

EISENHOWER BIRTHPLACE

state historic site

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See the Sites

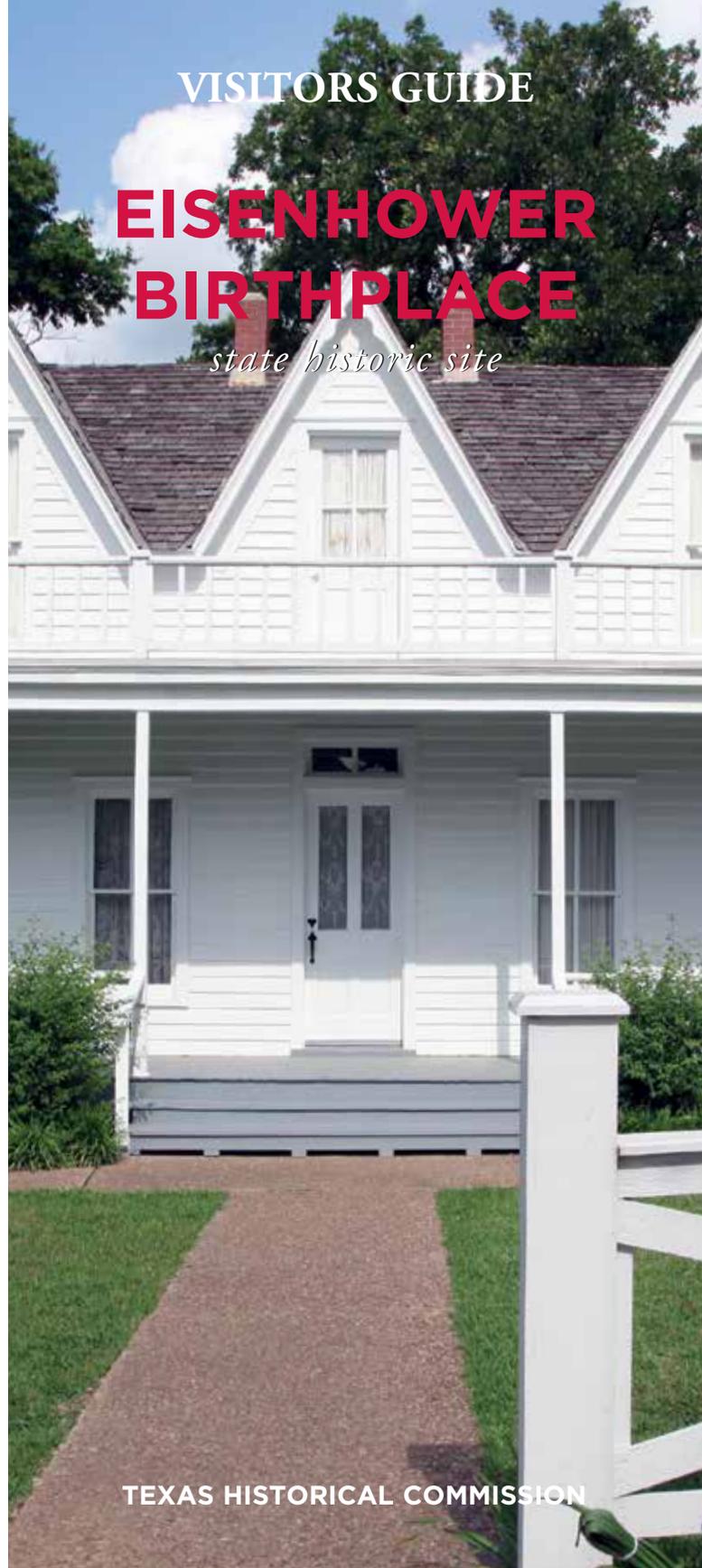
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TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
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VISITORS GUIDE

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TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Welcome to the Eisenhower Birthplace State Historic Site. Located in the heart of Denison, this historic site celebrates the home where the 34th U.S. President Dwight David "Ike" Eisenhower was born. Antique furniture fills the modest frame house, illustrating the working-class life of the Eisenhowers.

Exhibits showcase Eisenhower's many accomplishments as president and war hero. Explore "Ike" memorabilia, walk the site's gardens complete with a larger-than-life statue of Eisenhower, and hear the real story of the first Texas-born president.



Visitors center includes exhibits of political memorabilia.

TEXAS-BORN PRESIDENT

Only two American presidents were born in Texas, and the first was Dwight David “Ike” Eisenhower. His parents and older brothers had moved temporarily from Kansas to Denison, a busy railroad town where his father found work. Eisenhower was born October 14, 1890, in the downstairs bedroom of the family’s rented house. The Eisenhowers returned to Kansas in 1892 before he was 18 months old.

Eisenhower and his five brothers grew up in Abilene, Kansas, which the boys considered their hometown. After high school and a local job, Eisenhower was accepted to the Military Academy at West Point. Upon receiving his commission in 1915, his first post was Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, where he met his bride-to-be, Mamie Doud.

U.S. Army Gen. Eisenhower’s role in winning World War II prompted Denison’s citizens to make the hero’s birthplace a memorial. Eisenhower’s first visit back to his birthplace was in 1946, as a war hero. Encouraged by friends to seek our nation’s highest office, Eisenhower hit the campaign trail and returned to Denison in 1952. In 1953, Eisenhower became the 34th President of the United States, increasing the historical importance of the little wood-frame house at the corner of Lamar and Day streets.



A guided tour visits Ike’s statue by sculptor Robert Lee Dean.

The Eisenhowers



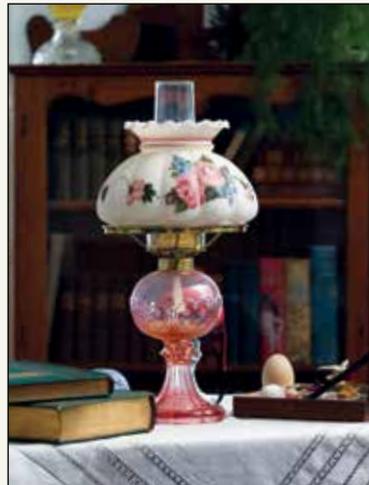
Dwight and Mamie.

One of the most significant political and military figures of the 20th century, Eisenhower began life in a modest household. His parents, David and Ida Stover Eisenhower, were better educated than much of the working-class population of Denison, having attended a small Kansas college, where they met and were married. Though neither graduated, David studied engineering while Ida took humanities classes and was especially fond of music.

Unwilling to be a farmer, David tried and failed as the co-owner of a general store in Hope, Kansas. He came to Denison where the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railway always needed laborers, and made about \$40 a month cleaning steam engines. The family got by, briefly taking in a boarder and saving money through Ida’s prudent efforts to grow vegetables and keep chickens in the yard. When relatives found David a better position at the Belle Springs Creamery in Abilene, the Eisenhowers moved back to Kansas.

A young Ida Stover had followed her older brothers from Virginia to Kansas, where members (including David’s relatives) of the River Brethren Church had settled on large farms. Mother Ida taught her six sons to be strong and honorable men, all of them finding noteworthy success as adults. David participated in raising the children, but their mother’s more open character seems to have had a far greater influence on their lives.

Period fixtures in the parlor.



A Distinguished Career

Still at home in Abilene, Kansas, when he was nearly 21, Eisenhower was too old for admission to the U.S. Naval Academy, his first choice, so he opted to enter West Point instead. His mother, a religious pacifist, was not pleased with his decision to serve in the military. However, army life brought out the best in him, making him a top student in advanced training and a leader esteemed by his troops and fellow officers.



The downstairs bedroom.

During World War II, the American public began to take notice of the capable officer in his early 50s who had been given increasingly greater responsibility in Europe. Since little was known about Eisenhower’s past, his U.S. Army career, his upbringing, and his family, the media scrambled to answer those questions in magazine and newspaper articles, on film, and through books about the rising hero.

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Interest around the globe grew as Gen. Eisenhower’s D-Day invasion was executed, resulting in Germany’s surrender and the end of the war in 1945. When reporters asked Ida Eisenhower about her famous son, she asked which one, declaring that she was equally proud of all her boys. Unfortunately, Ida died the following year and never knew that Gen. Eisenhower was destined to become president of the United States.

“We Like Ike” buttons were pinned on lapels across the nation during the 1952 campaign. Voters liked him then and again in 1956, electing Eisenhower to a second term. Mamie, his wife since 1916, was a popular First Lady. Among numerous accomplishments in Eisenhower’s eight years in office, he helped bring about desegregation in schools, created the interstate freeway system, ended the war in Korea, and started the NASA program that put men on the moon. President Eisenhower left office in 1961 and died on March 28, 1969.



Ida Eisenhower’s kitchen.