

LIFESTYLE ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

A rare look inside Bob Dylan's Hibbing childhood home

The house where Dylan lived with his family from 1947 until he headed to college in 1959 is now owned by collector Bill Pagel. It's a pilgrimage site for fans, including one famous movie actor.



Bob Dylan's bedroom at his childhood home seen on Friday, April 24, in Hibbing. Clint Austin / Duluth Media Group



By **Jay Gabler**

May 09, 2026 at 5:25 AM

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HIBBING — If you stand in the front yard of Bob Dylan's childhood home and look a couple blocks north, you can see the stone monument standing in front of Hibbing High School.

"The Nobel Prize in Literature 2016," it reads, "awarded to Bob Dylan."

Could Dylan himself have imagined such a thing coming to pass, back when he was up in his bedroom listening to singles like "The Girl I Love" (the Glowtones) and "Not Fade Away" (the Crickets)?

Yes, he probably could have.



A plaque hangs over the front door at Bob Dylan's childhood home. Clint Austin / Duluth Media Group

In a display case in the house's basement, collector Bill Pagel has a copy of "Bobby Vee with Strings and Things." In 1961, Dylan wrote on the record cover.

"'59, Buddy H. locked eyes with me," Pagel read aloud. "'60, played piano for Bobby Vee." That actually happened in 1959, Pagel noted, "but it sounds better when he writes it this way." Pagel continued reading. "'61, wrote a song to Woody G. One day, it'll be me all the people want to see."



Bill Pagel, of Hibbing, stands at the original basement bar at Bob Dylan's childhood home. Pagel is the owner of the home. Clint Austin / Duluth Media Group

Pagel, a retired pharmacist originally from Chicago, moved to Hibbing in hopes of buying the former home of Dylan's family. In 2019, he succeeded. He has also, since 2001, owned [Dylan's earlier childhood home in Duluth](https://www.duluthnewtribune.com/lifestyle/arts-and-entertainment/front-row-seat-celebrating-bob-dylans-birthday-at-his-first-house).

(<https://www.duluthnewtribune.com/lifestyle/arts-and-entertainment/front-row-seat-celebrating-bob-dylans-birthday-at-his-first-house>)

While the Hibbing house is not officially open to the public, Pagel is open to giving private tours. "I've had people from Russia and China and Colombia and India," Pagel said. "All the European countries."



Timothée Chalamet on how Bob Dylan sounds like North Country(<https://www.duluthnewstribune.com/lifestyle/arts-and-entertainment/timothee-chalamet-on-how-bob-dylan-sounds-like-north-country>)

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One particularly notable visitor signed Pagel's guest book on Jan. 25, 2024. "Thank you for the great tour," wrote Timothée Chalamet, "your deeply comprehensive knowledge of Bob's past and your passion."

Chalamet described his visit to the house in a Q&A after a [December 2024 screening of "A Complete Unknown,"](https://www.duluthnewstribune.com/lifestyle/arts-and-entertainment/timothee-chalamet-visits-minneapolis-complete-unknown-screening-talks-duluth-and-hibbing) (<https://www.duluthnewstribune.com/lifestyle/arts-and-entertainment/timothee-chalamet-visits-minneapolis-complete-unknown-screening-talks-duluth-and-hibbing>) the biopic in which the actor played a young Dylan.

"He has drawings there and notes and things that haven't made their way online," said Chalamet about Pagel. "Things that were massively informative to me about Bob's sense of pre-destiny and his drive."

"This is the thing that got him real excited," said Pagel, indicating the sleeve of a 78 RPM record set containing Woody Guthrie's "1913 Massacre." The set formerly belonged to Kevin Krown, a friend of Dylan's who was attending the University of Chicago when Dylan stopped there en route to New York.



On the back of the Bobby Vee album, Bob Dylan wrote: '59 Buddy H. locked eyes with me '60 Played piano for Bobby V. '61 Wrote a song to Woody G. One day it'll be me all the people want to see Bob Dylan 1961 The record owned by Bill Pagel is displayed at Bob Dylan's childhood home seen Friday, April 24, in Hibbing. Clint Austin / Duluth Media Group

"Bob drew a picture of himself on the inside of the back cover," Pagel noted. "Wrote his name. Then he's got a winding road going to New York, and he says 'Woody' in New York City." The sleeve also contains lyrics from "Song to Woody," one of only two Dylan originals that would appear on his 1962 debut album.

There is a phone shelf between the house's kitchen and dining room, and one can easily imagine Dylan's father, Abe Zimmerman, standing there [talking to the News-Tribune](https://www.newspapers.com/image/1128802845/) in 1963.

"He wanted to be a folk singer, an entertainer," said Dylan's father. "We couldn't see it, but we felt he was entitled to the chance."

Abe Zimmerman was supportive enough to accompany his son to the St. Louis County Courthouse in Hibbing on Aug. 9, 1962, when Bobby Zimmerman legally changed his name to Bob Dylan.

"These are the papers," Pagel said, indicating another basement display case. "He was living in New York, and he came back that

summer."



The living room at Bob Dylan's childhood home. Clint Austin / Duluth Media Group

Dylan still comes back to Hibbing occasionally, Pagel said. "He's been spotted walking around town several times in the past five years." A neighbor told Pagel he even saw Dylan once take a swing from the clothesline outside the artist's former kitchen window.

Most of the original furniture is gone, sold by Dylan's mother along with the house in 1967, and subsequently purchased by a fan who later died leaving the furniture's whereabouts unknown.

Pagel does have a handful of original pieces that remained with the house: a chair, an end table and a piano stand in the living room. Upstairs, Dylan's original nightstand is positioned next to a bed like the one the future Nobel laureate occupied when sharing the room with his brother David.

"This is the light he looked at, at night," indicated Pagel, pointing up to a simple fixture with a ship's wheel base. Pagel also has a teal-and-white 9-inch television set the Zimmerman boys watched in their room; their father worked at the family electrical appliance store.



Bob Dylan's childhood home was built in 1939. Clint Austin / Duluth Media Group

Built in 1939, the three-bedroom, 1,446-square-foot house is the kind of cozy abode that would be comfortable for a family of four (five, when Dylan's maternal grandmother shared the house). Millions of Midwesterners have grown up in similar circumstances, which presumably is why Dylan felt the need to obfuscate and mythologize his own past.

"Are these his friends from his circus days?" a character in "A Complete Unknown" asks sarcastically when she catches a glimpse of a scrapbook revealing Dylan's Hibbing youth and his normie pals.

In the living room, Pagel displays Zimmerman family pictures that he allows visitors to view but not photograph. A couple of particularly striking images were taken at the Zimmermans' Duluth house. In one, Bobby is around 2 years old, riding a small bike on the sidewalk in front of the house, the hill sloping down to Lake Superior behind him.

"If I ever do a book," Pagel said, "that'll be the cover."



The dining room at Bob Dylan's childhood home. Clint Austin / Duluth Media Group

Pagel is looking for an organization that might be able to take ownership and maintain the two homes. "I'm the same age as Bob, so I'm not going to be living a long time," he said.

For now, though, Pagel remains steward of the properties. On Monday, May 17, fans will congregate on the Hibbing house's front lawn for a concert to kick off the [2026 Duluth Dylan Fest](https://duluthdylanfest.com/duluth-dylan-fest-2026/). (<https://duluthdylanfest.com/duluth-dylan-fest-2026/>) The festival will continue through Sunday, May 24 — Dylan's 85th birthday — when there will be another concert on the porch of the Duluth house.

Hard as Pagel tries to restore both houses to the way they looked and felt when Bobby Zimmerman lived there, the times ... well, you know the song. After walking through the Hibbing house, Pagel stood near its front boulevard and looked at a large tree stump with lines painted around it. The tree came down last summer, he said.

"This was the original tree, but obviously I had no choice in the matter," Pagel said. "It was dying."




Bob Dylan's childhood home seen on Friday, April 24, in Hibbing. Clint Austin / Duluth Media Group



(<https://www.duluthnewstribune.com/lifestyle/arts-and-entertainment/movie-review-a-complete-unknown-looks-bob-dylan-squarely-in-eyes>)

Movie review: 'A Complete Unknown' looks Bob Dylan squarely in eyes(<https://www.duluthnewstribune.com/lifestyle/arts-and-entertainment/movie-review-a-complete-unknown-looks-bob-dylan-squarely-in-eyes>)

Timothée Chalamet's remarkable performance anchors an accessible, affectionate movie about Dylan's meteoric rise in the 1960s.

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