

George W. Bush Ranch

The streets of Crawford, TX were not always as busy as they are today, and you might be wondering why. In 1999 a ranch close to town was bought by a very important man, which made the little town of Crawford the new home of the president of the United States. The ranch that has turned this little town upside down is the Prairie Chapel Ranch, also called the Western White House for a time. George W. Bush bought this beautiful ranch in Texas a year before he took office, and the ranch would become famous over the next eight years for its role in international politics. You can see Crawford's downtown; just 5 minutes north of the McGregor station stop, on the west side of the tracks.

The property acquired by Bush in 1999 was originally the Prairie Chapel Ranch, owned by the Engelbrecht family. The ranch gets its name from the Prairie Chapel School, which was built on nearby land from a generous donation by ranch's owner Heinrich, a German immigrant who raised turkeys and hogs on this land with his family in the late 1900's. The ranch is comprised of approximately 1,600 acres, three miles of frontage along Rainey Creek, and includes seven different canyons throughout the property. Though the ranch had frontage on Rainey Creek, it was not enough water for the president. He added an 11-acre man-made stock pond for one of his favorite hobbies, fishing.

Can you imagine our former President out here fishing and making policy on the banks of these ponds? During his presidency, when asked to name the best moment in his administration, Bush jokingly said: "I would say the best moment was when I caught a 7 and 1/2 -pound largemouth bass on my lake."

A great deal of the property's popularity has come not because of the great hunting or fishing, but the guests who have come to the ranch to meet with the former president and the events that have taken place there. During the time that he was president, Bush would use the ranch for meetings, hosting foreign leaders, and even hosted his daughter's, Jenna, wedding. What better way to show wonderful hospitality than to take international guests to a sprawling Texas ranch? Some of the more famous guests at the ranch included Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Tony Blair, the British prime minister.

With so many important guests, the Western White House had to provide plenty of security. During the time of Bush's presidency, the Federal Aviation Administration created a no fly zone over the ranch, which would be expanded out even further when he was on site. Additionally, Secret Service agents, who always accompanied the president, secured the 1,600 acres.

After his presidency, Mr. Bush purchased a home in nearby Dallas for a permanent residence, but continues to use the ranch on weekends and during holidays. The town of Crawford provides a warm welcome to the Bush family. The former president has made local restaurants into famous attractions, where tourists and locals alike hope to catch a peak at George when he comes in to get a good cup of coffee.

Source(s):

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