



# Foundation Document Overview

## President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home

Arkansas



### Contact Information

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## Purpose



*“The purpose of President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site is to preserve the site most directly associated with the former President’s youth and early development; to interpret his family’s and community’s influences on Bill Clinton’s education and growth of his ambitions, as well as his sense of inner strength and dedication to purpose; all for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of the public in this and future generations.”*

## Significance

Significance statements express why President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- In this home on South Hervey Street, William Jefferson “Bill” Clinton spent the first four years of his life (1946 to 1950), and continued to visit until 1957, when his family sold the home after his grandfather’s death.
- Here in Hope, Arkansas, during the time of legal segregation, Bill Clinton’s grandfather owned a store where he served customers of diverse races, ages, and income levels. As the young boy observed his grandfather’s warm interactions with this mixed group of people, Clinton developed a broad view about race relations, social justice, and the inherent worth of each human being that helped shape his lifelong career in public service.
- In this home, a young Bill Clinton was surrounded by loving, supportive relationships with his mother, his grandparents, and lifelong friends. Friendships started here in Hope extended into his service as Governor of Arkansas and as our nation’s 42nd president. Mixed with the happiness of young Bill Clinton’s life in this place was the sad knowledge of the loss of a father he never knew.
- This is the place where Bill Clinton experienced the post-World War II era of expanding affluence and optimism for the future that nurtured his convictions about the value of public service and served as a springboard to the governorship, the White House, and his later work around the globe to improve the lives of others.





## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- The Home (117 Hervey Street). The home is critically important for telling these stories. Seeing their private spaces affords a glimpse into the family structure (separate beds in the grandparents' room, and the sense of being a child in Bill Clinton's room looking at the trains go by) that one does not get from outside the house, or even from the downstairs, more public areas.



## Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from — and should reflect — park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- In President Clinton's words, "Hope was home," and the Birthplace Home and surrounding yard provide a window into the private spaces of his childhood and family dynamics, the beginnings of President Clinton's lifelong friendships, and his development as a future world leader.
- Bill Clinton's childhood experiences in the post-World War II town of Hope—a vibrant town of industrial growth, new housing, and a busy railroad—contributed to his sense of optimism and fairness that steered him toward public service that continues today in his work to improve the lives of people around the world.
- In an age of legalized racial segregation, a young Bill Clinton encountered customers at his grandfather's store of diverse races, ages, and income levels, and learned from his grandfather's interactions with them the intrinsic value of each human being. Such experiences helped shape his views on race relations and social justice.
- Bill Clinton's mother and grandmother strived to improve the family's lot by sharing childcare responsibilities, pursuing opportunities for learning, and working outside the home to contribute to the family's finances. Bill Clinton learned to value education and a strong work ethic as the means for all individuals to create better lives for themselves.



## Interpretive Themes continued

- Watching his grandfather extend credit to those in need of food regardless of their ability to pay for it inspired Bill Clinton in his later roles as governor and president. Bill Clinton became an advocate for government policies and programs which provided childcare, educational opportunities, and other forms of assistance to those in need.
- Bill Clinton pursued a career in government service with a personal goal of enabling individuals to create better lives for themselves--even in the face of adversity and loss--formed on a foundation of education, fairness, and personal responsibility.

## Description

President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site is located in Hope, Arkansas. Hope is 30 miles east of Texarkana (on the Texas and Arkansas border) and 110 miles west of Little Rock, Arkansas, on Interstate 30. The site includes the Birthplace Home, a visitor center located in an adjacent historic home, and the Virginia Clinton Kelley Memorial Garden.

On August 19, 1946, Virginia Blythe gave birth to her son, William Jefferson Blythe, III. Named for his father, who died before he was born, he grew up to become William Jefferson Clinton - the 42nd president of the United States. He lived in this comfortable frame house in Hope with his widowed mother and her parents for four years after his birth in 1946.

In this house, he learned many of the life lessons that later defined his presidency and his emergence as a global statesman.

The non-profit Clinton Birthplace Foundation, Inc., acquired the home in 1994 and opened the restored house to the public three years later as President Bill Clinton's 1st Home Museum & Exhibit Center. The foundation added the Virginia Clinton Kelley Memorial Garden to honor President Clinton's mother. In 2010, the home was officially designated as a National Historic Site in the National Park System and the National Park Service assumed operation of the site in January 2011.

*In many ways, I know that all I am or ever will be came from here...a place and a time where...kids like me could dream of being part of something bigger than themselves.*

President Bill Clinton,  
March 12, 1999.

