

Harry S Truman

STATE HISTORIC SITE

HARRY S TRUMAN BIRTH-PLACE STATE HISTORIC SITE

The life of Harry S Truman began humbly in a small, white frame house in Lamar, the Barton County seat. Throughout his life, he reflected the traditional values of the Midwest: honesty, a dedication to hard work, decisiveness, and forthrightness. And although he became the only Missourian ever to hold our nation's highest office, he remained, quite simply, a man from Missouri.

"I always came back to Independence every chance I got because the people in Independence, the people in Missouri had been responsible for sending me to Washington. And that's why when I ended up in the White House, after I had finished the job, I came back here. This is where I belong," the former president once said.

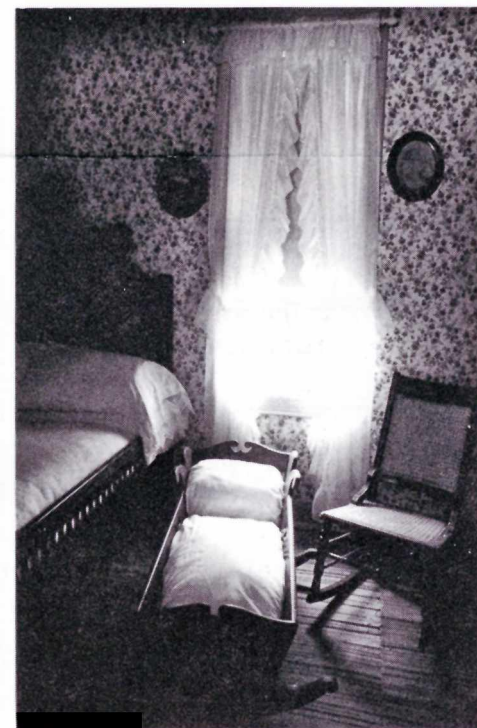
Harry Truman's roots were firmly in Missouri. Both sets of his grandparents had moved from Kentucky to a place called Westport Landing — later renamed Kansas City — in the 1840s. Truman's father, John Anderson Truman, was born Dec. 5, 1851, on a farm in Jackson County; his mother, Martha Ellen Young, was born Nov. 28, 1852, on a farm that now would be located at about 35th and Prospect streets in Kansas City. After John Anderson and Martha Ellen were married in 1881, they set off on their own and moved to Lamar where John continued farming and dealing in livestock.

Mrs. Truman gave birth to her son May 8, 1884, in the downstairs southwest bedroom of the 1½-story house she and her husband bought in 1882. On the same day Harry was born, John Anderson Truman proudly planted an Austrian pine tree at the corner of the house and nailed a mule shoe over the front door to celebrate his first child's birth.

At the time Harry was born, Lamar was a typical Missouri town. It had recovered from the devastation of the Civil War — a war that had left the town and surrounding countryside in a state of terror and disorder, half depopulated, and economically at a standstill. In 1884, Lamar had flour mills, banks, hardware and furniture



Nick Decker



Nick Decker

stores, lumber companies, groceries, two newspapers, livestock trading, and other businesses. Two railways, the Gulf and the Missouri Pacific, went through Lamar.

When Harry Truman was 11 months old, the Truman family moved from Lamar back to the area where John Anderson and Martha Ellen had been reared. After living in Harrisonville, Belton, and Grandview, the Trumans

came to Independence in 1890. Harry Truman began his formal schooling in Independence. He graduated from high school in 1901, and then he had to go to work rather than college so that his brother John Vivian and his sister Mary Jane could remain in school.

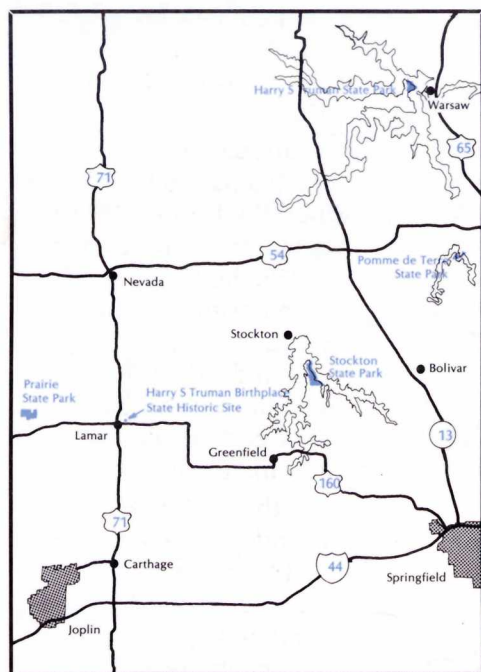
Truman worked hard and kept long hours all his life. His first job after graduation was as timekeeper for a railroad contractor. Subsequently, he worked in the mailing room of the *Kansas City Star* and in two banks. In 1906, Truman left the banking world to help his parents run the family's farm near Grandview, leaving only in 1917 when he joined the U.S. Army in World War I. During his time in the army, Truman became the commander of Battery D, 129th Field Artillery, and served in France.

When the war ended, the first item on Truman's peacetime agenda was to marry his childhood sweetheart, Elizabeth "Bess" Wallace. They were married June 28, 1919, in Independence. Next, he and a partner opened a haberdashery, or men's clothing store, in Kansas City. The business failed, however, in 1922 and Truman spent more than a decade paying off his debts.

After the business failure, Truman turned to local politics with the encouragement of one of his fellow officers,



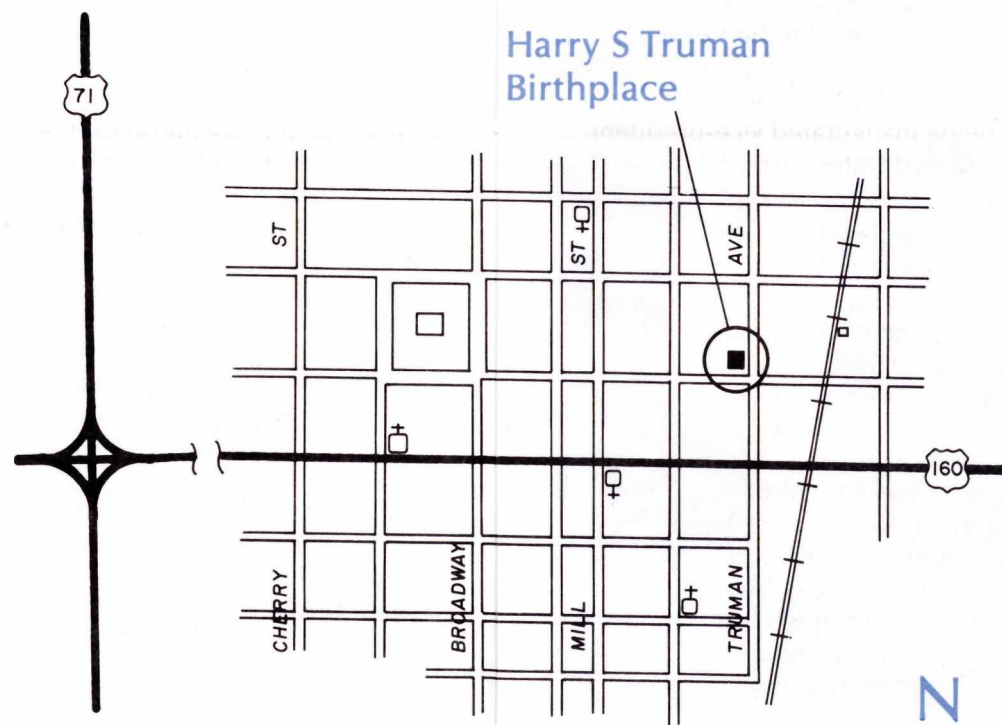
MISSOURI
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Division of Parks and Historic Preservation
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City, MO 65102



Harry S Truman Birthplace State Historic Site is open to visitors from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays, and from noon to 4 p.m. Sundays. The site is located two miles east of U.S. 71, one block off Highway 160 in Lamar, Barton County.

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Lt. James Pendergast, the nephew of political boss Tom Pendergast. Throughout his life, Truman avowed that Tom Pendergast never asked him to do a dishonest deed and that he had never interfered with Truman's work.

Truman's first job on the political scene was as eastern judge of the Jackson County Court. He was defeated in his reelection bid in 1924 (the same year his daughter Margaret was born), but he came back and served as presiding judge to the Jackson County Court from 1926 to 1934. Truman then was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1934 and reelected in 1940.

Truman's work on a Senate committee that was created to oversee military expenditures led President Franklin D. Roosevelt to select Truman as the 1944 Democratic candidate for vice-president. Truman reportedly drew the largest crowd in Barton County's history when he came back to Lamar for the first time to deliver his nomination acceptance speech.

As expected, the Roosevelt-Truman ticket won in 1944. But the unexpected also happened when the president died on April 12, 1945. Only 82 days after being inaugurated vice-president of the United States, Harry S Truman became the nation's 33rd president.

During his presidency, Truman ended World War II; initiated his "Fair Deal" program of social and economic reforms; signed the United Nations charter; brought about a major alliance of western nations known as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; survived an assassination attempt; worked to prevent railroad and steel mill strikes; stood against Sen. Joseph McCarthy and his Red-scare tactics; ordered Gen. Douglas MacArthur to lead the United States' efforts in the "police action" to counter North Korean aggression against South Korea; fired Gen. MacArthur; and began negotiations to end the Korean War.

The president announced that he would not be running for a second full term in 1952. Instead, he put his support behind Democrat Adlai E. Stevenson, who nonetheless lost the race to the Republican candidate, Gen. Dwight Eisenhower.

Following President Eisenhower's inauguration, Truman and his wife returned home to Independence where he wrote his two-volume

memoirs and worked daily for many years at the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, which was dedicated in September 1957.

Another dedication marked the second return of Truman to the town of his birth. When the Harry S Truman Birthplace State Historic Site was dedicated April 19, 1959, the former president thoroughly enjoyed the event: "They don't do this for a former president until he's been dead 50 years. I feel like I've been buried and dug up while I'm still alive and I'm glad they've done it to me today."

Truman died at the age of 88 on Dec. 26, 1972, in Independence. His wife died nearly 10 years later, in the fall of 1982. Both President and Mrs. Truman are buried on the grounds of the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum in Independence.

WHAT TO SEE

Harry S Truman Birthplace

This 1½-story house, built around 1881, now is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. John Anderson Truman bought the house for himself and his bride in 1882 for \$685. Measuring 20 by 28 feet, this small house has four rooms downstairs and two rooms upstairs.

An outdoor smokehouse and hand-dug well also have been preserved at this state historic site.

The United Auto Workers of America bought the house from descendants of the famous Wyatt Earp (who was once a constable of Lamar) for \$6,000 in 1957 and then donated it to the state in 1959. Since then, the house has been restored and redecorated with furnishings from the period of the Trumans' occupancy.

Places to Visit Nearby

Six state parks in southwestern Missouri have excellent recreational facilities. Bennett Spring, Pomme de Terre, Table Rock, Roaring River, Stockton, and Prairie state parks, all within easy driving distance of the Truman birthplace, offer opportunities for swimming, boating, fishing, and camping.

Another historic site, the George Washington Carver National Monument, is located about 45 miles south of Lamar.