving Midland.”<sup>52</sup>

Unsettling as the move to Houston was for Barbara Bush and her 13-year-old son, it represented a progression in the life of George H.W. Bush, who would begin his political career there. The family lived at 5525 Briar Street, a custom home designed by George H.W. Bush himself. Everything about the new house and its one-acre lot was bigger than any of the Bush homes in Midland. The house had two stories instead of one, and the backyard was big enough for a baseball diamond. It was a fitting residence for a man who had found success in the oil industry.<sup>53</sup> The larger house easily accommodated a new child, Dorothy Walker Bush, who was born on August 18, 1959.

For George W. Bush, the move to Houston represented more than a shift from a small town to a big city. Now, for the first time, he entered a private school, Kinkaid, one of the most prestigious private schools in Houston. Classes were held at the school’s new 40-acre campus in the city’s Piney Point Village neighborhood.

George W. Bush spent only two years at Kinkaid – his eighth- and ninth-grade years – before his parents decided that he should enroll at Phillips Academy, a boarding school in Andover, Massachusetts, that his father had attended.<sup>54</sup> The school, established in 1778 and typically called Andover, is one of the most prestigious private residential schools in the United States.

George W. Bush began his academic career at Andover in the fall of 1961. His initial impressions of the school were not sanguine. He described the place as “cold

and distant and difficult.” He settled in, however, and quickly became one of the more popular students.<sup>55</sup> Bush attended Andover through his graduation from high school in 1964. He continued to follow his father’s educational path by enrolling at Yale University the following fall. Majoring in history, he graduated in 1968. During these years, from 1961 until 1968, when he was between the ages of 15 and 21, George W. Bush spent his holidays and summers in Houston and the rest of his time in New England.

During his senior year at Yale, George W. Bush faced a decision point in his life. The war in Vietnam had escalated, and President Lyndon Johnson had instituted a draft. Bush, whose father was a decorated World War II hero, remembered being faced with two choices: “join the military or find a way to escape the draft.” The decision was made quickly. “I was going to serve,” he later wrote. “I would have been ashamed to avoid duty.”<sup>56</sup> Just before graduation he enlisted in the 147th fighter group of the Texas Air National Guard. His commitment required two years of active duty and four years of reserve duty. He went through basic training and more than a year and a half of flight training. He felt proud when his father was invited to “pin on my wings.”<sup>57</sup> With his active duty commitment completed, George W. Bush met his reserve obligation and was honorably discharged from the Texas Air National Guard on October 1, 1973, and from the Air Force Reserves in November 1974.

From the summer of 1968 until the fall of 1973, Bush lived in an apartment building called Chateaux Dijon, a 400-unit apartment complex in Houston’s Galleria District that was marketed to the city’s

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<sup>52</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 18-19; Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 52-53.

<sup>53</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 47

<sup>54</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 19.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., Kessler, *A Matter of Character*, 18.

<sup>56</sup> Bush, *Decision Points*, 16.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 17.





*George W. Bush campaigning for Congress with his wife, Laura, 1978. Photo: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum (HS373)*

single young men and women. Ironically, Laura Welch, who would marry the future President less than ten years later, also lived at Chateaux Dijon. But once again, their paths did not cross.<sup>58</sup>

George W. Bush returned to New England in 1973 to enter Harvard Business School, where he earned a Master's degree in business administration (MBA) in 1975. After finishing his studies in Massachusetts he decided to return to Texas. Rather than return to Houston, he moved to Midland, essentially retracing his father's footsteps into the Permian Basin oil industry.

When he moved back to Midland, Bush rented space in a gray brick bungalow at 2006 Harvard Avenue and went to work for independent operators as an oil landman, scouring public records for mineral rights. Bush had \$15,000 left from a college fund set up by his parents and decided to begin investing in drilling prospects. His timing was fortuitous. The 1973 Arab oil embargo had sent the cost of oil skyrocketing; its price soared 800 percent from 1973

to 1981. George W. Bush, however, met with less immediate success than had his father. His first prospect oil well turned out to be a dry hole. His second prospect, while not spectacular, proved to be a bit more productive. The profits facilitated Bush's entry into politics and his first bona fide business venture, Arbusto Energy, a company established to invest and trade oil and mineral royalties.<sup>59</sup>

George W. Bush also followed his father into politics. The elder Bush had been elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1966 from Texas' 7th Congressional District, but lost his bid in 1970 for a Texas seat in the United States Senate. By 1977, George H.W. Bush had served as ambassador to the United Nations, chairman of the Republican National Committee, U.S. Liaison in Beijing (then Peking), and director of the Central Intelligence Agency. That year of 1977, George Mahon, the incumbent congressman from West Texas's 19th District, announced his retirement, and George W. Bush decided to run for his seat in

<sup>58</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 97-98; Bush, *Spoken From the Heart*, 90.

<sup>59</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 62; Weisberg, *The Bush Tragedy*, 49; Kessler, *A Matter of Character*, 40-41.



Left to right: President George H.W. Bush, baseball broadcaster Joe Morgan, and George W. Bush, who was then general managing partner of the Texas Rangers, in the locker room at the Texas Rangers v. Milwaukee Brewers baseball game in Dallas, Texas, April 8, 1991. Photo: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum (P20674-12)

the House of Representatives. Bush was not inexperienced in politics. He had worked on three of his father's campaigns, as well as on the Republican Senate campaigns of Edward J. Gurney (Florida) and Winton Blount (Alabama). His father played no active role in his campaign for Congress. Running as a moderate Republican, Bush won the primary but lost the election in 1978. Texas was still a traditionally Democratic state in the 1970s, and his opponent characterized him as out of touch with rural Texas.<sup>60</sup>

That summer of 1977, when Bush decided to run for Congress, he also met Laura Welch, a librarian, at a backyard barbeque in Midland. By September they were engaged. "We had been dating only six or

seven weeks but our childhoods overlapped so completely and our worlds were so intertwined, it was as if we had known each other our whole lives," she wrote in her autobiography. That November they were married. "I loved how he made me laugh and his steadfastness," she wrote.<sup>61</sup>

After a brief honeymoon, the newlyweds settled into a house George had purchased at 1405 West Golf Course Road in Midland. Four years after their marriage, George and Laura welcomed twin daughters Jenna and Barbara into their home.<sup>62</sup> The family remained in this house until 1985, and then moved to their final Midland residence at 910 Harvard Avenue.

<sup>60</sup> Weisberg, *The Bush Tragedy*, 51; Kessler, *A Matter of Character*, 42-43

<sup>61</sup> Bush, *Spoken From the Heart*, 95.

<sup>62</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 126.



George W. Bush continued investing time and money in Arbusto Energy and, by 1979, his investments were showing solid returns. Indeed, the next two years were marked by steady growth. By 1981, the company had raised and invested \$3 million. After taking the company public in 1982, Bush decided to sell his shares of stock and use the money to start a “full-blown operating company” called Bush Exploration. In 1984, Bush Exploration merged with another energy development company, Spectrum 7, with Bush serving as chief executive officer. Two years later, Spectrum 7 was acquired by Harken Energy. George W. Bush would serve on the company’s board of directors as a consultant to the company.<sup>63</sup> The acquisition by Harken Energy marked another turning point in the life of George W. Bush. “My days of day-to-day management in the energy business were behind me,” he later recalled.<sup>64</sup> His focus now shifted to politics.

The Bush family moved to Washington, D.C., in 1988 so George W. Bush could assist in his father’s successful Presidential campaign, but their stay was brief. George and Laura Bush and their two daughters returned to Texas in 1989 and moved into a roughly 4,000-square-foot home at 6029 Northwood Road in Dallas’s Preston Hollow neighborhood. Daughters Jenna and Barbara attended public school for a short time before enrolling in Hockaday School, a private school in Dallas.<sup>65</sup>

That same year, George W. Bush pulled together a group of friends and investors to purchase the Texas Rangers baseball team for \$80 million. “Buying the baseball team was a financial risk for me,” he recalled. “I put \$600,000 – almost a third of my entire net worth – into a team that had a twenty-

five-year losing streak. . . .” On the other hand,” he continued, “owning a Major League Baseball team was a dream come true.”<sup>66</sup> Bush would serve as the general managing partner of the Texas Rangers for five years. With his partner Rusty Rose, Bush developed a new business plan for the struggling franchise, while leaving player personnel to “baseball people.” Bush quickly became the public face of the franchise while spearheading the financial campaign to construct a badly needed new stadium. “I signed thousands of autographs, brought guests to the ballpark, and sat in the seats with the fans every night,” he recalled.<sup>67</sup>

Partly at the insistence of his advisors, including Karl Rove, George W. Bush entered the political arena as a candidate again in 1994. He entered the Texas governor’s race against incumbent Democrat Ann Richards, and was not expected to win. The campaign was difficult and divisive, but Bush won with 54 percent of the popular vote to Richards’s 45 percent.

The election victory was a turning point in Bush’s life. He sold the family home in Dallas, moved to the Governor’s Mansion in Austin, and onto the national political stage. Bush was almost immediately courted as a potential Presidential candidate, speculation that only became stronger when he won re-election as Governor in 1998 by a huge margin, garnering 69 percent of the popular vote.<sup>68</sup>

George W. Bush entered the United States Presidential race in June 1999, less than a year after his re-election as Texas Governor. He campaigned as a centrist. He promised to bring integrity to the White House,

<sup>63</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 63.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>65</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 159.

<sup>66</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 201.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 202-203.

<sup>68</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 179; Kessler, *A Matter of Character*, 55.

security to America, and opportunity to all Americans. He won the 2000 election by a slim margin, prevailing in the Electoral College but losing the popular vote. Bush won re-election in 2004, including both the popular and Electoral College vote.

In 1998, shortly before entering the race for the Presidency, Bush purchased the 1,600-acre Prairie Chapel Ranch near Crawford, Texas. The Bushes had previously owned a vacation home and guest cottage at Rainbo Lake, a private fishing retreat near the town of Athens in East Texas, where they purchased a membership in 1991. They sold the Rainbo Lake house and guest cottage in 2000.

The Prairie Chapel Ranch is about two hours from the state capital at Austin. Originally a farm and owned by the same family since the mid-1800s, the ranch was being used to run cattle when the Bushes purchased it. George W. Bush had no intention of ranching himself and allowed the former owners to raise cattle on his property. George W. Bush and Laura envisioned the ranch as a refuge from the stress of political office and campaigning. It was also a place where the Bushes felt they could “grow old.”<sup>69</sup>

When George W. Bush and Laura decided to build a new house on the property, they hired architect David Heymann to design it. Heymann, an architecture professor at the University of Texas at Austin, specializes in designs that incorporate built and natural landscapes.<sup>70</sup> The three-bedroom, 4,000-square-foot house is constructed of native limestone and incorporates large windows so the Bushes could enjoy some of the most picturesque views at the ranch. The windows also allow ample natural light

to filter into the home. An underground geothermal system provides heat and air conditioning, while rainwater and gray water are collected and diverted to the ranch’s irrigation system.<sup>71</sup> The ranch also features a swimming pool, garage, guest house, and ten-acre, manmade fishing pond.

The Crawford ranch became known as Bush’s “Western White House” while he was President. Often accompanied by members of his Cabinet, Bush spent about 70 weeks at the ranch between 2001 and 2008. The President also hosted several world leaders and dignitaries there, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Saudi King Abdullah, Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Jun’ichirō, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, Mexican President Vicente Fox, Spanish King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

In 2008, George W. Bush and Laura Bush purchased another home at 10141 Daria Place in Dallas’s Preston Hollow neighborhood, not far from the home they owned from 1989 to 1994 on Northwood Road. They moved into the house at the conclusion of his Presidency and currently split their time between their Daria Place home in Dallas and the Prairie Chapel Ranch near Crawford, Texas. ☼

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<sup>69</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 203, 205; Bush, *Spoken From the Heart*, 429-430.

<sup>70</sup> “David Heymann,” University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture <http://soa.utexas.edu/people/profile/heyman>.

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<sup>71</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 205.

## SUITABILITY

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To be suitable for inclusion in the National Park System, an area must represent a natural or cultural theme or type of recreational resource that is not already adequately represented in the National Park System or not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by another land-managing entity. Adequacy of representation is determined on a case-by-case basis by comparing the proposed area to other units in the National Park System for differences or similarities in the character, quality, quantity, or combination of resources, and opportunities for public enjoyment.

George W. Bush lived in numerous homes throughout his life. As noted earlier, he lived in 14 different homes during his first 18 years of life, not counting his boarding school residency in Andover, Massachusetts. As an adult, he had at least 12 different addresses, including his time in the Texas Governor's Mansion and the White House. This section presents a chronological overview of these homes, with information on significant events associated with each private residence.

### Childhood Homes Of George W. Bush

#### New Haven, Connecticut, 1946-1948

George W. Bush was born in New Haven, Connecticut, at Grace-New Haven Community Hospital (now Yale-New Haven Hospital) on July 6, 1946. At the time of his birth, his parents lived in a tiny apartment on Chapel Street in New Haven, with their black standard poodle, Turbo. George H.W. Bush, who was a veteran of World War II, was finishing his sophomore year at Yale University at the time of his



*George H.W. and Barbara Bush with their first-born child, George W. Bush, while George H.W. Bush was a student at Yale. Photo: National Archives and Records Administration*

son's birth. "When I arrived, they had to move out because the landlord allowed dogs but not babies," George W. Bush later wrote. "They found a place on Edwards Street, where the owner allowed babies but not dogs. Fortunately, I made the cut and Turbo went to live at Grove Lane [the home of George H.W. Bush's parents in Greenwich, Connecticut]."<sup>72</sup> The young family later moved to 37 Hillhouse Avenue in New Haven. Yale University owned the house, which had been converted into apartments for married students who were veterans of World War II. Built in 1866, the Italian Villa-style house sat right next door to the university president's residence. The Bush family lived in their apartment at 37 Hillhouse Avenue for two years. "We were so lucky, for we had three tiny rooms and a tiny bath," Barbara Bush recalled. They did,

<sup>72</sup> Bush, 41: *A Portrait of My Father*, 35.



however, have to share a kitchen with two other families.<sup>73</sup> Reflecting on the postwar housing shortage, George H.W. Bush noted that “a dozen other veterans’ families shar[ed] the house with us” – all with at least one child.<sup>74</sup>

George W. Bush has no personal memories of his time in the house at 37 Hillhouse Avenue, which today is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is occupied by the Yale Economics Department. Also known as the Graves-Gilman House, the house was designated for its architectural significance as a contributing building within the Hillhouse Avenue Historic District, described as the “most complete and best-preserved continuous array of high-style nineteenth- and early twentieth-century suburban villa architecture surviving in the City of New Haven.”<sup>75</sup>

### **Odessa, Texas, 1948**

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Almost immediately upon graduating from Yale in 1948, George H.W. Bush along with his wife, Barbara, and toddler son, George W. Bush, moved to West Texas. Their first stop was Odessa, where George H.W. began work for Dresser Industries. During their time in Odessa, the family lived in two small duplex apartments and one single-family residence. The stay in Odessa, however, was short-lived because the following year, George H.W. Bush was transferred to California.

#### ***1519 and 1523 East Seventh Street, Odessa (Summer 1948)***

George H.W. and Barbara Bush’s first home in Odessa was a duplex apartment at 1519 East Seventh Street. The family moved

two more times in less than a year. They moved from 1519 East Seventh Street to the other side of the duplex at 1523 East Seventh Street before settling briefly at 916 East 17<sup>th</sup> Street. Although there are family recollections of the time in Odessa, George W. Bush, who was only two years old at the time, possesses no personal memories of his time there. Both apartments on East Seventh Street have been demolished.

#### ***916 East 17<sup>th</sup> Street, Odessa (September 1948- April 1949)***

The Bush family lived in the one-story, two-bedroom house on East 17<sup>th</sup> Street for less than a year before George H.W. Bush was transferred to California. George W. Bush, who turned two years old in July 1948, celebrated Christmas in this 970-square-foot, frame house. Although Barbara Bush holds fond memories of living in the bustling town of Odessa, her oldest son’s childhood memories did not begin until after the family left Odessa.

The house on 17<sup>th</sup> Street was acquired by the University of Texas of the Permian Basin and, in 2003, moved onto the college campus. The house is part of the university’s Presidential Archives and Museum. Known as “The Bush Home,” it has been restored to the era during which the Bush family lived in Odessa. The interior is furnished to reflect a Christmas morning scene in 1948. The house was opened to visitors in 2004. Another home has subsequently been built at the site where the Bush home originally stood at 916 East 17<sup>th</sup> Street.

### **California, 1949-1950**

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In April 1949, the Bush family moved from Odessa, Texas, to California. Over the next 12 months, the family lived in Whittier, Bakersfield, Ventura and Compton, while George H.W. Bush spent much of his time on the road selling Ideco oil

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<sup>73</sup> Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 27.

<sup>74</sup> Dick Ahles, “Bush’s Birthplace? It’s Deep in the Heart of . . . New Haven,” *The New York Times*, December 24, 2000.

<sup>75</sup> J. Paul Loether, “Hillhouse Avenue Historic District”, National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, 1985.



*The 916 East 17th Street home in its current location on the University of Texas-Permian Basin campus, 2014.  
Photo: Steven C. Baker*

drilling equipment. The family stayed in hotels while in Whittier and Ventura. In Bakersfield, they rented a 950-square-foot, wood-frame house, and in Compton lived in the Santa Fe Gardens apartment complex.<sup>76</sup> Looking back on this time, George H.W. Bush remembered it as an itinerant lifestyle, during which he drove on average 1,000 miles per week.<sup>77</sup> George W. Bush, who was a toddler during this period, has no personal memories of any of these homes.

### **Midland, Texas, 1950-1959**

Midland played an important role in the formation of George W. Bush's character, both by his own admission and from the perspective of his parents, journalists, and historians. "All my life, I have been grateful to George and Barbara Bush for raising me in West Texas," he states in his biography of his father.<sup>78</sup> George W. Bush has regularly pointed to his childhood in Midland as exerting a fundamental influence on the man he became. His childhood in the Texas oil town helped shape his ideology and worldview, which in turn formed the

basis for his political principles. During his time in Midland, he developed his life-long passion for baseball, his interest in the oil business, his personal identity as a Texan, and many of the conservative "small town values" expressed during his campaigns for political office and later during his Presidency. Midland was the first city that George W. Bush remembers living in, and "will always be the place that I consider my hometown."<sup>79</sup>

### **405 East Maple Avenue, Midland Texas (April 1950-October 1951)**

The house at 405 East Maple Avenue, in a section of town called "Easter Egg Row" for the identical houses painted in wildly different colors, was the family's first house in Midland. The Bush family's Easter Egg home was light blue.<sup>80</sup> George W. Bush was not yet four years old when the Bushes moved in, and he lived there only for a year-and-a-half. While he may have had some formative experiences while living in the house on East Maple Avenue, the home does not occupy an important place in his

<sup>76</sup> Bush, *41: A Portrait of My Father*, 45.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.



405 East Maple Avenue, 2014. Photo: Steven C. Baker

ideological development. This is evident in his autobiography, *A Charge to Keep*, as George W. Bush opens his discussion of Midland not with memories of the house on Easter Egg Row, but of playing baseball, riding his bicycle, walking to Sam Houston Elementary School, and being told of the death of his sister Robin, all of which occurred while the family lived at its next house at 1412 West Ohio Avenue. The home is more directly connected to the early business career of George H.W. Bush, who, Barbara Bush writes, was working hard in the oil industry and spending “a lot of time traveling, looking for good oil deals and financing.”<sup>81</sup>

The house and Easter Egg Row neighborhood have changed considerably since the time that the Bush family there. The pastel-colored paint scheme that gave the neighborhood homes their distinctive and colorful “Easter Egg” appearance in the early 1950s no longer adorns the Bush family home and many of the other homes in the area. In addition, several nearby neighborhood homes have been demolished or modified.

**1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland Texas  
(November 1951–November 1955)**

The Bush family moved into 1412 West Ohio Avenue in November 1951 and resided in the home for the next four years. George W. Bush, who was five years old when

the family moved in, entered nearby Sam Houston Elementary School while living there. Some of his fondest memories of this period involve outdoor activities, especially playing baseball. “I remember the time I rode my bicycle to the house of a friend of my dad, Mr. John Ashman, to borrow his copy of the first-ever *Sports Illustrated*, August 26, 1954.” He also recalled eagerly awaiting every edition of *The Sporting News* “to pore over the statistics and read the stories about the baseball stars of the 1950s.”<sup>82</sup> While George attended elementary school, George H.W. Bush formed Zapata Petroleum while living in the 1412 West Ohio Avenue home. He spent much of his time focusing on running the successful oil development company.

Tragically, three-year old Robin was diagnosed with late-stage leukemia while the family lived in the house. She passed away in the fall of 1953. Her death saddened and stunned George W. Bush and exerted a long-lasting impact. George W. Bush saw it as his duty to comfort his mother, especially when his father was away on business, and help her out in any way he could. Robin’s death was indeed a formative experience in George W. Bush’s young life. He learned “never to take life for granted,” and it made him determined “to enjoy whatever life might bring.”<sup>83</sup>

In his memoirs, George W. Bush is very clear that his youth in Midland played an important role in the development of his overall character, deeply held beliefs and fundamental values. His lifelong love of sports, especially baseball and the outdoors, can be traced to the sandlots of Midland. The family regularly attended the First Presbyterian Church, where both his parents taught Sunday school. The tightly knit community was a place, Barbara Bush

<sup>82</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 18.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>81</sup> Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 38.



remembered, where, “When the chips were down, all of us were there for each other.”<sup>84</sup> During his time in Midland, George W. Bush recalled, his parents instilled a deep belief in the power of “faith, family and friends,” as well as loyalty, empathy and self-reliance.<sup>85</sup> These values were eventually expressed by President George W. Bush through a political philosophy that called for less government and a larger role for religious institutions and private companies in solving societal problems.

Despite his family’s New England roots, George W. Bush also developed a strong personal identity as a Texan and a special fondness for Midland and West Texas. “West Texas was in my blood,” he stated in his memoirs, and he returned to Midland again and again later in life.<sup>86</sup>

The home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue was purchased by the Permian Basin Board of Realtors in 2001 with the intent purpose of commemorating George W. Bush’s childhood. The home is now operated as the George W. Bush Childhood Home museum. George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc. has restored the interior and exterior of the house to its 1950s



*George W. Bush with bat and ball, Midland, Texas, 1953. Photo: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum (HS574).*

appearance in accordance with the “Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings.” Throughout the restoration, George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc.

<sup>84</sup> Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 38.

<sup>85</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 6.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.



*1412 West Ohio Avenue, 2014. Photo: Steven C. Baker*

consulted with the Texas Historical Commission, as well as the Bush family, and other individuals with personal knowledge of the house in the 1950s. The neighborhood, including homes, churches and associated landscapes, also appear largely unchanged from the time the Bush family lived in Midland. The most significant change to the larger setting is the church parking lot that is now located across the street from the house, replacing the historic homes that were once located there.

***2703 Sentinel Drive, Midland, Texas  
(December 1955-August 1959)***

The final Midland home of the George H.W. Bush family, 2703 Sentinel Drive, reflects George H.W. Bush's success in the oil and gas business and the growth of the family, which now included three sons: George, Jeb, and Neil, with a fourth, Marvin, to be born in October 1956. The 3,000-square-foot ranch style home was in Midland's wealthier neighborhood, and the residence included a swimming pool and an attached two-car garage. The one-story, red brick home abutted a park, where young George W. Bush played baseball. While living on Sentinel Drive, George W. Bush attended the final years of elementary school and entered the seventh grade at San Jacinto Junior High. He writes of playing baseball behind the Sentinel Drive house, and of being on the football team in the seventh

grade at San Jacinto Junior High, the last public school he ever would attend.<sup>87</sup>

Like the home on West Ohio Avenue, the time spent at 2703 Sentinel Drive represents an important chapter in the development of President George W. Bush's ideological and political perspective. However, the time was short, less than four years, with one month of each summer spent at Camp Longhorn in the Texas Hill Country. In his memoirs, as in those of his parents, George W. Bush devotes considerably more space describing life at 1412 West Ohio Avenue than the residence on Sentinel Drive, in large part because of the death of Robin. The home on Sentinel Drive and the surrounding neighborhood retain their residential mid-century, brick-ranch architectural character.

***Houston, Texas, 1959-1968***

In August of 1959, the Bush family moved into a new house in Houston, Texas, to be closer to the Gulf of Mexico, where many of George H.W. Bush's oil interests were located. For George W. Bush, the move to Houston was significant. "My life changed after seventh grade, when our family made the long move to Houston," he wrote in his memoirs. Despite the new surroundings, George W. Bush quickly made new friends while attending the private Kinkaid School. In the fall of 1961, when he was 15 years old, he was sent to Phillips Academy in Andover,

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 15-17.



*2703 Sentinel Drive, Midland, Texas, 2014. Photo: Steven C. Baker*

Massachusetts, where his father had gone to school.<sup>88</sup>

***5525 Briar Street, Houston, Texas (August 1959-1968)***

The house at 5525 Briar Street, Houston, was the last childhood home of George W. Bush. The house was custom built for the Bush family; Barbara and George H.W. Bush lived in an apartment in Houston for a short time while the house was being finished. Daughter Dorothy was born in Houston on August 18, 1959, even as the house was being completed. “The house and the baby got finished at the same time,” Barbara Bush recalls. “George moved into the new house while I was in the hospital.”<sup>89</sup>

The two-story house was larger than the Bushes’ last home in Midland. It occupied a one-acre lot in the Tanglewood neighborhood; the house and grounds included a swimming pool and a baseball diamond. For eighth and ninth grades, George W. Bush attended Kinkaid School, one of the oldest private, co-educational schools in Houston. The family began attending St. Martin’s Episcopal Church, where young George served communion during the Sunday morning service.

After completing the ninth grade in Houston, George W. Bush began attending Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. It was, he wrote, “a hard transition,” but feelings of loneliness “eased pretty quickly,” replaced by a newfound confidence that he “could make friends, and make my way, no matter where I found myself in life.”<sup>90</sup> After the fall of 1961, George W. Bush’s time in the house was limited to summers and school holidays. He graduated from high school at Phillips Academy in 1964 and spent the next four

years attending college at Yale University, graduating in 1968. The house at 5525 Briar Street was demolished in about 1985, and a new home built on the site in 1986.

## **Adult Homes Of George W. Bush**

***Chateaux Dijon, 5331 Beverlyhill Street, Houston, Texas (1968-1973)***

After graduating from Yale in 1968, George W. Bush returned to Houston, where he lived in an apartment complex, the Chateaux Dijon, constructed in 1965. While living at Chateaux Dijon, Bush served in the Texas Air National Guard. Shortly after Christmas in 1972, Bush also started work as a counselor for a social welfare program known as Project Pull (Professionals United for Leadership). The anti-poverty program provided mentoring and role models for low-income, inner city youth living within Houston’s Third Ward. His friend John L. White, a former tight end for the Houston Oilers, had founded the program, which offered sports, crafts, field trips and big-name mentors from the athletic, entertainment and business worlds.<sup>91</sup> His future wife, Laura Welch, also lived at the Chateaux Dijon complex, but their paths never crossed in Houston. The red brick apartment complex, which still stands, retains its 1960s era appearance and Second Empire stylistic elements.

### **Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1973-1975**

After completing his Air National Guard duty in Texas, George W. Bush attended Harvard Business School in Boston while living alone in a small apartment in Central Square in Cambridge. During his time at Harvard, he recalled, Bush learned “the principles of capital, how it is accumulated, risked, spent, and managed.”<sup>92</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 18-20.

<sup>89</sup> Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 53-54.

<sup>90</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 19-22.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 60.





2006 Harvard Avenue, 2014. From 1975 to 1977, George W. Bush rented a two-room cottage behind this house, which was owned by a friend of the family. Photo: Steven C. Baker

### **Midland, Texas, 1975-1988**

Intent on entering the oil industry, as his father had done, George W. Bush returned to Midland in 1975 after he earned his MBA from Harvard Business School. While living in Midland, he met and married Laura Welch, welcomed the arrival of twin daughters Jenna and Barbara, and entered his first political race.

#### ***2006 Harvard Avenue, Midland Texas (Summer 1975-1977)***

Returning to Midland in 1975, George W. Bush rented a two-room, brick cottage – “a little apartment in the alley” – behind a home owned by friends of his father’s at 2006 Harvard Avenue. He lived in the apartment for two years, at which time he began his career in the oil and gas industry as a landman, researching public records to determine who owned the mineral rights on a particular tract of land. It was also during this time that George W. Bush met and became engaged to Laura Welch. This residence also represents the time when George W. Bush decided to run for Congress. Midland was booming in the mid-1970s, and the money that George W. Bush earned in the oil and gas industry

helped support his run for Congress in 1978.<sup>93</sup>

#### ***1405 West Golf Course Road, Midland, Texas (December 1977-1985)***

Built in 1976, this one-story, three-bedroom, 2,400-square-foot, brick residence was the first home that George W. Bush and Laura Bush lived in after their marriage in 1977. They lived here for eight years, during which time George W. Bush continued to develop his business, Arbusto. By the time the Bushes sold the house in 1985, Arbusto had grown into a moderately successful oil development company and had merged with a larger operating company, Spectrum 7, for which Bush served as a chairman.

In 1978, George W. Bush campaigned for a seat in Congress from Texas’s 19<sup>th</sup> District, a traditionally Democratic district, but lost to Kent Hance. After losing the election, “George went back to being a landman in the oil business, going to an office every day, and I began to set up our new home,” Laura Bush remembered.<sup>94</sup> In 1981, George W. Bush and Laura welcomed twin daughters Barbara and Jenna into their family. Also while living on West Golf Course Road, the

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 61-62; and Bill Minutaglio, *First Son: George W. Bush and the Bush Family Dynasty* (New York: Random House, 1999), 164.

<sup>94</sup> Bush, *Spoken from the Heart*, 102.



1405 West Golf Course Road, 2014. George W. and Laura Bush's first home after their marriage in 1977.  
Photo: Steven C. Baker

family attended the First United Methodist Church, where George W. Bush taught Sunday school.

In addition to being the first family home of George W. Bush and Laura Bush and being associated with his first political campaign, the West Golf Course Road house represents the longest residency in any single home up to this point in George W. Bush's life.

**910 Harvard Avenue Midland, Texas (1985-1988)**

The 2 ½-bath, 5,100-square-foot home at 910 Harvard Avenue was the last Bush family home in Midland, Texas. George W. Bush, Laura, and their young daughters moved to the home in 1985 and lived here until moving temporarily to Washington,

D.C., to assist with the 1988 Presidential campaign of George H.W. Bush.<sup>95</sup>

During the period he lived at 910 Harvard Avenue, George W. Bush experienced one of the "turning points in his life." In July of 1986, he and Laura visited the Broadmoor Hotel in Colorado Springs, Colorado. After drinking too much one evening and waking up with a hangover, George W. Bush decided to stop drinking. The decision had life-long effects. "I felt different. ... I had more energy. I became a better listener and not such an incessant talker," he wrote. "I now say it is one of the best things I have ever done."<sup>96</sup>

<sup>95</sup> While in Washington, D.C., the family lived in an apartment at the northwest end of Massachusetts Avenue. See Minutaglio, *First Son*, 220.

<sup>96</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 136.



910 Harvard Avenue, 2014. Photo: Steven C. Baker



## **Dallas, Texas, 1989-1994**

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### ***6029 Northwood Road, Dallas Texas (1989-1994)***

The Bush family moved into the home at 6029 Northwood Road in early 1989 after returning from Washington, D.C., where George W. Bush and Laura Bush had assisted with George H.W. Bush's successful campaign for the Presidency. Buying a home in the Preston Hollow neighborhood of North Dallas coincided with Bush's resolve to buy the Texas Rangers baseball team, which played in nearby Arlington.<sup>97</sup> The family lived in the three-bedroom, three-bath house for five years. Built in 1940, the 3,639-square-foot house had a pool in the back yard.

Bush's time in this home coincided with two turning points in his life, including his purchase of an interest in the Texas Rangers. He became the baseball team's general managing partner and was responsible for the construction of a new stadium. As the well-known public face of team management, he traveled throughout the Rangers' market, giving speeches and talking up the ball club, experiences that taught him, he writes in *Decision Points*, "how to connect with a crowd and convey a clear message."<sup>98</sup> While living here, Bush also re-entered politics as a candidate. He ran against incumbent Governor Ann Richards in 1994 and won. The Bush family sold the house when they moved into the Texas Governor's Mansion on January 17, 1995. The home appears to have undergone significant modifications to the exterior since the time the Bush family lived there.

### ***Rainbo Lake, near Athens, Henderson County, Texas (Second home, 1991-2000)***

In 1991, George and Laura Bush purchased a membership in the Rainbo Club, a private,

1,200-acre lakeside hunting and fishing club in East Texas, about 90 miles southeast of their home in Dallas. They bought a rustic house with a view of the 280-acre Rainbo Lake. The Bushes have written little about their time at the lake, which would have served as a refuge from their public lives, including George W. Bush's service as Texas Governor (1995-2000). They sold their house and membership at the club in March 2000, as Bush was campaigning for the Presidency and construction was well underway on a new house at their recently purchased Prairie Chapel Ranch near Crawford, Texas.

## **Austin, Texas, 1995-2000**

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### ***Texas Governor's Mansion, 1010 Colorado Street, Austin, Texas (1995-2000)***

From 1995 to 2000, the George W. Bush family lived in the Texas Governor's Mansion in Austin, Texas. The symmetrical Greek Revival home was constructed in 1854 and has served continuously as the Governor's residence. The property was designated a National Historic Landmark on December 2, 1974.

### ***Prairie Chapel Ranch, near Crawford, Texas (Second home, 1998-present)***

The George W. Bush family purchased the 1,600-acre ranch near Crawford, Texas, in 1998, while George W. Bush was serving as Governor of Texas. After he won re-election that November, Laura Bush worked to update the modest, six-room, clapboard house on the property, where the family stayed until a new ranch house and adjacent, two-bedroom guesthouse, both designed by David Heymann of the University of Texas School of Architecture, were completed. The single-story ranch house that was designed by Heymann is about 4,000 square feet and features Lueders limestone cut from a nearby quarry, as well as views of the surrounding live oaks and cedar elms.

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<sup>97</sup> Bush, *Decision Points*, 45.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.



The house has three bedrooms, a library and sitting room, a combined living and dining room and, to conserve power and water, a geothermal heating system. The Bushes spent their first night in the new ranch house in April 2001, just weeks after Bush's inauguration as President. The President spent considerable time at the ranch from 2001 to 2008 – as much as 70 weeks – where he hosted fellow leaders of state and conducted Presidential business in consultation with his Cabinet members and senior staff.

### **Washington DC, 2001-2009**

*The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. (2001-2009)*

From 2001 to 2009, George W. Bush served as the 43rd President of the United States, and lived in the White House in Washington, D.C., which has been the residence of every U.S. President since John Adams in 1800.

### **Dallas, Texas, 2009-Present**

*10141 Daria Place, Dallas, Texas (2009-present)*

The family purchased a home at 10141 Daria Place in Dallas shortly before President George W. Bush completed his second term in office. The house is in the Preston Hollow neighborhood of North Dallas. The Daria Place house is currently the family's primary residence.

### **Preliminary Determination of Suitability**

Only one site administered by the NPS is directly associated with the life and career of George W. Bush: The White House became the official residence of George W. Bush and his family from 2001 to 2009 when he resided there as the 43rd President of the United States. The NPS does not own

or administer any site associated with the childhood of George W. Bush.

This reconnaissance survey identified numerous homes associated with the childhood of George W. Bush, two of which are currently preserved and open to the public. The Bush family lived at 916 East 17th Street in Odessa, Texas, from September 1948 to April 1949. In 2003, this home was acquired by the University of Texas of the Permian Basin and relocated to their college campus as a house museum. As a result of the move, this residence suffered a significant loss of integrity with regard to its original location and historic setting. The house has been restored to reflect Christmas morning in 1948, when two-year-old George W. Bush was then living there. George W. Bush, however, does not have any memories of his time in this home.

The only other childhood home that is open to the public is the George W. Bush Childhood Home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, which is owned and operated by the nonprofit George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc. This building has been accurately restored to the time George W. Bush lived there as a child from November 1951 to November 1955. George W. Bush has strong childhood memories of his time in Midland, and this home specifically, and this is the residence that is most frequently mentioned in Bush family memoirs. In terms of suitability, it appears that the home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, would fill an important gap in the National Park System with regard to the childhood of President George W. Bush. No unit of the National Park System currently tells the story of the life and career of President George W. Bush.

The assessment of suitability as a potential unit within the National Park System must also address if that site is already protected

for public enjoyment by another land-managing entity. George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc. administers 1412 West Ohio Avenue as a house museum, but is unable to keep the site open seven days a week because it is staffed primarily by volunteers. Operating hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10am-5pm, and Sunday from 2pm-5pm. The museum is closed on

Monday. In addition, the organization does not have the staffing capacity to develop and implement a comprehensive interpretive plan, nor does it have curatorial staff to fully catalog and maintain the Bush family archives and collections in its possession. As such, the home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue appears to meet the NPS criteria for suitability. ⚡

# HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE GEORGE W. BUSH CHILDHOOD HOME, 1412 WEST OHIO AVENUE, MIDLAND, TEXAS

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## Architectural Description

The following architectural description of the George W. Bush Childhood Home is derived in large measure from the National Register of Historic Places nomination form that was completed in 2004. The description was updated during a NPS site visit in the spring of 2014.

The home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue is a 1939 wood-frame house built in the Minimal Traditional style and occupied by the George H.W. Bush family from November 1951 to December 1955. The non-profit organization George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc. has carefully restored the home to the time it was

occupied by the Bush family. During the restoration, the organization worked closely with the Texas Historical Commission to ensure that the restoration met the “Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings.” The restored house opened to the public on April 11, 2006. Former President George H.W. Bush, Barbara Bush and Laura Bush gave opening remarks at the event. The house has been well-maintained over the past eight years.

The one-story house is approximately 1,500 square feet in size and features a multi-

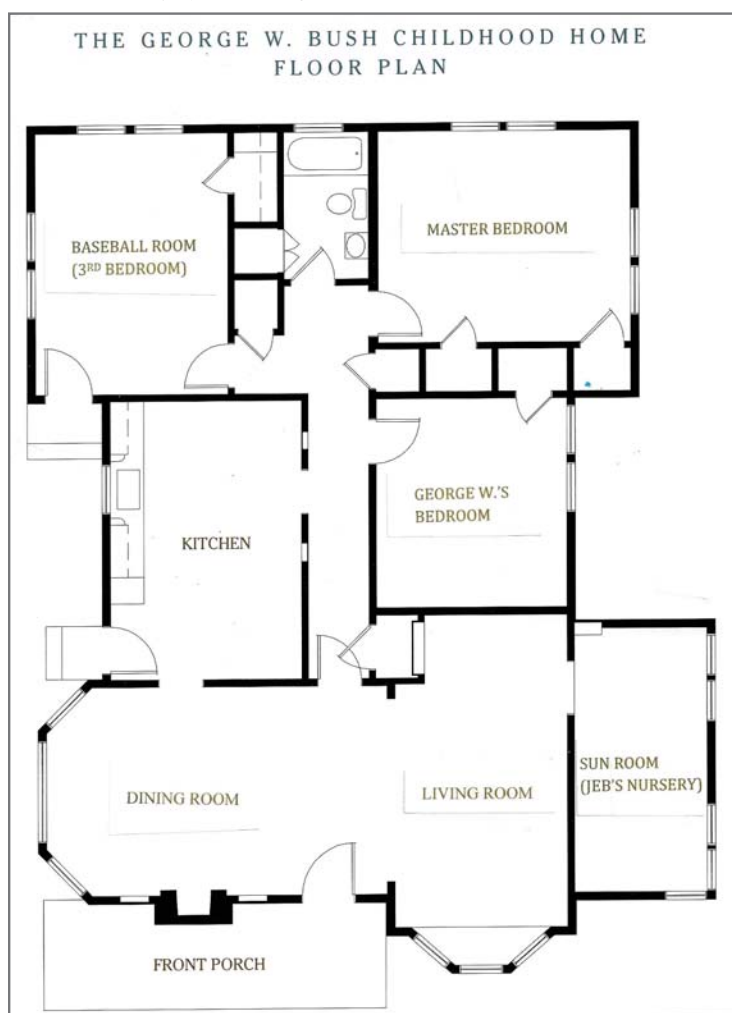


*Barbara Bush, Laura Bush, George H.W. Bush and family friend Joseph I. O'Neill (who introduced Laura and George W. Bush in Midland) at the dedication of the George W. Bush Childhood Home in Midland, Texas, April 11, 2006. Photo: White House photo by Shealah Craighead.*





Site plan (above) and floor plan (below) of 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas.  
Both: Courtesy of the George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc.



faceted hip roof of red composite shingles, flush eaves, and minimal architectural ornamentation. Horizontal wood siding covers the exterior walls, which are painted a medium blue-gray hue. Noteworthy exterior features include a bay window on the front (south) elevation and a rectilinear masonry chimney with decorative red brickwork near the top of the stack. The modest home is typical of most constructed in Midland, Texas, during the mid-twentieth century. In her autobiography, Laura Bush commented on the low architectural profile of Midland's residential neighborhoods: "Land was abundant, and the swirling desert winds and the tornadoes that periodically threatened to rip past made going up impractical. If you were wealthier, you just bought a longer house."<sup>99</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Bush, *Spoken from the Heart*, 17.



*1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas, circa 1939. As originally built in 1939, the house had an attached single-car garage. Before the Bush family bought the house in 1951, the garage had been converted into interior living space with a bay window. Photo: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum.*



*Aerial photograph of 1412 West Ohio Avenue (highlighted) and surrounding neighborhood, circa 1940s. This photo was taken prior to the conversion of the garage at 1412 West Ohio Avenue into living space. Photo: George Bush Childhood Home, Inc.*

The home's simple and functional interior floor plan contains three bedrooms and one bath. As one enters the home, the dining room is on the left and the living room to the right. A central hallway leads directly to the kitchen and three bedrooms. George W. Bush's bedroom was the first bedroom on the right of the hallway. Significant interior features include knotty pine paneling, stone

fireplace, original cabinets, phone niche, "tile look" wallboard, and wallpaper from the Bush occupancy. Knotty pine paneling is found in the living room, den, and George W. Bush's room (Bedroom No. 1). The cabinets in the kitchen, hall bath, and closet of Bedroom No. 3 are original with hardware intact. The distinctive doorknobs and escutcheons are present on most of the



*The Living Room and Dining Room of the George W. Bush Childhood Home, 2012. Photo: Savant Photography, courtesy of the Midland Convention & Visitors Bureau, [www.VisitMidlandTexas.com](http://www.VisitMidlandTexas.com).*

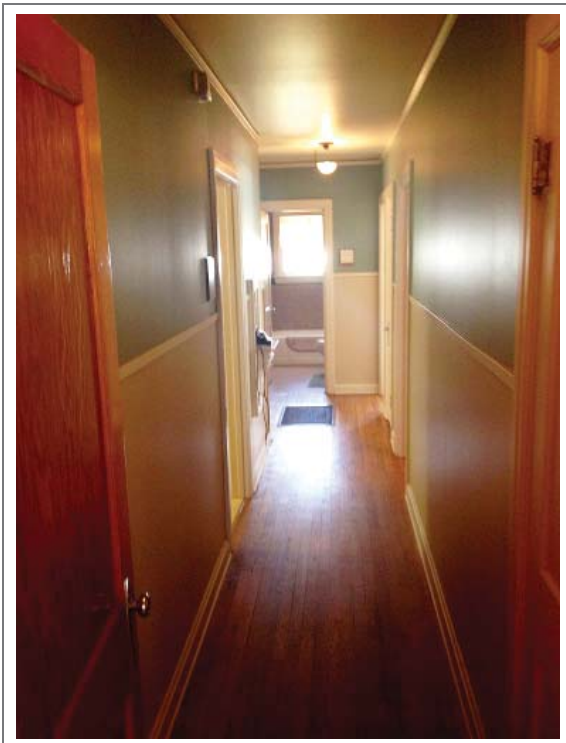
original two-panel interior doors. As was typical in homes of the 1940s and 1950s, a phone niche was built into the central hall. Wallboard was scored to resemble square tiles in the kitchen on the north wall, and below the wainscot of the east and south walls. Hardwood oak floors are present throughout the home with the exception of the kitchen and bathroom, which have linoleum floors. Each room of the house has been furnished with period pieces and contains interpretive exhibits about the Bush family's life in Midland.

The immediate neighborhood still retains a strong residential feel and setting. The major change to the 1400 block of West Ohio Avenue has been the expansion of Episcopal Church of the Holy Trinity to the south of the home. As the church, which fronts on Illinois Avenue, was expanded, a number of small residences were demolished across the street (south)

from the Bush home on Ohio Avenue. On the southeast corner of the 1400 block of West Ohio Avenue, two lots owned by the Episcopal Church are used as parking for the George W. Bush Childhood Home, as well as the church. George W. Bush Childhood Home Inc. negotiated with the Episcopal Church to develop the two lots.

The George W. Bush Childhood Home is typical of most of the houses fronting West Ohio Avenue, which were built immediately before and after World War II. These small one-story homes were commonly occupied by growing middle-class families, and featured two or three bedrooms and one bath. The neighborhood is on the edge of downtown Midland, which is about 10 blocks to the east. George W. Bush and his friends often walked or rode their bicycles to the downtown movie theater or to school.





*Hallway to the kitchen, bedrooms, and bathroom, 2014. Photo: National Park Service.*

## Building History

The house, originally owned by Mildred L. Ethridge, was built in 1939 and contained an attached single-car garage on the south facade. Ethridge remained in the home until she sold it to W. B. and Evelyn Hanley in 1945. Two years later, the Hanley family sold it to Paxton and Ester K. Howard, who subsequently purchased a strip of land to the east of the home in order to expand the lot. The Howards modified the home in two significant ways. They added an enclosed sunporch and converted the original garage into an interior living space with a bay window, replacing the former garage door space. The Howards also constructed a detached garage at the rear of the property. Other changes included replacement of the home's original front door and removal of two windows flanking the chimney. The window openings were covered with siding on the exterior and filled in with display shelving on the interior. The Howards sold



*Phone niche, 2014. Photo: National Park Service.*

the home to Lloyd Ponder in March 1951. Ponder, who never lived in the house, sold it to the Bush family on November 7, 1951, for \$9,000.<sup>100</sup>

The Bush family made only minor changes to the house. A gas furnace is thought to have been installed in the central hall and an evaporative cooler, also known as a swamp cooler, placed at the southwest corner of the home, outside a living room window. The family also converted the sunporch into a bedroom for baby Jeb. The Bushes moved to a larger home in Midland in December of 1955.

The home passed through numerous owners after 1955 and was altered in several ways through this period. Some of the changes were cosmetic, such as modifications of floor and wall coverings. Other, more dramatic, alterations included a new bathroom addition, new roofs over the front porch and west patio, and the replacement of some doors and windows. Since being acquired in 2001 by George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc., the house has undergone careful restoration. The post-1955 bathroom and roof additions were removed. Restoration experts also removed aluminum siding and non-historic floor

<sup>100</sup> Herndon and Smith, "George W. Bush Childhood Home."



*The kitchen of the George W. Bush Childhood Home, 2012. The home has been restored to its appearance during the time that the Bush family lived there, 1951-1955. Photos: Savant Photography, courtesy of the Midland Convention & Visitors Bureau, [www.VisitMidlandTexas.com](http://www.VisitMidlandTexas.com)*

and wall coverings. Structural problems associated with the roof required repair. Experts also had to abate lead-based paint, asbestos, and mold. Finally, period-specific floor coverings, wallpaper, fixtures, and other features reflecting the 1950s character of the home were installed. The restoration took nearly five years to complete. ★



## FEASIBILITY AND NEED FOR NPS MANAGEMENT

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To be feasible as a new unit of the National Park System, an area must be of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure long-term protection of the resource and accommodate public use. The site must also have the potential for efficient administration by the NPS at a reasonable cost. A number of factors are considered when evaluating feasibility, including landownership, acquisition and operational costs, staffing needs, public access, existing and potential threats to the resource, and level of public support.

This preliminary assessment of the feasibility of the George W. Bush Childhood Home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas, as a potential new unit of the National Park System examines size and configuration, potential for public use and enjoyment, potential acquisition and operational costs, staffing needs, access issues, and possible threats to the historic resources. The reconnaissance survey does not include an assessment of public support, and the survey team did not hold public meetings to gauge such support.

### Size and Configuration

The George W. Bush Childhood Home at 1412 West Ohio is owned and operated by a nonprofit organization, George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc. The organization has restored the home and associated landscape to the period of the early 1950s, when George W. Bush resided there with his family. The home is open to the public Tuesday through Sunday, and visitation averages 7,000 persons annually. Visitors can park their cars at no charge in a paved parking lot that is on the southeast corner of the 1400 block of West Ohio Avenue.



*Visitor parking is available nearby at the end of the block. Photo: National Park Service.*

George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc. negotiated a long-term use agreement with the owner of the parking lot, the Episcopal Church of the Holy Trinity. Visitors can also park along the street. Access to the museum is facilitated by a concrete sidewalk that stretches the length of the block. The nonprofit organization also acquired two other residential properties across the street from the George W. Bush Childhood Home; one property serves as the gift shop and administrative headquarters for the museum, the other provides rental income. The three properties – 1412 West Ohio Avenue, 400 Broadway, and 402 Broadway – encompass approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an acre. The compact, small size of the site is sufficient and appropriate to protect the resource and accommodate public use.

### Threats to the Resource

Since the George W. Bush Childhood home was acquired by the nonprofit organization in 2001, no threats to the historic site are



known to exist. With the exception of the church parking lot, the architectural character of the 1400 block of West Ohio, as well as the surrounding neighborhood, still retain a residential character reminiscent of Midland of the 1950s.

### **Potential Acquisition, Development, and Operational Costs**

The NPS typically acquires property through donation or from a willing seller within its authorized boundary. Assessing the disposition of the current owner of the George W. Bush Childhood Home as to its willingness to donate or sell the historic site is outside the scope of the reconnaissance survey. The most recent appraised property value of 1412 West Ohio Avenue by the Midland County Appraisal District is \$134,500. This figure, however, does not include the costs of the restoration of the home nor its historic furnishings. The Midland County Appraisal District assessed the value of the properties at 400 and 402 Broadway at \$155,200 and \$136,400 respectively.

The operating costs of the historic site average \$250,000 annually, including the salaries of an executive director and assistant director, who are the only paid staff. Interpretive programs are delivered by the two permanent staff as well as 35 part-time volunteers. The two full-time staff members also conduct routine maintenance, including of the grounds of the historic site, while cyclical maintenance and repairs are performed by contractors. Security is provided by local law enforcement. Income to cover the annual expenses is derived through fundraising, donations, admission fees, merchandise sales, and rental of the residence at 402 Broadway.

The NPS manages numerous historic sites associated with the lives and careers of U.S. presidents. However, only a handful

of these NPS sites are of the modest size and scale of the George W. Bush Childhood Home. The President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace National Historic Site in Hope, Arkansas, presents perhaps the best comparison in terms of size and scale of historic buildings, acreage, and visitation. The President William Jefferson Clinton site consists of the birthplace home and a visitor center, which, like that for the George W. Bush Childhood Home, is located in an adjacent residential property. The two-story President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace is approximately 2,100 square feet in size and contains three bedrooms. It comprises approximately one acre and receives about 10,000 visitors annually. The President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace has a staff of two permanent employees and four part-time employees, and an annual operating budget of approximately \$260,000. Information about the President Clinton birthplace and three other comparable NPS units is in the following table.



*Entrance sign in front of 1421 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas. Photo: National Park Service.*

NPS Unit	Acres	Staffing (FTE)	Annual Operational Budget	Number of Historic Buildings	Visitation
President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace NHS, Hope, AR	1	2 full-time and 4 part-time	\$260,000	1	10,000
Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural NHS, Buffalo, NY	1	7 full-time and 7 part-time; managed through a cooperative agreement with a nonprofit organization	\$288,000	1	22,000
John Fitzgerald Kennedy NHS, Brookline, MA	1	5	\$511,000	1	26,000
William Howard Taft NHS, Cincinnati, OH	4	8	\$816,000	1	23,000

The John Fitzgerald Kennedy and William Howard Taft national historic sites are managed as traditional units of the National Park System, with NPS owning and administering the sites. The Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site is owned by the NPS but managed in cooperation with the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site Foundation.

### Preliminary Determination of Feasibility

The George W. Bush Childhood Home appears to meet many, but perhaps not all, of the NPS criteria for feasibility. The relatively small and well-preserved historic site is of sufficient size and configuration to protect key historic resources as well as accommodate public use. Acquisition and operational costs appear to be at reasonable levels. However, no assessment of local public support has been undertaken and no significant resource threats appear to exist. A full special resource study would determine the level of public support and also present various management strategies for the George W. Bush Childhood Home, which could include NPS partnership with a nonprofit organization as well as with state and local governments.

### Preliminary Determination of Need for NPS Management

An additional criterion for potential new park units is the need for direct management by the NPS. To be recommended as a unit of the National Park System, an area must require direct NPS management, and that management must be clearly superior to other possible options. Because management options are not developed in a reconnaissance survey, this section will focus on and consider the unmet needs at the George W. Bush Childhood Home.

The George W. Bush Childhood Home is owned and managed by a nonprofit organization that has goals of resource protection and public use. The house was acquired by George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc. in 2001 and restored to its current appearance in 2006. Currently the house is in excellent condition and well maintained. The annual operating budget for the George W. Bush Childhood Home allows for two full-time permanent staff members, who spend the majority of their time on administrative duties, routine maintenance, community outreach, and fundraising. The nonprofit organization

has designed and developed its own website – [www.bushchildhoodhome.org](http://www.bushchildhoodhome.org) – and created a printed brochure.

Onsite interpretive and educational services are provided almost exclusively by part-time volunteers. This situation has resulted in reduced operating hours, scheduling problems and inconsistent educational and interpretive programs. In addition, the volunteer staffing levels are currently insufficient to support existing visitation, and often unavailable during certain periods of the operating hours of the historic site. The lack of a permanent interpretive staff has also hampered the George W. Bush Childhood Home from developing public educational programs and community activities. In addition, while the George W. Bush Childhood Home has set aside one room to store historic objects, it does not currently have a staff curator, curatorial

facility, or professional curatorial program to accession and provide care for historic objects and documents.

In conclusion, the George W. Bush Childhood Home is in excellent condition and well maintained by the nonprofit managing entity, George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc. Yet, several unmet needs exist. The organization has insufficient staff to develop a comprehensive interpretive program and to professionally manage and care for its historic collections. Existing interpretive staff levels are also inadequate to meet visitation levels or to efficiently develop public educational programs or community activities. As such, based on a preliminary assessment of the site's unmet needs, the George W. Bush Childhood Home appears to meet the criteria for need for NPS management. ✦



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Through this reconnaissance survey, the NPS has determined that the George W. Bush Childhood Home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas, appears to be nationally significant under National Historic Landmark Criterion 2 because of its important associations with George W. Bush, the 43<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States. While George W. Bush's period of residence at the home was less than five years, his time at 1412 West Ohio Avenue was exceptionally influential in the development of his character and political philosophy, and it is here where the ideological foundations of his Presidency took root. From 1951 to 1955, the otherwise unremarkable house at 1412 West Ohio Avenue is also exceptional as being the home of two future Presidents of the United States – the first is George H.W. Bush, who was then a young man learning the oil business and supporting his family, and the second is his oldest son, George W. Bush, for whom this house was an especially important childhood home. (The only other father-and-son Presidents were John Adams, the 2<sup>nd</sup> President of the United States, and his son John Quincy Adams, the 6<sup>th</sup> President, whose homes are part of Adams National Historical Park.)

The home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue is an outstanding representation of George W. Bush's childhood and formative years. George W. Bush lived at 1412 West Ohio Avenue longer than any other residence of his childhood, and this is the family home most often recalled in Bush family memoirs. This home is where George W. Bush began playing baseball, had formative educational experiences at his local public school, first understood the concept of neighborhood and community, stood by his parents through the tragic death of his



*Former President George H.W. Bush, Laura Bush, and Barbara Bush share a moment in the living room of the President George W. Bush Childhood Home in Midland, Texas, prior to the dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony of the home, now restored as a museum, April 11, 2006. Photo: White House photo by Shealah Craighead.*

sister, and welcomed the first of his three younger brothers. His time in Midland also clearly influenced his ideological development and the values that he brought into his Presidency. While living at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, the young George W. Bush accompanied his parents to church and joined the Cub Scouts and Roy Rogers Riders' Club, which taught the traditional values and mores that the future President embraced. In Midland, he was taught to be honest, to work hard at school, to have faith, and to love his country. Except for the death of his sister, his was a happy childhood rooted in family and friends. For George W. Bush, Midland was a secure place where a boy could spend endless hours playing baseball and riding his bicycle without fear. Dan P. McAdams, in his book *George W. Bush and the Redemptive Dream*, analyzed the manner in which George W. Bush's childhood shaped his political perspective. He notes that the values expressed in George W. Bush's memories

of his youth were not only idyllic, but also conservative. He argues that by the time George W. Bush went to high school he had internalized the basis of a conservative, traditionalist identity that matured into his political identity later in life. It was a philosophy based on an appreciation for simplicity, security, authority, and tradition. These were all values expressed in his memories of Midland. McAdams further argues that George W. Bush's philosophy of "compassionate conservatism" was influenced by a desire to share the America he remembered as a child in Midland with the rest of the United States. It was a conservatism that hoped to bring loyalty, morality, and traditional authority back to American communities. The Midland of George W. Bush's youth was the ideal to which he thought all should aspire.<sup>101</sup> McAdams's analysis reinforces the conclusion that living in Midland was an important formative experience relating to President George W. Bush.

The traditional political identity that George W. Bush conveyed as President was shaped by his experience as a boy on West Ohio Avenue and by his idyllic memories of Midland. Whenever President George W. Bush referenced the "American Dream," it was Midland that he had in mind. When he campaigned as a centrist who called himself a "compassionate conservative," it was a philosophy borne of the goodness and opportunity, buttressed by personal experiences that he had known in Midland. And even though as a young man George W. Bush attended some of the most prestigious schools in New England, he immediately returned home to Texas – where he married fellow Midlander Laura Welch Bush, started his family, launched his professional career, and ran for public office for the first time,

embarking on a life in politics that would eventually lead to the White House.

In addition, the home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue retains a very high degree of historic integrity in terms of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc. has restored the house to its 1950s character, specifically to the time of George W. Bush's childhood. All work was done in consultation with the Texas Historical Commission, the Bush family, and other individuals with personal knowledge of the house in the 1950s. Restoration has taken place on the interior and exterior of the house. Indeed, the home is being preserved as a museum to tell the story of the life of George W. Bush in Midland, and to celebrate the lives of two presidents, two governors, and two first ladies. The neighborhood in which the home is situated also retains considerable integrity reflecting 1950s Midland.

This reconnaissance survey also has determined that the George W. Bush Childhood Home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, appears to meet NPS criteria for suitability, feasibility, and need for NPS management. The NPS does not own or administer any site that tells the story of the life and presidency of George W. Bush; as such, this home would fill an important gap in the National Park System. The George W. Bush Childhood Home also appears likely to meet many, but perhaps not all, of the NPS criteria for feasibility. The historic site is of sufficient size and configuration to protect key historic resources and accommodate public use. Acquisition and operational costs appear to be at reasonable levels.

In terms of the need for NPS management, the home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue is in excellent condition and well maintained

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<sup>101</sup> McAdams, *George W. Bush and the Redemptive Dream*, 121-123, 134.

by the nonprofit management entity, George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc. Yet, as noted in this report, the nonprofit organization has insufficient staffing to develop comprehensive interpretive programming and community activities, and to professionally manage and care for its historic collections. The museum has two full-time paid staff, and relies primarily on volunteers to provide tours of the site. In addition, the volunteer staffing levels are currently insufficient to support existing visitation levels, and are often unavailable during some periods of the operating hours.

In conclusion, the NPS has determined that 1412 West Ohio Avenue appears to meet NPS criteria for national significance,

suitability, feasibility, and need for NPS management, and recommends that the home be further studied as a potential unit of the National Park System. A full, Congressionally authorized special resource study would identify a range of management alternatives for the George W. Bush Childhood Home, including its potential as a national historic site. Another possible alternative, based on the strengths of the existing management organization, may be that the George W. Bush Childhood Home becomes an affiliated area of the National Park System, and the NPS provides programmatic support in certain professional disciplines such as interpretation and curation. ✪





## APPENDIX:

# THE 41ST AND 43RD PRESIDENTS AND FIRST LADIES OF THE UNITED STATES

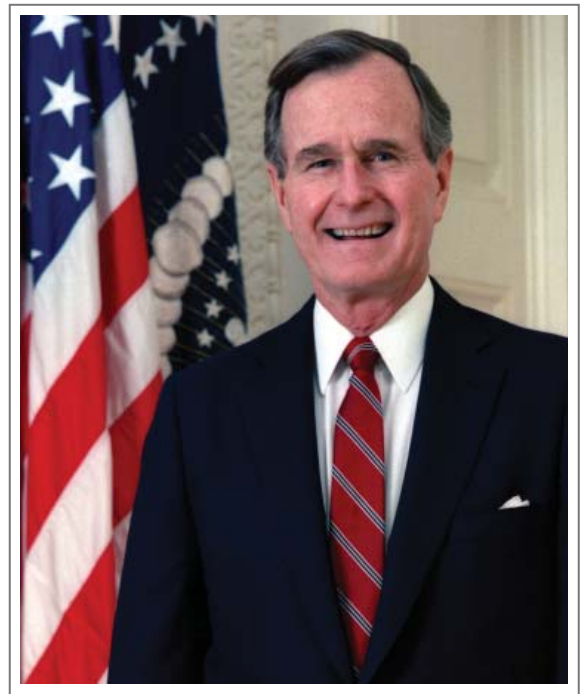
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Midland, Texas, is associated with two Presidents of the United States – 41st President George H.W. Bush and the 43rd President George W. Bush. Both future Presidents, along with future First Lady Barbara Bush, lived at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, which is now operated as the George W. Bush Childhood Home museum. Also associated with the town of Midland is First Lady Laura Bush. Although she did not live at the West Ohio Avenue address, Laura Bush grew up in Midland and attended the same junior high school as her future husband, President George W. Bush. Following is brief biographical information on these Presidents and First Ladies.

### George H.W. Bush 41<sup>st</sup> President of the United States (1989-1993)

In November 1951, the future President George H.W. Bush moved his family into the house at 1412 West Ohio Avenue in Midland. An ambitious young man, Bush headed to Texas following his graduation from Yale in 1948 and his acceptance of a job in the oil industry with the International Derrick and Equipment Company. George H.W. Bush started out as an equipment clerk, “at the very bottom of the corporate ladder,” but after a few years, with financial backing from an uncle, he and neighbor John Overbey went out on their own and founded the Bush-Overbey Oil Development Company.<sup>102</sup> In 1952, they merged with the Liedtke brothers to form Zapata Petroleum, which flourished and expanded into offshore drilling. “This West Texas is a fabulous place,” Bush wrote. “Fortunes can be made . . .”<sup>103</sup>

Texas was a world away from Bush’s New England roots, where he was born into a prominent family in Milton, Massachusetts,



*George H.W. Bush. Photo: Official Portrait of George H.W. Bush, U. S. Government Photo*

on June 12, 1924, the second of five children of Prescott and Dorothy Walker Bush. His father was an investment banker who served in the U.S. Senate (1952-1963). Although wealthy, the Bushes raised their children to be modest and stressed the importance

<sup>102</sup> Bush, *All The Best*, 63.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

of public service.<sup>104</sup> George H.W. (named after his mother's father, George Herbert Walker) attended Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, and graduated in the midst of World War II. On December 7, 1941, "everything changed," wrote George W. Bush about his father's life. "Dad and some classmates were walking across the Andover campus . . . when they learned that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor."<sup>105</sup> Although Prescott Bush encouraged his son to go on with his plans to attend Yale, George H.W. chose the path of many other young men of his generation. On his 18th birthday he enlisted and became the youngest pilot in the U.S. Navy. He flew 58 combat missions before being shot down. He was rescued, returned to the States, married Barbara Pierce on January 6, 1945, and only then headed to Yale on the G.I. Bill. While there, his first son, George W. Bush, was born on July 6, 1946.

The Texas years were prosperous, though heartache struck when daughter Robin died of leukemia in 1953. In 1959, the Bushes moved to Houston, where George H.W. began his political career as Republican Party chairman of Harris County. In 1964 he ran for the U.S. Senate but lost. In 1966, he won a seat in the House of Representatives. He supported the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Act of 1968. He lost another Senate bid, but soon was named ambassador to the United Nations. He went on to serve as Republican Party chairman during the Watergate years, as chief of the U.S. Liaison's Office to China, and as head of the Central Intelligence Agency. In 1980 he joined the Reagan Administration as Vice President, then won the Presidency in 1988.

As President (1989-1993), Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Clean Air Act Amendments. In "Operation Desert Storm," he responded with force to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and, in "Operation Just Cause," brought to trial Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega. President George H.W. Bush also led American foreign policy during the end of the Cold War, including the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall and the ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

After the White House, George and Barbara Bush resumed their private lives in Houston and Kennebunkport, Maine

### **Barbara Pierce Bush** **First Lady of the United States** **(1989-1993)**



*Barbara Bush. Photo: White House Photo Office, courtesy George Bush Presidential Library and Museum*

Barbara Pierce married the future president George Herbert Walker Bush when she was 19 years old and living in Rye, New York, the comfortable New York City suburb where she grew up. She was born on June 8, 1925, the third of four children of Marvin and Pauline Robinson Pierce. Her father worked for the McCall publishing company, becoming company president in 1946.

<sup>104</sup> Miller Center, University of Virginia, "American President: George H.W. Bush" <<http://millercenter.org/president/bush/essays/biography/1>>

<sup>105</sup> Bush, 41: *A Portrait of My Father*, 16.



Barbara was reared in an upper-middle-class home full of books, attended public school through the sixth grade, and then the private Rye Country Day School and Ashley Hall boarding school in South Carolina. She spent a year at Smith College before leaving to get married and would always take great pride in being George Bush's wife and the mother of six children: George (1946), Pauline "Robin" (1949), Jeb (1953), Neil (1955), Marvin (1956), and Dorothy (1959).<sup>106</sup> Robin died of leukemia in 1953.

The trajectory of Barbara Bush's life followed that of her husband's – from the move to West Texas, to his entry into politics and election to Congress in 1966. During these early years, Barbara Bush evolved from a woman focused on the responsibilities of motherhood, to a politician's wife who became an avid campaigner and popular national figure when her husband was elected president in 1988.

As First Lady she was known for her signature strand of pearls, her wit, and her fondness for animals, including Millie, the springer spaniel who gave birth to puppies while the Bushes lived in the White House.<sup>107</sup> Mrs. Bush attributed her popularity to her white hair and matronly figure, an image that endeared her to many. She did her best to cultivate the benign image although one reporter described her as "blunt and opinionated. . . formidable and powerful," a woman who was extremely defensive of the president.<sup>108</sup>

Her best-known work as First Lady was literacy, which especially interested her

because her son Neil was dyslexic. She founded the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy and regularly spoke on national radio during *Mrs. Bush's Story Time*. She visited homeless shelters and made headlines when she held a baby infected with AIDS, thus countering fears regarding the contagiousness of the disease. She was credited for influencing the President's proposal to increase funding for AIDS research and for his signature on the Hate Crimes Statistics Act, when she invited openly gay citizens to the signing ceremony. She hired an African-American press secretary and gave particular attention to black colleges.

When her son George W. Bush was elected President in 2000, Barbara Bush became only the second woman to be the wife of one president (No. 41) and the mother of another (No. 43). Abigail Adams was wife of John Adams (No. 2), and mother of John Quincy Adams (No. 6).<sup>109</sup>

### George W. Bush 43rd President of the United States (2001-2009)

George Walker Bush was barely two years old when his father, just out of Yale, set out by car for West Texas. Barbara Bush soon followed by plane, carrying the toddler they called "Georgie" with her. Though born in Connecticut on July 6, 1946, George W. Bush's first memories were of a hot, dry, and dusty West Texas town – Midland – where giant sandstorms blew and tumbleweeds rolled across the family's yard on West Ohio Avenue. Midland had broad horizons and Texans a brash directness that appealed to George W. Bush; Texas was the place he would always call home.

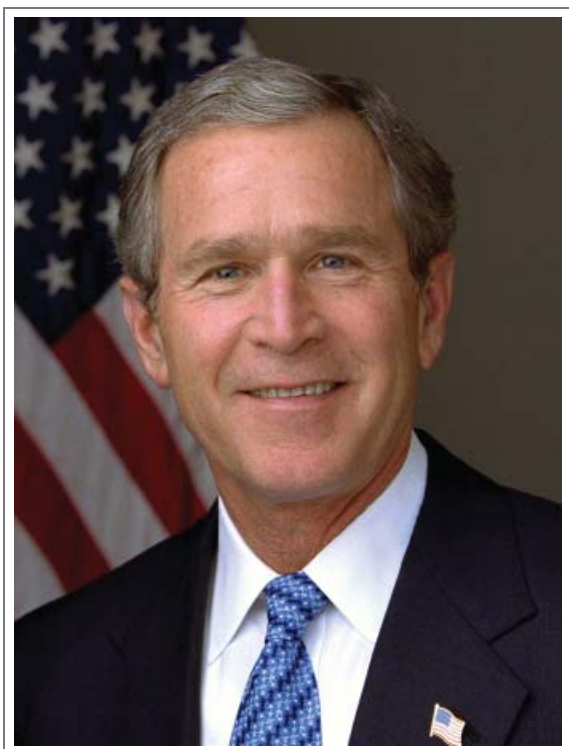
As George H.W. Bush worked hard in the oil business, young George filled his days

<sup>106</sup> Pamela Kilian, *Barbara Bush: Matriarch of a Dynasty* (New York: Thomas Dunn Books, St. Martin's Press, 2002), 12.

<sup>107</sup> Barbara Bush wrote *Millie's Book* (New York: William Morrow, 1990). It made No. 1 on *The New York Times* best-seller list.

<sup>108</sup> "First Lady Biography: Barbara Bush," "National First Ladies' Library and Historic Site, <http://www.firstladies.org/biographies/firstladies.aspx?biography=42>

<sup>109</sup> Abigail Adams died seven years before her son became president.



George W. Bush. Photo: White House photo by Eric Draper

with baseball, playing for hours. He went to church, joined the Cub Scouts, and walked to school. The years in Midland were formative ones, and the death of his little sister Robin in 1953 left an indelible mark on young George. As he took it upon himself to try to cheer his mother, he became a bit of a clown, determined “to live each day to its fullest.”<sup>110</sup>

As a teenager, Bush followed in his father’s footsteps, attending high school at the Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, and then enrolling at Yale, where he graduated in 1968, in the midst of the Vietnam War. He joined the Texas Air National Guard and flew F-102 jet fighters at Ellington Air Force Base in Houston. In 1972, he moved to Alabama to work on a Republican campaign (his second), then enrolled at Harvard Business School.

After earning his MBA, he used \$15,000 left over from an education fund set up by his parents, to set himself up in the oil business. He formed Arbusto Energy, which grew into Bush Exploration and then merged with Spectrum 7, which eventually was purchased by Harken Energy.<sup>111</sup>

In 1977 he met and married Midland native Laura Welch and ran unsuccessfully for a seat in Congress. The Bushes twin daughters, Barbara and Jenna, were born in 1981. The family moved to Washington, D.C., in 1988 to assist in George H.W. Bush’s successful campaign for President, then returned to Texas, where George W. Bush purchased an interest in the Texas Rangers baseball team. “This is as good as it gets,” he remembered thinking.<sup>112</sup>

After five years as general manager, Bush returned to politics. He was elected Governor of Texas in 1994 and earned a reputation for bipartisan friendships. When he won a second term in a landslide, he emerged as the Republican Party standard-bearer in the 2000 presidential election, George W. Bush embraced the fundamental platform of his party – “a vibrant free-enterprise, a smaller more accountable federal government, and greater decision-making at the state level.”<sup>113</sup> He defeated Democrat Al Gore, although losing the popular vote. The victory followed vote recounts and legal challenges that placed the outcome of the election in the hands of the U.S. Supreme Court.

In the White House, Bush signed a trillion-dollar tax cut in June 2001, and the following January signed the No Child Left Behind Act, which tied federal funding to student test results. The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, irrevocably

<sup>111</sup> He served as a consultant and a member of the board of directors until 1993.

<sup>112</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 198.

<sup>113</sup> Bush, *41: A Portrait of My Father*, 71.

<sup>110</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 15.

altered Bush's Presidency. He announced the "War on Terror," which led to direct military action in Afghanistan and Iraq. Despite strong anti-war sentiment over the invasion of Iraq, which had not been implicated in the attacks, Bush handily won re-election in 2004. In his second term he faced crises including Hurricane Katrina and the 2008 credit catastrophe, which occurred at a time when the country was facing a multi-trillion-dollar debt. The Bush administration enacted a \$700 billion Emergency Economic Stabilization Act to bail out the housing and banking industries.<sup>114</sup>

Bush left office in January 2009 and returned to Dallas, where he participated in the building of his presidential library and wrote his memoir, *Decision Points*.

### Laura Welch Bush

**First Lady of the United States  
(2001-2009)**

When she was 30 years old and working as an elementary school librarian, Laura Welch met the future President George W. Bush at a backyard barbeque in her hometown of Midland. The two wed four months later, in November 1977 – even as George W. Bush was planning his first run for political office. Laura Bush left the work-a-day-world as a librarian and joined her new husband on the campaign trail, her life set on a path that would take her far from her humble beginnings in West Texas.

Laura Bush was an only child, born on November 4, 1946, to Harold and Jenna Hawkins Welch. Her father owned a home building company, and her mother worked as the company bookkeeper. In *Spoken from the Heart*, Laura Bush writes about growing up in a town she describes as "a sleepy backwater" where the wind



Laura Bush. Photo: White House photo by Krisanna Johnson

constantly blew.<sup>115</sup> But the sky was broad and her childhood happy. She went to movies and football games, attended church and joined the Girl Scouts. She and George W. Bush, she said, had been cut "from the same solid Permian Basin stone."<sup>116</sup> Laura graduated from Southern Methodist University in 1968, taught elementary school in Dallas and Houston and, in 1972, earned a master's degree in library science at the University of Texas.

The Bushes' twin daughters, Barbara and Jenna, were born in November 1981, and Laura focused on rearing them while also serving as "the strong but steadying influence" as George decided to stop drinking.<sup>117</sup> When he was elected Texas

<sup>115</sup> Bush, *Spoken from the Heart*, 19.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>117</sup> National First Ladies' Library and Historic Site, *First Lady Biography: Laura Bush* < <http://www.firstladies.org/biographies/firstladies.aspx?biography=44> >

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*



Governor in 1994, the new First Lady started a Texas Book Festival and focused on literacy and education.

When he was elected President in 2000, Laura kept a low profile until the attacks of September 11 pushed her into the spotlight. She visited hospitals and appeared on television to offer words of comfort. As First Lady, Mrs. Bush launched the Preserve America historic preservation program. She visited schools to highlight innovative programs, and likely helped spur the Bush Administration to request more money for libraries and museums. She spoke out on behalf of at-risk youth and women's health. She traveled to Africa to offer relief to AIDS victims, visited Afghanistan to promote a

teacher-training institute for women, and participated in the World Economic Forum, where she argued that education for all people fostered democracy.

While a strong defender of her husband and his policies, she still held and expressed her own opinions, including that abortion was a private decision and that *Roe v. Wade* should not be overturned.

Laura and George W. Bush returned to Texas in 2009, where they split their time between their home in Dallas and their Prairie Chapel Ranch in Crawford. Laura Bush continues to promote women's rights and health, education and literacy. ☺

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