



# Foundation Document Overview

## Herbert Hoover National Historic Site

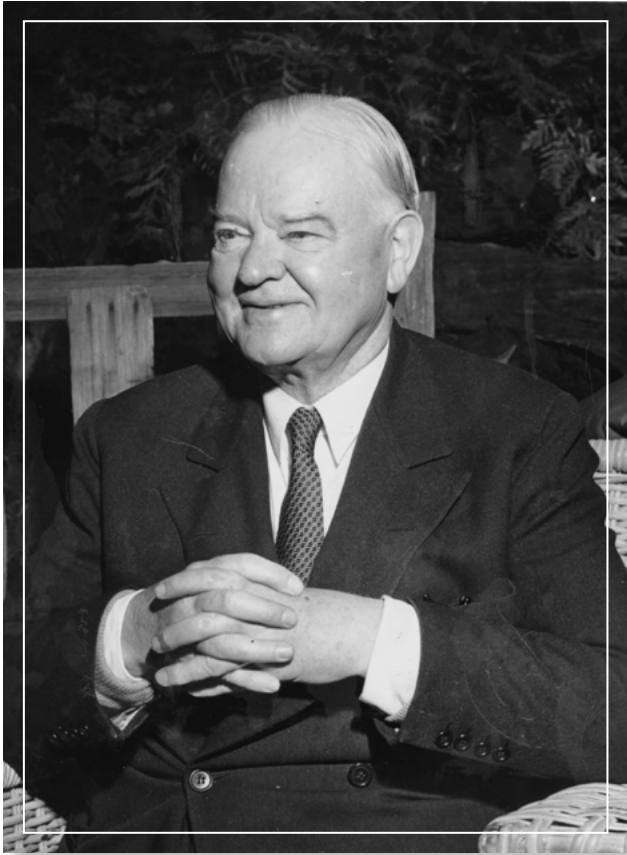
Iowa



### Contact Information

For more information about the *Herbert Hoover National Historic Site Foundation Document*, contact: [heho\\_superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:heho_superintendent@nps.gov) or (319) 643-2541 or write to: Superintendent, Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, P.O. Box 607, West Branch, IA 52358

## Purpose



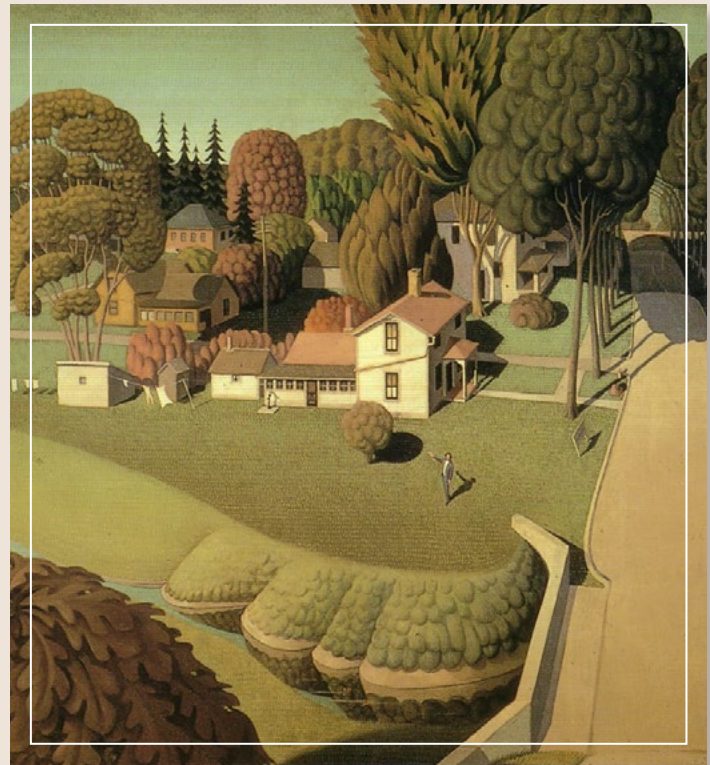
*The purpose of HERBERT HOOVER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE is to preserve in public ownership the Birthplace Cottage, Gravesite, and other historically significant properties associated with the life of Herbert Hoover in West Branch, Iowa, and to commemorate and interpret his life, career, and accomplishments.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Herbert Hoover National Historic Site 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.

- West Branch, Iowa, is home to the birthplace and the formative years of Herbert Hoover, which set him on the road to becoming the nation's 31st president and a global humanitarian. His experiences and associations with family and the community influenced his personality, work ethic, spiritual and moral character, and ambition.
- Herbert Hoover National Historic Site commemorates President Herbert Hoover's life and accomplishments, and maintains historically significant properties associated with him. The park was designed with the direct involvement of Herbert Hoover, Lou Henry Hoover, their family, friends, and the community of West Branch.





## 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.

- **Hoover's Birthplace Cottage.** The cottage birthplace includes the cottage itself, the furnishings in the cottage, and the immediate grounds and associated archeological resources.
- **Hoover's Gravesite.** The gravesite includes the designed memorial hillside landscape, with plantings, walkways, flagpole, and vista to the Birthplace Cottage. The gravesite includes Herbert Hoover and his wife, Lou Henry Hoover.
- **Friends' Meetinghouse, Reconstructed Blacksmith Shop, and School House.** These buildings form the core historic area and encircle the Birthplace Cottage.
- **Statue of Isis.** This bronze statue was given to Hoover by the people of Belgium for his relief work in that country, and now stands between the Birthplace Cottage and the Presidential Library and Museum.
- **PT Smith House and House of the Maples Site.** Hoover lived in the House of the Maples (no longer extant) and had vivid memories of the Smith House next door.
- **Commemorative Setting.** The core area of the park is managed to commemorate and appreciate the president and Mrs. Hoover's lives and legacies.

Herbert Hoover National Historic Site contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Historic Buildings on Downey and Poplar Streets.** These homes reflect the setting of Hoover's birthplace and the character of West Branch in the late 1800s and early 1900s.
- **Open Rural Space.** A reconstructed prairie and agricultural lands form the backdrop of the park and help maintain the commemorative setting.

## 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.

- **Simple Beginnings.** “In no other land could a boy from a country village, without inheritance or influential friends, look forward with unbounded hope.” — Herbert Hoover
- **Family and Fellowship.** Growing up in West Branch, Herbert Hoover saw his parents, family, and others in leadership roles, which instilled in him a drive to become a leader and a success.
- **Triumphs and Tragedies.** A child who grows up in a life of adversity takes a path that requires personal endurance and perseverance.
- **Adversity Leads to Opportunity.** Herbert Hoover's loss of his parents in early childhood influenced his self-reliant character and his future concern for the physical and social well-being of the youth of all nations.
- **Faith, Hope, Charity, and Love.** Herbert Hoover's Quaker beliefs in the equality of all people and in helping others in times of crisis or need led to his becoming one of the world's great humanitarians.
- **Nature and Stewardship.** Herbert Hoover's experience living in a rural environment in early childhood shaped his interest in the natural world, which influenced his choice of career and the recreational activities he pursued throughout his life.
- **A Memorial and a Legacy.** The influence of Herbert Hoover, Lou Henry Hoover, and their family shaped the development of the presidential memorial area in order for the public to gain a fuller understanding of Hoover's life.

## Description

Herbert Hoover was a successful engineer, an international humanitarian, and the 31st president of the United States (1929–1933). Hoover spent his early childhood in West Branch, Iowa, from his birth in 1874 to his departure from the community in 1885. His experiences with family, community members, and members of his family's Quaker church were strong influences on his life.

In the mid-1930s, after Hoover left the presidency, the Hoover family purchased and restored the Hoover Birthplace Cottage and began to develop a park on the site. The Hoover Presidential Foundation, which began in 1939 as the Hoover Birthplace Society, facilitated the preservation of the birthplace and the establishment of the park. Mr. Hoover chose West Branch as the location for his presidential library and as the site of his final resting place. The park was designed to tell the story of his life, from humble beginnings to world renown.

Herbert Hoover National Historic Site is managed by the National Park Service. It encompasses his Birthplace Cottage, Gravesite, Presidential Library and Museum, Friends Meetinghouse, Blacksmith Shop, Schoolhouse, statue of the Egyptian goddess Isis, two farms, a reconstructed tallgrass prairie, and an originally unnamed tributary of the West Branch of the Wapsinonoc Creek (locally referred to as Hoover Creek). The park is embedded in the town of West Branch, and provides an accessible, dignified, and spacious setting in which visitors can experience these resources.

The gravesite of Herbert Hoover and his wife, Lou Henry Hoover, rests on a hillside 550 yards southwest of the Birthplace Cottage. The gravesite overlooks both the library and Birthplace Cottage. A reconstructed prairie and agricultural fields provide a background for the gravesite area.

A loop road brings visitors to the gravesite, and the 1.8-mile Herbert Hoover Prairie Trail runs along the park perimeter and through a portion of the restored prairie.

The Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum is also included within the boundaries of the park. It is independently administered by the National Archives and Records Administration and is the primary repository of material related to Herbert Hoover's presidency.

The National Park Service maintains a visitor center to greet visitors and guide their visit. Displays inside the visitor center focus on Mr. Hoover's upbringing in West Branch, his success as an engineer, his significant accomplishments in international relief work following World War I, his presidency, and his involvement in developing the park. There is no fee to visit the NPS visitor center or the NPS-managed portions of the park; visitors must pay a fee to access additional resources at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum.

