



# Foundation Document Overview

## John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site

### Massachusetts

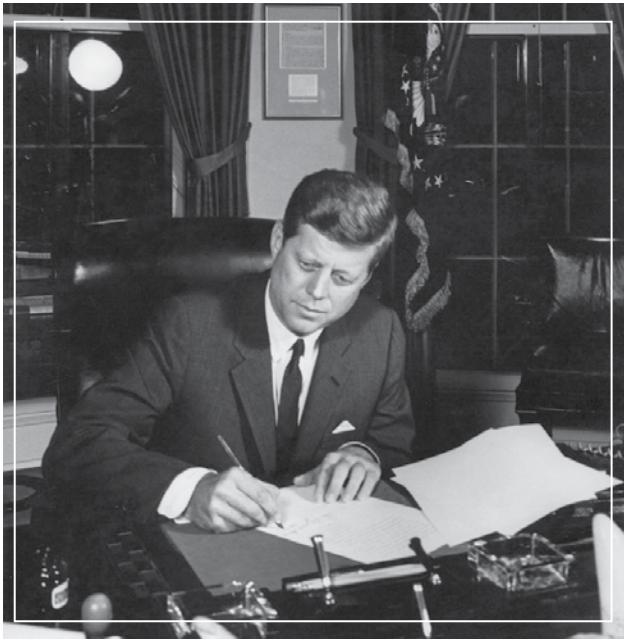


#### Contact Information

For more information about the *John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site Foundation Document*, contact: [jofi\\_superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:jofi_superintendent@nps.gov) or (617) 566-7937 or write to: Superintendent, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, 83 Beals Street Brookline, Massachusetts 02446



## Purpose



JFK in the Oval Office, White House, Oct., 1962.

*As a gift from Mrs. Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy to the people of the United States, JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE preserves and interprets the birthplace and first home of the 35th president of the United States.*



Nursery, with christening dress worn by all Kennedy children.

## Significance

Significance statements express why John Fitzgerald Kennedy 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.

- John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site is the birthplace and early childhood home of the 35th president of the United States.
- It was here, in their first home, that Joseph and Rose Kennedy began to cultivate and instill in their children the family's ideals, aspirations, and ambitions.
- Mrs. Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy repurchased the home in 1966 and, guided by her recollections, carefully re-created the birthplace as a gift to the American people in the lingering wake of the president's assassination.
- The historic house, collections, and neighboring Brookline community preserve the context within which one of the nation's most powerful political families was formed and permit exploration of early influences that helped to shape the character and ambitions of John Fitzgerald Kennedy.



Kitchen

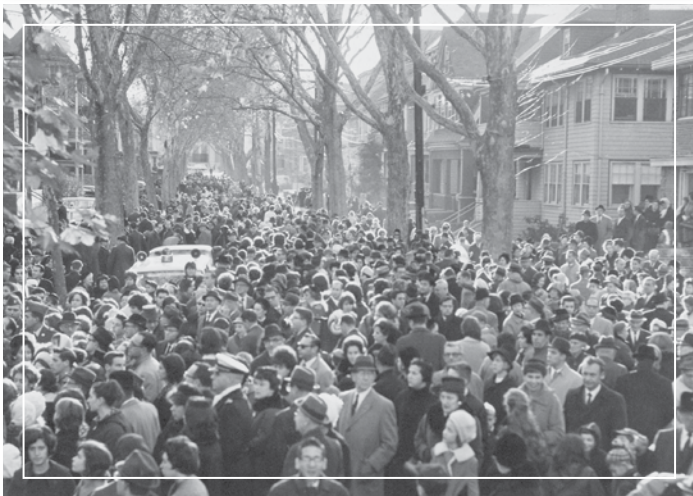
## Fundamental Resources and Values

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.

- **John Fitzgerald Kennedy birthplace and childhood home includes both house and landscape (83 Beals Street, Brookline, Massachusetts)**
- **Collections and archives**
- **Viewshed of the Brookline neighborhood from and to the John Fitzgerald Kennedy childhood home**



*View (c. 1910) from the intersection of Harvard and Beals Streets, looking northeast on Beals towards the site of what will become JFK's birthplace, near the end of the block on the right.*



*National Day of Mourning for President Kennedy, Beals Street, November 25, 1963.*

## 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.

- **Family Beginnings.** The Kennedy family home at 83 Beals Street represents the beginning of Joseph and Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy's married life together, and offers opportunities to explore the hope, uncertainty, opportunity, resolve, and accomplishment that defined the Kennedys' Brookline years as they formed their large family, began their upward climb, and embraced new roles and expanding spheres of influence in a rapidly changing world.
- **Formative Influences.** Joseph and Rose Kennedy's ambitious life choices, high expectations, belief in human agency, religious faith, and commitment to family and country shaped the home environment in which young Jack Kennedy defined himself and his role in the family, and developed a foundation in character that inspired a life of public service.
- **Legacy and Commemoration.** Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy's treatment of the house, her selection and arrangement of objects, and her recorded memories of life in Brookline suggest how she wanted future generations to view the beginnings of the president's life, and invite the public to imagine how the waning years of the 1960s—characterized by national mourning, social turmoil, and political unrest—may have informed her commemorative treatment of the house and stories of the family's Brookline years
- **Intersections of History and Memory.** The Kennedy birthplace, boyhood home, historic neighborhood, and associated landmarks offer visitors opportunities to experience much of the physical environment of the early 20th century Kennedys, and to reflect on how successive generations construct and reinterpret history and memory.



## Description

John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, at 83 Beals Street, Brookline, Massachusetts, is the birthplace and first childhood home (1917–1920) of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the 35th president of the United States. The house, situated on a 0.1-acre plot, was built in 1909. In this, their first home, Joseph and Rose Kennedy began to instill in their children the family's ideals and aspirations. Almost 50 years later, Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy repurchased the house and thoughtfully crafted a re-creation of the home's interior (1914–1920) as a gift to the American people in the aftermath of the president's assassination. The site was established as a unit of the National Park Service by Public Law 90-20 in 1967 and opened to the public 2 years later.

The historic house, grounds, and collections of the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, as well as the views to and from the surrounding Brookline community, preserve the context of the formative years of one of the nation's leading political families. Four of the nine Kennedy children were born while the family resided at 83 Beals Street: Joseph, Jr.; John; Rosemary; and Kathleen. When John Kennedy was 3 years old, his parents sold the house and moved to a larger residence nearby at 51 Abbottsford Road. In 1927, the Kennedy family moved to New York.

Today the National Park Service presents guided tours of the house, with its display of household furnishings, photographs, and significant mementos personally collected by Mrs. Kennedy. Many pieces in the collection are original to the 1914–1920 historic period and reflect the lifestyle and various interests of the Kennedys. An audio tour narrated by Mrs. Kennedy provides visitors with an evocative glimpse of family life in Brookline. Mrs. Kennedy's treatment of the house, her selection and placement of objects and furnishings, and her recorded memories of life here suggest how she wanted the public to remember her son, her family, and their place in American history. Through a variety of traditional and contemporary means—including ranger-led and self-guided house tours, social media outreach, Junior Ranger programs, curriculum-based teacher conferences, cellphone tours, etc.—the National Park Service offers a range of visitor options for experiencing the site. Rangers also offer tours of the nearby neighborhood, which includes viewing the second Kennedy home at 51 Abbottsford Road, schools where the children studied, and Saint Aidan's Roman Catholic Church, where the family worshipped.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site is also significant for its connection to the President Kennedy commemorative period of 1960–1969 as well as ongoing memorial activities related to members of the Kennedy family. The National Register of Historic Places has recently recognized the expanded significance of the site by documenting the commemorative efforts relating to the establishment of the site between 1963 and 1969 and the personal involvement of Rose Kennedy between 1966 and 1969. The annual visitation at the site in 2012 was 22,642 (late May–October).

There are 1,360 objects in the park's collection, consisting of a mixture of artifacts original to the house, items that belonged to the Kennedy family, and period pieces. The collections include furniture, books, photographs, textiles, ceramics, and glassware. The historic furnishings acquired or returned to the house by Mrs. Kennedy were arranged in the late 1960s as she remembered them appearing during the family's occupancy (1914–1920). John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site also possesses a small collection of documents related to the site, primarily NPS site management records and ephemera related to the history of the Kennedy family.

The site is jointly managed with Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site in Brookline and Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site in Cambridge. John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site is located in the Coolidge Corner area, which is Brookline's primary commercial district and a leading example of a streetcar suburb.

