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# FARM ROOTS AND FAMILY TIES

## Historic Resource Study

The Harry S Truman Grandview Farm,  
The Wallace Houses, and  
the Noland House in Independence

Gail E. H. Evans-Hatch and Michael Evans-Hatch

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# Farm Roots and Family Ties

## HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY

The Harry S Truman Grandview Farm,  
the Wallace Houses, and the Noland House in Independence

Harry S Truman National Historic Site  
Grandview and Independence, Missouri

by

Gail E.H. Evans-Hatch and D. Michael Evans-Hatch

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2001

**Recommended:**

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2/6/2001  
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Subject: "Farm Roots and Family Ties: Historic Resource Study of  
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and the Noland House in Independence," by Gail E. H.  
Evans-Hatch and Michael Evans-Hatch

Attached for your information is a copy of the subject document.  
If you have any questions concerning the report, please contact  
Senior Historian Ron Cockrell of this office at 402-221-3447.

*William Apple*

Attachment

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## Preface

Between 1989 and 1993, Congress authorized the acquisition of four properties for inclusion into the existing Harry S Truman National Historic Site, created in 1983, and managed by the National Park Service.<sup>1</sup> In 1989, Public Law 101-105 (codified at Title 16 United States Code Section 461 [b]),<sup>2</sup> provided for the addition of the Natalie and Frank Wallace home, the May and George Wallace home, and the Noland home to the Truman National Historic Site. The National Park Service acquired all three properties, totaling .63 acres, in 1991. The two Wallace homes, each encompassing around .22 acres, stand on adjacent lots at 601 West Truman Road (Natalie and Frank Wallace house) and 605 West Truman Road (May and George Wallace house.) Following their addition to the national historic site, the Wallace properties, along with the Truman home, formed one contiguous parcel comprised of 1.21 acres. The Noland house, located on .19 acres at 216 North Delaware Street, stands directly across the street from the Truman house.<sup>3</sup>

In 1993, Congress authorized the acquisition and addition of the Harry S Truman Farm to the Truman National Historic Site. Public Law 103-184 (codified at Title 16 United States Code Section 461 [c]) amended the original congressional legislation that had established the Truman National Historic Site. Located about fifteen miles south of Independence, in Grandview, Missouri, this approximate 5.2-acre agricultural parcel, encompasses the Young-Truman farmhouse, several outbuildings and other existing cultural features, and archaeological evidence of other cultural features no longer existing. (The Solomon Young Farm, located at 12121 and 12301 Blue Ridge Extension Road, had been previously nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. It was upgraded to National Historic Landmark status in 1985 as the Harry S Truman Farm.)

All four properties are intimately associated with the life of Harry S Truman. As a young child, Truman spent two years living on his grandparents' Grandview farm, a large and prosperous Jackson County family operation that had been owned and enlarged several times by Truman's maternal grandparents, Solomon and Harriet Young. Harry Truman

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<sup>1</sup> In May 1983, Public Law 98-32 (97 Stat. 193) provided for the inclusion of the Truman National Historic Site in the National Park system.

<sup>2</sup> Representative Wheat sponsored bill H 419 in the House and Senator Bond sponsored bill S 109 in the Senate, which later became this public law.

<sup>3</sup> The Wallace homes and the Noland house had been previously included in the Truman National Historic Landmark District, nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1971.

returned to the Grandview farm in 1906 as a young man, and managed the farming operation during the "golden age" of farming in the United States, first with his father and then alone. Truman's nine-year courtship of Bess Wallace, his future wife, began while he lived on the Truman Farm. In 1917, Truman left the farm to enter active military service during World War I.

Throughout his life, Harry Truman spent many hours visiting his favorite aunt, Ella Truman Noland, and her two daughters, Nellie and Ethel. Ella and Joseph Noland and Nellie and Ethel moved into an old Queen Anne-style house at 216 North Delaware in 1900 and purchased it in 1908. Three generations of the Noland family owned and occupied the Noland house for over eighty-five years. Throughout his life, including his presidency, Harry Truman visited and regularly communicated with Ella Noland as well as Nellie and Ethel, both public school educators in Independence and Kansas City for sixty years. At Harry Truman's request, Ethel Noland became an authority on Truman family genealogy and the family history spokesperson.

The two Wallace properties were the homes of Harry S Truman's brothers-in-law and their wives. At the time of their marriages in 1915 and 1916, Frank and George Wallace erected modest Bungalow-style houses on land just to the east of the Gates family home and on land once used by the family for a garden and grazing. Natalie Ott and Frank Wallace as well as May Southern and George Wallace resided in their homes at 601 and 605 West Truman Road, which adjoined the Truman home, or "Summer White House," during their entire married lives. The two Wallace couples, Harry and Bess Truman, and Margaret spent hours socializing in and around the two Wallace houses, in what became known as the "Wallace compound." Following the death of Frank and Natalie Wallace in 1960, Bess Truman and May Wallace managed that property. After George Wallace's death in 1963, May Wallace continued to live at home and remained close to and supportive of both of the Trumans until their deaths in 1972 and 1983. May Wallace left her home at 605 West Truman Road for the last time in late 1989, and died four years later.

## Acknowledgements

A project of this size and scope relies heavily on the contributions of many. We wish to gratefully acknowledge and heartily thank the helpful assistance given to us by: Liz Saffly, Dennis Bilger, and Pauline Testerman at the Harry S. Truman Library of the National Archives branch in Independence; Janet Russell at the Jackson County Historical Society in Independence; Patrick Steele, historic preservation planner for the City of Independence; and several reference librarians, too numerous to name, at the Genealogy and Local History Branch of the Mid-Continent Library in Independence, the Missouri Valley Collection of the Kansas City Public Library, the Missouri State Archives in Jefferson City, and the Williamson County Library, as well as the Herrin Public Library, and the Herrin High School Library in Herrin, Illinois. Everyone in the office of the *Jackson County Advocate* in Grandview, Missouri, made a special and generous effort to provide us with numerous original photographs that had previously appeared in that newspaper. We wish to thank James D. Turnbaugh, editor and publisher, Agnes Ann Turnbaugh, co-publisher, Joseph D. Turnbaugh, reporter and photographer, and Annette M. Turnbaugh, account executive for the jovial and generous assistance. Not only did these journalists scour their archives for photographs, but they also provided a wealth of information derived from their years of dedicated journalism in western Missouri.

Most of the other photographs and illustrations that appear in this historic resource study are housed at the Harry S. Truman Library and the Jackson County Historical Society.

Numerous individuals gave us abundant information during oral history interviews and through long-distance communication (in letters, e-mail messages, and telephone conversations). Five individuals kindly granted us permission to tape-record our interviews with them during the summer and fall of 2000, including: Richard Jaques and his wife, Jane; Bill and Mary Ellen Carnes; Dr. Gerald Anderson; William and Annette Curtis; Sterling Goddard; and John Southern. Several others cheerfully responded to our long-distance research questions. These include: Betty B. Matthews, Shelbyville, Kentucky; Roy and Carol Romine, Greenwood, Indiana; Roy Hornbuckle, Raytown, Missouri; Howard Woodruff, Independence; Milton Parks, Blackjack, Missouri; James Weber, Independence; Mike Manners, Independence; and Eric Fowler, Independence.

Finally, we wish to gratefully acknowledge the assistance we received from key individuals who became closely involved in the project during its fifteen-month life. All of the personnel working at the Harry S Truman National Historic Site were especially welcoming and helpful when we poured over research



materials for days in the Truman park headquarters in Independence in early 2000. Their dedication to the project as well as their enthusiastic provision of a warm, well-lighted work area, hot coffee, and encouragement, engendered the momentum that carried us from note-taking to page-making. Four individuals in particular, Carol Dage, Jeff Wade, Mike Hosking, and Superintendent Jim Sanders graciously gave of their time to assist us whenever we asked. These Truman park staff, plus Ron Cockrell, senior historian in the Midwest Regional Office of the National Park Service, continually supported and inspired us throughout the project. We also wish to express our indebtedness to Jon Taylor, former historian at the Truman National Historic Site, who amassed a mountain of research materials on the Truman Farm, Wallace properties, and Noland house, from which we benefited greatly. Finally, Lindsey Reed, managing editor of *The Public Historian* and editor of this historic resource study, skillfully encouraged us to write (and sometimes think) more clearly.

We heartily thank all these individuals. We alone, however, take full responsibility for any errors of fact or interpretation contained on these pages.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Solomon and Harriet Young and Their World** **1841 - 1892**

**Introduction**

**Solomon and Harriet Move West**

**Westward Expansion**

**Farming World of the Youngs**

**Solomon Young**

**Harriet Young**

**The Young Farm in Grandview**

## **Solomon and Harriet Young and Their World**

### **Part 1, Chapter 1**

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#### **Introduction**

This chapter introduces Solomon and Harriet Young. It follows them from Kentucky to western Missouri during the height of America's westward expansion, and describes their life. The Missouri farming environment of the mid-1800s is overviewed, the Young's farm is described, and Solomon and Harriet's acquisition of land holdings is presented.

#### **Solomon and Harriet Young Move West**

In the winter of 1841, Solomon and Harriet Young packed their belongings, boarded a steamer named *Fanny Wheeling* in Louisville, Kentucky, and went to St. Louis, where they boarded a second vessel and headed up the muddy Missouri River. In December, they landed where the Missouri River meets the Kaw River and makes its big bend northward. The place was known as Westport Landing, the birthplace of Kansas City. The Youngs had both been born and raised in Shelby County, Kentucky. Solomon had been orphaned at a young age. He had an older brother, Michael Young, and two sisters.<sup>1</sup> Solomon had owned and farmed land in Shelby County. Harriet was orphaned as a youth and was cared for by her older brother, William. On January 9, 1838, when Solomon was twenty-three and Harriet was nineteen, they married. When they moved west in 1841, the couple brought along two children, Susan and Sara.<sup>2</sup>

The Youngs were after public land to preempt, and the law required the construction of a home and a prescribed period of residency on the land. They walked to the top of Dodson Hill at what is now 135<sup>th</sup> and Byars Road, Kansas City.<sup>3</sup> Solomon and Harriet assembled a few split rails, tossed some brush atop the assemblage to create a primitive shelter, and Solomon rode off to Clinton, Missouri, to file their eighty-acre claim and pay the requisite \$150.<sup>4</sup> Harriet huddled against the winter cold in the shelter, watching hearth smoke rise from the 1,000 farms already established in Jackson County, warming the more than 6,230 county residents. Harriet gazed upon a rich, gently rolling land. A land where the growing season averaged 180 days, rainfall

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<sup>1</sup> John Meador, interview by Niel Johnson, July 1981, transcript of taped interview, 4, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>2</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman: His Life on the Family Farm* (Worland, Wy.: High Plains Publishing Co., 1991), 64.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

## Solomon and Harriet Young and Their World Part 1, Chapter 1

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averaged over thirty inches per year, and within reach of the Missouri River down which farm products would one day flow.<sup>5</sup>

### Westward Expansion

Harriet and Solomon were certainly not the only ones moving west. The 1840s was a time of rapid westward expansion of the United States. The Preemption Act of 1841 granted ownership rights to U. S. citizens and aliens alike who had established farms on unclaimed public lands. The act was one of many pieces of federal legislation that reflected a widely fluctuating governmental policy regarding public lands. As early as the end of the Revolutionary War, the federal government perceived western lands as a source of revenue. However, many of the Cession Acts passed by individual states to transfer state lands to the federal government contained provisions protecting the rights of persons who had moved onto unclaimed public lands and established homes and farms. Then the pendulum swung the other way. In the early 1800s, the federal government enacted Anti-Intrusion Acts forbidding "squatting" on unclaimed public lands. On occasion, the federal government would send troops into areas north of the Ohio River in an attempt to remove squatters. The soldiers would evict the homesteaders and burn their houses and crops. When the soldiers left, the settlers would return to rebuild and replant.

With the addition of lands acquired by purchase and as a result of hostilities from France and Mexico, United States courts were suddenly inundated with conflicting land claims based upon grants from the previous sovereigns. For example, settlers along the southern Mississippi River to whom land rights had been granted by France wanted those rights protected by the United States after it became the sovereign as the result of the Louisiana Purchase. In an attempt to settle such disputes, the Preemption Act of 1841 was passed, which acknowledged land rights of those who had settled land, whether they were United States citizens or not. The act not only attempted to resolve the issue of land rights created under a former sovereign, but was also an attempt to resolve the issue of who owned public land upon which a person had built a home, planted a crop, and started a new life. The act provided that if a person had settled on unclaimed public land, made improvements, and continually resided there, title would vest in that person. Although a cut-off date was established by the act, after which mere entry upon the land, residence, and creation of improvements would not vest title in the squatter,

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Federal Census, Missouri & Missouri Agriculture Production Schedule, 1840, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1900.

## **Solomon and Harriet Young and Their World**

### **Part 1, Chapter 1**

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government land agents liberally constructed the legislation. Suddenly Kansas, Missouri, and lands to the west became irresistibly inviting to those who aspired to land ownership and its perceived financial independence.<sup>6</sup>

As a result, Jackson County continued to swell in population with those seeking lands promised by the federal government. Between 1840 and 1850, the population of the county almost doubled, reaching 11,031; it rose to 18,969 by 1860, 55,041 by 1870, and 283,527 by 1900.<sup>7</sup>

On August 8, 1844, Solomon filed his deed to 160 acres of land in the southern part of Jackson County that the Youngs had purchased from Stephen Abston. On December 12, Solomon filed his petition to perfect title to his original eighty-acre claim with the government land office in Clinton. Even though they owned land near what would become Grandview, in 1852, their residence was still on the 160-acre farm called Parrish Place, near what is now the corner of Thirty-sixth and Prospect streets in Kansas City.<sup>8</sup> By December 26 of 1860, Solomon and Harriet had made nineteen government land acquisitions by preemption, purchase, or land warrant, totaling 1,928.88 acres, at a cost of \$1,194.80, plus whatever they paid for the warrants.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Farming World of Solomon and Harriet Young**

As Harriet and Solomon were steadily increasing their land holdings in western Missouri, the world of agriculture was undergoing radical transformation. Between 1830 and 1860, farming in the United States evolved from a subsistence activity designed to support farmer and family to a commercial enterprise providing cash income.<sup>10</sup> Improved farm tools, the enlargement of market areas as the result of enhanced transportation, and

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<sup>6</sup> Under the survey system established by the Land Ordinance of 1785, the western lands of the United States were divided into townships of 36 square miles each. Townships were further divided into thirty-six sections. Each section was one square mile. The northern and southern boundaries of Townships were established by base lines extending east and west; the eastern and western boundaries of townships were established by meridians that extended north and south. Reference base lines and meridians (called principal meridians) were identified and used to describe the location of a particular township. For example, the location of a particular township was described as being so far west of an identified principal meridian, and so far north of an identified base line.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Federal Census, Missouri & Missouri Agriculture Production Schedule, 1840, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1900.

<sup>8</sup> Richard S. Kirkendall, "Harry S. Truman: A Missouri Farmer in the Golden Age," *Agricultural History* 48: 4 (1974), 467-83.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 467-83.

<sup>10</sup> F. B. Mumford, "A Century of Missouri Agriculture," *Missouri Historical Review* XV (October 1920-July 1921), 284.



**Solomon and Harriet Young and Their World**  
**Part 1, Chapter 1**

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increased demands from the West resulted in money-making opportunities for the Midwest farmer. In 1850, Missouri had 9,732,600 acres in farms, and by 1860 the acreage increased to 19,984,810 — a 106 percent increase. The jump in acreage was not the result of an increase in individual farm size, but of an increased number of farms. The average (mean) Missouri farm of 1850 included 178 acres; the average Missouri farm of 1860, totaling 215 acres, wasn't much larger.<sup>11</sup> By comparison, Harriet and Solomon Young were working 1,929 acres in Jackson County by 1860, either in cultivation or as pasture for livestock.<sup>12</sup>

Although the average farm of 1860 wasn't much larger than the 1850 farm, its value during that decade doubled from \$1,161 in 1850 to \$2,485 in 1860. In 1860, Missouri farms produced four million bushels of wheat, seventy-three million bushels of corn, and four million bushels of oats, quantities that more than doubled the total production of 1850.<sup>13</sup> Impressive farm production increases were also enjoyed throughout the United States during this period. Wheat production increased more than fifty percent nationwide, corn production increased more than seventy percent, and oat production increased a nearly twenty percent.<sup>14</sup>

This increase in crop production was in large part the result of the mechanization of farming. For example, generations of farmers had separated wheat from stalk and chaff by flailing it with sticks. In 1788, Baron Pollnitz brought a Scottish automatic threshing machine to New York that allowed two persons to perform the same task, producing seventy bushels of wheat a day. The first United States patent for a threshing machine was issued to Samuel Mulliken of Philadelphia on March 11, 1791. In 1852 the New York Agricultural Society, in trials conducted at Geneva, proved that it took fifteen men to cradle and bind fifteen acres of wheat by hand, whereas nine men could accomplish the same task using an automatic reaper. By the time the International Agricultural Exposition was held in Paris in 1855, American technology had moved into the lead. The American Pitts thresher threshed seventeen bushels per hour, the English machine threshed nine, and the French a mere 5.75.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 277-97.

<sup>12</sup> Jill York O'Bright, "Cultivating the Land. Cultivating the Man: The Young-Truman Farm," *Jackson County Historical Society* 15 (Fall 1984).

<sup>13</sup> Mumford, "A Century of Missouri Agriculture," 43.

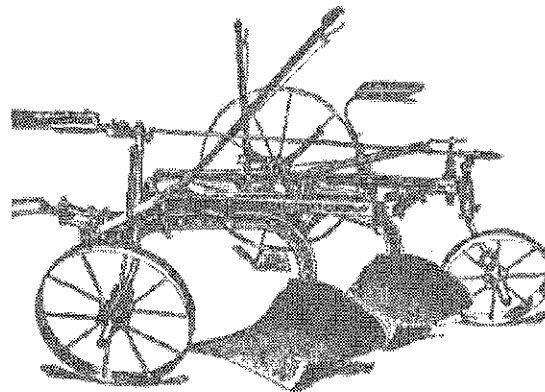
<sup>14</sup> Donald B. Dodd, *Historical Statistics of the United States* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1993).

<sup>15</sup> Graeme R. Quick and Wesley F. Buchel, *The Grain Harvester* (N.p.: American Society of Agricultural Engineers, 1978), 72.

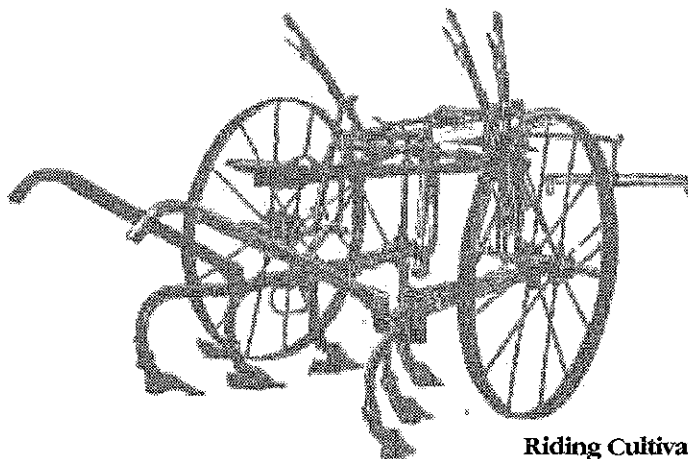
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There is other evidence of the increasing mechanization of farming after 1830. Ploughs, once universally made by local blacksmiths, were being made, marketed, and sold by centrally located manufacturers by 1850. In 1845, Henry Bear, who lived eight miles south of Boonville, announced he would be manufacturing the McCormick Reaper, which was guaranteed to cut fifteen acres of hay per day. The reapers sold for \$100 cash, or \$106 on a four-month contract.



**Four-horse Gang Plow**



**Riding Cultivator**

The May 13, 1854, *Boonville Observer* carried an extensive advertisement for farm machinery, placed by Alfred Lee and Company's Great Western Agricultural Warehouse and Seed Store of St. Louis. They advertised steel plows, seed sowers and drills, harrows, cultivators, horse hay rakes, McCormick's reaping and mowing machines, Emery's Patent Horse Power Thresher, fan

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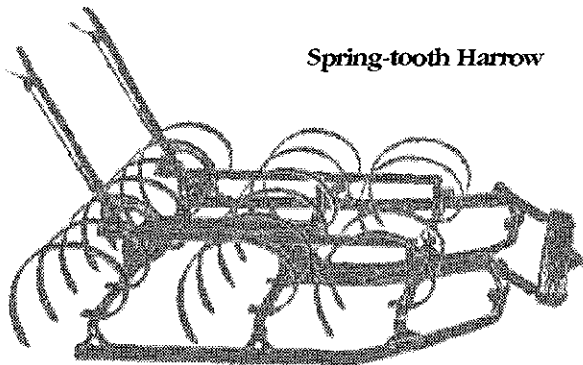
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mills, and corn shellers. In 1855, William M. Plant and Company of St. Louis advertised Ketchum Improved Mowers, Reads Improved Reapers, Atkins Self-Raking Reapers, and Emery's Two-Horse Powers with thresher and separator attachments.<sup>16</sup>

A quick review of United States patents related to farming filed between 1790 (when the first United States patent law was enacted) and November of 1899 provides a glimpse into the mechanization of American agriculture. During that year, patents were filed for 701 vegetable cutters and crushers, 822 fertilizers, 5,319 thrashers, 5,801 harrows and diggers, 9,156 seeders and planters, 12,519 harvesters, and 12,652 plows. In addition, 1,102 patents were issued related to the care of livestock and 4,632 related to dairy farms.<sup>17</sup>

This new technology pushed farming into an entirely new era. On pre-mechanized Missouri farms of the 1820s and 1830s, farmers fenced their fields with brush, broke the soil with wooden moldboard plows, and used farm animals to pull brush across the newly plowed fields to smooth it for sowing. Harrows had yet to be invented. Only enough wheat was raised to supply the farmer's family, and some of what was grown was parched to be used as a substitute for coffee. Flour bread was served only on Sundays or upon the arrival of special guests. In September, the farmer would hoist a two-bushel wheat sack on his shoulder and start walking between his guide stakes, broadcasting wheat seed. He would cross-sow to insure an even

stand of wheat. The mature wheat would be cut with a scythe. After being left to dry, the cut wheat would be gathered in



Spring-tooth Harrow

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<sup>16</sup> George F. Lemmer, "Farm Machinery in Ante-Bellum Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review* 40 (July 1946), 49.

<sup>17</sup> *Agricultural Yearbook, 1899*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Secretary of Agriculture: Government Printing Office), 1900. NOTE: The 1899 *Yearbook*, is a 880-page document containing a wealth of articles dealing with the history of American agriculture from colonial days to the date of publication, which was late 1899. The articles were written by various experts within the Department of Agriculture.

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bundles with a hand rake and tied with a band of straw. Threshing was done entirely by hand.<sup>18</sup>

In 1867, after having lived in Missouri for twenty-six years, Solomon and Harriet Young bought 398 acres of farmland just north of Grandview from Thomas A. Smart. Title to the 398 acres was taken in Harriet's name, as was the practice in Missouri as well as other states having dower rights.<sup>19</sup> Here they would build a home.<sup>20</sup> Solomon would retire from the transcontinental freighting business, and farm some of the almost 2,000 acres the couple had accumulated in western Missouri. Solomon was over fifty years old; Harriet was forty-nine. They had seven children by this time, aged twenty-eight, twenty-six, twenty-four, twenty-one, seventeen, fifteen, and thirteen. Three of the five daughters were married: Susan, twenty-eight; Sarah, twenty-four; and Laura, seventeen. The two remaining daughters, Martha Ellen, fifteen, and Ada, thirteen, were still with their parents. Son William, twenty-six was a veteran of the Civil War. The other son, Harrison, was twenty-one and single. He would remain single his entire life and continue a life-long association with the farm.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Asbury Good-Knight, "Wheat Raising in Pioneer Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review*, 4 (July, 1922), 502-505.

<sup>19</sup> Dower granted the wife certain legal rights upon the death of her husband intestate. She was entitled to a life estate in one-third of her deceased husband's real property if he died without a valid will. That meant that she had full ownership of that one-third during the rest of her life. She could do anything any owner could do, including selling it. However, upon her death, all rights in the land reverted to the husband's heirs. For example, if the widow sold her rights to the land, upon her death the land would revert to her husband's heirs. All she owned, and therefore all she could convey, was rights in the land during her life. Even if a man left a will, the validity of the will could be challenged for numerous reasons, as would later happen in Harriet Young's estate. Such challenges can last for years and become so expensive that the very land being fought over becomes overburdened with mortgages, and is eventually lost. To avoid these and similar problems, families would simply record the portion of their land upon which their house was built in the wife's name.

<sup>20</sup> Note: According to Mary Jane Truman, the granddaughter of Solomon and Harriet, there was already a partially-completed house on this property which had been started before the Civil War. Mary Jane reported that Solomon and Harriet finished that house. Mary Jane Truman, interview by Jerald L. Hill and William D. Stillely, 2 January 1976, transcript of taped interview, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>21</sup> Some years later, Harrison's husbandry skills would be called into question. The local newspaper ran a story in its October 28, 1898, issue dealing with an apparent local epidemic killing cattle. "Harrison Young," the newspaper reported, "speaking of the cause of the death of so many cattle in this vicinity recently, says: there wasn't anything the matter with the cattle - not anything at all, that they merely got lonesome and died." *Belton Herald*, 28 October 1898. Eighteen years later, the same newspaper would publish Harrison's obituary: Harrison Young was 70. He never married. He was the second son of Solomon Young, early settler in south Jackson county. With his father he often crossed the plains in his youth. Everybody knew Harrison Young and everybody liked him. He died at the home of his sister, Mrs. Martha Truman, on the old farm near Grandview, which had been his home from early youth. A number of people from Belton attended the funeral,

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The late 1860s was the time of Jesse James, a time of lingering social trauma caused by the Civil War, and a time of accelerated westward expansion. By 1868, emigrants arriving in western Missouri were told that no lands were left in either Missouri or Kansas that could be preempted.<sup>22</sup> By 1870, Missouri was the fifth most populated state in the United States.<sup>23</sup> Solomon and Harriet's move to Missouri could not have been better timed. They moved west in the midst of the American surge of westward expansion. By the time the supply of available inexpensive land had been exhausted by settlement or low-cost purchase, the Youngs were well established on their farm near Grandview.

### Solomon Young

Some of the money the Youngs used to acquire their land came with them from Kentucky, but much of it they earned by operating a transcontinental freight business between western Missouri and Utah, Colorado, and California. Starting in 1854, when he was thirty-one, Solomon made repeated trips west to the Rocky Mountains and the Far West. Between 1846 and 1857 and again between 1864 and 1870, Solomon transported cattle, wagons, and other goods west for sale to settlers and the United States Army.

In the spring of 1854, Solomon headed west driving fifteen hundred head of cattle destined for California. He lost a third of them on the way, and stayed in California until 1857 rebuilding his herd. He would typically leave Missouri in May and return the following spring. The August 9, 1860, issue of the Salt Lake City newspaper, *The Desert News*, reported Solomon arriving in the area driving 130 yoke of oxen and forty wagons. The article described Solomon's method of moving his wagons. He hitched



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which took place Tuesday at Forest Hill cemetery, Kansas City. *Belton Herald*, 10 August 1916.

<sup>22</sup> Jonathan Daniels, *The Man of Independence* (New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1950), 53.

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Federal Census, Missouri & Missouri Agriculture Production Schedule, 1850, 1860, 1870.

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six or eight yoke of oxen to a lead wagon, and to the rear of the lead wagon he chained a second wagon. The oxen team would be pulling two wagons. The article reported that when Solomon arrived with his train of goods, the army (which Solomon understood was to buy them) refused to accept the goods. Solomon Young then met with Brigham Young (no relation), and the two arranged the sale of Solomon's goods to Salt Lake City inhabitants. They removed the goods from Solomon's wagons, set them up in stalls along the street in downtown Salt Lake City, and retailed them to the residents.

By 1860, freight hauling west had become big business. California miners, Mormons, army post personnel, and assorted other western settlers increased their orders exponentially for goods from Missouri and states to its east, south, and north. One of the largest freighting companies, Russell, Majors and Waddell, operated 6,250 wagons and approximately 75,000 oxen. The company sold out to Ben Holladay in 1862, who sold the business to Wells and Fargo in 1866. In 1865 the Quartermaster General of the United States reported that between Denver and Fort Leavenworth, one was never out of sight of wagon trains of either emigrants or merchants.<sup>24</sup>

### Harriet Louisa Gregg Young



Little has been written and little is known about the nineteen-year-old redhead who married Solomon Young on January 9, 1838. There can be no doubt that she was a strong, resourceful person. Were she otherwise, she and the eight children she raised would simply not have survived. During those years when Solomon was commuting between California and Missouri, Harriet presided over the family interests at home, serving as farmer, protector, and single parent. Harriet must have been an impressively strong person, for during some of the time Solomon was gone, the Civil War raged and western Missouri was the epicenter of

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<sup>24</sup> Fred A. Shannon, *The Farmer's Last Frontier* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1945) 31.

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tremendous social upheaval. Quantrill, the Confederate guerilla, was conducting raids in Jackson County, and Kansas "Red Legs"<sup>25</sup> were raiding western Missouri.

The western counties of Missouri became violent even before the civil war. Conflict over the fate of Kansas — free state or slave state — became violent and spilled into those western counties of Missouri bordering Kansas. The hostile feelings engendered by that conflict were blown into a full-scale conflagration by winds of the Civil War. With the advent of open hostilities between seceding states and the union, Kansas "Jayhawkers" and Missouri "Bush Whackers" were suddenly able to justify conduct that had been simply criminal.

In early August of 1863, Quantrill sacked and destroyed the city of Lawrence, Kansas, precipitating retaliatory acts by Kansas irregulars into western Missouri. As recorded in 1877 by historian J. W. Slavens:

This act of wanton destruction increased and intensified the bitterness of the Kansas people, and the worst passions were let loose, reprisals were made, and the whole aspect of the war in the counties lining Missouri and Kansas was being changed from a "war for the Union" or "Secession" to one of border extermination.<sup>26</sup>

On August 25, 1863, General Ewing of the Union forces issued his infamous Order Number 11 that directed all persons living beyond one mile of a military reservation in Jackson, Cass and Bates counties (except those north of Brush Creek and west of the Big Blue) leave their homes within fifteen days. All grain and hay was to be removed to the nearest military post by September 9. Grain and hay remaining in the designated area after September 9 was to be destroyed. As recorded by Slavens in his 1877 history:

Many of the people could not be brought to believe that this sweeping order would be enforced, but it was most fully and rigidly carried out, and the most relentless and inhuman spirit of the war was let loose on both sides, one for the enforcement of a military order, the other for revenge and resistance to its effects. It is useless to attempt to describe the scenes that followed. It is enough to say that the monuments of wars" devastation may be

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<sup>25</sup> Some reports indicate that the "Red Legs" were not military units, but rather gangs of civilians who crossed the Kansas-Missouri border to harass, rob, and intimidate civilians in western Missouri.

<sup>26</sup> J. W. Slavens, *History of Jackson County* (Philadelphia: Brink, McDonough & Co., 1877), 41.

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I, Solomon Young  
 County of Jefferson State of Missouri do solemnly swear that  
 I will support, protect and defend the Constitution and Government of the  
 United States against all enemies, whether domestic or foreign; that I will  
 bear true faith, allegiance and loyalty to the same, any ordinance, resolution or  
 law of any State, Convention or Legislature to the contrary notwithstanding;  
 and, further, that I will well and faithfully perform all the duties which may  
 be required of me by the laws of the United States. And I take this  
 oath freely and voluntarily, without any mental reservation or evasion whatever,  
 with a full and clear understanding that Death, or other punishment by the  
 judgment of a Military Commission, will be the penalty for the violation  
 of this, my solemn oath and parole of honor. And I also swear, that under  
 no consideration will I go beyond the military lines of the United States forces.

Certificate

Subscribed and sworn to before me, this  
fifteenth day of July, 1862.  
David G. Leving  
 Capt. Comd. Co. 8. 1st. Missouri

Solomon Young (seal)

Witnesses: John R. Paul  
Charleston City, D. C., Jefferson County, Mo.  
 " " " " " " " "

**Oath of Loyalty to the federal government by Solomon Young**  
 Courtesy of Harry S. Truman Library.

seen to this day in many places in the county, in the desolate walls and chimneys of what were once the stately mansions and comfortable homes of a prosperous people. The breath of war like the simoon swept over the country, leaving a wide waste of desolation and death which the blessing of peace and the hand of industry has not yet entirely effaced. Many acts of great wrong and injustice were doubtless perpetrated on both sides. Houses were



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burnt and men murdered or driven from their homes on the charge of feeding or harboring "Bushwhackers" or "Jayhawkers," when it was more frequently the act of coercion than choice. Lawless bands of armed men, in the name of one party or the other satiated their diabolical hatred and inordinate cupidity by robbing, plundering and depopulating with fire and sword.<sup>27</sup>

The emotional trauma of the Civil War was visited on the Young family in a more immediate and intimate way as well. William Young, Solomon's son, fought for the South; on July 15, 1862, Solomon Young swore allegiance to the Union.<sup>28</sup>

Harriet Young's courage, strength, and wisdom were clearly demonstrated when a group of Union soldiers under the command of James H. Lane arrived at the Young farm in May of 1861 when Solomon was absent.<sup>29</sup> Harriet fed them biscuits as they slaughtered and butchered the family hogs, taking the hindquarters and leaving the rest of the almost 400 carcasses lying in the pen.<sup>30</sup> By calm determination borne of her wisdom and courage, Harriet protected her family and the family farm.

**The Young Farm in Grandview**

By 1867, when Solomon retired from freighting and Harriet acquired the 398 acres just north of Grandview, the couple had personal property valued at \$70,000 and owned almost 5,000 acres of land.<sup>31</sup> The Youngs raised corn and livestock. The land was gently rolling with an elevation ranging

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>28</sup> Affidavit of Solomon Young, July 15, 1862. Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>29</sup> There appears to be some confusion regarding what the Union forces took and when they took it. According to a petition filed by Harriet Young in the Court of Claims, the following was confiscated by Union troops from the farm:

Taken by General Lane in May, 1861: fifteen mules and thirteen horses.

Taken by General Sturgess in September, 1861: 150 head of cattle.

Taken by Colonel Burris in September, 1862: sixty-five tons of hay; 500 bushels of corn; forty-four head of hogs; one horse; one lot of beds and bedding; one horse, bridle, and saddle.

Taken by Colonel Burris in October, 1862: 1,200 pounds of bacon; one house used for guardhouse; 30,000 rails; and seven wagons.

Taken by Captain Axaline in September, 1864: 13,000 rails; 1,000 bushels of corn; and 6,000 rations.

The Court of Claims concluded that these items had been taken from the Young farm by Union troops and that the Youngs had received no payment for them. The Court also concluded that the Youngs had been loyal to the Union throughout the war. *Harriet L. Young, administratrix de bonis non of Solomon Young, deceased, v. The United States.* Congressional, No 7843.

<sup>30</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess: The Letters from Harry to Bess Truman, 1910-1959* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 82.

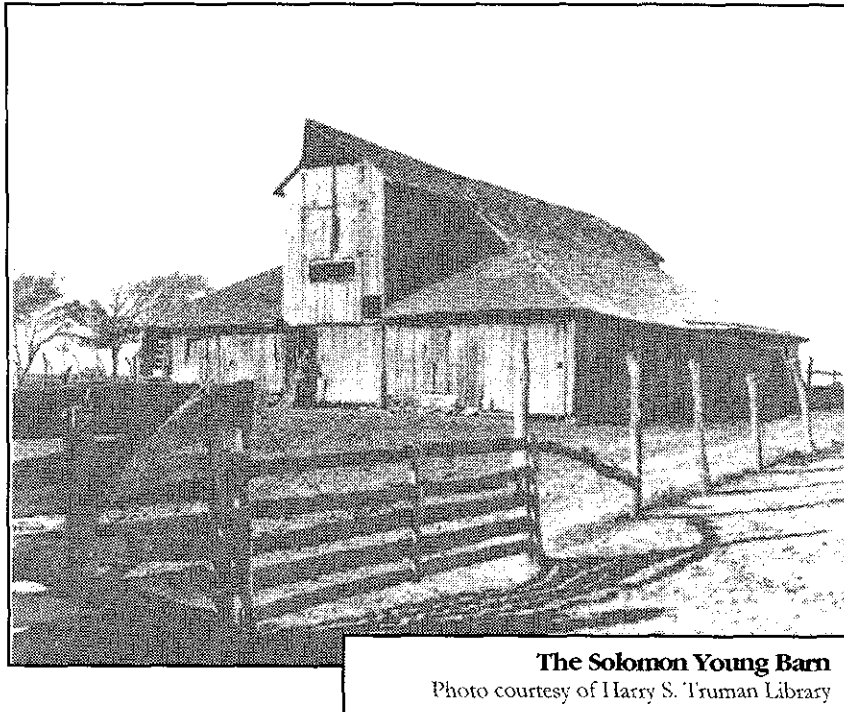
<sup>31</sup> Kirkendall, *Harry S. Truman: A Missouri Farmer*, 94.

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from 920 to 1060 feet above mean sea level. The soil was dark brown and very fertile. When the Youngs bought the land, there was a "brush-roofed log pen" cabin there.<sup>32</sup>



Twenty feet in front of the existing cabin on a high ridge between the Big and Little Blue rivers, Solomon and Harriet Young built their home.<sup>33</sup> They dug a twenty-inch wide by twenty-inch deep trench for footings, and filled it with small limestone rubble they gathered from nearby talus slopes. On top of this footing they laid a foundation of coursed stone masonry using a lime-based bonding mortar.<sup>34</sup> The house they built (at the site of the present

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>33</sup> Although some have identified this structure which appears in some historical photographs as a "utility barn," artifacts discovered during the archaeological exploration by Robert Bray strongly point to the building having been a dwelling. Artifacts were predominately domestic and included ceramic shards with embossed floral patterns; heavy ironstone rims from a serving platter; pieces of a stoneware jug or crock; pieces of light green window pane; and pieces of white bone china. The artifacts also indicate that this structure probably remained standing until the end of the nineteenth century. The archaeological evidence also indicates that it did not burn. It was also not permitted to disintegrate in place. It was probably torn down.

<sup>34</sup>Robert T. Bray, *Archaeological Survey and Testing at the Truman Farm Home and Grounds, Grandview, Missouri* (Kansas City, Mo.: N.p., n.p., 1983).

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Truman farmhouse) here was a fine, two-story home with a deck atop a front portico. From this deck, a person could gaze west through the grove of maple trees toward the main farm entrance a quarter mile away.<sup>35</sup>

The house was frame construction and forty-three feet wide. It had a cellar and a central fireplace. Years later, President Harry S Truman would reminisce about the colonial style house with green shutters. Inside was a center hall that opened onto large rooms on each side. There were two bedrooms upstairs. The house stretched back on the east side to a large dining room, and behind that was the kitchen. Beneath the kitchen was a cellar. Porches stretched along the north and south sides. The west, or front, porch of the house was decked with one-by-three, tongue-and-grove white pine. At least one window on the north side of the house had light green glass. Door fittings were made of iron and brass.<sup>36</sup>

Guests visiting Solomon and Harriet Young turned east off the public wagon road onto the Young's front drive. Heading east toward the large, two-story home, they passed through a grove of maple trees that stretched from the main entrance all the way to the front yard of the house.<sup>37</sup> Solomon Young planted this grove, in the fall of 1868, with his daughter, Martha Ellen, future mother of President Harry S Truman.

A local cemetery occupied a plot adjacent to the Young Farm entrance.<sup>38</sup> Next to the cemetery was the Blue Ridge Baptist Church, which had been built in 1848. The church was damaged during the Civil War and rebuilt in 1867. In 1891, the congregation picked it up and moved it into Grandview. A very young Harry S Truman was perched atop a fence rail with his Uncle Harrison and watched it go.

Immediately south of their new house, the Youngs dug a thirty-foot well, twenty-four inches in diameter. They lined it with rough-hewn limestone slabs and blocks. East south east of the house, they built a sixty-by-fifty-foot barn, a massive barn for the day.<sup>39</sup> Much of the timber for the barn was obtained from Hickman's Mill. Edwin A. Hickman had built the gristmill in 1850. It was vandalized in 1858, during the pre-Civil War unrest, after which Hickman prospected for a time in Colorado. He returned to enlist in the Confederate army and lost his right arm in the battle of Shiloh. After the war he returned to Jackson county and worked from 1868 to 1877 as Jackson County

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<sup>35</sup> Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 21.

<sup>36</sup> Bray, *Archaeological Survey*, 6.

<sup>37</sup> Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman: His Life on the Family Farm*, 74.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>39</sup> Bray, *Archaeological Survey and Testing*, 9.

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surveyor. In 1872 he published a book entitled *Arithmetical Geometry*.<sup>40</sup>

One can catch a glimpse of the Young's farm operation by examining Solomon Young's probate records. When he died in 1892 at the age of seventy-seven, his estate, for probate purposes, was valued at \$5,616.80.<sup>41</sup> A close study of the probate records provides a clear picture of what Young raised and how and where he raised it prior to his death.

The records show what the Young family raised. The probate inventory lists:

- sixty tons of hay;
- 749 bushels of corn in the barn;
- 545 bushels of wheat in the barn;
- eighteen bushels of Timothy seek;
- 720 bushels of oats;
- 2,400 bushels of corn in the crib;
- seventy-eight steers; four cows;
- ten two-year-olds;
- thirteen one-year-olds; and
- one bull.

The records also show how the Youngs raised it. Solomon's estate included:

- one Deering mower;
- one harrow;
- one breaking plow;
- one Falor wagon;
- one sixteen-inch iron beam plow;
- one revolving hay rake;
- four breaking plows;
- one double shovel plow;
- a sixteen-inch wood beam plot;
- one Toungeless cultivator;
- one three-section harrow;
- one corn sheller;
- one cultivator;
- one corn planter and checker;
- a six-foot cut mower;
- one spring tooth hay rake;
- one mower and reaper combined; and
- one spring wagon;

And, the probate records show where they raised it:  
1,360 acres of land in Jackson County, and

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<sup>40</sup> *Ruskin/Hickman Mills Times*, 11 September 1997.

<sup>41</sup> Inventory of the Estate of Solomon Young, Deceased, Jackson County Court records, Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City, Mo.

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160 acres in Saline County, Missouri (about  
seventy-five miles east of Jackson County).

In October of 1894, the house that Solomon and Harriet built burned to the ground. On the night the house burned, Harrison, Mrs. John Bartleson (a daughter of Solomon and Harriet), two of Mrs. Bartleson's daughters, and Harriet were at home. Nothing was saved from the house except some bedding. Reports indicate that there was no insurance on the house.<sup>42</sup> One month after the house burned, Harrison was rebuilding with the assistance of L. J. Willis and E. P. Dunsmoor. By the first week of December, they had completed the initial construction, and the David Sheets family moved in as renters. On December 28, 1894, T. M. Donaldson of Belton painted the new farmhouse.<sup>43</sup> It is possible that the new house referred to in the local newspaper is not the house that now stands. The time spent by Harrison and his two associates was extraordinarily brief for building a house as large as the one that stands today. In addition, the same newspaper in 1895 reported that Harrison was building another dwelling on his farm.<sup>44</sup> It is perhaps more probable that the existing house was constructed in two stages: the portion that includes the kitchen was built first, and the front two-story portion with the north-south gable housing the sitting room, the parlor and two bedrooms was built later.<sup>45</sup>

Before Solomon's death, the Youngs constructed outbuildings, including a barn of hickory boards; they tilled the rich soil with mule-power; and they raised seven children, one of whom was destined to become the mother of a President of the United States. She was Martha Ellen Young, the seventh child of Solomon and Harriet. She was born on November 25, 1852, in Jackson County, Missouri, and matured under the tutelage of two strong, vibrant, independent parents. On December 28, 1881, when she married John Anderson Truman, Martha Ellen was twenty-nine years old

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<sup>42</sup> *Belton Herald*, 26 October 1894.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 November, 1894; 23 November 1894; 7 December 1894; 28 December 1894.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 October 1895.

<sup>45</sup> Mary Jane Truman, Notes from a telephone conversation with Milton F. Perry, July 29, 1974, Harry S. Truman Library.

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## **Chapter 2**

### **The Truman Family**

#### **Introduction**

**Anderson Shipp and Mary Jane Holmes Truman**

**John and Martha Ellen Truman**

**Harry Truman Childhood Years on the Young Farm**

**The Young Farm During the Truman's Absence, 1890 - 1905**

**The Trumans Return to the Young Farm**

## **The Truman Family**

### **Part 1, Chapter 2**

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#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the Truman family, including an overview of Harry Truman's parents, his birth, and the life up to 1907. It follows the trials and tribulations of John Anderson Truman from successful stock trader to losing everything. Harry's siblings are introduced: his brother, Vivian, and his sister, Mary Jane. The reminiscences of a neighbor provide some insight into the family members.

#### **Anderson Shipp and Mary Jane Holmes Truman**

The story of John Anderson Truman, future father of a United States President, is another story of a westward migration out of Shelby County Kentucky into western Missouri. His parents, Anderson Shipp Truman and Mary Jane Holmes, were born to pioneers. Mary Jane Holmes moved to Missouri with her sixty-year-old mother, Nancy Tyler Holmes, a widow. The widow Holmes was the single parent of seven daughters and three sons when she made the trek from Kentucky to Missouri. Mary Jane returned to Kentucky in 1845 when she was twenty-four years old. A year later, on August 13, 1846, she would marry the thirty-three-year-old Anderson Shipp Truman in Christiansburg, Kentucky. In the fall of that year, the couple would move to Missouri.

Anderson and Mary Jane Truman were reportedly a "well-fixed" young couple in Missouri. Mary Jane's mother, Nancy Holmes, had given the couple some slaves as a wedding present, they purchased a two-hundred-acre farm near Westport Landing, and Anderson served as the school director for four years. On December 5, 1851, John Anderson Truman was born to this couple. This child who would father Harry S Truman, was the third of five children born to Mary Jane and Anderson. In the spring of 1853, Anderson and Mary Jane moved north to Platte County, Missouri, where a southern plantation economy had evolved around tobacco and hemp.<sup>46</sup> At the time of this move, Margaret Ellen, future aunt of the president, was four years old, and John, future father of the president, was one. The family stayed there for thirteen years, and unlike the Youngs and residents of Jackson County, the Trumans lived comparatively tranquil lives throughout the Civil War.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Jonathan Daniels, *The Man of Independence* (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1950), 59.

<sup>47</sup> *Kansas City Times*, 29 January 1892.



After the Civil War, both the Youngs and the Trumans returned to Jackson County and settled near what would become Grandview. Solomon continued his freighting business, and Anderson Shipp Truman worked a 200-acre farm.

### **John and Martha Ellen Truman**

The mother and father of the future president, John Anderson Truman and Martha Ellen Young, lived on neighboring farms when they met. They married in 1881, and moved to Lamar, Missouri, 120 miles south of Kansas City. Harry S Truman<sup>48</sup> was born on May 8, 1884. The future president's birth was not published in the local newspaper, the *Lamar Democrat*. That event was pre-empted by an advertisement placed by the new baby's father, and an announcement that a local resident had graduated from a technical training program. The baby's father advertised, "Wanted, a few good mules and horses. Will pay highest cash prices for same. J. A. Truman, White barn near Missouri Pacific depot." The paper that day also reported that Hoyt Humphrey had graduated from an embalming class, and noted that, "Hoyt is thorough in anything he undertakes."<sup>49</sup> At the time of Harry S Truman's birth, his parents occupied a small twenty-by-twenty-eight-foot frame house. It had four rooms downstairs and two on the second floor. His father, John Anderson Truman, traded horses, mules, cows, pigs, and sheep. He traded the horses and mules locally; the other livestock went to stockyards or slaughterhouses.

A year after Harry's birth, the Trumans left Lamar. They lived briefly on a farm near Harrisonville, moved to a seventy-one-acre farm southeast of Belton known as the Dye farm, and, in 1887, moved to the Young farm where they helped Solomon and Harriet work their acreage. Harry Truman's parents had two other children. John Vivian was born in 1886 and Mary Jane was born in 1889.

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<sup>48</sup> From a letter to Dr. Fabrikant from Harry S Truman, August 6, 1962, "I never use anything but the "S", sometimes with a period when I am in a hurry and not thinking about it, but it is a name and not an initial and does not need punctuation after it." See also letter to Miss McNees from Harry S Truman, June 17, 1964, "It is a capital "S" with no period." Harry S. [sic] Truman Library, Post Presidential Files, Box 1, Family Correspondence Files, File: Harry S.[sic] Truman Initial "S".

<sup>49</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman: His Life on the Family Farm* (Worland, Wyo.: High Plains Publishing Co., 1991), 39.

**The Truman Family**  
**Part 1, Chapter 2**

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**Martha and John Truman. Harry S Truman's Parents.**  
Photo courtesy of Harry S. Truman Library

### Harry Truman Childhood Years on the Young Farm

The Young Farm of the late 1880s, where Harry Truman spent a few impressionable years of his youth, was a wonderland of cultivated fields, grazing meadows, hedgerows, ponds, and groves of trees, all waiting to be explored by the young Truman boy. The turned-earth smells of spring, the cold brilliance of fall, and the cornstalk-crackling heat of summer saw Harry Truman tagging along behind father, or grandfather, his mother or grandmother, to be imprinted with farming scenes he would recall throughout his life. Years later, in 1949, he spoke of his grandfather Young taking him by cart, pulled by a strawberry roan horse, six miles to the Cass County Fair at Belton, Missouri. They went each day for six days. Five-year-old Harry sat next to his Grandfather in the judges' stand as horse races were called. He would also recall years later the Shetland pony his father gave him, and the time his father made him walk home after falling from the pony.<sup>50</sup>

Harry had a bobtailed Maltese gray cat, Bob, and a small black-and-tan dog, Tandy, who would tag after Harry during his farm explorations. The young Harry Truman spent hours watching Bob and Tandy team up to catch field mice in the cornfields. Sometimes the trio would simply wander through the 440 acres immediately adjacent to the farm house, or the 160 acres to the west across the road. They watched the cattle, the horses, the mules, or the sheep laze in the pasture. They saw wheat harvests, wheat threshing, corn shucking, and the mowing and stacking of hay. They arced high in the backyard swing hung from an old elm tree, and during stormy weather they moved to the swing inside the house in the downstairs hall. And, when they tired of swinging on those gray, inclement days, they could play on the long porch along the north side of the house where a hammock made of barrel staves was hung.<sup>51</sup>

When Solomon Young's half sister visited the farm from her home in St. Louis, she would take the boys out into the back pasture, where they would wander through the tall prairie grass in search of birds' nests, daisies, prairie wild flowers, and wild strawberries.<sup>52</sup>

Apples and peaches were gathered on crisp fall days at the Young Farm. The peaches were dried and the apples buried.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, Vol. I, Year of Decision*. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1955), 27.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>53</sup> Apples were harvested in the fall and placed in a hole dug in well-drained ground where they were covered with a layer of straw that was then covered with boards. The nearly constantly cool temperature below ground would preserve the

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The fruits were made into pies throughout the winter. The Youngs' kitchen also produced peach butter, apple butter, grape butter, jellies and preserves, during cold winter days, all cooked by Harriet Young, Martha Truman, and a hired woman from Germany.

After the first fall freeze, the hogs were slaughtered. Sausages, souse, pickled pigs' feet, and hams filled the basement and smokehouse.<sup>54</sup> Lard was rendered in a big iron kettle mounted on long steel legs and placed inside the smokehouse.

Although the farm of Truman's childhood was a sprawling 1,600-acre spread, much of that land was used as pasture for livestock and was not cultivated. Approximately thirty feet behind the two-story house that Solomon built, was a one-story utility building resting on a brick foundation. Further east, approximately three hundred feet down a gently sloping field, was a massive fifty-by-sixty-foot barn.<sup>55</sup> Much of the timber used to construct the barn, including thick walnut beams and the barns siding, came from the old mill built in 1854 by Edward A. Hickman. Some reports indicate that lumber from a bridge over the Blue River that had been badly damaged in a flood was also used. George Kemper was apparently the carpenter who constructed the barn in 1868 for Solomon and Harriet.<sup>56</sup>

Not only had the Young farm been transformed by the labors of Solomon and Harriet, the very nature of farming had changed. It had been transformed from a subsistence operation to a commercial activity. Not only had farming technology advanced, but also national and international transportation had improved. The railroads had reached west of the Mississippi River, and ocean transport had been revolutionized. The invention of the double-expansion or compound marine engine reduced the on-board area needed for the vessels' power plant, freeing space for additional cargo. In addition to making more on-board space available for cargo, the construction of much larger ships became possible. The use of the new Kelly-Bessemer steel-making processes made steel affordable for ship construction, and steel ships could be built much larger than wooden vessels.

The Truman family left the Young farm in 1890, when Harry was six years old. They moved to Independence, Missouri,

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apples through much of the winter. The apples were dug up during the winter and baked into pies or cobbles.

<sup>54</sup> The smokehouse was located where the garage is situated now (October 2000). Fred L. Truman, interview by James H. Williams, 18 June 1991, transcript of typed interview, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>55</sup> Robert T. Bray, Robert T. *Archaeological Survey and Testing at the Truman Farm Home and Grounds, Grandview, Missouri*, 1983, typescript, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>56</sup> Truman, *Memoirs*, 119.

where their three children could attend what the parents perceived as better schools.<sup>57</sup> The Trumans lived in Independence for an eventful thirteen years. Harry Truman graduated from high school in 1901, committed himself to piano lessons, and dreamed of a life as a professional musician. (See Exhibit A for the chronology of Harry S Truman's formal education.)

Although born left-handed, Harry became ambidextrous, since he was taught to write using his right hand.<sup>58</sup> Morton Chiles, a childhood friend, would recall years later that neighborhood boys called Harry a sissy:

I'm ashamed to admit it now, but we used to call Harry a sissy. He wore glasses and didn't play our games. He carried books, and we'd carry a baseball bat. So we called him a sissy.<sup>59</sup>

Diphtheria struck both Harry and his brother Vivian, and Mary Jane was sent to the Young farm to protect her from the disease. John Anderson Truman continued his animal brokerage business from lots next to their house. He successfully invested in several financial ventures. Then, in 1903, a large wheat futures investment turned bad, and he lost everything, including land his wife had inherited from Solomon Young.

The Trumans then moved to Kansas City, where they lived at 2108 Park Avenue. John Anderson worked as a watchman at a grain elevator. In 1905, John and Martha traded the Park Avenue property for eighty acres of farmland in Henry County and moved to Clinton, Missouri, to farm it. Harry S Truman and Vivian stayed in Kansas City working for a bank. They roomed at 1314 Troost Avenue, paying \$5 a week for room and board (which included breakfast and dinner). Weekends the brothers went home to Clinton. John Truman had planted his eighty acres near Clinton in corn, but his luck had not improved: the Grand River flooded, destroying his crop.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>58</sup> Edward W. Potts, "The President's Mother," *The Christian Advocate*, Winter 1945, 10.

<sup>59</sup> Merle Miller, *Plain Speaking: An Oral Biography of Harry S Truman* (New York: Berkley Publishing Co., 1973), 51.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 124.

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**The Trumans Return to the Young Farm**

In late 1905 or early 1906, the parents moved back to the Young farm, where they would remain. Vivian joined them shortly thereafter. Harry remained in Kansas City for another year, working for the bank, before he, too, returned to the farm of his mother's parents. (See Exhibit B for the chronology of Harry S Truman residences between his birth and 1906.)

By the time Harry Truman returned to the farm in 1906-07 as a young man of twenty-two, human and farm-animal muscle were still primarily responsible for crop production, but the potential market for those crops had increased dramatically. It was the golden age of agriculture. Demand for farm products was high and the national and international transportation enabled the farmer to supply that demand.<sup>61</sup>

The time Harry Truman spent on his maternal grandparents farm from 1907 until he left for the First World War, was not only a glorious time for farming in America, it was also a time on the Young farm we know a great deal about. Not only were events documented by letters Harry Truman wrote to his future wife, but others who knew him and his family during that period would later reminisce about the Youngs and Trumans during those early farming years. Gaylon Babcock, a friend of the Trumans who lived on a farm northeast of the Truman-Young farm at that time, would report years later that Harry's mother was rather short and caustic, even perhaps a little sarcastic. During harvest times, Babcock recalled, Mrs. Truman would not help in the dining room or kitchen. Harry and Mary Jane prepared food for neighbors who were helping with the Truman harvest, and Harry and Mary Jane served it.<sup>62</sup>

Babcock was also able to provide some definition to the character of Vivian Truman, Harry's brother. During his oral history interview, Babcock recalled an incident that took place in the early 1900s:

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<sup>61</sup> Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman: His Life on the Family Farm*, 63.

<sup>62</sup> Some writers have discounted Babcock's credibility, arguing he was biased against Harry Truman because of an alleged unpaid loan. However, during the interview upon which the above text is based, Babcock praises Harry Truman for his organizational skills: "Yes, yes, I think he's a pretty good organizer. He could do better at organizing and handling people like that than Vivian could, even though I liked Vivian much better and his father better than all the rest of them. Gaylon Babcock, interview by James R. Fuchs, 12 February 1964, transcript of taped interview, Harry S. Truman Library. Babcock offered such praise notwithstanding his obvious annoyance that a debt was not paid by Harry Truman, which Babcock thought was a valid debt, argues strongly for Babcock being a much more objective witness than other writers maintain.

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FUCHS [Interviewer]: Do you recall anything about the Ku Klux Klan?

BABCOCK: I remember about the Ku Klux Klan. I remember about it, but not in connection with Harry. I do remember this. They held a meeting in the lodge hall in Hickman Mills; notices were sent out that there would be an interesting meeting and inviting all the citizenry around there to attend. And, the notice was worded in such a way that it would create your interest. There had been talk on Ku Klux Klan prior to that around there, and you could have some reason to believe that maybe it would be a Ku Klux, but we didn't know it necessarily. I did go to that meeting. Vivian Truman and I sat together at that meeting. When the men who opened the meeting got up to explain what their meeting was about, they said if there were any foreign-born people there, and any non-Protestants there, which I took to mean Catholics, or any husband who had a wife that was non-Protestant, meaning Catholic, and a few more qualifications, they would suggest that they leave the room. Well, immediately, a bunch of us left, and Vivian and I were together and we left.<sup>63</sup>



**Vivian and Luella Truman. Harry S Truman's brother and sister-in-law.**

Photo courtesy of Harry S. Truman Library

Born on April 25, 1886, Vivian Truman had little interest in formal education, preferring instead to work with livestock and crops. Although he didn't finish high school, his father had enough confidence in him that he provided him with his own checkbook at age twelve, and Vivian actively participated with his father as a stock trader. Ultimately, Vivian Truman was to

<sup>63</sup> Babcock interview, 12 February 1964.

## The Truman Family

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become a career farmer and would have children, two of whom would follow in the footsteps of their father and their father's father to farm the land. These two sons, Harry and Gilbert, would recall years later that their father loved farming and being around cattle. He continued helping Harry and Gilbert farm the land until his death.<sup>64</sup>

In October of 1911, Harry Truman reported in a letter to Elizabeth Wallace (Bess), his future wife, that Vivian had rented a farm and was getting married.<sup>65</sup> On October 28, 1911, Vivian married Luella Campbell, a redhead who was described by Truman as more like his grandmother, Harriet Young, than any person he knew.<sup>66</sup> The couple would have five children: John Custis and Callie Louise (fraternal twins), Fred Leland, Martha Ann, Harry Arnold, and Gilbert Vivian. Callie would die as a child in 1915.

After their marriage, Vivian and Luella lived on farms in Belton, Grandview, and Hickman Mills. They moved to a farm on the eastern border of the Young-Truman Grandview farm in 1927. In 1930 they built a home, just north of the Truman farm home, which remained the Vivian Truman family home for many years to come.<sup>67</sup>

Luella Truman was a member of the Hickman Mills Community Church, which she joined in 1895; she also was an organizer of the Hickman Mills Old Settlers Club, and a member of the Grandview Study Club. Luella died on March 8, 1978, at the age of ninety, leaving eleven grandchildren and eleven great-grandchildren. She was buried in Mount Moriah Cemetery.<sup>68</sup> Vivian died on July 8, 1965, at the age of seventy-nine.<sup>69</sup>

Babcock also related his recollection of other members of the Young and Truman families. Harry Truman's uncle, Harrison Young, Babcock recalled as being quick tempered and prideful, Harry's sister, Mary Truman, he reported was his favorite of the three Truman children. Babcock felt that Harry's father, John Truman, would go out of his way to make people feel good about themselves. He would often compliment people.

Yes, and, if you did a good job, he would compliment you. In a crowd, he tried to make it easy for everyone. Instead of not noticing maybe a water hauler or a child, he would notice them. And if you did a good job,

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<sup>64</sup> Harry and Gilbert Truman, interview by Jon Taylor, 20 September 1996, transcript of tape interview, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>65</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess: The Letters from Harry to Bess Truman, 1910-1959* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 52.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>67</sup> Fred L. Truman interview, June 18, 1991.

<sup>68</sup> *Independence Examiner*, 9 March 1978.

<sup>69</sup> *Lincoln Star*, 9 July 1965.



he would compliment them [sic]. He made you want to do a good job. That's Mr. Truman.<sup>70</sup>

Harry Truman's father, John Anderson Truman, was not only a stockbroker (in the true sense), a farmer, and a deacon in the Blue Ridge Baptist Church, he was also an inventor. He patented a reel for the deployment of wire used in barbed-wire fences<sup>71</sup> and a staple-puller used for barbed wire.<sup>72</sup> He also invented a railroad switch.

Harry Truman related an anecdote regarding his father that adds a personal dimension to the man. "If my father's honor was impugned," Harry is reported to have said, "he'd fight like a buzzsaw."<sup>73</sup> Harry Truman reported that on one occasion his father was seated on the witness stand, testifying in Judge James H. Slover's Independence courtroom. At the conclusion of his cross-examination, the attorney leaned toward John Truman and said, "Now, John, you know that's a damn lie!" John Truman sprang from the witness chair and pursued the offending attorney as he fled the courtroom. Upon John Truman's return to the courtroom, Judge Slover is reported to have leaned over the bench and asked, "Did you get him, John?"

"No, he got away. He ran inside a building across the street."

"Too bad," Slover said. "That fellow really had a good beating coming to him."<sup>74</sup>

At the time of John Truman's death, he confided in friends who were visiting him on his deathbed that he felt like a failure. His friends tried to dissuade him and later reported that in their opinion he had been a great success.<sup>75</sup> Local schools were closed in tribute on the day of John Truman's funeral.

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<sup>70</sup> Babock interview, 12 February 1964.

<sup>71</sup> Patent No. 438,718, serial number 349,855, dated October 21, 1890.

<sup>72</sup> Serial number 370,194, dated April 2, 1891.

<sup>73</sup> Harry Truman as quoted by Alfred Steinberg, *The Man From Missouri: The Life and Times of Harry S. Truman* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1962), 17.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>75</sup> Stephen S. Slaughter, *History of a Missouri Farm Family: The O. V. Slaughters, 1700-1944* (Harrison, N.Y.: Harbor Hill, 1978), 81.

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## **Chapter 3**

### **Harry S Truman: The Farm Years**

#### **Introduction**

#### **Harry Truman Returns to the Grandview Farm**

#### **Farm Work and Its Seasons**

#### **Scientific Farming and Lessons Learned**

#### **A Family Divided**

#### **The Truman Family on the Grandview Farm**

#### **Socializing in Town**

#### **Truman Leaves the Farm**

### **Introduction**

This chapter examines Harry Truman's years on the farm as an adult from 1905-06 until 1917. It discusses the relationships of those living on the farm during that time, and the relationship of each of them to the farm and to farming. The chapter briefly examines the emotional and financial repercussions resulting from the unfortunate litigation over Harriet Young's estate. The newer, scientific farming methods being used in Missouri generally, and at the Young-Truman farm in particular, are outlined, as well as a glimpse of what life was like on a farm at that time.

Harry Truman's social life is presented, including his membership in the Masons, the church, and the National Guard.

### **Harry Truman Returns to the Grandview Farm**

The farm that Harry Truman returned to in 1907 as a young man was not the farm he knew as a five-year-old child. The big house Solomon Young built in 1867-68 had burned in 1893 and been replaced by a smaller home built by his uncle, Harrison Young. His uncle had built it on the location occupied by the larger house that had burned. He built it in at least two stages. Apparently the rear, or eastern, portion was constructed first. It consisted of a small kitchen, a dining room, and an upstairs bedroom, built directly over the original house's cellar. The western portion, or what is the front of the house today, was built next. It included two rooms downstairs bisected by a hallway with stairs leading up to two bedrooms.<sup>76</sup>

Six people lived in this three-bedroom house in 1907. Harriet Young, John Anderson and Martha Truman, Harry Truman, and Vivian and Mary Jane Truman all lived in the house. Each person played an important role in the operation of the farm. Harry Truman's father, John Anderson Truman, oversaw the total farm operation until his death in November of 1914, when Harry Truman took over his role as farm manager. When Harry Truman returned to the farm, Harrison Young then lived in an apartment in Kansas City, but he stopped by to spend several days at a time. Harry and his brother Vivian shared the bedroom over the dining room until Vivian married in 1911; and after that Harry frequently shared his bedroom with hired

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<sup>76</sup> Telephone Conversation with Miss Mary Jane Truman, 29 July 1974, Vertical File: "Grandview Farm," Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

**Harry S Truman: The Farm Years**  
**Part 1, Chapter 3**

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hands<sup>77</sup> when they had to spend the night. Family members, including the Noldnas and Colgans, were frequent visitors to the farm.<sup>78</sup>

The front drive was marked by two stone posts and a white gate. The stone posts were thirty inches wide on each side, were about five feet high, and were capped with Portland cement. These massive square posts of cemented stones were used throughout the farm as both corner posts or, paired to support gates.

The Trumans would build additional outbuildings. Behind the house (twenty feet behind the old seventeen-by-seventeen-foot dwelling) they would build a small twelve-by-twenty-foot utility barn on a brick foundation. They would build a newer, additional barn. The crowning glory of the Truman transformation of the Young farm was a modest utilitarian building at the extreme eastern end of the rear yard — a new outhouse. They installed the door on the east side, modestly facing away from the house, and they embellished the structure with a brick floor.<sup>79</sup> The pump, which was located on the south side of the house, and was painted white:

I gave the pump a good coat. I did that because it stands immediately in front of the back door and in one of those horribly dark nights I was telling you of when the Nolands were here I was endeavoring to get out of Ethel's way in a hurry and collided with the pump. I dislocated my specs and gave myself a black eye.<sup>80</sup>

On the east side of the barn was a cistern with a capacity of more than two hundred gallons. There was also a coal shed for stoves in the house, and the parlor stove was cantankerous.<sup>81</sup>

Truman found some things had not changed. They continued to use the massive barn Solomon built of lumber from Hickman's mill. It had four rows of stalls. You could drive a wagon through the central portion, and there were cribs at both

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<sup>77</sup> In 1911 the farm had two hired hands plus Vivian when John Truman broke his leg (see text below); in 1912 Booney McBroom (AKA "Boon") was the hired hand. Another hired hand, Brownie Huber, worked on the farm from 1912 to 1917 and boarded with the family. Bill Renshaw, "President Truman: His Missouri Neighbors Tell of His Farm Years," *The Prairie Farmer*, 12 May 1945. Henry Paustian was another hired hand. The dates of his employment are unknown. Esther M. Grube (nee Hall), interview by Niel Johnson, 4 February 1981, transcript of taped interview, 4 February 1981, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>78</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess: The Letters from Harry to Bess Truman, 1910-1959* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 67, 116.

<sup>79</sup> Robert T. Bray, *Archaeological Survey and Testing at the Truman Farm Home and Grounds*, 1983, typescript, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>80</sup> Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 39.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

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ends on the side of the drive-through.<sup>82</sup> There was still no running water to the house. He bathed in a metal tub near the well in water that had sat warming in the sun during the day. Farm animals and human muscle still got the work done. Mornings started at four or five with dressing in the dark cold. Corncobs were gathered to start a fire in the kitchen stove, eggs were collected, cows were milked. Only then was time taken for breakfast. The farm and farmer remained so intimately connected that one didn't exist without the other.

**Farm Work and Its Seasons**

Harry Truman could not have chosen worse weather for his return to the farm than that of the spring of 1906. March brought cold and very wet weather. A local newspaper reported that, "everything is mud, travel is suspended, the rural mails are delayed, stock cannot go about in the field, and farming is at a standstill."<sup>83</sup> However, the bright economic climate of 1906 agriculture both nationally and in Missouri compensated for the heavy local rains. American farmers were prospering. Although agriculture was no longer expanding as rapidly as it had during much of the nineteenth century, industries and cities were, producing a national economy in which prices for the scarcer agriculture commodities were increasing as prices for more plentiful industrial goods were decreasing. In a very practical sense, it took fewer bushels of wheat to buy a plow. Rural population decreased in Missouri, and city populations grew (Kansas City doubled in size between 1900 and 1920, reaching over 320,000). The price of agricultural products continued upward. By 1916, prices for corn and wheat were double what they were in 1905, and the index of Missouri farm prices in 1916 was 15 percent above 1910 levels.<sup>84</sup>

As the value of agricultural products increased and rail transport of those products was enhanced, the value of Jackson County farmland rose. In 1900 the average (mean) value of an acre of farmland was \$71, in 1910 it was \$152, and in 1910 it reached \$229. In 1920, Jackson County farmland was the most valuable in Missouri.<sup>85</sup> And, the Young farm could not have been more strategically located. It was less than twenty miles from

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<sup>82</sup> Harry and Gilbert Truman, interview by Jon Taylor, September 20, 1996, transcript of taped interview, Harry S Truman National Historic Site. Note: This majestic barn would burn to the ground on November 6, 1966.

<sup>83</sup> *Jackson Examiner*, 21 December 1906.

<sup>84</sup> Richard S. Kirkendall, "Harry S. Truman: A Missouri Farmer in the Golden Age," *Agricultural History* 48: 4 (1974), 467-83.

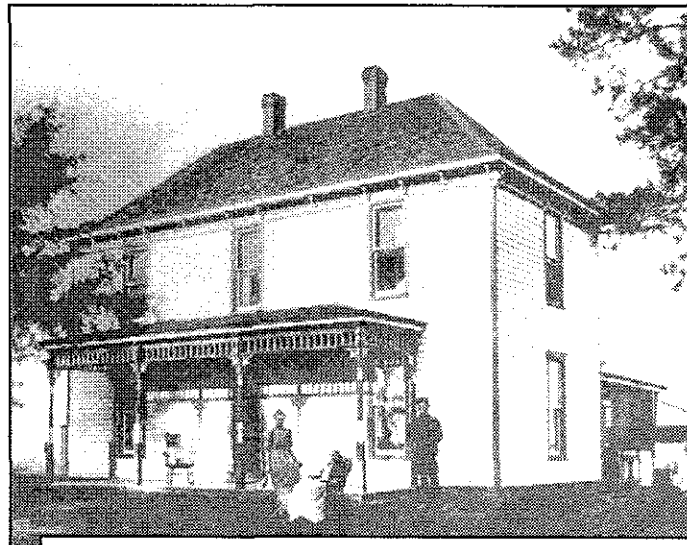
<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 472.

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Kansas City, Grandview was connected to the city by a rock road and both the Kansas City Southern and the St. Louis & San Francisco railroads provided rail transport. In fact, trains ran through the farm, stopping a mile south in Grandview as well as in Hickman's Mill, a few miles north of the farm.<sup>86</sup> The Trumans hauled their wheat to the Hickman Mills' general store, where it would be weighed, and then shoveled into rail cars.<sup>87</sup>

Although the Trumans used machinery, including a gang plow, a corn planter, a grain drill and a binder, most motive power was provided by horses and mules during Harry Truman's tenure. The first gasoline-powered tractors were behemoth, lumbering monsters. Light tractors did not debut until around 1913 and were not commonly available until after World War I. And the Trumans were not alone. In 1919 Missouri farms had more than one million horses and mules, but only 7,200 tractors.<sup>88</sup>



**The Truman farmhouse c. 1906. From left to right:  
Martha Truman, Harriet Young, and Harry S. Truman.**  
Courtesy of Harry S. Truman Library

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<sup>86</sup> The proximity of the tracks was both blessing and curse. Sparks created by the wheels of passing trains would sometimes ignite fires. One such a fire burned thirty acres of corn and severely burned a horse. *Jackson Examiner*, 2 November 1906.

<sup>87</sup> B. F. Ervin, Sr., "He Was a Good Man With a Pitchfork, Too." *Kansas City Times*, 10 July 1963.

<sup>88</sup> Kirkendall, "Harry S. Truman: A Missouri Farmer," 467-83.

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Harry Truman's farm life was dictated by the seasons. His year started behind an Emerson plow mounted on a three-wheeled frame pulled by four horses or mules digging a two-foot furrow. If he got an early start, he could plow five to six acres in a ten- or twelve-hour day. After plowing and harrowing, he planted wheat, oats, and corn. He used a twelve-disc drill that covered eight feet for the wheat and oats. Corn was planted in checkrows.<sup>89</sup>

After the planting came the incessant cultivating. Thistles, cockleburrs, morning-glories, nettles, sand burs, plantain, pigweed, mules tail, buck brush, ironweed — all had to be hoed and removed from fields and pastures alike. Livestock had to be fed, watered, and treated for injury and illness. Farm tools had to be repaired, maintained, sharpened. Fences needed building or repairing. The house, the barn, and outbuildings needed constant attention after the winter snows and spring rains and wind. Time was read by the sun, and if light remained, work continued.

In a letter to his future wife in July 1912, Harry Truman described repairing a binder: "I have been working over an old binder. My hands and face and my clothes are as black as the ace of spades — blacker, because the ace has a white background. I hate the job I have before me. If the machine goes well, it is well; if not, it is a word rhyming with well (?) literally."<sup>90</sup> Harry Truman described other farm tasks as well:

It was my job to help my father and brother feed the livestock, sometimes milk a couple of cows, then help my mother get breakfast. After breakfast we'd go to the fields. In spring and fall there'd be plowing to do. We had gang plows made by the Emerson Plow Company — two twelve-inch plows on a three-wheeled frame. It required four horses or mules to pull it and if an early start was had, about five acres could be broken up in a day — not an eight-hour one but in, say, ten or twelve hours. In the spring when the weather was cool and the teams could be kept moving the time was shorter. That sort of a plow is the best demonstration of horsepower, pounds, feet, minutes. Sometimes the horses gave out and then the power was off until a rest was had.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Checkrows were based upon a checkerboard-square pattern that enabled the farmer to cultivate in two difference directions (e.g., north-south as well as east-west). The pattern was created by establishing equal-distant parallel lines in the field, then running equal-distant parallel lines perpendicular to the first set of lines. Wherever lines crossed, corn was planted.

<sup>90</sup> Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 88.

<sup>91</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *The Autobiography of Harry S Truman* (Boulder, Colo.: Associated University Press, 1980), 31.

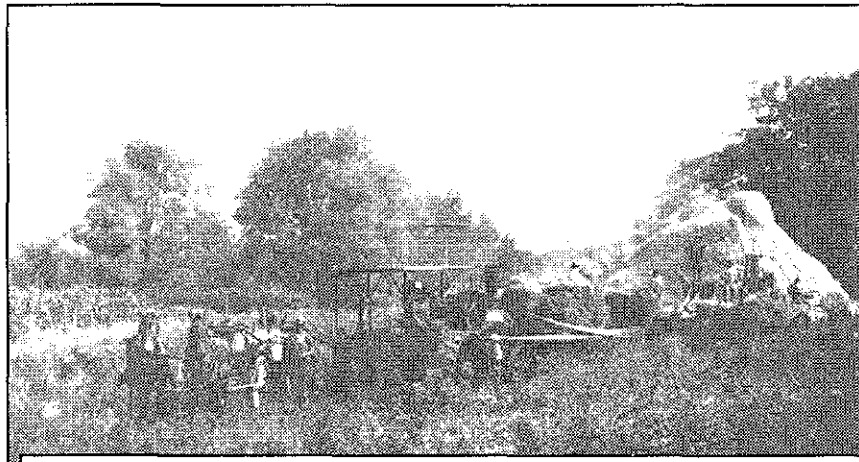


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As spring turned into summer, the sun became hot and the dry winds dust-filled. The farmer's typical day was spent alone in the fields or barn. Problems that arose were either solved on the spot, or they were worked around. There were no committee meetings, no task forces, no brainstorm sessions. And if the garden didn't grow, there was a scarcity of vegetables for the table:

We are living on bread and bacon with some canned goods thrown in. I can sympathize with those westerners now who can never raise a garden. Ours is a total failure. We had one measly little mess of peas and there was more soup than peas then. One of our neighbors who has a big orchard says that all the apples are falling off green. I am doing the usual farmer act now. They are always starving to death.<sup>92</sup>



**Threshing Crew. From left to right: water wagon, steam engine, and thresher. The long belt provides sufficient distance between the steam engine and the hay to minimize fire danger.** Courtesy of Harry S. Truman Library

The children of farmers started young. By age eight, they were gathering and disposing of brush, by age ten they were in the cornfield with a hoe in search of weeds, by age twelve they had graduated to a scythe or were running a team of four horses in front of a plow or harrow.

Harvest-time meant a respite from solitude in the wheat fields. Neighbors gathered and moved from farm to farm, helping each other harvest the grain. The wheat would be cut, bound, set

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<sup>92</sup> Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 65.

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in shocks, and left to dry for ten days to two weeks. The cutting and the binding were done using a machine called a binder. Assembling the bundles in shocks was done by hand.<sup>93</sup>

After the wheat that had been assembled in shocks had dried, the farmer would hire a thresher. The threshing machine was expensive and would only be used a few days a year by a farmer. Consequently, the common practice was to simply pay for the use of a thresher when needed. The Leslie C. Hall family was in the threshing-for-hire business in the Grandview area in the early 1900s. The thresher was paid by the bushel run through the machine.<sup>94</sup>

Years later, Mary Jane Truman would describe what threshing time meant for those running the house:

[W]e always had a big bunch of men at threshing time. We had as many maybe as twenty-five or thirty for dinner. . . . You always had to have plenty of meat and plenty of potatoes and plenty of vegetables. . . . Then there were the machine men; there would be five with a machine and they stayed overnight. So you had breakfast, dinner, and supper for them. Then at the noon meal the neighbors would come in; they traded work. We would have anywhere from twenty-five to thirty, and we always had company besides. We always had a house-full.

And, Harry, when he was home, would get up lots o times and get breakfast for the men. Cause maybe Mamma and I would be washing dishes 'til ten or eleven o'clock at night."<sup>95</sup>

Leslie Hall used his machine to thresh wheat at about eight farms near Hickman Mills. News of the arrival of Hall's steam engine, water wagon, and thresher traveled quickly through the farming community. Three blasts of his steam whistle, a pause, then three more blasts was the signal for the neighboring farmers to gather. The neighbors who formed the threshing crew usually started on a farm owned by C. W. Babock, nicknamed Witt. A boy would arrive in a buggy with a burlap-covered ten-gallon water can for the workers. Four farm wagons with spring seats arrived to transport the grain for weighing and shipment in Hickman Mills. And seven or more bundle wagons

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<sup>93</sup> Erwin, "He Was a Good Man With a Pitchfork, Too."

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Mary Jane Truman, interview by Stephen and Cathy Doyal and Fred and Audrey Truman, 1975 transcript of taped interview, Harry S. Truman Library, 50.

were used to gather wheat bundles scattered in shocks throughout the field and deliver them to the thresher.<sup>96</sup>

Members of the thresher gang took pride in the assembly of the highest, most symmetrical load of wheat bundles on the bundle wagons. Losing a load on the way across the field to the thresher, or separator, was a fall from grace. Two loaded bundle wagons would pull up on either side of Hall's separator or thresher allowing workers to feed bundles of wheat into the machine with pitchforks.<sup>97</sup>

The threshing machine was run by a long belt, which was looped around the steam engine's flywheel. The steam engine was positioned as far away as possible from the thresher to minimize the risk of fire jumping to the wheat. The steam engine required water and wood or coal, which had to be continually supplied to the field operation. The logistics were almost as complex and labor-intensive as was the actual threshing. There were innumerable potential problems. Someone could walk into or drive a horse into the belt stretched from the thresher to the steam engine. Someone could throw too many wheat bundles into the thresher, causing it to stall. The water wagon could break down. It was not uncommon for individual farmers helping on these threshing crews to be unable to finish a full day due to illness, injury, or simple exhaustion from the heat and incessant wheat dust. When they finished that harvest, the entire group of neighbors would trundle after Hall's machines to the next farm. And then the next. Until all the wheat was harvested and the farmers would return to their solitary labors.<sup>98</sup>

### **Scientific Farming and Lessons Learned**

During Harry Truman's tenure on the farm, the farm developed a reputation for being well-run. George Arington, a neighbor on an adjoining farm recalled that Harry Truman spent every spare moment either "readin'" or "figurin'". He built the first derrick and swing in the area for stacking hay. Ed Young (no relation), the local veterinarian who was the Truman's veterinarian from 1912 to 1917 said,

Harry was always bustling around getting things done. I remember once when the Trumans were putting out a big

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<sup>96</sup> Erwin, "He Was a Good Man With a Pitchfork, Too."

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> J. Sanford Rikoon, *Threshing in the Midwest, 1820-1940* (Bloomington, IL: Indiana University Press, 1979). See also Marvin McKinley, *Wheels of Farm Progress* (American Society of Agricultural Engineers, n.d.).

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corn crop, of seeing three corn planters running. A few days later I went by and was surprised to see the same three teams cultivating the corn before it was up. That was something new to me but it worked, as it gave Harry a head start on the weeds.<sup>99</sup>

Truman farmed approximately 300 acres and used the rest as pasture for his livestock and neighbor's livestock. The 1910 census shows that the Trumans received \$478.70 rent for livestock grazing in their pastures. In the same year they valued their farm at \$59,500.<sup>100</sup> In 1911 he and his father built a new hay barn with internal dimensions of fifty by seventy-two feet.

Truman also practiced crop rotation. He sowed wheat in a field in September, and planted clover in the same field the following spring. He cut the wheat in July, and in the fall he would harvest a crop of stubble and clover from the field. The following year he would be able to harvest a crop of hay and clover seed. Then he broke up the clover field in the fall and planted corn in the spring. After harvesting the corn, he used the corn stalk field as pasture for the livestock through the winter then cut the stalks and sowed oats. In March of 1911, Harry Truman planted eighty acres of oats. It took him five days to sow seventy acres. They also put 160 acres of wheat in on September 8, 1911. The same field would be sown with wheat again the following fall. It would take five years to complete the rotation cycle of wheat, clover, corn, oats, and then wheat. The result of the rotation was increased crop yield. Wheat increased from thirteen to nineteen bushels per acre, oats from eight to fifty, and corn from thirty-five to seventy bushels per year.<sup>101</sup> In 1913, the Trumans harvested 150 tons of hay.<sup>102</sup> In Harry Truman's words:

We used a rotation system in our farm program. We'd plant corn after clover. Starting with wheat we'd sow clover on the wheat field in the spring and usually get a crop of clover hay that fall. The next year we'd spread all the manure from the farm and the little town adjoining it on the clover field. Nearly every family in the little town of 300 people had a cow or two and a horse. My father and I bought a manure spreader and kept it busy all the time when we were not doing other necessary things. We'd break the clover field up in the fall and plant corn the next spring, sow oats in the corn stubble the next spring and

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<sup>99</sup> Bill Renshaw, "President Truman: His Missouri Neighbors Tell of His Farm Years," *Prairie Farmer*, May 12, 1945.

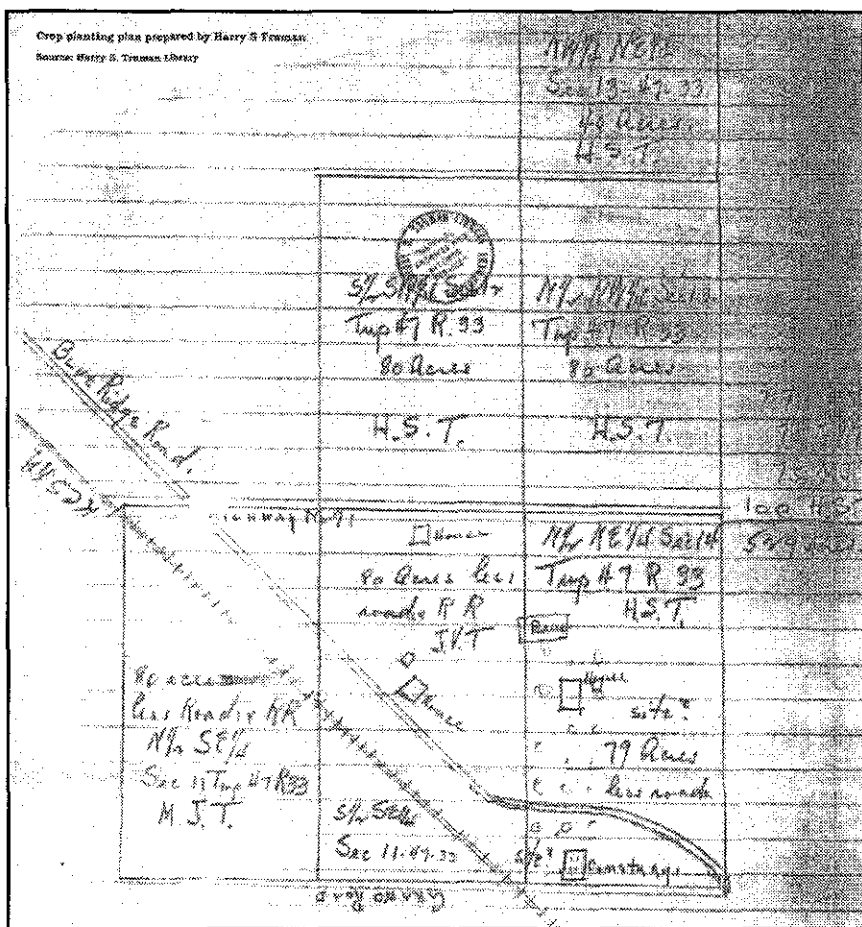
<sup>100</sup> Vertical File: "Grandview Farm, Misc. Records, 1890-1918," Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>101</sup> Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 121.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

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wheat after oats. It would take five years to make the complete rotation but it worked most successfully. We increased the wheat yield from thirteen to nineteen bushels -- the oats from eight to fifty bushels and the corn from thirty-five to seventy bushels to the acre. Besides these increased yields in the grain crops we always had two excellent hay crops and at least one seed crop from the clover, so my practical education in farm management took place in those ten years.<sup>103</sup>



**Crop planting plan prepared by Harry S Truman c. 1907**  
 Courtesy of Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>103</sup> Ferrell, ed., *Autobiography of Harry S. Truman*, 30-32.

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The oat sowing and the wheat hauling were all done behind four horses, William, Samuel, Jane, and X. X was a bronc and interested in speed, William (AKA "Bill") was a former buggy horse and lazy, Samuel was a very large ex-dray horse whose top speed was measured in nanometers per hour. Jane was just right, according to Harry.

There can be little doubt that the future president learned much of his ingenuity and thoughtful approach to farming from his father. The manure spreader is just one example: Shortly after moving to the farm, he and his father bought a manure spreader. The Trumans picked up manure from neighbors' barns and stables and spread it on their clover fields.

Harry also learned a great deal about livestock from his father, who had spent most of his adult life working with animals in one capacity or another. The farm had horses, mules, chickens, and Shorthorns. At the time of John Truman's death in 1914, they had begun to raise Black Angus. According to letters Harry wrote to Bess, cows were not his favorite farm animal. One broke his leg in the spring of 1913. Harry's version of the incident was that he had grabbed the tail of this 300-pound cow and was reaching for her ear when it stuck her head between his legs, backed him into a corner, and with a heave of her head flipped him over her back. The resulting fall broke his leg. No record of the cows version of the incident could be found; however, it was later determined that it was not a cow, but a calf.

The Trumans also raised Hampshire hogs in a concrete-floored shelter with an attached fenced area east of the house. Harry didn't seem to like pigs either:

I have been to the lot and put about a hundred rings in half as many hogs' noses. You really haven't any idea what a soul-stirring job it is, especially on a day when the mud is knee deep and about the consistency of cake dough. Every hog's voice is pitched in a different key and about time you get used to a squeal pitched in G minor that hog has to be loosed and the next one is in A-flat. This makes a violent discord and is very hard on the nerves of a high-strung person. It is very much harder on the hogs' nerves. We have a patent chute which takes Mr. Hog right behind the ears and he has to stand and let his nose be bejeweled to any extent the ringer sees fit. I don't like to do it, but when a nice bluegrass pasture is at stake I'd carve the whole hog tribe to small bits rather than see it ruined. Besides it only hurts them for about an hour and about one in every three loses his rings inside of a week and has to endure the agony over again.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 80.

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Raising hogs then also brought with it the risk of cholera decimating the entire stock. In 1913 10 percent of all American hogs died from cholera. An epidemic struck Truman's hogs in 1912. He started with ninety hogs; he was able to send only thirteen to market, and save twelve others. The rest died. In accordance with the law, he dumped the carcasses in a hole and buried them en masse.

About the same time, hogs on the neighboring farm owned by the Slaughters were also struck with cholera. Stephen Slaughter remembered years later his mother calling the Truman farm and asking for help vaccinating the Slaughters' hogs. At four-thirty the next morning, Harry S Truman arrived on horseback and spent the day helping the Slaughters wrestle 200-pound hogs to the ground long enough to vaccinate each one.<sup>105</sup> The incident wasn't forgotten by Harry either:

It was necessary to sneak up and grab a hind leg, then hold on until someone else got another hold wherever he could, and then proceed to throw Mr. Hog and sit on him while he got what the Mo [Missouri] University says is good for him. A two-hundred-pound hog can almost jerk the rigs loose from your backbone when you get him by the hind leg. It is far and away the best exercise in the list. It beats Jack Johnson's whole training camp as a muscle toughener.<sup>106</sup>

Truman was to report in one of his letters to his future wife that the farm netted about \$7,000 per year.<sup>107</sup> However, the Trumans seemed to have very little discretionary income. Stephen Slaughter, who was the son of one of the neighbors, wrote, "You know, they didn't have much spare money. The Trumans were always strapped."<sup>108</sup> What the neighbors didn't know was that income from the farm not only had to support the extended family living there, but John and Harry Truman were still struggling to pay off approximately \$12,500 in debts John still owed from his 1900-01 financial collapse.<sup>109</sup>

A few of the farm receipts still exist. Obviously, receipts that have been lost over the past ninety years would number in the hundreds; however, the existing records provide a glimpse into the farm operation: On August 6, 1909, the Trumans sold 1,011 bushels of oats for \$414.87 less \$16.19 freight, \$1.40 inspection and weighing and \$5.06 commission. On August 11,

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<sup>105</sup> Stephen S. Slaughter, *History of a Missouri Farm Family* (Harrison, NY: Harbor Hill Books, 1978).

<sup>106</sup> Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 96.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>108</sup> Slaughter, *History of a Missouri Farm Family*, 71.

<sup>109</sup> Margaret Truman, *Bess W. Truman* (New York: Macmillan, 1986) 34.

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1909, the Trumans sold 849 bushels of wheat for \$912.85 less \$40.71 for freight, inspection, and commission. On August 8, 1910, the Trumans sold 779 bushels of red wheat for \$779.33, less \$37.44 for freight, inspection, and commission. And, on August 15, 1910, the Trumans sold 1,286 bushels of oats for \$468.16 less \$28.42 for freight, inspection, and commission.<sup>110</sup>

Additional insight into the farm operation during Harry Truman's tenure can be gleaned from a close examination of the 1910 census questionnaire Harry filled out: He reported that they had 600 acres in pasture or under cultivation, and the farm value was \$58,000, which included the farmhouse and all outbuildings worth about \$8,000. Farm machinery and implements were reported to be worth \$1,500. They also reported twenty-one cows, six heifers, seventeen calves, and five steers. Fifty-four hogs, eight horses, six colts, and sixty-five chickens were included. In responding to the census questions about the preceding year (1909), the Trumans said they had harvested 3,000 bushels of wheat from a hundred-acre planting that they sold for \$1,500; they harvested 1,200 bushels of oats from a forty-acre planting that they sold for \$480.53; and they sold 849 bushels of winter wheat for \$872.60 that came from a sixty-acre planting. They also produced thirty tons of clover from forty acres they sold for \$150, as well as twelve tons of alfalfa from three acres that sold for \$153.00. The year 1909 was also a year rich in gestation and birthing. The Trumans were blessed by the arrival of ten calves, three colts, and sixty little piglets.

Existing records enable one to flip forward seven years in the Truman history, and look at the farm operation for 1916 and 1917. In the property valuation forms completed by Harry in 1916 and again in 1917 for state, county, and school district taxes, Harry reported:<sup>111</sup>

| <u>in 1916</u>                 | <u>in 1917</u>                     |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| eight horses valued at \$800   | ten horses valued at \$750         |
| two yearling mules worth \$100 | two yearling mules worth \$100     |
| two older mules worth \$200    | two older mules worth \$150        |
| three pure breed cows, \$120   | five pure breed cows \$200         |
| two grade cows worth \$60      | three milch cows worth \$150       |
| two milch cows worth \$80      | forty hogs valued at \$200         |
| sixty hogs worth \$240         | one piano valued at \$50           |
| one piano worth \$50           | clocks, jewelry & furniture, \$320 |
| household furniture, \$200     | one car worth \$100                |

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<sup>110</sup> Mary Jane Truman Estate, Vertical File: "Grandview Farm, Misc.," Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.



farm machinery worth \$250<sup>112</sup>  
one used car worth \$100

It helps in developing a broader perspective of the Truman farm economics to step back and take a look at Missouri farming in general during the 1917-18 farming year: The state had 14,870,400 acres under tillage with the average value of crops on each farm being approximately \$1,685.00. Statewide, there were 6.6 million acres in corn, 3 million acres in wheat, 1.5 million acres in oats, 2.9 million acres in hay, and 300,000 acres in potatoes, cotton, and rye. In 1919, Missouri farmers had 919,000 milk cows, 1,599,000 sheep, and 4,943,000 hogs.<sup>113</sup>

Extrapolating from information gleaned from receipts, census information and school tax information from the Young-Truman Farm, it becomes obvious that the farm was a very typical Missouri farm of the time. It produced milk, grains and hogs with hogs and grains being the principal income-producers.

### **A Family Divided**

Harriet Young died on December 19, 1909. Harrison Young and John Truman were appointed executors of her estate. J. H. Conrad and W. B. Garrison were appointed by the probate court to assist them in making an inventory of the real and personal property Harriet owned at the time of her death. They reported to the court on February 4, 1910, that Harriet owned 444.75 acres when she died.

Harriet's will purported to leave all of her estate to Harrison Young and Martha Ellen Truman. The will directed that her other children received five dollars each. The other children filed suit, arguing that the will was invalid because Harriet was mentally incompetent when she made the will and because Harrison and/or Martha Ellen had exerted inappropriate influence on Harriet resulting in her not being able to exercise her own judgement in deciding how and to whom she wanted to convey her property. All parties to the lawsuit elected to not have a jury, and testimony was heard by Judge O. A. Lucas.<sup>114</sup> On

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<sup>112</sup> Farm machinery was not listed on the 1917 form. Either the reporting rules changed or Harry forgot.

<sup>113</sup> F. B. Mumford, "A Century of Missouri Agriculture," 296.

<sup>114</sup> A search was made of both the state archives in Jefferson City, Missouri, as well as the court files in Jackson County. Although the probate file was found, the court file containing the litigation record, including testimony, was not located. The litigation file was assigned a different court number, and was archived separately. A litigant may appeal a trial court's judgment only during a specific period of time. After that time has passed, appeal is usually not possible.

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May 14, 1914, the judge concluded that Harriet had been mentally competent and that the will accurately reflected Harriet's independent wishes.<sup>115</sup>

Two months after being appointed executors of Harriet's estate, John Truman and Harrison Young leased 480 acres to Harry Truman.<sup>116</sup> The lease was for a term of three years, running from March 1, 1910, to March 1, 1913. The lease required Harry to cultivate all the tillable land. The lease also required Harry to pay one-third of all grain in the crib, one-half of all hay in the stack (or one-third of the sale of the hay), and one-half of all pasture rents.<sup>117</sup>

**The Truman Family Back on the Young Farm**

Harry Truman did not live alone on the farm. His mother, Martha Ellen, his sister, Mary Jane, and until 1911, his brother Vivian all lived there. And, there were his cousins, Ruth, Nellie and Ethel Noland who were frequent visitors as was his Uncle Harrison.

Although they all played a role in running the farm, after Vivian's marriage and departure in 1911, Harry's younger sister, Mary Jane, was probably the most significant, particularly after Harry went to war.

Mary Jane grew up being lovingly cared for by her older brothers. Years later she would recall during an interview with Merle Miller:

When I was a baby, Harry used to sit on a rocking chair and sing me to sleep, and he braided my hair, and when I was outdoors, he wouldn't let me out of his sight. He was so afraid I'd hurt myself.

I sometimes think that's why I never did get married. I just never met anybody who was as nice to me as Harry

We played almost all of the games that children played in those days, and we all three had a horse to ride and did

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Consequently, the file upon which the appeal would be based would no longer be needed, and in many jurisdictions is destroyed except for the final judgment.

<sup>115</sup> Jackson County Probate File, Docket No. I3060.

<sup>116</sup> The inventory of Harriet's estate included only 444 acres of land, whereas this lease conveyed 480 acres. The land conveyed by the lease that was not in Harriet's estate was a forty-acre parcel immediately west of the acreage containing the farmhouse.

<sup>117</sup> Mary Jane Truman Estate, Vertical File: "Grandview Farm, Misc.," Harry S. Truman Library.

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quite a bit of horseback riding. I remember one horse in particular — we called him Old Bill — and he wouldn't let the boys catch him. But I could go out and catch him in the pasture or anywhere else because I usually carried a biscuit or a piece of cake or something for him.

He was the old buggy horse, and we drove him for years. We still had him when my brother Harry went to the First World War, and I drove him all during that time and then bought a car in the spring of 1919, shortly after my brother came home. But Old Bill was still there. We kept him as long as he lived.<sup>118</sup>



**Family and friends on the Truman farm. From left to right: Mary Jane Truman, Harry S Truman, Laura Everhart, Mary Colgan Hornbuckle, Vivian Truman, and Nellie Noland.**

Courtesy of Harry S. Truman Library.

When the Truman family returned to the farm in 1906, Mary Jane was seventeen. She had been born there on August 12, 1889. According to Harry's letters to Bess, Mary Jane was actively involved in running the house. According to photographs dating from that period, Mary Jane was also actively involved in farming.

Mary Jane's abilities as a farmer are clearly demonstrated by her single-handedly managing the farm when Harry Truman

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<sup>118</sup> Miller *Plain Speaking*, 50.

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was absent pursuing business interests in late 1915 and much of 1916, first in Texas and later in Oklahoma. Mary again ran the farm while Truman was serving as an artillery officer in France during most of 1918 and the first five months of 1919. Vivian was running a farm of a couple hundred acres in Hickman Mills at the time. So, in Harry's absence, it was Mary Jane as farmer, and her mother as homemaker.<sup>119</sup>

The Young-Truman farm and farms throughout the country in the early twentieth century were not simple idyllic sanctuaries from the clatter of streetcar wheels, crime, and the street pollution of horse manure. The absence of telephones, the tediousness of transportation, and the vagaries of medical care all



**Mary Jane after the morning milking. The Solomon Young barn is in the immediate background, Vivian Truman's hay barn is to the viewer's right.**

Courtesy of Harry S. Truman Library.

combined to paint a picture of a quiet determination, and a need to accept life on its own terms. In March of 1914, Truman's mother underwent hernia surgery at home. Truman held the lamp for the surgeon. Truman described the operation in a letter to Bess written on March 20, 1914:

Dear Bess: I have a few minutes so I'm going to write you a short note. Mamma has had an operation called hernia. It is somewhat akin to appendicitis. At least there was a

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<sup>119</sup> Fred L. Truman, interview by James H. Williams, June 18, 1991, transcript of typed interview, Harry S. Truman Library.

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long incision made in her right side and some parts removed. She is getting along as well as we can expect.

I have to stay with her all the time, Mary has so much else to do. The doctor is with her now. We were very much surprised when the doctor said he wanted expert advice on the case. We just supposed at first that she had a slight rupture. The specialist came at five o'clock Thursday, and at six they decided to have the operation. I had to stand and hold a lamp while it was going on. I hope never to witness another one.<sup>120</sup>

In April of 1914, Truman borrowed \$650 from his mother and bought a car: a Stafford. Contrary to popular reports, it wasn't used primarily for pleasure. He put five thousand miles on the car in the first three months of ownership, much of it transporting his father, who had developed medical problems, to and from a Kansas City doctor.<sup>121</sup>

In November 1914, Harry's father John Truman died. In September he had become ill. Reports vary regarding the source of his illness. Some indicate that he suffered a strangulated hernia resulting from a job injury; however, the local newspaper reported that he had cancer.<sup>122</sup> In a letter to Bess dated August 31, 1914, Truman reported that his father's condition was grave and they were not hopeful that his 63-year-old father would survive. According to Truman's letter, an X-ray showed that the lower entrance to his father's stomach was almost closed.<sup>123</sup> In October he underwent surgery at the Swedish Hospital in Kansas City. On the morning of November 3, 1914, Harry and Brownie Huber, the hired man, rose early and quietly went downstairs, not wanting to wake Mamma Truman and Mary Jane. Harry and Brownie made biscuits, oatmeal, and fried some eggs. Harry stepped into the parlor where his father had been sleeping on a couch since becoming ill. According to Brownie, Harry came back into the kitchen a moment later and said, "Dad just passed away."<sup>124</sup> John Anderson Truman was sixty-four. Local schools

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<sup>120</sup> Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 115.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>122</sup> See Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 52. Margaret Truman reports that John Truman strained himself trying to move a huge boulder while working as road overseer. The strain, she reports, aggravated a pre-existing hernia, closing his stomach.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>124</sup> Renshaw, "President Truman: His Missouri Neighbors."

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were closed in memoriam on the day of his funeral.<sup>125</sup> He was buried in Forest Hill Cemetery in Kansas City.<sup>126</sup>

His father's death cast Harry Truman in the role of farm manager:

I have quite a job on my hands now trying to make things run as smoothly as they formerly did. You know, I've been in the habit of running the farm for some time, but Papa always made it go. He could make the men [hired farm help] step lively even after he was sick a great deal better than I can or even will. It surely makes me feel a loss that is quite irreparable . . . .<sup>127</sup>

John Truman's illness had resulted in heavy medical bills, and Harry was forced to sell the Black Angus herd he and his father had started to pay them.<sup>128</sup>

### **Socializing in Town**

The farm years of Truman were not years of isolation. In fact, some historians argue that Truman's farm years molded him into the more gregarious, more social, more self-confident person he became. It was during his years on the farm, argue these historians, that Harry Truman underwent important personality changes that prepared him for politics.<sup>129</sup> Whether the man made the farm, as the genetic-determinists would argue, or the farm made the man, as Jeffersonian agriculturists would argue, or whether, as is more probable, some of both are true, Truman would leave the farm a different man.

Each day he was confronted by problems he alone had to solve. Others working the farm were way up in the hog house vaccinating for cholera, or wrestling a sick calf away from a protective cow, or reattaching the right rear wagon wheel knocked loose on the macadam road into Kansas City. Wherever the others were, they were not with Harry when the team encountered the wasps in the north cornfield, developed a sudden longing to be somewhere in Kansas, and wanted to get there at light's speed. It was his problem. There was no one else. He had to solve it. And, like any other farmer, he solved it. Each

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<sup>125</sup> Doris Faber, Typescript of notes from interview of Mary Jane Truman, July 1967. Family Correspondence File: "Mary Jane Truman," Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>126</sup> *Jackson Examiner*, 9 October 1914.

<sup>127</sup> Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 132.

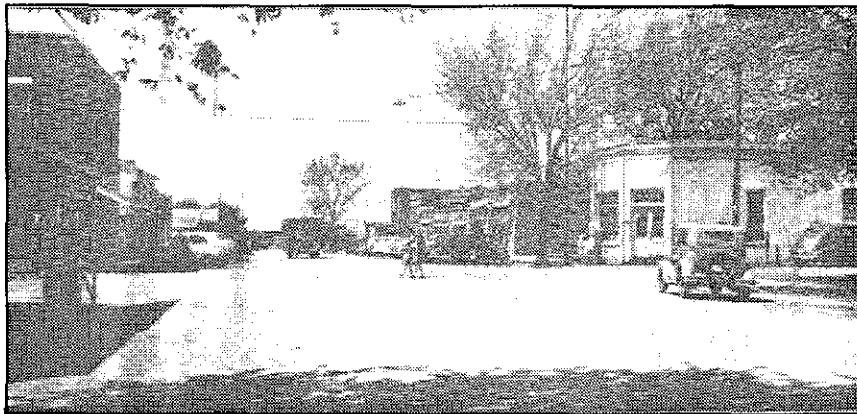
<sup>128</sup> Renshaw, "President Truman: His Missouri Neighbors."

<sup>129</sup> Kirkendall, "Harry S. Truman: A Missouri Farmer in the Golden Age," 467-83.

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problem confronted and solved enhanced self-confidence. This environmentally induced self-confidence that was a natural by-product of early twentieth-century farming takes on profound significance when one remembers who is being discussed: Harry S Truman, aged twenty-two years, a young man who as a boy had been pampered and protected because of sight problems, a young man who as a boy had spent more time at domestic chores than at physical outdoor challenges, a young man who as a boy had stayed home with mother to watch his younger brother ride off with his father on another livestock trade. The person upon whom this magical self-reliance was being bestowed had been student, musician, and banker. There can be no doubt that just as he watched the metamorphosis of his body from banker to laborer, so he also sensed a new self-confidence, born of confronting and solving the innumerable problems that are the *very definition of farming*. It was a newer, more self-possessed Harry S Truman who ventured into town seeking solace from the solitude of farming.



**Grandview, Missouri, 1910s**      Courtesy of Harry S. Truman Library.

In town, Harry attended the Baptist church, became active in the Masons, joined camp 4311 of the Woodmen of America, participated as a member of a National Guard unit, and became politically active. In fact, Harry's father expressed the opinion on several occasions that Harry was so busy doing things off the farm that he couldn't be too interested in farming.

In 1903, while still living and working in Kansas City, Harry had been baptized in the Little Blue River and joined a Kansas City Baptist congregation. He continued his association with the Baptist tradition when he returned to the Young farm and became a member of the *Grandview Baptist Church, which*

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had its origins on land deeded by Peter Thompson, a Jackson County pioneer, for the construction of a church and cemetery. The land was adjacent to the main entryway to the Young farm. He remained a member of that congregation for the rest of his life. In 1891 the congregation moved into Grandview, taking the building with it.

On June 14, 1905, Harry Truman, aged twenty-one, joined a battery of field artillery of the Missouri National Guard. He remained with the group for six years, or two enlistments. He attended drills every two weeks in and around Kansas City. It is reported that he was so proud of his dress blue uniform with red stripes down the trouser legs, red piping on the cuffs, and a red *foutragere* over the shoulder that he wore it to the farm one weekend to show his Grandmother Young. Truman later recalled that his grandmother's reaction wasn't what he had hoped for. "She looked me over, and I knew I was going to catch it." Truman recounted later. "She said, 'Harry, this is the first time since 1863 that a blue uniform has been in this house. Don't bring it here again.'"<sup>130</sup> While with the National Guard Harry Truman received promotions to the rank of corporal.

In December of 1908, Harry Truman filed his Petition for Initiation with the Westport lodge of the Masons, and joined the lodge in Belton, Missouri, nine miles north of Grandview. In 1911 he established a lodge in Grandview. Truman remained active in the Masons for the remainder of his life.<sup>131</sup> Both his Grandfather Young and Grandfather Truman had been members. By 1909 he had created a lodge in Grandview and was elected its first master. In 1913 he became the first patron of the Grandview chapter of the Eastern Star. Much later, in 1945, he would be given the thirty-third degree in the Masons.

In 1913 he joined the Farm Bureau and served as president of the township group. He also became president of the Grandview Commercial Club. Otherwise his political activities were limited to smaller posts. He succeeded his father to the post of road overseer for the southern half of Washington Township. He was appointed in December of 1914 to the position of postmaster of Grandview, a position, which he held from February 1915, until he resigned that April. In July 1916 he took the place of U.R. Holmes on the board of the Hickman Mills Consolidated School District, and served for almost a year. In August of 1916 he ran for committeeman in Washington Township but he lost in the primary.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 68.

<sup>131</sup> Jill York O'Bright, "Cultivating the Land, Cultivating the Man: The Young-Truman Farm," *Jackson County Historical Society* 26: 2 (Fall 1984).

<sup>132</sup> David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 86.



So, although it was farming that gave Harry Truman that confidence to rely upon himself, it was his life in town that gave him the social skills to apply that new-found confidence in the political arena.

### **Truman Leaves the Farm**

In 1918 Truman left the farm to enlist in the U.S. Army. He was commissioned a first lieutenant and was stationed in France, leaving Mary Jane to manage the farm. Years later Mary Jane would recall:

I did have a man and his wife that lived in a house on the farm. They were there all the time and then we had to hire other help to help them. Of course, we had quite a large crop of wheat and oats and corn; and then we had over two hundred acres in pasture, in pasture cattle.<sup>133</sup>

When Truman enlisted in the army he was thirty-three years old. Truman reported later that it was patriotism that compelled him to join the army. But, according to government officials, commencing in early 1917, plowing was as essential as shooting to victory in Europe. Farmers "will be as much a part of the great patriotic forces of the Nation as the men under fire. The boys in the furrows may win the war before the boys in the trenches may ever get a shot," proclaimed an USDA official. "No work," said the official, "that is being done in the country today is of more patriotic or of greater strategic military importance than the work of food production. Enlist in the national service; grow a war crop."<sup>134</sup> Truman would later recall that "it was quite a blow to my mother and sister for me to leave the farm."<sup>135</sup> Years later, when asked about her recollection of the time Harry went to France, Mary Jane said:

When my brother Harry went off to enter the service during the First World War, he said I'd have to look after Mamma and the farm, and so I did. My brother Vivian was on another farm east of here. I ran the farm, but I did have one good man. He had a house down on the other part of the farm where he and his family lived. Our trouble was getting good help to help

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<sup>133</sup> Mary Jane Truman, interview by Jerald L. Hill and William D. Stillely, 2 January 1976, transcript of taped interview, 8-9, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>134</sup> *Jackson Examiner*, 6, 20, 27 April and 4, 11 May 1917.

<sup>135</sup> William Hillman, *Mr President: The First Publication from the Personal Diaries, Private Letters, Papers, and Revealing Interviews of Harry S Truman* (NY: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1952), 73.

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him. But we got through, and we raised wheat and oats and corn and came out very well with it.<sup>136</sup>

Truman returned to the United States as a captain. He married Elizabeth Wallace in May of 1919, moved to Independence, opened a men's clothing store in Kansas City, and never returned to work the Young farm. Mary Jane, reluctant to continue running the farm without Harry's assistance, concluded that she would discontinue the farming operation.

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<sup>136</sup> Miller, *Plain Speaking*, 123.

## **Chapter 4**

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**Farming and Politics**

**Truman as County Judge, 1924 - 1926 1928 - 1934**

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#### **Introduction**

The years Harry Truman spent on the Grandview farm, without doubt, had an effect on him. Any life experience lasting eleven years obviously would. However, did that farming experience somehow bathe him in a light more favorably perceived by the electorate? Did the voters elect Harry Truman because they perceived him as a farmer? Or, did the farming experience have a subtler, more complex causal relationship with his political success? These are the questions addressed in this chapter.

A brief overview history of Harry Truman's political career, commencing with his years on the Jackson County Court and culminating with his ascension and later election to the Presidency is presented followed by an examination of what factors influenced his career, including the role played by his time behind the plow.

#### **Farming and Politics**

A significant question is what effect, if any, Truman's Grandview farming experience had on both his political success and his political policies. All too frequently, the answer is based upon assumptions that are not substantiated by either the statistical evidence or common sense. The popular assumption is that the people elected a farmer. But by the time he beat Dewey in the 1948 presidential election, Truman had been a politician twice as long as he had farmed. He was a First World War veteran, a Mason, a former county judge, a former United States senator, and a Vice President. Was he still perceived as a farmer anyway? Perhaps it was not being a farmer as much as possessing "Common Man" attributes that got the votes to put him in the White House. Could Truman have come from any other "Common Man" background and still been perceived in the same way by the electorate? The answer must be somewhere in his political history. However, before examining the Truman specifics, some broad, contextual background, and some knowledge of the politics of Missouri farming in the early 1900s might be helpful.

The political force exerted by United States farmers has been sporadic at best. For example, between 1873 and 1875 there were approximately 3,000 local lodges of the Patrons of Husbandry or Grange organized in Missouri. The organization declined in membership until about 1890 when participation increased making it an important political force in the state at

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least up until the early 1920s. Both the Farmers' Alliance, organized in 1872 and the Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union, organized in 1902, were important social and economic organizations; however, both were short-lived. The most important single organization which held sway within the Missouri farming community prior to Truman's launch into politics was a state organization known as the Missouri Farmers' Association which engendered a large number of affiliated local organizations known as County Farm Bureaus. Originally created as an avenue for the then College of Agriculture to promote "progressive farming techniques," the Missouri Farmers' Association blossomed during the First World War when the federal government perceived the Association as an organization through which it could advocate increased agricultural production during the war. Following the war, County Farm Bureaus continued to cooperate with local agricultural colleges and universities as well as the United States Department of Agriculture to promote new farming techniques and to disseminate educational information. By 1921 the average per-county membership of County Farm Bureaus was 800 members. However, County Farm Bureaus were much more important as an educational forum and a social focus than they were as a political force.<sup>137</sup>

### Truman: County Judge, 1924 - 1926, 1928 - 1934

Harry Truman's first campaign was launched in 1922. He ran for the position of County Judge, an administrative job that would be most closely analogous to today's county commissioner. The position paid \$3,465 a year and the term was two years. The timing could not have been better for Truman. His haberdashery had failed, largely due to the then-prevailing economic climate, and he needed a job. "Went into business all enthusiastic. Lost all I had and all I could borrow. Mike Pendergast picked me up and put me into politics and I've been lucky," Truman would write later.<sup>138</sup> During an interview with Merle Miller years later when Miller was conducting research for his book *Plain Speaking*, Truman was even more to the point:

Miller: It seems odd, feeling as you do, that you didn't want to get into politics.

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<sup>137</sup> N. F. B. Mumford, "A Century of Missouri Agriculture," *The Missouri Historical Review*, XV (October 1920 - July 1921), 294-96.

<sup>138</sup> McCullough, *Truman*, 160.

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Truman: Well, I never did. I got into politics by accident. In 1922 I had gone broke trying to run a haberdashery store, and I had to have a job. And I had a lot of good friends in Jackson County and was kin to everybody else, and so I ran for eastern judge, one of five, and I licked all of the rest of them because I knew more people in the county than they did. That's all.<sup>139</sup>

Truman's campaign for County Judge was launched on March 8, 1922, at the War Veterans Auditorium at Lee's Summit. Three hundred people attended. It is important to note that Truman did not identify himself as a farmer running for office, but as a veteran running for office. He was presented as the American Legion candidate. He won the election and in a formal ceremony at the Independence courthouse on New Year's Day, 1923, he was inaugurated.<sup>140</sup>

Two years later, in 1926, Truman again ran for county judge and was defeated by Henry Rummel, an Independence harnessmaker. For the next two years Harry sold memberships in the Kansas City Automobile Club on commission. His commission was five dollars for every new member. He cleared \$5,000. Harry also joined with Colonel Stayton, Spencer Salisbury and others, and took over the Citizens Security Bank in Englewood, a town near Independence. Discovering that they had been misled about the existence of assets, the partners sold their interest, making no money on the transaction.<sup>141</sup>

In 1926, with the support of the Pendergast political organization, Truman ran for and was elected presiding county judge. He served two consecutive four-year terms, from January 1927 to January 1935. During those eight years, Truman became known as a public servant who was sincerely concerned about providing taxpayers with the full benefit of their tax dollars. He passed up the 6 percent interest being offered by Kansas City banks and went to Chicago where he secured 4 and later 2 ½ percent interest loans; he built good roads at reasonable prices as the result of awarding contracts to the lowest qualified bidders; and he made himself available to his constituency.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Merle Miller, *Plain Speaking: An Oral Biography of Harry S Truman* (New York: Berkley Publishing Co., 1973), 64.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid., 161.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>142</sup> McCullough, *Truman*, 173-92.

### **Truman as United States Senator**

Truman's first venture into national politics was in 1934-35 when, as a middle-aged man, he ran for the U.S. Senate. His senatorial campaign was conducted during a time of profound nationwide economic hardship. Farm prices had been in a constant decline since the Coolidge years. Eggs that once sold for 25 cents a dozen were being sold for a nickel. Since 1930 more than eighteen thousand Missouri farms had been foreclosed. The rural Missouri landscape was dominated by abandoned houses with boarded windows, overgrown front yards, and toppling fences. Sharecroppers lived in two-room, dirt-floor shacks; newspapers insulated the walls. The heat of the sun conspired with drought and wind, heralding in the dust bowl. A *Kansas City Star* editorial described the agrarian tragedy: "Under merciless summer suns the fields arched, and the corn withered, and the cattle perished, and the rivers became as scars of dust, as the drought droned its hymn of hate."<sup>143</sup>

James P. Aylward, Truman's 1934 campaign manager stressed Truman's service as an Army officer, an active member of the American Legion, and as county judge. However, when speaking, Truman frequently stressed his thesis that, "what was good for the farmer was good for the county." He attacked both his opponents for their failure to support the Frazier-Lemke Farm Loan Bill and he accused both of failing to champion legislation designed to increase farm prices. Pro-farm statements not only endeared him to farmers but to the rural population generally.<sup>144</sup> In fact a May 31, 1934 *Independence Examiner* editorial endorsing Truman for the Senate focused primarily on his rural roots and not his farming background. In its lead sentence, the editorial drew the urban-versus-rural distinction: "Missouri this year has an opportunity to get away from the two large cities and elect a country boy to the United States Senate."<sup>145</sup>

Truman also focused his speeches on his advocacy of New Deal legislation. He carefully researched his two opponent's congressional record and pointed out each time they had deviated from Roosevelt's programs. One scholar concluded that, "Truman's success [in the 1934 primary] lay in the fact that he emerged from the rural and urban areas with a majority because he appealed to a more diverse voting populace."<sup>146</sup>

Truman presented himself as a simple country boy offering the electorate a common-sense approach to public office.

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<sup>143</sup> *Kansas City Star*, 31 July 1934.

<sup>144</sup> James T. Crenshaw, "Harry S. Truman: A Study of the Missouri Democratic Senatorial Primary Races of 1934 and 1940," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Missouri, August 1976.

<sup>145</sup> *The Independence Examiner*, 31 May 1934.

<sup>146</sup> Crenshaw, "Harry S. Truman," 109.

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He portrayed himself as a good Baptist farmer from Grandview, poking fun at his "city farmer" rivals. Interestingly, the Missouri Farmers' Association opposed Truman's during the campaign. William Hirth, the association's president characterized Truman as a Pendergast bellhop.

For this bellhop of Pendergast's to aspire to make a jump from the obscure bench of a county judge to the United States Senate is without precedent. When one contemplates the giants of the past who have represented Missouri this spectacle is not only grotesque, it is sheer buffoonery.<sup>147</sup>

During the campaign, Truman appeared in more than fifty Missouri county seats (more than half of the 114) to stand on the courthouse steps and address what was usually a small crowd comprised of school children and the unemployed lounging on the courthouse lawn.<sup>148</sup>

The general economic climate of 1934 was certainly conducive to the electorate being receptive to a candidate who knew struggle and suffering. The United States was still dazed from the Great Depression. Farm prices had fallen to one-fifth of what they had been prior to and during World War I. One-third of farm families nation-wide had been forced to go on relief. In Missouri approximately 18,000 farms were seized through foreclosure between 1930 and 1934. Truman's support of legislation such as the Soil Conservation Act, federal farm loans, subsidization of farm interest rates, and the Agricultural Adjustment Acts made him popular with American farmers in the 1934 election and his continued support paid political benefits when he ran again in 1940, and in his 1948 bid for president. In fact the foreclosure proceedings against the Grandview farm may have worked to his advantage. Millions of voters could deeply empathize with Truman's embarrassment.<sup>149</sup>

Truman won the primaries by a narrow margin with 276,850 votes. Cochran received 236,105, and Milligan 147,614.<sup>150</sup>

Truman's success against these two candidates, both of whom had national experience, has been attributed by some writers to a large rural support that resulted from his wide exposure throughout Missouri as a Mason, and as president of the Missouri County Judge Association. The Judge's Association

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<sup>147</sup> *Kansas City Star*, 29 July 1934.

<sup>148</sup> McCullough, *Truman*, 211.

<sup>149</sup> Crenshaw, "Harry S. Truman," 155.

<sup>150</sup> Richard Kirkendall, ed., *The Harry S Truman Encyclopedia* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1989), 72.



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was reportedly one of the most powerful political forces in the state. Additionally, Truman's participation in veterans' organizations and in the Baptist church has been identified as factors. Ironically, Truman's failure as a businessman may have been a political asset since many voters who were struggling against the same fate could identify with him.<sup>151</sup> Truman enjoyed an overwhelming victory in the general election perhaps as a result of Roosevelt's popularity.

It is interesting to note that the summer of 1935 when Truman went to Washington as a freshman senator, his world included the worst of the Dust Bowl in the nation's midlands, Will Rogers dying in a plane crash in Alaska, and Senator Harry Truman, one of the most financially impoverished Senators receiving a salary of \$10,000 per year. In letters to Bess he reported his bus fare as 20 cents, a six-month subscription to the Washington Post as \$7.50, and he expressed guilt for extravagantly buying a bathing suit and going to the Maryland seashore for the Fourth of July.<sup>152</sup>

If the 1934 election fails to reveal a causal link between Truman's Grandview farming experience and his political success beyond giving rise to his perception as a common man, the 1940 election is even less helpful. On February 3, 1940, Harry Truman announced formally that he was running for reelection to the United States Senate. He borrowed a room in the Ambassador Building in St. Louis, he borrowed furniture, and on occasion had difficulty raising enough money for postage. One mailing soliciting contributions was mailed to eight hundred addressees; the mailing produced \$200. At one point during the campaign, there was not enough money for a motel, and Harry slept in his 1938 Dodge.<sup>153</sup> But Truman was not left alone. Fellow Democrats from the Senate traveled to Missouri to help. Carl Hatch, Sherman Minton and Lewis Schwellenbach were vocal in their support. Senator Jimmy Byrnes prevailed upon Bernard Baruch, a New York financier, who contributed \$4,000 to the campaign. A. F. Whitney, the president of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, ran a full-page newspaper ad soliciting support for Truman, and the railroad unions gave \$17,000 to the cause. Notwithstanding these contributions, Harry still had to borrow \$3,000 against his life insurance policy.

Truman campaigned on his record in the senate where his four years of investigations into railroad finances had culminated in the Truman-Wheeler Bill providing protection for the railroads. He had supported the Farm Tenancy Act of 1937, the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938, farm price supports, low-cost housing,

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<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.* 79.

<sup>152</sup> Ferrell, ed., *Letters to Bess*, 367.

<sup>153</sup> McCullough, *Truman*, 245.

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increased funds for public works, increased federal contributions to old-age pensions, and the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938.<sup>154</sup> Also notable was his stand on civil rights, which was daringly radical for 1940 America. In a Sedalia speech before an all-white audience, he said:

I believe in the brotherhood of man; not merely the brotherhood of white men, but the brotherhood of all men before the law. If any class or race can be permanently set apart from, or pushed down below the rest in political and civil rights, so may any other class or race when it shall incur the displeasure of its more powerful associates, and we may say farewell to the principles on which we count our safety.

Negroes have been preyed upon by all types of exploiters, from the installment salesman of clothing, pianos, and furniture to the vendors of vice. The majority of our Negro people find but cold comfort in shanties and tenements. Surely, as freemen, they are entitled to something better than this.<sup>155</sup>

Governor Lloyd C. Stark and Maurice Milligan opposed Truman on the Democratic ticket in the primaries. Stark had been instrumental in the prosecution and incarceration of Tom Pendergast in 1939, which endeared him to anti-Pendergast voters. However, his ego combined with his obvious political ambitions (manifested by his attempts to run for president, vice president and seek appointments as Secretary of the Navy and governor-general of the Philippines), alienated many Missouri voters.<sup>156</sup> Bennet Clark, who finally concluded he would support Truman commented on Lloyd Stark's political ambitions to a St Louis Post-Dispatch reporter:

Lloyd's ambitions seem to be like the gentle dew that falls from heaven and covers everything high or low. He is the first man in the history of the United States who has ever tried to run for President and Vice-President, Secretary of the Navy, Secretary of War, Governor General of the Philippines, Ambassador to England and United States Senator all at one and the same time . . . I understand, too, that he is receiving favorable mention as Akhund of Swat and Emir of Afghanistan.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>155</sup> McCullough, *Truman*, 247.

<sup>156</sup> Kirkendall, *The Harry S Truman Encyclopedia*, 87.

<sup>157</sup> McCullough, *Truman*, 249.

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On July 15, 1940, Truman was in attendance when the Democratic convention opened in Chicago. He had a position on the Resolutions Committee. The following day, July 16, 1940, an event transpired back home in Missouri that emotionally affected him as much as any event he had experienced up to that time or would deal with in his future. The Grandview farm was foreclosed, forcing his sister and his eighty-seven-year-old mother to pack their belongings and move off the family homestead. The *Kansas City Star* featured it on page one, complete with pictures. The caption of the newspaper's photograph identified the farm as that belonging to Martha E. Truman, the mother of the Missouri senator. Truman would believe for the rest of his life that both the foreclosure and its timing were for political purposes and designed to humiliate him in the middle of his campaign.

Although Truman won the primary, it would be equally accurate to say that Stark's mistakes, and the fact that Milligan and Stark divided the anti-Pendergast vote got Truman elected. Truman won by only 8,000 votes. Truman was a strong supporter of Roosevelt in the general election. Both Roosevelt and Truman won in the general election by a narrow margin.

Truman's second term as Missouri senator became most distinguished by his leadership of the Senate Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program, known from its inception as the Truman Committee. Created in the Spring of 1941 at Truman's instigation, the Truman Committee, comprised of seven bipartisan members, was charged with investigating what Truman believed was the scandalously wasteful state of military spending (even before the United State's direct military involvement in World War II). In only a few months, the Truman Committee proved its value in both results and attention. Under Truman's straightforward, intelligent, and eminently fair leadership, the committee uncovered millions of dollars wasted in federal military expenditures. His highly praised chairmanship of the committee thrust Truman into the national spotlight and, ultimately, made him a contender for the 1944 vice-presidential nomination on Franklin Roosevelt's ticket.<sup>158</sup>

### **Truman as Vice-President**

In 1944 Harry Truman was selected to run as vice president on President Roosevelt's ticket. Truman's name as a possible vice-presidential candidate surfaced initially during a meeting at the White House in January of 1944, six months before the national convention. Alternative choices considered at that meeting included Jimmy Byrnes, Alben Barkley, and Justice

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 256-70.

## **Truman's Grandview Farming and Political Success**

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William O. Douglas. Truman knew nothing of the meeting, or anything of his being considered. In his opinion Sam Rayburn would be the best nominee for the vice-presidency. Roosevelt's health had quietly become an issue. In April of 1944, after suffering what was publicly reported as "walking pneumonia," Roosevelt went to South Carolina for a two-week vacation and stayed a month. Ed Flynn, a New York national committeeman and White House confidant, seeing the President after his return from South Carolina asked Mrs. Roosevelt to persuade President Roosevelt to not run. "I felt," Flynn later said, "that he would never survive his term."<sup>159</sup> Flynn's observations were well founded. President Roosevelt had secretly been under the supervision of a cardiologist who reported in March that given proper care the President might live a year.<sup>160</sup>

During the Chicago Democratic National Convention in the summer of 1944, several names were mentioned as possible vice presidential candidates. Harry Truman was the choice of Roosevelt as well as Ed Flynn. And, it was a very reluctant Harry Truman who ran as the candidate.

### **Truman Becomes President**

Truman was Vice President for eighty-two days before he was catapulted in the presidency by Roosevelt's death on April 12, 1945. Truman accepted the office with deep reservations.

During Truman's first weeks in office in 1945, he had so alienated J. Edgar Hoover of the FBI that Hoover would later provide Dewey with as much information as he could throughout the 1948 campaign. Shortly after assuming the office of president, transcripts of telephone conversations the FBI had surreptitiously intercepted were delivered to Truman. It had been Roosevelt's custom to encourage Hoover's surveillance of opposing political figures. The tapes delivered to Truman pertained to the activities of the wife of a White House aide. Truman was reportedly offended by the FBI's conduct, and refused to review the documents. President Truman would later write in his diary after only one month as President,

We want no Gestapo or Secret Police. FBI is tending in that direction. They are dabbling in sex-life scandals and plain blackmail when they should be catching criminals.

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<sup>159</sup> George E. Allen, *Presidents Who Have Known Me* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950), 179.

<sup>160</sup> Jim Bishop, *FDR's Last Year: April 1944-April 1945* (New York: William Morrow, 1974), 94.

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They also have a habit of sneering at local law enforcement officers. This must stop. Cooperation is what we must have.<sup>161</sup>

### Truman's 1948 Campaign

It is the 1948 presidential campaign that provides at least a partial answer to the question of the significance of the Grandview farm to Truman's political success. This time it was Truman himself against Dewey. And, from the beginning it was an up-hill fight for Truman. Dewey presented a persona of a confident, barb-witted public speaker. Some political analysts, however, contend that Dewey may have appeared overly confident to the point of being perceived as arrogant.

In the senate Truman had continued to build a reputation as the common man's champion dedicated to the elimination of privilege derived from the concentration of wealth. As chair of what would later be known as the Truman Committee, he pursued corruption in defense contracting. He found it, and he publicly exposed it. In so doing he gave the electorate two messages: first, the voters could not trust the powerful privileged within the industrial machines, and, second, that Truman continued to be the relentless advocate of Every Man. It certainly didn't hurt that as a Missouri farmer in the Senate his assaults against the gated walls of privilege could only be perceived as Goliath being pummeled by David in a straw hat.<sup>162</sup>

The defense industry was not the only Goliath Truman assailed as hero of the common man and as Missouri farmer in Washington. The Polls were not favoring Truman in the spring of 1948. So, on July 25th, 1948, Truman reconvened the Republican congress, admonished their failure to address the plight of the average citizen and challenged them to do something positive. Recalling Congress into a special session after adjournment probably provided Truman with some additional political hay. Convening a special session is a presidential power that had been only rarely used by presidents, and would, therefore, most certainly receive wide press coverage.

Truman also appeared before an estimated six million people during his thirty-one thousand-mile "whistle stop" campaign. He appealed to the "common man" with his verbal attacks on big business and GOP anti-union legislation, including the Taft-Hartley Act. Truman also advocated farm price supports

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<sup>161</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Off The Record*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 22.

<sup>162</sup> Paul C. Nagel, *Missouri: A Bicentennial History*, (NY: W. W. Norton & Co., 1977).

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making him attractive to farmers who were getting less for their products.<sup>163</sup>

Following the serious economic woes of farmers, and the resulting slump in the national economy after World War I, there developed a wide-spread belief that what was good for the farmer was good for the country. A belief that depressions were "farm led and farm fed." The consequential corollary was that the United States could maintain a healthy economy by ensuring the agricultural sector remained healthy. This commonly held belief translated into the Agricultural Adjustment Acts of the 1930s receiving broad support. Another manifestation of the general belief that national economic wellbeing depended upon the wellbeing of the agricultural sector was the formation of the concept of parity.

Price parity was introduced under the Roosevelt administration. The basic concept of parity was that the ratio between the prices received for agricultural commodities and the prices farmers were forced to pay for the products they needed would be maintained at levels designed to ensure the farmers' economic survival. This New Deal farm program continued through the Second World War. The only primary change during the war was that the Secretary of Agriculture's discretion to set parity rates was diminished. Prior to the war the Secretary had the authority to determine the specific level for any commodity based upon supplies and anticipated demand. The war, however, necessitated a massive expansion of farm production; guaranteed high parity rates were designed to accomplish that goal. And, they did. The wartime congress set guaranteed supports at higher levels and extended coverage to include more commodities, and farm production increased.

Postwar economics would not be able to maintain those high rates, and it was generally understood that the rates had to be lowered. Unfortunately, according to at least one historian, the congressional establishment of guaranteed rates opened a Pandora's box by focusing attention on the level of the price supports rather than either the method of establishing rates, or even the viability of the concept itself.<sup>164</sup> Ensuing debates most commonly were waged between proponents of a mandatory or fixed level of price supports and those who favored a flexible system.

Legislation in place during the war provided that war-level price supports would remain in effect for a period of two years after the end of the war. On December 31, 1946, Truman officially terminated hostilities meaning that price supports would

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<sup>163</sup> Kirkendall, *The Harry S. Truman Encyclopedia*, 87.

<sup>164</sup> Virgil W. Dean, "Farm Policy and Truman's 1948 Campaign," *The Historian* 55: 3 (Spring 1993).

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end in the latter part of 1948. Congress started dealing with the issue in 1947, but was unable to arrive at a resolution. It was left for the 1948 session.

Truman was arguing for the enactment of a flexible price-support system, and the Senate, with the urging of Secretary of Agriculture Anderson, enacted legislation that embodied a flexible system. However, the House of Representatives was unwilling to abandon the high World War II levels. Truman used that reluctance to launch his presidential campaign. On May 14th he sent congress a special message on agriculture. The message credited Democratic legislation with the farm prosperity following World War II. He wrote that in his opinion there was no reason to, "overturn this sound legislative base," and he urged Congress to implement improvements in the existing program. He urged Congress to enact a permanent system of flexible price supports.<sup>165</sup>

On June 19<sup>th</sup>, Congress passed the Agricultural Act of 1948 (also known as the Hope-Aiken Act); Truman voiced strong disapproval of the legislation as it had finally been passed, but nevertheless he signed the act into law on July 3rd. Truman was concerned that Congress had not implemented an effective long-range policy. Throughout his campaign Truman focused on what the Congress had not done, ignoring its accomplishments. "In the field of agriculture, as in so many others, most of the business of the 80th Congress was left unfinished," he said.<sup>166</sup> Truman intensified his campaign by calling Congress back into session on July 26th.

Throughout his 1948 campaign Truman aggressively sought both the farm vote and the vote of labor. He argued repeatedly during campaign speeches that the Republican Party was a party dedicated to advancing only the welfare of the privileged, and was doing its best to split the labor and farm vote. Only by the two factions sticking together and voting Democratic, Truman argued, could the welfare of the general populace be maintained.

A commonly held, but simplistic, misleading assumption held by observers in 1948 and 1949 that has been perpetuated by some historians since then is that there is a direct correlation between what Truman did or said during the campaign and the election results. For example, John A. Kennedy, a longtime personal friend of Harry Truman who owned and published a San Diego newspaper during the 1948 election, and on several occasions traveled with the president on campaign tours in 1948, concluded that a primary factor in Truman's election was that the 80th Congress had alienated the American farmer, and the farmer

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 506.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 507.

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perceived Truman as being an adversary of that "do-nothing" Congress. . . "[F]armers were very mad and they voted that way," said Kennedy during an interview in 1974.<sup>167</sup> Similarly, Louis H. Bean, an economist with the Department of Agriculture for thirty years whose last post was as part of the staff of Secretary of Agriculture Anderson in 1947, concluded that, "Truman would have lost the election, except for the support that came to him from the farm belt."<sup>168</sup> Bean continued, saying:

Sometimes I say that what elected Truman was the weather. The good crop conditions of the summer of '48 produced those bumper crops of cotton and wheat, grains in general, at a time when the farmers were demanding more storage facilities and didn't get them. [Congress had failed to enact requested legislation which would have increased the number of grain storage facilities nationwide.] And, as a result of that, you had the pressure of these large supplies on prices, so that prices were sagging or went down during the campaign. That interesting economic complex, large crops, low prices, inadequate storage facilities, and a candidate [Dewey] saying in part, or interpreted to have said, he favored only sixty percent of parity, I think that seems like a reasonable explanation of why you had this nationwide rural pickup for Truman.

Even Dewey was reportedly convinced that the farm vote he lost in the 1948 election was in large part responsible for his not being elected.<sup>169</sup> But, he was probably wrong, as were contemporary and subsequent reporters. These reporters are basing their conclusion that the farm vote won Truman the election on several assumptions without evidence to support those assumptions. First, they are assuming that the contents of Truman's speeches were heard by the majority of the electorate; second, they are assuming that the messages contained in the speeches were persuasive; third, they are dividing the electorate into overly simplistic demographic categories (farmer vs. non-farmer); and, fourth, these reporters are assuming, without evidence, that the electorate also was aware and responded to some very complex political and legislative maneuvering in Washington, D.C. Translated into useable form, the assumptions are that the average farmer spent time studying the local newspaper, and that the local newspaper reported *in toto*, and

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<sup>167</sup> John A. Kennedy interview by James R. Fuchs, transcript of taped interview, Harry S. Truman Library, 13 April, 1974.

<sup>168</sup> Louis H. Bean interview by Jerry N. Hess, transcript of taped interview, Harry S. Truman Library, 11 September, 1970.

<sup>169</sup> Dean, "Farm Policy and Truman's 1948 Campaign, 509.



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accurately what Truman said, what Dewey said, and what the Congress did or did not do.

The more logical, objective (and therefore informative) approach to the question of who and what elected Harry Truman to the presidency is to start at the other end. Although the glamour of highly placed public officials is very seductive to historians, the analysis should more logically focus on the voters. Who were they? How did they vote? Why did they vote as they did? And how did the voting break down demographically?

In 1952, the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor reported the results of research they had conducted of the 1948 election. Their methods involved face-to-face interviews of voters in October and follow-up interviews of the same people shortly after they had voted. Their sample was unfortunately small (622 interviewees); however, their sampling was statistically random providing as accurate a cross-section as was possible at that time. And the queries posed to the members of their sample population were sufficiently objective to maximize the possibility of statistical accuracy.<sup>170</sup>

Some of the results of the 1952 University of Michigan study are not surprising: Democratic voters came mainly from the socio-economic groups associated with "the common man," the Republican voters came mainly from the more advantaged groups. A larger percentage of voters voted in metropolitan areas<sup>171</sup> (eight out of ten); six out of ten reported voting in urban areas, and only four out of ten voters voted in rural areas. The study noted that comments made by non-voters in their survey suggested that people in the less populated areas heard less about the campaigns and perhaps felt less involved in the outcome. Significantly, the study concludes that Truman's margin over Dewey at election time was won in the metropolitan and rural areas. A study of some of the demographics and percentages developed by the study is very enlightening. Presented below is a table that synthesizes some of the study results. Columns labeled "Intended" list the percentages of persons who expressed an intent to vote when interviewed in October.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Angus Campbell and Robert L. Kahn with Sylvia Eberhart, "The People Elect A President," typescript, Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, 1952.

<sup>171</sup> For purposes of this study, "metropolitan" means urban areas having populations equal to or greater than one million; "urban" denotes towns and cities having populations less than one million.

<sup>172</sup> Campbell and Kahn, "The People Elect A President," 22.

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| <b>POPULATION CLASSIFICATION</b> |              |                         |              |                     |              |
|----------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|
| <b>Metropolitan Areas</b>        |              | <b>Towns and Cities</b> |              | <b>Open Country</b> |              |
| <b>Intended</b>                  | <b>Voted</b> | <b>Intended</b>         | <b>Voted</b> | <b>Intended</b>     | <b>Voted</b> |
| <b>Truman:</b>                   |              |                         |              |                     |              |
| <b>32%</b>                       | <b>47%</b>   | <b>24%</b>              | <b>27%</b>   | <b>34%</b>          | <b>24%</b>   |
| <b>Dewey</b>                     |              |                         |              |                     |              |
| <b>30</b>                        | <b>32</b>    | <b>34</b>               | <b>30</b>    | <b>16</b>           | <b>12</b>    |

Courtesy of University of Michigan

**Table 4.1 Vote by population density**

The above table makes clear that the largest gains for the Democrats were in metropolitan areas. Thirty-two percent said in October that they would vote for Truman, forty-seven voted for him in November. Most of these gains came from that portion of the sample population expressing indecision in October. Voters in rural areas went the other way. In October, 34 percent of those surveyed in October voiced an intention to vote for Truman; however, only 24 percent did. An examination of votes by occupation is also enlightening:<sup>173</sup>

| <b>Professional and Managerial</b> | <b>Other White Color</b> | <b>Skilled and Semi-Skilled</b> | <b>Unskilled</b>      | <b>Farmers</b>        |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Intended/Voted</b>              | <b>Intended/Voted</b>    | <b>Intended/Voted</b>           | <b>Intended/Voted</b> | <b>Intended/Voted</b> |
| <b>Truman: 20% / 15</b>            | <b>29% / 38%</b>         | <b>35% / 52%</b>                | <b>22% / 33%</b>      | <b>34% / 25%</b>      |
| <b>Dewey 53 / 57</b>               | <b>36 / 39</b>           | <b>17 / 15</b>                  | <b>25 / 12</b>        | <b>18 / 13</b>        |

Courtesy of the University of Michigan

**Table 4.2 Socio-economic vote break-down**

The question of income adds yet another dimension to the voting dynamics of 1948. Candidate preference appeared to be income-sensitive. \$3,000 - \$4,000 was the dividing point for voting behavior. In this bracket voters were about evenly split between the Republican and Democratic candidates. At incomes lower than \$3,000 the Democrats had a majority; over \$4,000

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 24.

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Republican preferences prevailed. As one slides up or down the income scale from this mid-point, the differences become more pronounced the further one gets from the mid-point. Those with incomes of \$1,000 - \$3,000 voted two-to-one for Truman; those with incomes over \$5,000 voted two-to-one for Dewey.

Significantly, the study revealed that the trend toward Truman between October and November involved all income groups. Truman's greatest gain was in the \$4,000 - \$5,000 category, and the gain in that income category alone was enough to reduce Dewey's lead from one of nineteen points to three points.

Although the above information is partially helpful since it answers the question of which candidate various groups voted for, it doesn't help with the more informative question of *why* they voted as they did. The University of Michigan pollsters discussed the question of "why" with voters after the 1948 election. Each voter in the survey's sample population was asked:

"Why do you think people voted for Truman?" and

"Are there any other kinds of reasons why you think people voted for Truman?" and

"Do you think there was anything special about Truman that made some people vote against him?"

An identical set of questions was then asked concerning Dewey. Only then was the respondent queried about his or her vote with the question: "What made you decide to vote the way you did?"

The pollsters noted interesting differences between the perceptions of Democrat and Republican voters, but they also noticed agreement on some major attributes and group-loyalties that were not party specific. Analysts of the survey results concluded that Truman was perceived by respondents as attracting support because of what he stood for; support of Dewey was perceived in primarily negative terms. Dewey voters expressed an interest in simply making a change. The analysts also concluded that Truman's success was the result of voters identifying him with the interests of certain segments of the population. Specifically, his identification with labor, farmers, or the "common people" generally. The survey report presents what it characterizes as the most common genre of comments regarding Truman:<sup>174</sup>

Your farmers and laborers put him in; he's been playing straight with them and naturally they want it to continue. He was for the average man, which is what we need.

I think he's more for the common man. Thinks more about what's the best for people. Dewey never did take any stand on any matter.

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 42.

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Because they were afraid of another depression and if Dewey got in it would be tougher for labor.

I think he is for the little people like us. His ideals were like Lincoln's.

The following table presents an overview of reasons expressed by voters during the post-election survey conducted in November:<sup>175</sup>

| <u>Reasons</u>                             | <u>Mentioned in Connection With:</u> |              |
|--|--------------------------------------|--------------|
|  | <u>Truman</u>                        | <u>Dewey</u> |
| Time for a change                          |                                      | 32           |
| Foreign policy                             | 2                                    | 4            |
| Tautological and other reasons             | 6                                    | 9            |
| Identified with certain groups             | 46                                   | 11           |
| Domestic policies                          | 18                                   | 7            |
| Will maintain prosperity: avoid depression | 18                                   | 3            |
| Effect of campaign                         | 16                                   | 4            |
| Better man: other person attributes        | 16                                   | 19           |
| Experienced: good record                   | 13                                   | 19           |
| Party allegiance                           | 6                                    | 20           |
| No time for a change                       | 4                                    |              |
| Don't know                                 | 7                                    | 13           |
| Not ascertained                            | 5                                    | 6            |

NOTE: The columns total more than 100% because some respondents gave more than one answer

Courtesy of the University of Michigan

**Table 4.3 Reasons Expressed for Vote Decisions**

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 43.

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The last issue examined by the University of Michigan pollsters addressed issues of personality. They found that respondents used words like "capable" and "competent" to describe Dewey more than twice as often as the same words were used to describe Truman. Only one in ten respondents characterized Truman in terms of capable or competent, and then it was more often used in the context of his experience as president rather than in the context of his personality. Respondents were much more likely to attach adjectives denoting feelings of personal warmth, such as "honest," "sincere," "spunky," or "down-to-earth." The following table summarizes personal attributes voiced by the respondents.<sup>176</sup>

|   | <u>Truman</u> | <u>Dewey</u> |
|---|---------------|--------------|
| Experienced, capable, competent, intelligent            | 10%           | 23%          |
| Honest, sincere, fair                                   | 7             | 4            |
| Down-to-earth, common touch, understanding              | 7             | *            |
| Fearless, spunky, fighting, aggressive                  | 4             | 2            |
| Small, incompetent, inefficient                         | 17            | 2            |
| Indecisive, vacillating, doesn't know his own mind      | 3             | *            |
| Insincere, deceptive, two-faced                         | 1             | 1            |
| Smug, complacent, over-confident, patronizing, superior | *             | 19           |
| Non-committal, backs away from issues, on the fence     | 1             | 11           |
| Floppish, over-dressed, appearance antagonizing         | *             | 6            |
| Short-tempered, hot-headed, shoves people around        | *             | 1            |
| <i>No attribute mentioned</i>                           | 59            | 53           |

\* Denotes less than one-half of one percent.  
 NOTE: Columns total more than 100% because some respondents mentioned more than one attribute.  
 Courtesy of the University of Michigan

**Table 4.4 Personal Attributes Mentioned by Voters**

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 50.

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Would Truman have been elected to the senate, to the vice presidency, or to the presidency if he had no farming history? And, would his politics have been different had he not farmed? Perhaps both questions are too simplistic to answer. But, if the question asked were whether his success was the result of his farming, his association with Masons, his association with veterans groups, his formative years of financial struggles, his rural up-bringing, and his business failures, the answer would probably be, "all of the above." However, even if all these factors had been present but within a different social and economic context, the results may have been different. For example, if there were not a significant percentage of voters who perceived themselves as disenfranchised and to whom New Deal legislation provided hope, Truman may not have been sent to the U.S. Senate by Missouri voters in 1934. This block of voters could identify with another "common man" who had experienced struggles and failures.

It was Truman's social and political activities, such as Masons, county politics, the Baptist church, and veterans' organizations that got the attention of the voters; it was a sense of commonality, of shared experiences, that got their votes. Had Truman's humble origins been something other than farmer, perhaps blacksmith, teamster or cooper, would he have still gotten those votes? Probably yes. But, "farmer" was an occupation any non-urbanite could very readily identify and understand. The title itself was more immediately recognizable than "cooper," or "teamster," especially during Truman's era.

So, was his farming background essential to his political success? No, not standing alone; but, as one of several important table legs supporting his platform, it was probably essential.

Truman, the advocate of Every Man, continued his battles after his election to the presidency. The Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) serves as a good example. Created in 1941 by executive order, President Roosevelt charged the committee with overseeing a policy of nondiscrimination in government employment and in private industries performing defense contracts. In June of 1946 Congress killed the committee by failing to authorize appropriations.

Following his 1948 election, Truman championed the enactment of legislation establishing the FEPC, rather than continuing the risky appropriations associated with an executive order based FEPC. Opponents of the FEPC over the years labeled the FEPC as everything from un-American to Communistic. In fact, in the 1948 campaign, pre-printed postcards were mailed to southern workers reporting that Truman was seeking to "force you to work with Negroes and other undesirables." During Truman's presidency, a total of seventy such bills were

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introduced in both houses of Congress. None passed. Truman was forced to continue establishing such committee by executive order. He first created the Fair Employment Board in the Civil Service Commission on July 26, 1948. On December 3, 1951, he created the President's Committee on Government Contract Compliance. It was not until 1964 that organic legislation creating an agency responsible for civil rights in employment was enacted. Notwithstanding Congress's intransigence, Truman continued to argue for the rights of the common man.<sup>177</sup>

The question remains: what effect did Harry Truman's Grandview farming experience have on his political success? The simple answer propounded by some writers, that it was of primary significance, is probably so overly simplistic that it is misleading. The complete answer is probably that his farming experience is one of several significant factors that influenced both his success in the ballot box and his policies in office. His farming experience was most likely broadly interpreted by voters, particularly in the 1948 presidential campaign, as being an indication that he was a common man seeking office, and not a politician courting the labor vote. His success in 1948 was the result of his winning not merely the farm vote, but more generally, the working class vote. He successfully captured the vote of the urban laborer, both skilled and unskilled, as well as the farm vote. In fact, statistically, he received a higher percentage of votes in metropolitan areas, and towns than he did in the farm areas. But, what motivated those votes? According to the survey conducted by the University of Michigan in 1952 (see above), almost half of the voters queried reported that they believed votes were cast for Harry Truman because of his identification with certain groups (see Figure 4.3, above). Perhaps of equal significance is the fact that the voters queried by the pollsters used words such as experienced, capable, competent, and intelligent twice as often in describing Dewey than in their descriptions of Truman. However, the same voters almost twice as often used adjectives such as honest, sincere, fair, down-to-earth, common touch, understanding, fearless, spunky, fighting, and aggressive in describing Truman than they did when they described Dewey. These numbers argue for the conclusion that Truman, for whatever reason, owed his success in the 1948 election to his being perceived as the common man. His Grandview farming, no doubt, enhanced that perception. But, perhaps it did more. Perhaps the farming experience was one of several significant factors that helped mold a personality that would in fact be fearless, spunky, fighting, and aggressive.

Harry Truman's success in keeping the farm going for eleven years required a fearless, fighting spunk that is rarely

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<sup>177</sup> Kirkendall, ed., *The Harry S. Truman Encyclopedia*, 125.

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called for in other endeavors. The factory worker, the carpenter, the plumber have co-workers and supervisors to rely upon for advice, assistance, direction, and motivation. The farmer sows his future alone. The lawyer, physician, dentist, teacher, and salesperson all have assistants, associates, or neighbors in the next office to provide at least the illusion of community. The farmer sits alone astride his plow coaxing a yoke of reluctant oxen to drag a plow incessantly up and back through a soil fallow of guarantees. Few other professions demand and engender the determinate self-reliance essential to farming.

Perhaps, also, the farming experience in Grandview was one of several significant factors that helped mold a personality that would in fact be honest, sincere and fair. A rural farm operation, such as the Grandview farm, required business dealings with persons and businesses to whom the farmer would return time after time. Grain and seed suppliers, equipment dealers, blacksmiths, millers, stock traders, and grain buyers were all a permanent part of the farm and the farmer's life. Unlike a contemporary freeway interchange business, the farmer would deal with those same individuals repeatedly. Fairness, truthfulness, and sincerity were a rural currency without which the farmer, and his farm were severely handicapped.

So, did the Grandview farming experience influence Harry Truman's political life? Yes. Those very attributes used by the voters when they talked about Truman with the University of Michigan pollsters probably came from the farm. The very personality that audiences perceived as emanating from the rear platform of Truman's campaign train, and the personality they elected to the presidency probably grew to maturity in the Grandview soil, were strengthened by the incessant reminders of humility that came from sun, wind, rain and drought. And those same personality traits were greatly broadened by the search for community among others to whom those same traits meant wealth, success, and an eulogy a child would be proud to publish.



## **Chapter 5**

### **The Grandview Farm 1917 - 1940**

#### **Introduction**

#### ***Grandview Farm During World War I***

#### **The Vivian and Luella Truman Family in Grandview, 1920 - 1950s**

#### **Mary Jane and Martha Truman, 1940 - 1947**

#### **The Truman Family and the Truman Farm, 1950 - 1977**

**The Grandview Farm, 1917-1940**  
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**Introduction**

After Harry S Truman left the farm in 1917 to serve in the First World War, Mary Jane and her mother, Martha Truman, continued farming with the help of friends, neighbors, and a hired man. When Harry returned from France, he decided to leave the farm permanently. He divested himself of his interest in the farm. Farm animals and implements were sold at auction. Mary Jane intensified her involvement in both the Baptist Church and Eastern Star, as well as continuing to care for Martha. Harry opened a clothing store in Kansas City, and Vivian Truman, Harry and Mary Jane's brother, worked the acreage around the farmhouse. Later, Vivian's sons would take over the farm.

In 1940 the farm was seized in a mortgage foreclosure; Mary Jane and Martha moved to Grandview, and a renter moved into the farmhouse. Vivian and two of his sons continued to farm the land around the farmhouse.

The chapter focuses on the farm between 1917 and 1940, provides some insight regarding Mary Jane and Martha, and then follows the two women into Grandview after the foreclosure.

**The Grandview Farm During World War I**

When Harry went to war, Mary Jane stayed behind with their mother and ran the farm. Although neighbors helped when they could with the Truman farm, Mary Jane and Martha Truman were usually on their own. Vivian was running his own farm, and most of the young men were in the army, leaving older men and boys who were unable to provide much help.<sup>178</sup>

They did have one hired man and his wife living on the farm. And during unusually busy times, they would hire additional temporary help. They raised large crops of wheat, oats, and corn on a portion of the 600 acres they worked. Two hundred acres was in pasture. As later related by Mary Jane:

When Harry went to the Army, I took over the farm. We raised wheat, corn, Hampshire hogs and cattle. I had to manage the place, hire the help, buy supplies and arrange for the sale of the products.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Mary Jane Truman, interview by Jerald L. Hill and William D. Stilley, 2 January 1976, transcript of taped interview, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>179</sup> C. A. Johnson, "Truman Sister, Brother: One Politician in Family Enough," *Sunday World-Herald Magazine*, 12 October 1947.

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Mary Jane recalled the years she spent with her mother on the farm as good years. They enjoyed each other's company. According to Mary Jane, Martha (who was generally referred to as Mamma or Mamma Truman) never seemed like an old lady. She remained clear-minded right up to the time of her death. "Sensible is the word for Mamma," Mary Jane concluded.<sup>180</sup> Mary Jane reported that her mother described herself as a "light-foot Baptist," meaning that she was a Baptist who enjoyed dancing. Mary Jane also recalled that one of her mother's favorite sayings when describing to a person how best to live life, was, "Just belong to the key of B-natural." And, her favorite Bible text was Matthew 7:1 and 2: "Judge not, that ye be not judged."<sup>181</sup>

Holidays were times for guests around the table. Mamma Truman always sat at the west end of the one-leaf, square, dining room table that normally had a plain, white, oil cloth tacked to the top. On special occasions, Mary Jane would use the linen table cloth. Mamma Truman always used her old bone-handled knife and kept an aluminum coffeepot next to her table setting.

"Never drink more than one cup," she claimed. But, the frequent "warm-ups" were hard to miss. Milk or cream for the coffee came from the cellar where it was stored in large crocks that sat on the cellar's stone floor along with jars of vegetables. Across the dining room, against the north wall sat a roll-top desk. Mary Jane used it, and before her, her older brother, Harry Truman, had used it to keep farm records and write letters to Bess Wallace, his future wife. A bird dog picture hung on the south wall of the dining room. A small, oval, wood stove stood in front of a little closet under the stairway. There was no door connecting the dining room to the sitting room. Mary Jane and her mother accessed both rooms from the hall.<sup>182</sup>

The kitchen was immediately east of the dining room.<sup>183</sup> As one entered the kitchen, there was a cabinet immediately to the left with three drawers on one side and a large tilt-out flour drawer on the other side, with a flat preparation surface on top. Immediately to the right of the door was a wood stove with a warming oven on top. In the summer, Mary Jane and Mamma

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>181</sup> Doris Faber, Typescript notes of interview of Mary Jane Truman, July 1967. Family Correspondence File: Mary Jane Truman, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>182</sup> Years later, in the late 1940s Vivian Truman's son, Harry Arnold Truman would live in the house with his wife. He would construct a doorway connecting the dining room with the sitting room.

<sup>183</sup> It should be noted, that what is today (2000) being used as the dining room was the kitchen, and what is now the sitting room served as the dining room on formal occasions. However, today's arrangement is as it was when Mary Jane and Martha lived there in the 1920s. In the 1930s, the room on the east end of the house, presently serving as the kitchen, was added. See Niel M. Johnson, Memo for the File, Re Esther Grube telephone interview, August 1, 1983. Harry S. Truman Library.

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Truman would bring a coal oil cooking stove into the kitchen. It would be too hot to cook on the wood cook stove. (See Appendix C for the floor plan of the farmhouse during this period that is based upon a description by Harry S Truman in 1950.)

In the winter, Mary Jane and Mamma Truman used a small, round coal oil heater that stood about three feet high, which they carried upstairs into Mary Jane's bedroom on the north side of the house at night to "take the chill off." Mary Jane's bedroom was immediately above the sitting room. There was a register in the floor of her bedroom that allowed heat from the sitting room to rise into her bedroom. Mary Jane had a small oak wash stand in her bedroom, as well as a walnut dresser, a small dressing table with triple mirrors, and a vanity seat. A small picture of a hunting scene hung on the wall. It had horses, dogs, and riders in red coats.

The upstairs hall separating Mary Jane and Margaret Truman's bedrooms contained a blanket chest along the wall near the west window, and a sewing machine positioned next to the stairway rail. Mamma Truman's south-side bedroom remained unheated. The head of her feather bed was against the south wall. On the west side of the bed was a thirty-inch-square end table with spindle legs and a lower shelf. A coal oil lamp rested on the end table. Occasionally, to entertain visiting children, Mamma Truman would use the lighted lamp to cast animal-figure shadows against the east wall of her bedroom. Her dresser of solid walnut with burl inlay, was against the north wall.

Downstairs, the hall separating the sitting room from the parlor was furnished with an oak chest of drawers in the corner under the stair landing. A black, heavy metal clock rested on it. A marble-topped hall tree was also in the hall. It had a large mirror and brass coat hooks on the frame around the mirror.

In the sitting room were two rocking chairs, an oak library table, and a wicker sofa. Mamma Truman would sit in the larger rocking chair and read. Both rocking chairs had wicker seats and backs that were covered with cushions. The library table, positioned against the east wall, was a long table with a central drawer in the middle and a shelf beneath. At one time there was a leather sofa in the sitting room. One day, Mamma Truman decided to take it upstairs. It became stuck while she was trying to navigate the back stairs. She sawed off the legs and nailed them back on once she had it upstairs.

The piano was across the hall from the sitting room in the parlor, where the glass-fronted bookcase was kept as well. Unless they had company, the parlor was not heated.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Martha Ann Swoyer, interview by Niel M. Johnson, 28 October 1983, transcript of taped interview, Harry S. Truman Library.

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Young-Truman Farm c. 1944. United States Soil Conservation Service

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Outside, Mary Jane kept the trellises that covered both the south side and front (west) gates covered with roses in season. Mamma Truman planted nasturtiums and cocks comb around the edge of the foundation. Northeast of the house was a wooden gate leading into the chicken yard. Near the gate Mamma Truman kept a large asparagus bed.<sup>185</sup>

After Harry returned from serving in France during World War I, he had no interest in farming. Harry had marriage plans and wanted to open a clothing store in Kansas City. Mary Jane was reluctant to continue running the farm without Harry's assistance. The decision was made to discontinue the farming operation. Although Martha Ellen Truman's interest in the farm would seem to have been great since she owned more than 62 percent of the land (375 acres; her three children owned seventy-five acres each), her position on Harry's decision to discontinue farming is unclear. On one hand, she may have been reluctant to stop an activity that had supported her family for decades. On the other hand, she never seemed personally enamored with farm life. She stayed away from the fields and the barns, and even during the busy threshing season she left the cooking for the farm help to Harry and Mary Jane. Furthermore, Martha may have believed that discontinuing the family farming operation would relieve some of her indebtedness and was a wise long-term financial decision. She may have been aware that the profitable years of farming were waning after World War I and that the income from farm production and the value of farm land was slowly declining. The money made from the sale of farm machinery and animals may have seemed especially attractive as well as the prospect of receiving regular income from tenant farmers. Finally, Martha had always supported Harry financially in his various business ventures; the income from a farm auction would allow her to do this again. And, Martha may have reasoned, there was no one else in the family to carry on with the farm operation. Her father, mother, and Uncle Harrison had all died, and Vivian's farming interests were elsewhere.<sup>186</sup>

With all these considerations in mind, the Trumans placed an advertisement in the September 18, 1919, *Belton Herald*, announcing that they were going to auction:

eighteen head of horses and mules  
five mares  
three work horses  
two suckling colts

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<sup>185</sup> Martha Ann Swoyer, interview, 28 October 1983. Note: Most of the information in this chapter describing the house layout and contents were derived from a careful reading of the Swoyer interview.

<sup>186</sup> Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman: His Life on the Family Farms*, 22, 95-103. McCullough, *Truman*, 100-101.

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two nine-year-old horse mules  
one saddle stallion, Kentucky bred  
one blind horse  
two yearling colts  
one two-year-old gelding  
one mare mule, 4 years old  
231 hogs  
230 stock hogs  
one Hampshire boar  
twenty-three head of cows and calves  
four thoroughbred shorthorn cows  
three milk cows, and  
sixteen steers and heifers

The September 22, 1919 *Independence Examiner* ran the following story:

Captain Harry Truman has decided to quit the farming game for the present. With his mother and sister he owns 600 acres of land one mile north of Grandview and they have leased the land in several tracts. Tomorrow they will hold an all day auction sale of the farm property, hogs, horses, cattle and farming implements.<sup>187</sup>

They auctioned off the farm equipment, and Mary Jane bought a Dodge coupe, which she drove for over ten years. Later, she drove a series of Nashes. The car, and the release from farm chores liberated her, and she immersed herself in social activities she had only been able to sample before.

Mary Jane was very active in the local Baptist church. She was an accomplished pianist, and played for the Grandview Baptist church for thirty years. She also taught Sunday School, first for young boys, then classes of young girls, and finally for young adults. She frequently had picnics for her Sunday School classes at the farm.

Mary Jane was also active in the Eastern Star.<sup>188</sup> She joined in 1913 and was installed as Matron of the Grandview lodge in 1917. In 1951 she was named Worthy Grand Matron of the State of Missouri. Following her installation, approximately 750 people attended a reception held in her honor at the Ruskin High School. Eastern Star took her out of Missouri as well. She was an honorary member of lodges in Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Montana, Wyoming, Kentucky, and Nebraska, all of

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<sup>187</sup> *Independence Examiner*, 22 September 1922.

<sup>188</sup> The Eastern Star is an organization of women which focuses on the moral and ethical development of the individual member through adherence to certain social and religious principles. The Eastern Star is closely associated with the Masons.

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which she visited.<sup>189</sup> Years later, on March 14, 1996, Viola Zumault, a friend of Mary Jane's and a member of Eastern Star who attended meetings with Mary Jane, was interviewed. During the interview, Zumault recalled:

It [Eastern Star] was her life. She lived it. That's what it meant to her. Mary Jane was never married. You know that. She devoted her life to Eastern Star and to her mother. But she loved everything about it. She loved the work and the thing that it represented. That's what it meant to Mary Jane. She was just a symbol to others of a loving person who did the right thing and lived a good life.<sup>190</sup>

Although Mary Jane never married, Roy Romine, a relative who visited her on the farm in the 1930s, recalled that she had several boyfriends:

She had a fair share of suitors. Now don't ask me who they were because I don't remember, but one of them gave her a black chow. . . . And none of them cut the mustard. As we mentioned yesterday, everybody overlooks the part that Mary Jane played in Harry's success, in that she gave up everything and took care of Mamma [Mamma Truman]. Outside of her work in the Eastern Star, Mary Jane devoted her life to her mother.<sup>191</sup>

**Vivian and Luella Truman Family**

In the 1920s, Vivian Truman purchased a portion of the old Young farmstead adjacent to the land occupied by the farmhouse. In 1930, he built a house, a barn, and several outbuildings. He continued to farm the land until his sons Harry and Gilbert permanently took over the operation. Harry A. Truman was born on September 18, 1923. He graduated from Ruskin High School in 1941 and married Dorothy Barr on June 1, 1946. Gilbert, the younger brother, was born on June 27, 1926. He also graduated from Ruskin High School (In 1944). On November 30, 1946, he married Pauline Reynolds.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Mary Jane Truman, interview by Stephen and Cathy Doyal and Fred and Audrey Truman, 1975, transcript of taped interview, 69, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>190</sup> Viola Zumault, interviewed by Jon E. Taylor, 14 March 1996, transcript of taped interview, 28, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>191</sup> Roy and Carol Romine, interview by Jon Taylor, 11 September 1997, transcript of taped interview, 23, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>192</sup> Tom Quickel, "The Truman Brothers of Grandview Lifelong Partners," *Jackson County Democrat*, 14 April 1950.



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In 1931 another of Vivian's sons, John C. Truman, assumed management of the 600 acres Vivian had been working adjacent to the Young-Truman farmhouse. John had been attending Central Missouri State Teachers College in Warrensburg, Missouri; however, when Vivian's business started keeping him away from the farm, John came home. Although John continued his course work as much as possible, he committed himself primarily to the farm. In fact, he was unable to take any classes in 1933 and 1934. When John ran the farm, it consisted of approximately 300 acres in cultivation and 300 acres in pasture. Each year it produced 250 to 300 hogs, twenty to thirty beef cattle, and fifty to seventy dairy calves. They sold the dairy calves to local dairies when the calves came into milk production.

John completed all his undergraduate coursework and was graduated with a bachelor of science degree and a teacher's certificate in late 1936. He attended summer school at the University of Missouri from 1938 to 1941 and on April 20, 1944, enlisted in the navy. After attending Quartermaster School from July to October of 1944, he was assigned to the *U. S. S. Missouri* as a seaman second class in November of that year. John was aboard the *Missouri* when Japan surrendered. John was honorably discharged on October 23, 1945, with a rank of seaman first class.<sup>193</sup> John became the clerk of the United States district court for the Western District of Missouri.

Vivian's son, Harry, enlisted in the army in 1942. When he returned to Missouri after his enlistment in 1948, he, rented the farmhouse from Truman and Vivian, and moved in 1948 with his wife, Dorothy Barr. For the first year, there was no water piped into the house and they carried water in buckets. They used an outhouse that was near the gate east of the house. A year after they moved in, city water was piped into the house and a bathroom was installed off the hallway downstairs.<sup>194</sup>

In the late 1940s and first half of the 1950s, Vivian's sons, Harry and Gilbert Truman, farmed 640 acres that included the land immediately adjacent to the Grandview farmhouse. The brothers had 320 acres in cultivation and 320 acres in pasture for 140 head of calves, heifers and Holstein cows. Inside their milking barn, they had running water from the Grandview city system, a hot water heater, and a milk cooler. They used a vacuum milking system for their thirty-three-cow dairy herd. The machine could accommodate three cows at a time. They also

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<sup>193</sup> Application for federal employment, John C. Truman, June 25, 1947, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>194</sup> Gilbert and Harry Truman, interview by Jon Taylor, 20 September, 1996, transcript of typed interview, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

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maintained a herd of twenty-eight nurse-cows. Each nurse-cow would raise from four to twelve calves a year.

The brothers put up an average of over 200 tons of hay each year. They ground and mixed their own hay and small grain to be used as feed for both their dairy herd and their hogs. They had no hired help. Both were up by 4:30 a.m. and worked until dark six days each week.

Harry and Gilbert continued to farm the acreage until large portions were sold by the Trumans to be transformed into commercial use. In 1955 the brothers moved to Louisburg, Kansas, where they continued farming.<sup>195</sup>

John Vivian Truman died on July 8, 1965, at the age of 79. He was survived by his wife, Luella; four sons, Harry, Fred, J.C., and Gilbert; a daughter, Mrs. Martha Ann Swoyer; a sister, Mary Jane Truman; seven grandchildren; a great-granddaughter, and his brother, Harry S Truman.<sup>196</sup> He was a charter member of the Grandview lodge of the Masons, and was Grand Master of that lodge in 1920.<sup>197</sup> He was also active in the church. Prior to the construction of the shopping center known as Truman Corners, Vivian Truman's house was moved into Grandview.<sup>198</sup>

### **Mary Jane and Martha Truman, and the Family Farm 1940 - 1947**

For Mary Jane and her mother, 1940 was a profoundly fateful year. They were forced to move off their farm where Mary Jane had spent most of her life, and where her eighty-seven-year-old mother had hoped to die in peace. A mortgage, which was then held by Jackson County, was foreclosed. The origins of the indebtedness that forced Mary Jane and her mother into a small house in Grandview arose from the family fight over Harriet Young's estate.

The initial mortgage had been made in 1909 to pay legal fees arising from litigation between the Trumans and Harrison Young on one side, and the rest of the Young children on the other. The descendants of Harriet Young were fighting about her will, which provided that all her assets were to go to her son, Harrison, and her daughter Martha Ellen, Harry Truman's mother. Grandmother Young gave the rest of her children \$5 each. The other children sued to have the will declared invalid.

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<sup>195</sup> Maxine Williams, interviewed by Niel M. Johnson, 17 May 1983, transcript of typed interview, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>196</sup> *New York Telegram*, 8 July 1965.

<sup>197</sup> *The Kansas City Star*, 13 March 1978.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

The case went to trial before a judge alone without a jury, and what must have been painful testimony of family members against family members was elicited. The other children alleged that Grandmother Young, who died at the age of ninety-one, was mentally incompetent at the time she made the will at age seventy-seven. The court ordered that the Trumans and Harrison would retain the farm; however, the final outcome resulted in each of the other children receiving \$9,500. This liability, added to the \$3,000 of attorney's fees paid to Fred J. Boxley of Kansas City, necessitated that Harrison and the Trumans borrow money and convey a mortgage as collateral for the loan. They borrowed \$7,500.

When Harry Truman's uncle, Harrison Young, died, he left his half of the farm, about three hundred acres, to Harry's mother, Martha Ellen Truman, and her three children. In February of 1917, Martha Ellen Truman increased the home farm mortgage to \$25,000.

The mortgage encumbrances against the farm were not well received by everyone in the family. According to Gaylon Babcock, who knew Truman, Vivian, and Mary Jane Truman well, on several occasions Vivian voiced the strong opinion that not all the money borrowed had been absolutely essential.<sup>199</sup>

Although legal costs necessitated by litigating the validity of Harriet's will certainly exacerbated the Truman's financial woes, farm indebtedness was becoming a common business practice in America. Large farms that would later become even more successful used debt to leverage increased production.

In the meantime, the Trumans had paid interest only on their note. In 1938 they consolidated their indebtedness into a new note of \$35,000 that was secured by the farm mortgage. To add to the growing problem, the family had sold off more than half the land in the preceding years, and only 287 acres of the farm was left. The farm at that time was trying to sustain two separate families: Harry Truman's brother, Vivian, Vivian's wife, and their five children, and Mother Truman, and Harry Truman's sister, Mary Jane. Because farm income wasn't enough, they sold parcels. And Harry Truman couldn't help. He closed the haberdashery in 1922 with a loss of \$30,000. His partner, Eddie Jacobson, was unable to help with the haberdashery debt, and filed for bankruptcy protection in 1925. Harry Truman finally paid off the haberdashery debt in 1935 by buying back the final note at a sheriff's sale at a substantial discount. Unfortunately, the year before, he had incurred new debt to finance his campaign for the Senate, and again in 1940 when he campaigned for reelection.

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<sup>199</sup> Gaylon Babcock, interview by James Ruchs, 12 February, 1964, transcript of taped interview Harry S. Truman Library.

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In 1938, the holder of the note secured by the mortgage asked the Trumans to find other financing. They turned to the county school board, which was empowered to invest surplus funds in real estate loans. The school board granted the loan in April of 1938. The note was to be repaid by the end of the year at 6 percent interest. An unofficial appraisal of the farm that year calculated its value at \$22,680. By December 31, 1938, the Trumans were in default. Negotiations were protracted, lasting one and one-half years. Finally, on July 16, 1940, the mortgage was foreclosed by the county court. Truman's sister and his eighty-seven-year-old mother moved to a house in Grandview. Between 1940 and 1945 the farmhouse was rented out. Receipts received by Jackson County during that period totaled \$4,865.94

In 1940, Martha broke a hip, making her dependent upon the use of a cane. In 1944, she fell again and suffered fractures of both the left hip and the left shoulder. She fell again in February of 1947, at age ninety-four, again fracturing a hip. This time the injury confined her to her bedroom. At mid-day on July 26, 1947, at the age of ninety-four, Martha Young Truman died.<sup>200</sup>

On the day of her death, two deputy sheriffs, L. E. Babcock and Oscar L. Shartzler, together with Grandview Marshal, Vivian Goodwin, were positioned in front of Martha Truman's Grandview cottage. A Secret Service agent paced back and forth. A. E. Kerr, special agent of the Frisco railroad, made arrangement for trains to muffle their whistles at the crossing that was one-half block away. She was pronounced dead at 11:05 a.m. At 11:15 an ambulance arrived at the rear of the cottage; it departed at 11:45, and took Martha's body to the George Chapel in Belton. At 11:55 Vivian Truman, who, with George P. Wallace, Harry's brother-in-law, and Mary Jane, had remained at Martha's bedside, left the cottage looking grief stricken, and removed the barricade from the street.<sup>201</sup>

While flying in a C-54 at 5,000 feet above Cincinnati, heading home, President Harry Truman was handed the following radio message: "The President's mother died 11 a.m. Central Standard time. The Secret Service." The message was received by the Charles M. Mills, the C-54 pilot, at 11:26.<sup>202</sup>

During the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s, Mary Jane Truman continued to live in Grandview. She remained active in the Baptist Church and *Eastern Star*. From 1956 until 1982, the Williams family rented and occupied the farmhouse. The Williamses replaced the old stone columns that supported the

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<sup>200</sup> Doris Faber, *The Mothers of American Presidents*, (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1968), 61.

<sup>201</sup> *Kansas City Star*, 26 July 1947.

<sup>202</sup> *Kansas City Star*, 27 July 1947.

kitchen portion of the house with a cement foundation; they screened in the back porch, and installed a concrete-floored patio off the kitchen door. They also installed a concrete base for the front (west-facing) porch and shingled its roof.<sup>203</sup>

By 1973, Mary Jane had outlived her two siblings, Vivian and Harry S Truman. In late September of 1975, Malvina Stephenson, a writer with the North American Newspaper Alliance, was emboldened to walk up to the front door of Mary Jane's Grandview home and ring the bell. Mary Jane's telephone number was unlisted, and she had repeatedly refused other interviews. After three long rings of the doorbell, a squeaky screen door opened, revealing Mary Jane wearing a big, welcoming smile. Mary Jane invited Stephenson in, saying, "I look like a tramp." Stephenson saw nothing wrong with Mary Jane's green-and-white print housedress topped with a dark green sweater. "She was steadied by a cane in each hand, but manages to get around by herself. Her skin is surprisingly smooth for her age, and she is peppy and uncomplaining," Stephenson later reported. They sat on Mary Jane's glassed-in front porch and chatted. Her brothers Vivian and Harry had died: Vivian in 1965, Harry in 1972. Mary Jane was the only child left of John and Martha Truman. Stephenson reported that Mary Jane laughed frequently, and didn't seem to take herself too seriously. "Like her brother," Stephenson concluded, "she is one of a kind."<sup>204</sup>

On December 5, 1977, Mary Jane suffered a stroke. She was hospitalized at the Research Medical Center in Kansas City. In March of 1978, she moved to a nursing home, the Red Bridge Health Care Center, at 11515 Troost in Kansas City.<sup>205</sup> She died on November 3, 1978, at the age of 89.<sup>206</sup> In the year 2000, her house remains standing in Grandview, Missouri.

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<sup>203</sup> Maxine Williams interview, 17 May, 1983.

<sup>204</sup> Malvina Stephenson, "Plain Speaking from Miss Truman," *Kansas City Times*, 22 September 1975.

<sup>205</sup> *The Kansas City Star*, 13 March, 1978.

<sup>206</sup> *Grandview Tribune*, 8 November 1978.

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## **Chapter 6**

### **The Farm Repurchased, Restored and Made Public**

#### **Introduction**

#### **Repurchasing the Truman Farm**

#### **Attempts to Build the Harry S. Truman Library at the Farm**

#### **Jackson County Acquisition of the Truman Farm**

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## **The Farm Repurchased, Restored, and Made Public Part 1, Chapter 6**

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### **Introduction**

This chapter traces the farmhouse from the time friends of Harry Truman purchased the property from Jackson County, who had foreclosed the mortgage, restored it, conveyed it back to the county, and, finally the county's conveyance to the United States Government.

The Truman family's continuing association with the land even after foreclosure, the formation of a private foundation to acquire and restore the farmhouse, attempts to locate the presidential library at the farm, and the struggles by both the foundation and the county to meet the financial obligations in maintaining the property are presented.

### **Repurchasing the Truman Farm**

On February 24, 1945, the County Court sold the Grandview Farm for \$43,500.<sup>207</sup> According to Charles F. Curry, a friend of Harry S Truman who participated in the repurchase of the farm from the county, the sale was not widely advertised. Some of Truman's friends felt that the sale price would not be sufficient to retire the approximately \$43,000 of outstanding indebtedness. Curry discussed the matter with Vivian Truman, who expressed a family desire that Martha Truman be permitted to live in the farmhouse and the eighty-seven acres it occupied. Vivian told Curry that the Truman family could raise approximately \$20,000. They agreed that Curry and his friends would purchase the entire farm (approximately 287 acres), and sell the farmhouse and its acreage to the Trumans for \$20,000.

Curry was able to recruit two others, E. Kemper Carter and Tom Evans. The three submitted a sealed bid that was opened by the County Court on March 9, 1945. Curry, Carter, and Evans were the successful bidders at a price of \$43,000. The terms of the sale were that a \$10,000 deposit had to accompany the bid, \$20,000 in cash was due upon delivery of the deed, and a note for \$13,000 was to be agreed to. The \$13,000 note was secured by a first deed of trust pertaining only to the 200-acre tract (not pertaining to the 87 acres upon which the farmhouse was situated). The three took title in the name of Curry's bookkeeper, E. G. Huston, who executed a memorandum stating that she held title for E. Kemper Carter for one-sixth interest, for Tom Evans for one-sixth interest, and Curry for four-sixths

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<sup>207</sup> Ben Nordbert, Clerk, County Court of Jackson County, Memorandum to the file, June 27, 1957. Vertical File: Truman, Home, Grandview. Harry S. Truman Library.



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interest. On May 4, 1946, they resold the farm to Harry S Truman.<sup>208</sup> For legal reasons, Curry executed a quit claim deed and E. G. Huston, his bookkeeper, executed a warranty deed. (Fee simple title was vested in E. G. Huston by virtue of its transfer by the Jackson County Court; however, Curry's interest, which was conveyed by his quit claim deed, arose by virtue of the memorandum executed by E. G. Huston that provided that she held title only as agent for Curry.)<sup>209</sup>

**Attempt to Build the Harry S. Truman Library at the  
Grandview Farm**

On June 26, 1950, Truman contacted Edward F. Neild, an architect with the firm of Neild-Somdal Associates, and asked him to prepare preliminary plans for the Truman presidential library. Truman wanted the library to be located on the farm. A December 20, 1952, press release announced that a presidential library was being planned for construction at the Grandview farm site, and construction was scheduled to start in 1953. The planned library was expected to cost one million dollars. A group calling themselves Friends of the President incorporated under the name Harry S. Truman Library, Inc. They solicited contributions and raised approximately \$200,000.<sup>210</sup> A typescript of a draft article written by Harry Truman casts some light on the thinking behind locating the library at the Grandview farm:

The property lies on your left, 600 acres of it. 400-odd belong to me, the rest to my brother, Vivian and my sister Mary. Vivian and two of his sons, Gilbert and Harry, work the place today, and it's a going concern, planted to alfalfa, wheat, corn and oats, with grazing land for horses and ponies and 130 head of good cattle . . .

The reason for mentioning all this is that here is where I'd like to merge the past and the future — and by the future I mean the Harry S. Truman Library. It will be located here in Grandview, as soon as the fund drive, now going on, is finished. I'm giving the land, 60, 80, or as many acres as are needed, and the funds for the building are being raised by subscription. The land is valuable enough — in the present market it's worth between \$1,000 and

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<sup>208</sup> Charles F. Curry, interviewed by James R. Fuchs, 30 September, 1965, transcript of taped interview, 13, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>209</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman: A Life*, (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1994), 107.

<sup>210</sup> *U.S. News & World Report*, 22 September 1952.

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\$1,250 an acre — but the most valuable thing I have to give is the collection of papers I accumulated as President. Cached now in 400 5-drawer filing cabinets, these papers are the reason for the library. Of the 400, 219 contain top secret material, which can't be made public for some time. All together, they constitute in rough form a history of the 8 years I was in office.

Messages, received and sent, random jottings, letters, memos and so on, they tell their own intimate story of one of the most unusual periods in our career as a nation, the period from the explosion of the first atomic boomb [sic] to the conflict in Korea. No student of history, politics, sociology, or almost any major subject can afford to ignore them. That's why I want to make them available to students.

Meanwhile, the disposition and security of the papers have been my chief worries. Over a year ago, I discussed the matter with a group of advisers in the White House. The use of some vaults in the Fidelity Building in Kansas City had been offered as storage space, pro tem, and I was inclined to accept. Then Judge Samuel I. Rosenman pointed out that the vaults were federal property and that, if the papers were placed there, my successor in office would have the legal right to bar me from access to them — though the chance of his doing so was slight. Even so, I had trouble sleeping that night, just at the mere idea.

Next day, I asked my brother Vivian and Tom Evans, one of my old friends, to look for some other temporary cache, in or around Kansas City. They finally reported that there was room in the Jackson County courthouse. Two floors, still unused and unfinished, were available.

The Grandview farm seems to me to be the ideal site for the proposed library. Usually, in explaining why, I take a map and draw a circle, with a radius of 500 miles around Grandview. There are 81 (83?) colleges and other institutions of learning within the circle. None of them, at present, is a center of historical study or contains a collection of papers similar to mine. In other words, the library will be within easy reach of countless students, who now have no access to the sort of material it will hold.

But students won't be the only ones admitted. It will be open to the general public, too, and in this respect, as a

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tourist attraction, its central location in the nation and those good roads I mentioned earlier are prime assets. It should be worth a casual visit, as well as a prolonged one, for study purposes, because, if the architects' plans are realized, the building itself will be beautiful; also, the idea is to fill the exhibition rooms with many mementos of my years as president, including a lot of gifts I received from rulers and leaders all over the world.

I don't want to sound a funeral note, but people sometimes ask me the question, so I may as well answer it now. I want to be buried here in Grandview, where I belong, in a vault under or near the library, and I'd like to have my closest relatives placed beside me — after they're dead, of course.

Some day, after the library is built, I think I'll move mother's house back a ways and build myself a home in front of it. [I]t would be nice. Come to think of it, it would be the first home of my own, the first I myself built and live in, I've ever had in my life.<sup>211</sup>

However, on July 8, 1954, a different site was selected. Truman and the presidential library planners considered transportation, lodging, and other logistics and concluded that an Independence, Missouri, location would better serve public needs, and would be closer to Truman's own home on North Delaware Street.<sup>212</sup>

Financial considerations also persuaded Harry Truman not to have a presidential library constructed on the Grandview Farm. Truman had a long personal history of debt, and his presidential salary never made him wealthy. After he left office there was no pension for former presidents until 1958. Income and some security only came from the contract to write and the expected sale of his autobiography, *Memoirs* (although the financial returned turned out to be less than expected). The sale of his share of several hundred acres of the Truman farm in Grandview also provided financial security at last for Truman, as well as Mary Jane and Vivian.

In 1958, three years after Harry and Gilbert Truman had moved to Kansas, over two hundred acres of the Truman Farm was sold to B. F. Weinberg and Associates. B. F. Weinberg, doing business as Triangle Investments, announced that they would

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<sup>211</sup> Harry S. Truman, Draft Article, Post-Presidential File: American Weekly, work papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>212</sup> Jill York O'Bright, "Cultivating the Land: Cultivating the Man: The Young-Truman Farm," *Jackson County Historical Society* 26: 2 (Fall 1984).

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transform the farmland into a shopping center and residential subdivision. The 220 acres were sold for \$1,000 an acre.

Had it not been for the fact that I was able to sell some property that my brother, sister, and I inherited from our mother," Truman wrote to John McCormich in January of 1957, "I would practically be on relief, but with the sale of that property I am not financially embarrassed."<sup>213</sup>

In the early 1970s, while conducting research for his book *Plain Speaking*, Merle Miller accompanied Mary Jane Truman out to the old farm:

One sunny summer afternoon Miss Mary Jane and I were standing on the tiny plot of land that was all that was left of the Truman home place at Grandview.

Most of the land had been turned into a neon-lighted shopping center that, naturally, is called Truman Corners. It was dominated by a large electric cat over a drugstore. The cat had malevolent brown eyes that lighted up at night, and it revolved endlessly behind the old barn in which Mary Jane, Vivian, and Harry used to play.

As Miss Truman and I stood in the field near the barn, the cat eyed us menacingly. An old C-47 groaned overhead, and there were the sounds and smells of trucks on their way to the grime and smog of downtown Kansas City. A voice on a loudspeaker shouted out a then-popular rock-and-roll song, and there was the competing noise of a disc jockey from the radio in a TV appliance store.

Miss Mary Jane listened for a moment. "It used to be so quiet," she said, "and you could plow the north eighty without taking the plow out of the ground. It's all changed so much." She looked around again. "Well," she said. "That's progress. At least they say it is."<sup>214</sup>

### **Jackson County Acquisition of the Truman Farm**

The Trumans continued to sell small pieces of the farm until only a twenty-acre parcel containing the farmhouse remained. The house began to fall into disrepair during the Williams's family tenure there as renter, beginning in 1956. The last of the maples planted by Solomon Young were blown down by

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<sup>213</sup> Ferrell, *Off the Record*, 346.

<sup>214</sup> Merle Miller, *Plain Speaking: An Oral Biography of Harry S Truman* (New York: Berkley Publishing Co., 1973), 50-51.

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a tornado in 1957.<sup>215</sup> In 1966 the larger barn, which had been built by Solomon Young in 1867-68, and had been used by three generations, was destroyed by fire.

The first recorded official attempt to restore and preserve the farmhouse occurred in September of 1965, when Clarence McGill, a real estate broker acting on behalf of Gilbert and Harry Truman, who then owned the property, indicated that both Gilbert and Harry were interested in conveying the property to an organization that would preserve it. The asking price at that time was \$200,000. Jackson County officials were unable to purchase the property due to budget limitations. The Director of the

National Park Service, George B. Hartzog, Jr. was then approached in December of 1965. In accordance with President Truman's expressed wishes, the NPS voiced a reluctance to do anything during Truman's life to commemorate him.



**Truman farmhouse on the market.**

Photo courtesy of the *Jackson County Advocate*

### Truman Farm Home Foundation Is Formed

The issue was resurrected in 1976. A group of Grandview Chamber of Commerce members initiated a fund drive to buy the home. They only raised \$4,000, not enough to purchase the home, so the donations were returned. However, the group was able to have the farm home listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. In late 1978, members of the Grandview Chamber of Commerce and the Grandview City Council incorporated a foundation to purchase and restore the farm home. The foundation, called the Harry S. Truman Farm Home Foundation, became active in early 1980.<sup>216</sup>

The foundation was comprised of individual residents of Grandview, Missouri, motivated by a desire to preserve a piece of

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<sup>215</sup> Ferrell, *A Life*, 111.

<sup>216</sup> *Kansas City Times*, 12 December 1978.

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local history. The foundation was a true grass roots movement; it was not by a state, federal, or local agency. As is appropriate to the man whose memory they sought to preserve, the foundation was formed simply by private citizens of a rural town. And, they succeeded.

They orchestrated the purchase of the remaining Truman property by Jackson County. Working through the Jackson County Legislature, they were able to obtain a \$378,250 grant from the Department of the Interior, which was used to purchase the land. The Trumans agreed to sell the property to Jackson County for half of its \$700,000 appraised value. By September of 1983, the county owned the property and the foundation had raised enough money to start the renovation. Just before the Truman Centennial in 1984 (celebrating Truman's date of birth), the foundation also assisted National Park Service regional historian, Jill York (later O'Bright) in preparing the national historic landmark nomination for the Young-Truman Grandview Farm. The national historic landmark status later became critical to adding the farm to the federal park system, centered on the Truman home in Independence.<sup>217</sup>

Sterling Goddard was president of the foundation. As had been the case for Truman, Goddard's presidency was thrust upon him. Although he was instrumental in the incorporation of the foundation, he was unable to attend the first meeting. In his absence, his friends elected him president.

Sterling reported that the foundation raised over a million dollars. They conducted a massive direct-mail campaign. Letters went to former friends and associates of Harry Truman seeking private contributions; letters went to state and federal agencies seeking grants. The Department of the Interior's grant of \$378,250 came in late October of 1980. Secretary of the Interior, Cecil D. Andrus, presented the check to the Missouri governor. The foundation also had a benefit show at the high school; country singer Hank Snow and his son came. And many individuals contributed. Over twenty years later, Sterling was still amazed by the foundation's success: "And many of the

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<sup>217</sup> Members of the Harry S Truman Farm Home Foundation as of May 3, 1984 were: Foundation Officers: Sterling E. Goddard, President, Laroy Gann, Vice President, Robert M Garrison, Treasurer, Dennis H. Flanery, Secretary. Board Members were: John J. Strode, Vince Harrison, Rufus Burris, Ralph Hedges, Sam Lickteig, Marguerite Maxwell, Robert McCarthy, Bill Reno, James D. Turnbaugh, Jr., Dr. Benedict Zobrist, Charles Curry, Robert F. Hoesfer, Weldon Jackson, Barry Wilkinson, Doug Doll, William C. Hussey, Bob Johnson, Bill Waris, George Lehr, Ed Thompson, Nancy Pope, and George Fogelsong. The Consulting Architect was John Huffman, the foundation attorney was John O'Malley, and the Consulting Engineer was Dave Dyhouse. *Jackson County Advocate*, 3 May 1984. It is impressive that the same persons were still on the board on October 6, 1993. Historian's Files: Truman Farm Foundation, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

## **The Farm Repurchased, Restored and Made Public** **Part 1, Chapter 6**

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politicians and others that were all friends of Harry's they made – made contributions," he said during the June, 1999, interview. "And we raised over a million dollars." He paused for a moment, gazing into his backyard through the glass patio door. "My goodness. That's amazing," he said mostly to himself.<sup>218</sup>

Both Sterling and Joyce Goddard were careful to name others responsible for the foundation's success. A name that the Goddards emphasized is heard whenever knowledgeable people discuss the farmhouse renovation: George Foglesong, the retired carpenter who did the actual restoration work at no charge. George Foglesong advised the foundation that he owed a personal favor to Harry Truman and wanted to do the work, but wouldn't take money for it.<sup>219</sup> Foglesong had retired four years earlier. Foglesong was born in Ottawa, Kansas, moved to Emporia, Kansas, as a child, and was first exposed to carpentry by his uncle, Ben Burbett, who constructed stairs throughout Eastern Kansas. In 1921 Foglesong moved to Kansas City and started his own carpentry business. He built the Grandview Methodist church, the Terrace Lake (Methodist) church, as well as several other buildings in Jackson County.

### **Restoration of the Truman Farm Home**

At noon on Saturday, May 5, 1984, a dedication ceremony was held, followed by an open house celebrating the farmhouse's public opening. Reverend Jack Pope gave the invocation, Reverend Robert L. Johnson made the introductions, Governor Christopher Bond made some presentations, and State Attorney General John D. Ashcroft made the dedication speech. U.S. Air Force A-10s did a low-level fly-by. The farmhouse remained open Saturday and Sunday, and was then closed to complete the final restoration work and to move period furniture in.<sup>220</sup>

The open house commemorated the dedicated labor of not only George Foglesong, but of many others whose efforts resurrected the farmhouse. When Jackson County acquired the farmhouse and the surrounding 5.3 acres, the house was in serious disrepair. Siding had developed dryrot, roofing had deteriorated, chimneys had been weathered necessitating rebricking, porch footings had deteriorated to the point that they had to be replaced, wallpaper was peeling from ceilings, plaster had been damaged by leaks and had fallen from ceilings, and recent additions had been made to the west facade. The

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<sup>218</sup> Sterling Goddard interviewed by Gail E. H. Evans, 6 June, 2000, transcript of taped interview, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> *Jackson County Advocate*, 3 May 1984.

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*Independence Examiner* described the farm in its September 23, 1983, issue:

The eight-room, two-story house is shabby and neglected. Its paint has peeled off. The bare boards are showing. Its rooms stand empty both of inhabitants and furniture. Only two pines and a walnut remain from the glorious bounty of trees surrounding it half a century ago when a future president of the United States occupied its walls.<sup>221</sup>

They wanted to restore it to what it had been when Truman lived there, including, if possible, outbuildings. They examined historical photographs, retained an archeologist, and hired John A. Huffman, a Kansas City architect specializing in historical renovation work. Huffman inspected the farmhouse and submitted a restoration-reconstruction schedule (see Table 6-1 on the following page).

The archeologist searched the grounds using a piece of remote sensing equipment that would disclose any subsurface anomalies.<sup>222</sup> He found buried foundations, which he investigated by digging exploratory holes and analyzing the artifacts. Seventeen feet east of the house, he discovered a limestone foundation that was constructed using the same material and the same methods that were used on the original 1867 house. His exploratory digs at that location also revealed shards of pottery, pieces of window glass, and other items indicative of a dwelling. He concluded that the small, square building had been a house built either before or contemporaneous with the 1867 house. Further east, he found the remains of a barn that had burned. His exploratory digs revealed obvious evidence of a fire. He found charred wood, and metal pieces discolored red by intense heat. He also found not one square nail, only wire nails.

Because wire nails post-date c. 1900, the archeologist concluded that, contrary to popular belief, the barn that burned was not the barn Solomon Young built in 1868. Testimonial evidence, however, given by Truman family members, as well as historical photographs, support the conclusion that the barn that

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<sup>221</sup> *Independence Examiner*, 23 September 1983.

<sup>222</sup> The device used by the archeologist was a "Probe." The probe is made of steel measuring about 5/8" in diameter and about 3'6" in length with a welded T-bar handle at the top. The bottom end of the probe is tapered and hollowed into a small concavity enabling it to extract traces of brick, shells, or soils into which it is thrust. With experience, it is possible to know what type of material the probe is encountering (brick wall, a layer of oyster shells, sand, etc.) by feel alone without having to extract the probe and examine the sample the hollowed end of the probe has captured. Ivor Noel Hume, *Historical Archaeology*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969).



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burned was the original barn that had been built by Solomon Young in 1867-68. Both Gilbert and Harry Truman, sons of Vivian Truman, identified the burned barn as the original barn. Maxine Williams, who resided in the farmhouse for many years as a renter, examined a photograph of the original Solomon Young barn and identified it as the barn she saw burn. And, Mary Jane Truman identified the same photograph later viewed by Maxine Williams and reported that it was the barn her Grandfather Young had built.

As is frequently the case where conflicting evidence exists, the most correct answer is probably the one that can support both hypotheses. In this case, the most probable answer is that it was Solomon Young's barn that burned in 1966, but that barn had been modified subsequent to 1900. This would explain why the archeologist found the round, or wire nails. In fact, Gilbert and Harry Truman reported that the old original barn had been modified a couple of times.

Not far south of the site of the burned barn, the archeologist found another foundation. This second barn foundation was constructed using the same materials and methods as those that were used on the original 1867 house.

Based upon that evidence, the archeologist concluded that the original barn

had been located at this second site. He also concluded that the barn that occupied this second site had not burned. However, again the archeologist's conclusions conflict with other, persuasive evidence. Unfortunately, the archeologist did not sink any exploratory holes at the second site to enable him to confirm his theory by analyzing artifacts.<sup>223</sup>



**Master carpenter George Fogelsong, left, with Ralph Bray, State Architect for the Missouri Division of Parks and Historical Preservation**

*Photo courtesy of the Jackson County Advocate*

<sup>223</sup> Robert T. Bray, *Archaeological Survey and Testing at the Truman Farm Home and Grounds, Grandview, Missouri*, typescript, 1983, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

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**PHASE 1 RESTORATION - RECONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE**

|  | June 1983 | July | August | September | October | November | December | January, 1984 | February |
|--|-----------|------|--------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|---------------|----------|
| I. Foundation<br>a. Stabilize and tuckpoint<br>b. Install foundation drains<br>c. Treat for insect and termite infestation |           | ■    |        |           |         |          |          |               |          |
| II. Floor<br>a. Stabilize, restore and level floors and stairways  |           |      | ■      | ■         |         |          |          |               |          |
| III. Roof<br>a. Reinforce rafters and restore roof   |           |      | ■      | ■         |         |          |          |               |          |
| IV. Chimneys<br>a. Plumb, support and tuckpoint<br>b. Repair chimney caps<br>c. Replace deteriorated flashing              | ■         | ■    |        |           |         |          |          |               |          |
| V. Replace broken glass, reconstruct broken sash, and glaze windows  |           | ■    | ■      | ■         | ■       |          |          |               |          |
| VI. Restore exterior millwork and siding   |           | ■    | ■      | ■         | ■       |          |          |               |          |
| VII. Restore front and side galleries  |           | ■    | ■      | ■         | ■       | ■        |          |               |          |
| VIII. Rewire electrical system to code   |           |      |        |           |         | ■        | ■        | ■             |          |
| IX. Install security and fire alarm systems  |           |      |        |           |         |          | ■        | ■             |          |
| X. Repair lath and patch plaster   |           |      |        |           |         |          | ■        | ■             |          |
| XI. Caulk and paint exterior   |           |      |        |           |         |          |          | ■             | ■        |
| XII. Finish and furnish interior   |           |      |        |           |         |          |          | ■             | ■        |

**Table 6.1 Tentative Restoration Schedule Prepared by Project Architect**

Courtesy of the Truman Farm Home Foundation

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Renovation work was begun in the fall of 1983 under the direction of master carpenter George Fogelsong; the deadline for completion was May of 1984. Fogelsong carefully examined photographs taken during Harry Truman's tenure on the farm. Most of the photos were snapshots of family and friends, but the house was in the background. Trim painting, fixtures, doors, porches, siding, and windows were revealed by close scrutiny of the house in the background of these pictures.

Fogelsong encased the entire two-story structure in scaffolding and started a major rebirthing process. He stripped the roof of four separate layers of roofing to lay the new roof. He assumed that the last layer of roofing he removed was probably



**George Fogelsong, the master carpenter who directed the restoration carpentry work.**

*Photo courtesy of the Jackson County Advocate*

the first roof to have been installed. He duplicated its cedar wood shakes. The porch on the west side of the house was removed and replaced. Plaster was removed and replaced with new. Dry-rotted siding had to be removed and duplicated.

Attempts were even made to duplicate the wallpaper. In June of 1999, the National Park

Service received a cardboard box labeled, "Harry Truman Farm Home Old Wallpaper." The box contained samples of wallpaper from five rooms in the farm home. The samples had been missing for five years. The box had ended up in the attic of Ruby Jane Hall, a Truman family friend who died in January of 1999.

Relatives found the box while preparing for Hall's estate sale.<sup>224</sup>

Fogelsong, dressed in his usual attire of bib overalls, checkered shirt, baseball cap, heavy-framed tinted glasses, and holding an unlighted pipe, celebrated his 72nd birthday on the

<sup>224</sup> *Kansas City Star*, 29 June 1999.

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Truman job. During an April, 1984, interview with Joseph Turnbaugh of the *Jackson County Advocate*, Fogelsong stressed that the job wouldn't have been possible if it were not for the hundreds of hours donated by many skilled craftsmen from several area labor unions.<sup>225</sup> By some accounts, close to \$31,000 was donated in labor and materials during the renovation.<sup>226</sup>

Attendees of the May, 1984, dedication ceremony not only admired a reborn Young-Truman farmhouse, they drove past a new grove of sugar maple trees to get to the house. The last of the maple trees that Solomon and his daughter, Martha Ellen (future mother of the president) had planted c. 1869 blew down in the late 1950s. The area immediately west of the farmhouse, between the front of the house and the public-access highway, where once the maples stood, was barren when restoration commenced. The land looked like the remnants of a pasture.

The young women of Girl Scout Senior Troop 510 and Cadet Troop 710 applied for and were awarded one of only twenty-three grants offered nationwide by the Reader's Digest Foundation for community projects. The young women completed their historical research, and then coordinated with the Farm Home Foundation, Jackson County Parks and Recreation, and the project architect. By May the young women had planted twenty ten-foot high sugar maple trees, restoring Solomon's grove.<sup>227</sup>

Toward the end of 1984, it became obvious that the Farm Home Foundation lacked adequate funds to finally conclude all the restoration. On February 21, 1984, Jackson County entered into an agreement with the foundation under which the county provided the foundation with \$75,000 to finish the work.<sup>228</sup> The final costs, compared to estimated costs are impressive. The comparison is presented in table 6-2 on the following page.

Actual costs for all cost categories, including architectural, and administrative, as well as construction costs were \$28,456 less than what had been expected. The apparent source of this savings is the donation of both labor and materials. For example, Fogelsong Construction Company, alone donated approximately \$31,000 worth of labor to the project.

For the next two years, the foundation attempted to operate and maintain the farmhouse solely from revenue generated by a modest admittance fee. Volunteer docents guided tours four days a week in the summer. Jackson County assumed responsibility for maintaining the surrounding landscaping.

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<sup>225</sup> *Jackson County Advocate*, 3 May 1984.

<sup>226</sup> John A. Huffman, Completion Report, Harry S. Truman Farm Home, September 4, 1984, Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>227</sup> John A. Huffman, Architect, Letter to Kimberly White, Senior Girl Scout, May 8, 1984, Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>228</sup> Vertical Files: "Grandview Farm, Misc." Harry S. Truman Library.

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Although approximately 200 visitors would tour the house on some long weekends, by March of 1986 the foundation found itself \$17,000 in debt and concluded that it would be financially unable to continue maintaining the house appropriately. At its September 17, 1986, Board of Directors meeting, it was reported that the foundation owed six months of back interest (approximately \$687.46), making the amount then owing on their bank loan \$17,525.45.

| <u>Task</u>                      | <u>Originally<br/>Estimated Cost</u> | <u>Actual Cost</u>   |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Clearing and grubbing            | \$1,200                              | \$299                |
| Site improvements                | 11,120                               | 9,369                |
| Foundation work                  | 6,840                                | 419                  |
| Flooring Restoration             | 8,400                                | 534                  |
| Reconstruct roof; insulate attic | 7,600                                | 4,595                |
| Reconstruct three chimneys       | 2,400                                | 1,236                |
| Stabilize one chimney            | 800                                  | 0                    |
| Restore galleries                | 16,800                               | 6,296                |
| Reconstruct kitchen              | 4,800                                | 7,381                |
| Install mechanical system        | 8,000                                | 5,446                |
| Rewire electrical system         | 5,400                                | 9,942                |
| Security and fire alarm system   | <u>2,800</u>                         | <u>2,183</u>         |
| <b>TOTAL:</b>                    | <u><b>\$76,160</b></u>               | <u><b>47,704</b></u> |

Courtesy of the Truman Farm Home Foundation

**Table 6.2 Expected vs. actual costs**

The board concluded that admission receipts were simply not going to support the farm home. The finance report stated that the foundation had taken in \$1,700 for the year, and interest on their bank note was \$1,200. The minutes of that meeting included: "If this problem isn't resolved, we'll have to shut the property down. There would be no other option except to go to the County and tell them it's theirs - we can't operate it because we can't pay our bills."<sup>229</sup>

The foundation directors then spent the rest of what appears to have been a very long meeting exploring different options to solve the financial problem. A careful reading of the minutes of that meeting leaves the reader with the clear impression that the board adjourned the meeting with a firm resolution to go out and fix the problem.<sup>230</sup>

<sup>229</sup> Minutes, Truman Farm Home Foundation Board of Directors Meeting, September 17, 1986, Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

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In October of 1986, the foundation's Board of Directors voted to ask Jackson County to assume full operation and maintenance of both house and landscaping<sup>231</sup>. Jackson County Legislature agreed in April of 1987. The County budgeted \$6,000 in operating funds, and Grandview City Council added another \$5,000. The county's Heritage Programs and Museums Division of the Parks and Recreation Department assigned one person to the farm home. In addition, one seasonal employee would coordinate volunteers. Training of the new seasonal employee was conducted by the staff of the Harry S Truman National Historic Site. The Truman NHS also agreed to encourage its visitors to also tour the farm home.

In early 1989, it was becoming clear to Jackson County officials that they would not be able to continue maintaining and operating the farm home. Legislature Chairman Fred Arbanas commented that the county didn't have the funding to market it effectively.<sup>232</sup> Arbanas went on to characterize attendance at the farm home as "dismal." According to him, the farm home had 2,800 visitors in 1988, whereas the Truman home in Independence attracted 100,000.<sup>233</sup>

On May 15, 1989, the Jackson County Legislature passed a resolution directing the county executive officer to solicit the assistance of Senator John Danforth, Senator Christopher Bond and Congressman Alan Wheat in an attempt to have the National Park Service assume fiscal and operational responsibilities of the Truman Farm Home. In mid-1990, Senator John Danforth requested that the National Park Service (NPS) assess the possibilities for enhancing the interpretation of Truman's life and times, and prepare a report examining management options which might facilitate that enhancement.

Although no specific congressional directive was enacted either through specific authorizing legislation or as supplemental language in an appropriations act (which are normally the procedural mechanisms by which NPS initiates a new area study), NPS expressed a willingness to examine management options for the farm home. The new area study examining the farmhouse was substantially simplified because it had been designated a National Historic Landmark in February of 1985. Therefore, the first portion of the two-part area study (i.e., determination of the resource's national significance) was unnecessary. Ronald J. Mack, Superintendent of the Harry S Truman National Historic Site, responded on October 18, 1990. He submitted a draft, "Alternatives for the Management of the Truman Farm." The study was completed by the staff of the Harry S Truman National

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<sup>231</sup> Sterling Goddard interview, 6 June, 2000.

<sup>232</sup> *The Kansas City Times*, 13 May 1989.

<sup>233</sup> *The Kansas City Times*, 13 May 1989.

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Historic Site, who consulted with representatives of the Jackson County Parks and Recreation Department, the Jackson County Legislature, the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, and the Harry S Truman Farm Home Foundation.<sup>234</sup> The October report assessed six management alternatives, including various combinations of ownership and management of the Farm Home (e.g., continued ownership and management by Jackson County; continued ownership by Jackson County, but management by NPS; ownership and management by NPS, etc.). The report did not include conclusions or recommendations; it was intended only to "develop several options for managing, preserving, and using the site and its resources."<sup>235</sup> (It was National Park Service policy to avoid identifying a management preference in new area study reports. The Park Service would proffer a position only upon congressional consideration of legislation, which could result in federal protection of the resource.) The report presented four management objectives:

1. To restore and refurnish the historic farm home;
2. To preserve the home, furnishings, and grounds;
3. To provide accessibility to the public; and
4. To interpret the story of Harry Truman's farm experience and of the Truman family's influence on the President.<sup>236</sup>

The NPS report also presented an excellent, succinct description of the farmhouse as it appears today:

The Truman Farm Home is a two-story, three-bay, irregularly T-shaped vernacular farm residence. The home, recently restored to its early twentieth century appearance, is comprised of three rectangular sections. The front (west) section has a north-south axis; the middle section has an east-west axis and is attached perpendicular to the front section's east side; the small third section is attached immediately east of the center section. A roughly twenty-seven-by six-foot, three-bay porch graces the main facade; a seven-foot, six-inch by

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<sup>234</sup> The Harry S Truman National Historic Site staff who conducted this study included: Palma Wilson, Chief Ranger; Carol Dage, Chief of Cultural Resource Management; Mike Healy, Facility Management Specialist; Joan Sanders, Administrative Technician; and Constance Odom-Soper, Museum Aid. The study was initiated by Superintendent Norman Reigle. Following his transfer, responsibility for the project was assigned to Jill York O'Bright, Midwest Regional Historian, National Park Service.

<sup>235</sup> Ronald J. Mack, Superintendent, Harry S Truman National Historic Site to the Honorable John C. Danforth, US Senate, October 18, 1990, Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

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fourteen-foot, six-inch porch is situated on the south elevation at the crux of the front and center sections. The house measures forty-four feet east-to-west without the porch and thirty-six feet, six inches north-to-south at its widest points. It includes approximately 1,900 square feet of living space.

The frame structure has clapboard siding, painted white. The trim is dark green. The west section rests on a brick foundation; stone and brick masonry foundations support the other sections. The west section has a hipped roof, as does the front porch. The other sections have gabled roofs.

### **Acquisition by the National Park Service**

The National Park Service was widely thought to be the best agency to assume responsibility for the farmhouse and site. However, the Park Service expressed reluctance to assume that control. When Representative Alan Wheat, a Kansas City Democrat, introduced a bill into the House of Representatives that would require the Park Service to assume control of the farmhouse, James Stewart, assistant director of planning for the Park Service, testified before a congressional committee that, "It was the plowing of soil, sowing of seed and milking of cows that were important to Truman's development. That cannot be recaptured on a 5.2 acre parcel of land."<sup>237</sup>

Senate Bill 2956 was introduced by Senators Bond and Danforth during the 102d Congress. It authorized the Secretary of the Interior to acquire by donation the Truman Farm Home. Unfortunately, the Senate National Parks Subcommittee didn't get around to placing the bill on their calendar, so it died; and the United States, at that time, did not have a president willing to call a special session of Congress.

The 103rd Congress got a little more done. Senator Bond again introduced a bill that would empower the Secretary of the Interior to accept donation of the farm. A hearing was held on *Senate Bill 845 before the Subcommittee on Public Lands, National Parks and Forests of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources*. Senator Bond introduced the bill and advocated for its passage. Written testimony was submitted from David McCullough, author of *Truman*, as well as historians Robert Donovan and Robert H. Ferrell. Jerry L. Rogers, Associate Director of the National Park Service, reported that, "the Administration has decided to support enactment of S. 845. . . We estimate the recurring cost for operating and maintaining the

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<sup>237</sup> *Kansas City Star*, 10 May 1992.



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property to be from \$150,000 to \$250,000 per year; and this does not include the cost of any future repair or reconstruction that may be necessary."<sup>238</sup> Robert Eller, President of the Friends of the Truman Farm Home Foundation also attended the subcommittee hearings and testified.

Congress finally passed, and President Clinton signed legislation allowing the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, to accept the donation of the farm home. The Jackson County Legislature on March 21, 1994, enacted Resolution 10242, which authorized the county executive to donate the farm home to the United States. On April 4, 1994, Jackson County conveyed, by quit-claim deed, the farm home to the United States; the deed was filed on April 15.<sup>239</sup>

The farmhouse today is as it was when Mary Jane trekked between smoke house, garden and kitchen; Mamma Truman gently rocked in the sitting room, reading history; and a young dirt farmer cultivated the corn field north of the house.

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<sup>238</sup> Minutes, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Public Lands, National Parks and Forests, US Senate, 103d Congress, First Session, July 29, 1993.

<sup>239</sup> Vertical File: "Truman Farm," Harry S. Truman Library.

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## **Chapter 7**

### **Nineteenth-Century Independence and Moore's Addition**

#### **Introduction**

#### **Independence: Geographic and Cultural Setting**

#### **Beginnings: Center of Trade, Seat of Government, 1825-1855**

Founding and Early Years, 1825-1840  
Early Ownership of the Future Noland Property  
Independence—Marketing Mecca, 1840-1855  
Moore's Addition (Future Noland Property) Platted and Lots Sold

#### **Years of Decline and Turmoil, 1850-1865**

Decline of a Trading Mecca, 1850-1861  
Civil War Turmoil, 1861-1865  
Moore's Addition During Years of Decline and Turmoil

#### **Slack Family and Cyclical Growth in Independence, 1865-1890**

Slack Family on Lots 4 and 5 (Future Noland House),  
1865-1885  
Slack Family Ages, 1885-early 1920s

## **Nineteenth-Century Independence and Moore's Addition**

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#### **Introduction**

The birth and beginnings of Independence, Missouri, in the nineteenth century follow a pattern of cyclical exuberant and diminished growth characteristic of so many frontier Euroamerican settlements in America. The town's founding as the seat of Jackson County government in 1827, just three miles south of the Missouri River, and the fluctuating fortunes of its inhabitants over the next several decades can be attributed to several local, regional, and national factors—the town's geographic location near the Missouri River and the environmental circumstances of this broad meandering flood-prone river; commercial opportunities created by travel and trade in the Missouri Valley; the economic aspirations and creative imagination of early and developing town residents; and the town's somewhat unique relationship with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) as well as contestants in the national battle over slavery and secession of the South. Between 1827 and 1890, Independence transformed itself many times from: Queen City of the Santa Fe, Oregon, and California trails; City of Zion; battleground of guerrillas, outlaws, and Civil War soldiers; agricultural center; and suburb of Kansas City.

Development of the future Noland house site took place over this sixty-year metamorphosis of Independence and against a backdrop of changing local, regional, and even national economic, political, and social conditions. Located just northwest of the original Independence town plat, the future Noland house site came into private ownership for the first time in 1833. Six years later, following a national depression and the establishment of Independence as a regional trading center, James Moore became the third owner of a sizeable parcel, including the present 216 North Delaware property. His attempt to sell the land finally materialized in 1846 after he platted eighty-five acres as Moore's Addition. Two years later, Moore sold several lots in his addition. Reflecting wildly fluctuating economic and political conditions in Independence and the nation between the late 1840s and the end of the Civil War, between 1848 and 1865, the future Noland property changed hands five times.

The sale price of this land and other lots suggest that rather unsubstantial improvements may have existed until probably the mid-1860s. Then, in May that year, when Independence was no longer a Civil War battleground, the owner, a carpenter and builder, sold the property for \$1,200, three times the purchase price in 1858. Between May and December 1865, as the nation and Independence embarked on the long road to recovery from the wounds of civil strife, the future Noland house property jumped again, nearly three times, in value. In December

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that year, Anthony T. Slack (and eventually his growing family) became the first long-term owner of and residents on the future Noland house site. Although the house that Slack and his family occupied over the next twenty years is not known with certainty, maps of Independence in the 1860s and 1880s depict a house with an appearance and form that resembles the front portion (east side) of the present Noland house. This chapter tells the story of evolving developments on the Noland property and the historical context in which they took place, between the 1820s and 1890.

### **Independence: Geographic and Cultural Setting**

The original Independence townsite of 240 acres occupied land astride old Indian and hunters' trails on a high ridge, sloping northward to the Missouri River and to the east and west to Little Blue River and Big Blue River, respectively. In the early 1820s, a clearing of a few acres extended across the highest part of the ridge, created and later abandoned by a trapper. A few old girdled dead trees stood in this field, enclosed by a disintegrating rail fence. A dense forest with an impenetrable ground cover of brush, vines, and fallen timber, along with deep impassable gorges, stretched for miles around the old field. A narrow, crooked roadway wound from the hilltop clearing, northward down along the west side of a deep ravine to a bluff above the Missouri River. On the south riverbank, under the bluff, stood an old log house and a narrow winding path that ran east and west along the river, crossing fallen trees and the outlets of deep ravines. This is the landscape destined to become the site of Independence, a landscape that pioneer settler John McCoy described in 1871 at the first meeting of the "Old Settlers of Jackson County" historical society.<sup>1</sup>

### **Beginnings: Center of Trade, Seat of Government, 1825-1855**

#### Founding and Early Years, 1825-1840

The origin of Independence dates back to the mid-1820s. The city's founding benefited from the 1825 treaties between the United States and the Osage and Kansas Indians. With money from annuities paid for their confiscated lands, Indians bought goods from the earliest Euroamerican pioneers living in and

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<sup>1</sup> W. Z. Hickman, *History of Jackson County, Missouri* (Topeka, Kans.: Historical Publishing Co., 1920), 243.

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around the future site of Independence. These Indian treaties (and the 1830 Indian Removal Act that forced almost all Indians within in the United States living east of the Mississippi River to relocate west of the Missouri River), opened the fertile rolling hills now in Jackson County for private ownership and settlement. Commercial opportunities in this pioneer settlement expanded enormously when Santa Fe Trail traders, eager to shorten the overland distance between the United States and Mexico, began loading caravans of wagons further west on the Missouri River. Fort Osage, established in 1808 as the first military and trading post in the Louisiana Purchase, and the trading post of fur trapper and trader (representing Astor's American Fur Company), Francis Chouteau, founded in 1821 near the confluence of the Kansas and Missouri rivers (slightly northwest of present-day Kansas City), served as supply points for Santa Fe Trail travelers. In the spring of 1825, a great Missouri River flood swept every vestige of Chouteau's trading post away. That year the loading place for overland traders to Mexico became established further west to a place a short distance north of the future Independence townsite. By 1827, Independence had become the eastern terminus of the Santa Fe Trail and the westernmost settlement in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

The State of Missouri government acknowledged this small settlement's early marketing vigor and commercial promise when, on December 15, 1826, the Missouri General Assembly organized Jackson County (also embracing present-day neighboring Bates and Cass counties), named in honor of Indian War hero and soon-to-be president General Andrew Jackson. The county was then divided into three large townships: Fort Osage, Kaw, and Blue townships. Blue Township would soon become the site of the new county seat. Three general assembly commissioners soon selected a wooded ridge with sixteen springs for the county seat of government. George Champlin Sibley of Fort Osage (later renamed Sibley) surveyed the 240-acre townsite and laid out the Independence plat according to the "Shelbyville square plan," derived from the town plan of Shelbyville, Kentucky. A central undivided square block, surrounded by blocks with lots facing the square, dominated the Independence town plan.<sup>3</sup> A temporary

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<sup>2</sup> Bernd Foerster, *Independence, Missouri* (Independence, Mo.: Independence Press, 1978), 13, 15; *Political History of Jackson County: Biographical Sketches of Men Who Have Helped to Make It* (N.p.: Marshall & Morrison, 1902), 7-8; Hickman, *History of Jackson County*, 244-45.

<sup>3</sup> Independence was one of 57 of Missouri's 114 county seats to be laid out on a Shelbyville square plan. This plan flourished first in Tennessee during the 1810s. Independence was one of the first counties in Missouri to adopt this town plan. Shelbyville squares in Missouri date from the 1820s to 1861. Marion M. Ohman, *A History of Missouri's Counties, County Seats, and Courthouse Squares* (Columbia: University of Missouri-Columbia, Extension Division, 1983), 33-34.

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log courthouse, measuring 18 x 36 feet, was erected at present-day Lexington and Lynne streets. The following year, the county court awarded a contract to low bidder Daniel P. Lewis, for \$150, to construct a permanent brick courthouse on the central square, set aside for that purpose in the town plat.<sup>4</sup> The first sale of lots in the Independence townsite took place on July 9-11, 1827. Most individual lots sold for \$10 to \$20. A few buyers paid from \$40 to \$49 per lot. Flournoy and Noland family members and John Thornton, all associated with the Noland house property later on, bought several lots in the newly platted town.<sup>5</sup>

Located three miles south of the Missouri River on a high ridge encircled by rolling hills covered by forests and prairie land, the new seat of county government was ideally located for developing commercial trade. Independence gradually became a market place for pioneer farmers in the area. Most of these immigrants were of Scotch-Irish descent, and hailed from the trans-Appalachian states of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia. The small village also supplied travelers with goods for long westward overland treks. In 1830, three years after the town's birth, a caravan of mule- and oxen-drawn wagons and carts, organized by Jedediah Smith, Dave Jackson, and Bill Sublette in St. Louis, made its way up the meandering sloughs of the lower Missouri River to Independence. This wagon train became the first of hundreds more to stop in Independence for supplies on their way to the middle Rocky Mountains to trap and hunt for fur in the vast country of the Blackfoot Indians.<sup>6</sup>

Not long afterward, steamboats loaded with supplies regularly plied the 300-mile distance from St. Louis to Independence. At least two landings on the Missouri River were built to serve Independence at that time: the Independence Landing at so-called "Wayne City," built in the early 1830s about three and one-half miles due north of the courthouse square, and the Blue Mills Landing, established in 1832 northwest of the town. Goods were transferred to wagons at these landings, driven to Independence, and loaded onto wagons and carts bound for Mexico or the Rockies. In 1831, the "courthouse built of brick, two or three merchant stores, and fifteen or twenty dwelling houses, built mostly of logs hewed on both sides," made up the frontier village of Independence, according to Ezra Booth, a Mormon newcomer.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *History of Jackson County, Missouri Containing a History of the County, Its Cities, Towns, Etc., Indexed Edition*, 1881, reprint (Cap Girardeau, Mo.: Ramfre Press, 1966), 638-39; Hickman, *History of Jackson County*, 106, 161.

<sup>5</sup> Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 13; *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 635-36; Gregory M. Franzwa, *The Oregon Trail Revisited* (Tucson, Ariz.: Patrice Press, 1997), 80.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 76-77.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 71, 78-79.

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That year Joseph Smith, Jr., the founder and prophet of the newly created Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons), proclaimed Independence to be the "City of Zion," a place that God had given to Mormon members by divine inheritance. Soon Mormons primarily from New York and Oregon streamed into town; bought land; built homes, stores, and a school; operated a ferry; farmed; and started a newspaper, *The Evening and Morning Star*. The early Scotch-Irish settlers in the area viewed these claims as inflammatory and threatening to the existing social and governmental structure of the county. It was not long before intolerant settlers, in an effort to expel the Mormons, committed acts of horrific violence against them. In November 1833, the Mormons were driven out of Independence.<sup>8</sup>

During the 1830s, Independence continued to grow in size and importance as a trading center for overland travelers. In May 1832, several parties with 30 to 150 members stopped for supplies in Independence before beginning their westward trek: the large hunting and trapping parties of Captain Bonneville, Captain Sublette, and Captain Blackwell heading for the Rockies; a company bound for Santa Fe; and Captain Wyeth's party of thirty bound for the mouth of the Willamette River to prepare for settling the Oregon country.<sup>9</sup> Charles Latrobe, a fellow traveler of American author Washington Irving and Count Albert Alexandre de Pourtales, visited the infant county seat in 1832. His description of the village, which appeared in Irving's 1835 *A Tour of the Prairies*, provided a glimpse of this bustling settlement, then comprised of a half-dozen log huts, two or three hotels, and a few stores.<sup>10</sup>

The town of Independence was full of promise, like most of the innumerable towns springing up in the midst of the forests of the West.

. . . It lacked at the time [a bank, printing office, and church], but was nevertheless a thriving and aspiring place, in its way; and [a] fortune [had already been] made here in the course of its brief existence, by a bold Yankee shopkeeper, who had sold \$60,000 worth of good here in three years. . . . A little beyond this point, all carriage roads cease, and one deep black trail alone, which might be seen tending to the southwest, was that of the Santa Fe trappers and traders.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 14-15; William Patrick O'Brien, *Independence Square: A Convenient Guide to the Past for Today's Pioneers* (N.p.: n.p., 1985), (unnumbered pages 1-2 of text).

<sup>9</sup> Franzwa, *Oregon Trail Revisited*, 76-78.

<sup>10</sup> O'Brien, *Independence Square*, (page 1).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, (page 1).



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Just two years later, in 1834, the town had grown considerably larger, and boasted a population of 250 inhabitants.<sup>12</sup> Ornithologists John Townsend, traveling with Nathaniel Wyeth's Columbia River Fishing and Trading Company expedition that year, observed about fifty scattered houses "composed of logs and clay, [that] are low and inconvenient. There are six or eight stores here, two taverns, and a few tipping houses."<sup>13</sup> Unimpressed with Independence, Townsend and fellow travelers decided not to stay in the town but took up residence in a house on the landing until their departure. By the late 1830s, a few log and wood-frame buildings encircled the central courthouse square: Woodson Noland's two-story frame hotel and nearby large stable (eastern side), a shop and saloon (northern side), Owens and Aull general merchandise store (southwest corner), and a congerie of one-story rooms and shops (southern side).<sup>14</sup>

### Early Ownership of the Future Noland Property

Only a year earlier in 1833, the land on which the Noland house now stands transferred into private ownership when Jones Hoy Flournoy paid the State of Missouri \$160 for approximately eighty acres northwest and adjacent to the Independence town plat (Deed Book 264, p. 526). This sizeable parcel was said to be part of the so-called "Seminary Lands" at that time.<sup>15</sup> Jones H. Flournoy, along with other Flournoy family members, was one of the earliest settlers in Blue Township, and owned considerable land in and around Independence. He and two brothers, Hoy B. and Solomon Flournoy, had come to Missouri in the mid-1820s, and first settled in the eastern part of Jackson County. He soon afterward moved to Independence and engaged in general merchandising. Around 1826, Jones Hoy Flournoy built a substantial one-story brick house that stood at present-day 126 South Pleasant Street in Independence, where he and his wife, Clara Flournoy, probably lived. (The Flournoy house was saved from demolition by Independence historian William J. Curtis and moved in 1963 to 1107 South Cottage Street.)<sup>16</sup>

In 1836, Cornelius and Sarah Haskins Davy bought this parcel from Jones and Clara Flournoy (who acquired dower rights to this land), along with other lands totaling 101.50 acres for \$2,000 (Deed Book D, p. 446). Born in Ireland around 1792,

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<sup>12</sup> *Political History of Jackson County*, 14.

<sup>13</sup> Franzwa, *Oregon Trail Revisited*, 78, 79.

<sup>14</sup> "Independence as It Was in 1838," *Jackson Examiner*, 3 & 10 July 1903.

<sup>15</sup> John A. Sea, Examiner of Land Titles, No. 03287, "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition, Independence, Missouri, Mary Ethel Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>16</sup> Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers*, 152, 276; *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 297, 298; Foerster, *Independence, Mo.*, 22.

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Cornelius Davy and his wife came from Kentucky to Independence around 1835, when Davy was in his mid-forties. (A son, Thomas, had been born in Kentucky in 1834, according to the 1850 census of Jackson County.) Davy became a prosperous merchant in Independence.<sup>17</sup> It is likely that both Flournoy and Davy may have used most of the land on and around the Noland house site for agricultural purposes, reserving only a small parcel of the total for any structures.

In 1839, following the Panic of 1837 and subsequent national depression, James F. Moore bought eighty-six acres, along with other lands, from Cornelius and Sarah Davy for \$5,000 (Deed Book F, p. 464). (The Flournoys sold seven acres of the original ninety-three to Azariah Holcomb.) James F. and Sarah Moore and their family may have occupied a house within the city limits of Independence at that time (and not in Moore's Addition). Less than one year later, Moore, who was then living near Shelbyville in Shelby County, Kentucky, gave Independence attorney Benjamin F. Hickman a power of attorney to sell part or all of the 135 acres of land that Moore owned in Jackson County, a house and lot located within the Independence city limits, and land in adjoining Platte County (Deed Book G, p. 573 and Deed Book L, p. 422). Hickman was unsuccessful in selling Moore's land, and it remained in the Moores' hands for the next six years.<sup>18</sup>

### Independence—Marketing Mecca, 1840-1855

By the late 1830s, Independence had all the trading business that it could handle. This was true despite some competition for business from merchants in the small settlement of Westport, founded directly west of the county seat near Missouri-Kansas border. Here settlers had begun to develop a lucrative trading business with Indians on the nearby reservation. Both West Independence and Westport, with its stable rock landing on the Missouri north of town, benefited from Missouri River steamboat travel that became progressively more abundant, faster, and cheaper. Travel upriver between St. Louis and western Missouri landings in the 1840s only took three and one-half days (instead of two to three weeks by land) and cost only \$4.00 for passage on the deck. Growing volumes of wagons and goods arrived in the courthouse square from the river landings in April and May each year. In 1841, sixty wagons loaded with 150,000 pounds of goods for trading with Mexico departed from

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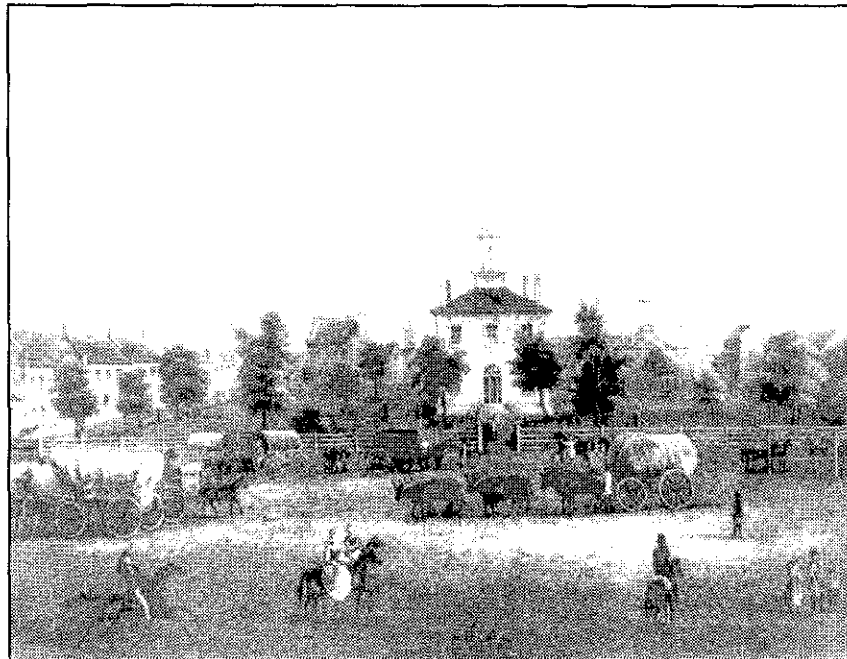
<sup>17</sup> John A. Sea, "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition; Poppino, comp., "Jackson County, Missouri, Census of 1850."

<sup>18</sup> John A. Sea, "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition.

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Independence. Two years later, 230 wagons carried 450,000 pounds of supplies of town. Business boomed.<sup>19</sup>



**Emigrants preparing for their overland trek to the Oregon Territory gathered in Independence Courthouse Square in early summer of 1846.**  
Courtesy of the Jackson County Historical Society.

From 1840 to the early 1850s, Independence became a great crossroads of travel and trade—a regional hub of marketing. A great stream of travelers converged on the town by the thousands: trappers, Santa Fe Trail traders, missionaries to the Far West, immigrants on their way to the Oregon country beginning in 1843, volunteers and soldiers from Fort Leavenworth on their way to the Mexican War in 1846-1847, and gold-seekers lured to California by the discovery of gold there in 1849. Supplies poured in from the East by way of St. Louis for sale by Independence merchants. Blacksmithing and the manufacture of wagons also became large businesses in the town. An enormous volume of humanity poured out of this outpost, heading southwest and west. Every spring, a sea of tents encircled the Independence Courthouse Square.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Franzwa, *Oregon Trail Revisited*, 80; Hickman, *History of Jackson County*, 115.

<sup>20</sup> O'Brien, *Independence Square* (page 2); Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 15; *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 646; Nagel, *Missouri*, 60-63.

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Francis Parkman, noted chronicler of the West, described an industrious colorful scene during his visit to Independence in the spring of 1846:

The Town was crowded. A multitude of shops had sprung up to furnish the [Oregon] emigrants and Santa Fe traders with necessities for their journey; and there was an incessant hammering and banging from a dozen blacksmiths' sheds, where the heavy wagons were being repaired, and the horses and oxen shod. The streets were thronged with men, horses and mules.<sup>21</sup>

Writing nearly one hundred years later about the western frontier on the eve of the Mexican War, historian Bernard DeVoto painted the most vivid picture of Independence in the spring of 1846:

[Independence] was still Eden but with metropolitan additions, and the flood poured through it. All conditions of mankind were there, in all costumes: Shawnee and Kansa from the Territory and wanderers of other tribes, blanketed, painted, wearing their Presidential medals; Mexicans in bells, slashed pantaloons, and primary colors, speaking a strange tongue and smoking shuck-rolled cigarettes; mountain men in buckskins preparing for the summer trade or offering their services to the emigrant trains; the case-hardened bullwhackers of the Santa Fe trail in boots and bowie knives, coming in after wintering at the other end or from Fort Leavenworth, miscellany of transients whose only motive was to see the elephant wherever the elephant might be. Freight poured in from the steamboat landings, the great wagons careened through the streets, day by day the freshet of movers came in from the east, the lowing of herds pullulated over the town, the smithies and wagon shops rang with iron, whooping riders galloped their ponies through the mud, the groggeries were on long aria, and out from the town little clusters of tents grew and grew.<sup>22</sup>

In the spring of 1846, a dozen blacksmith shops, one operated by African American Hiram Young, who had bought his freedom, encircled the courthouse square.<sup>23</sup> Blacksmiths worked at their forges fourteen hours a day trying to satisfy the impatient

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<sup>21</sup> Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 16.

<sup>22</sup> Bernard DeVoto, *The Year of Decision, 1846* (Boston, Mass.: Brown and Company, 1943), 138.

<sup>23</sup> Martha B. Ingram, "Hiram Young: City's First Black 'Smith'," *Independence Examiner*, 22 February 1979, 2D.

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demands of emigrants preparing for their overland treks. Thousands of cattle grazed around town and plodded down the main streets in town, prodded by men and dogs. Every night more than 400 guests, sleeping two to a bed, crowded into Smallwood Noland's new Merchant's Hotel, built on the site of a previous hotel and tavern that had been destroyed by fire in 1845. By late May 1846, all the grass and edible vegetation for miles around, except on the fenced courthouse square, had been eaten or pulverized by the sharp hooves of wandering livestock. By 1848, most of the twelve thousand overland settlers residing in Oregon had made their way through Independence.<sup>24</sup>

Evidence of Independence's vitality and growth as a trading center and government seat were everywhere to be found in the 1840s and early 1850s. In 1845, the U.S. government established a port of customs in Independence. Independence saw the founding of its first flourmill in 1846. In the spirit of enterprise and ambition to unite Independence square with the Wayne City Landing directly north on the Missouri, businessmen laid three miles of track between the two points and began operating a mule-drawn railway in 1849. Also in 1849, Independence became an incorporated city, adopting its own charter and electing its first mayor, early settler and leading merchant William McCoy. In 1850, four Independence men were awarded a contract for the first regular U.S. mail service to Santa Fe and Salt Lake City; the first mail left Independence in July that year.<sup>25</sup> By this time, Independence boasted a population of over 1,000. As the population increased, new dwellings, both log and clapboard structures, were built on previously undivided and undeveloped land. In 1846, James and Sarah Moore platted the second addition to Independence, (following the Hansbrough Addition in 1845), located just four blocks west of the Independence Courthouse Square. Between 1845 and 1853, a total of ten additions to the original town were platted.<sup>26</sup>

### Moore's Addition (Future Noland Property) Platted and Lots Sold

Independence's vigorous commercial activity in the 1840s must have encouraged James F. and Sarah Moore once again to try and sell the land they had owned since 1839 just four blocks west of the Independence Courthouse Square. In 1846, the Moores instructed their attorney, Benjamin Hickman, to have their eighty-five acres surveyed and divided into roughly three blocks with a total of eighteen lots. In the 1846 plat map of

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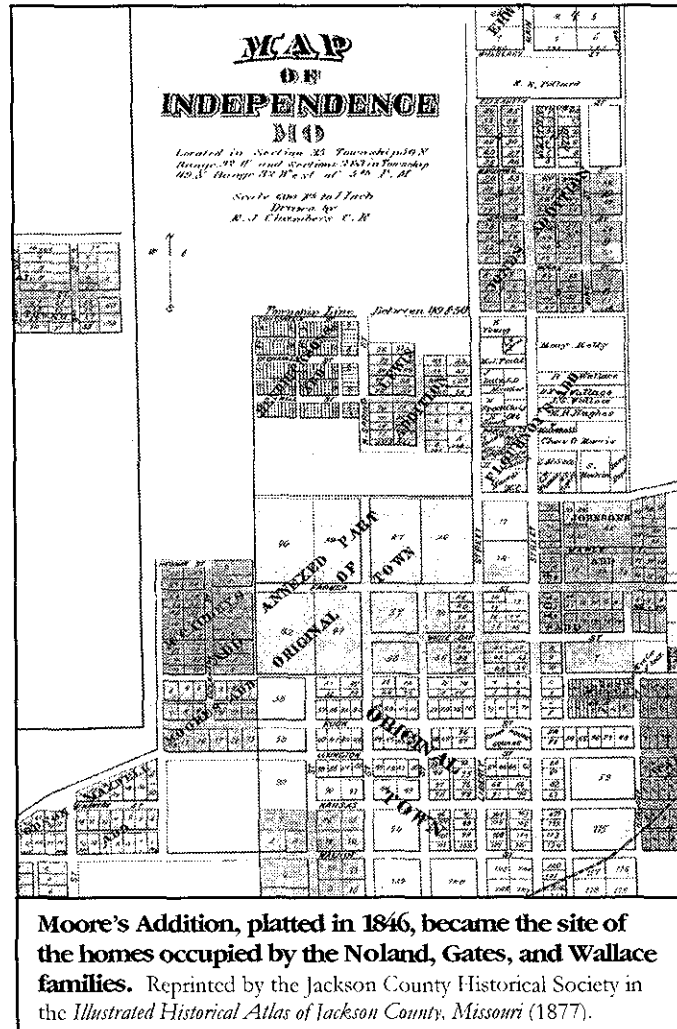
<sup>24</sup> Franzwa, *Oregon Trail Revisited*, 81-82; Hickman, *History of Jackson County*, 116; *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 643-44; Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 18.

<sup>25</sup> *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 634-35, 644; 646.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 647; O'Brien, *Independence Square*, (pages 2-3).

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Moore's Addition, so-called "Tanyard Road" (now Truman Road) formed the northern boundary of the addition. An alley paralleling Tanyard Road bisected the two northernmost blocks. "Rock Street" (later West Maple Avenue), so named for the rock quarry that had existed at its east end and for the road's rock



base under dirt/mud,<sup>27</sup> ran east and west through the middle of the addition. Lexington Avenue formed the southern boundary of Moore's Addition. North Delaware Street did not exist in the plat of Moore's Addition. Benjamin F. Hickman filed the plat map and legal description for the Moore's Addition to the City of

<sup>27</sup> Woodruff. "A. My Neighborhood," Woodruff Personal Papers, Independence, Missouri.

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Independence in 1847 (Plat Book 1, p. 3). The future Noland house would be built on the southern portion of lots 4 and 5.<sup>28</sup>

Lots in Moore's Addition began to sell soon afterwards. William B. Hay bought nine lots in Moore's Addition in August 1848, including lots 4 and 5 (on which the future Noland house would be built) from Benjamin Hickman, attorney for James F. and Sarah Moore. William Hay paid \$800 for all nine lots. Around this time, Hay, a Jackson County resident and merchant, and several others promoted the construction of a railroad to connect overland traffic through Independence with steamboat traffic on the Missouri River at Rickman's Landing. By February 1849, this group of railroad capitalists raised \$50,000 for the incorporation of the Independence and Missouri River Railroad Company.<sup>29</sup>

By August 1849, Hay had overextended himself financially and was deeply in debt. He owed several individuals a total of nearly \$8,5000. He gave three lawyers (Samuel H. Woodson, William Chrisman, and Abraham Comingo) power of attorney to sell or lease his nine lots in Moore's Addition as a means of raising money to liquidate his debts (Deed Book O, p. 296). Over the next several months, several individuals sued William Hay for his failure to pay off his debts (Deed Book R, p. 17). Liens were filed against five lots in Moore's Addition owned by William Hay (including lots 4 and 5, the Noland house lots). On September 10, 1850, the county sheriff sold all five lots (and other lots owned by Hay) at a public auction on the courthouse steps in order to pay the several plaintiffs who had filed suits against Hay for unpaid debts. By that time, William B. Hay, his wife, Emma, and two sons were living in the home of lawyer Richard Reese, presumably having lost their own home.<sup>30</sup>

Jonathan R. Palmer, the highest bidder in the public auction, paid the Jackson County Sheriff a total of \$2,487 for all rights to and interests in several lots in Moore's Addition previously owned by Hay. Palmer paid \$120 for lot 4 and \$122 for lot 5 (Deed Book R, p. 17). (He paid \$120 for lot 2 and \$100 for lot 3, the site of the Gates-Wallace-Truman house.) If any improvements existed on these lots at the time, they must have been quite unsubstantial. Palmer, mayor of Independence at that time and a patron of the arts, practiced law in Independence with John Henry Harper.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps never intending to keep these lots, within a month after acquiring them, Palmer sold lots 4 and 5 plus other lots in Moore's Addition, to John B. Slaughter, who

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<sup>28</sup> John A. Sea, "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition.

<sup>29</sup> Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers*, 279.

<sup>30</sup> John A. Sea, "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition; Ron Cockrell, *The Trumans of Independence: Historic Resource Study* (Omaha, Neb.: National Park Service, 1985), 13.

<sup>31</sup> Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers*, 202, 203.

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served as Independence mayor in January 1851 (Deed Book P, p. 557).<sup>32</sup> It is very unlikely that Palmer could have made any substantial improvements on lots 4 and 5 during the brief period (less than a month) he owned them. The new owners, John B. and Margretta S. Slaughter, held on to lots 4 and 5 from 1850 to 1857, a time of diminishing growth in Independence and rising tensions in western Missouri and across the United States.

### Years of Decline and Turmoil, 1850-1865

#### Decline of a Trading Mecca, 1850-1861

Several circumstances converged in the late 1840s and early 1850s to bring about Independence's decline as a trading mecca on the western frontier. Flooded river landings, poor roads between Independence and the Missouri River, outbreaks of cholera, and agricultural developments around Independence all combined to end the town's monopoly as a trading center. By the late 1840s, the landing north of Independence at Wayne City had clogged up with sand as a result of repeated spring floods, including the devastating flood of 1844, as well as the continually changing current of the river. Although the landing was opened for steamboats again, a sizeable sand bar formed in front of it in 1856, and no landing less than four or five miles from town could be found.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, the gradual conversion of open prairies between Independence and the western Missouri state border into fenced farmland separated by small crooked roads disheartened westward-bound travelers with cumbersome wagon caravans and ranging livestock that were difficult to contain on narrow roads.<sup>34</sup>

Competition for Santa Fe, Oregon, and California trade from other Missouri River towns, especially Westport, Westport Landing, and Kansas City, began to draw traffic away from Independence as early as the late 1840s. Both villages had good landings for unloading goods from steamboats to be transferred to caravans of wagons. Both were further upstream on the Missouri River, shortening the overland travel of westward-bound traders and emigrants and avoiding passage around a growing number of fenced cultivated farmers' fields west of Independence. Both were west of the exceptionally difficult crossing of the ravine at the Big Blue River, which flowed north into the Missouri River. The infant village of Kansas City, advantageously laid out in 1846 on the Missouri, began to grow in importance as a trading center. In

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<sup>32</sup> John A. Sea. "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition.

<sup>33</sup> *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 667.

<sup>34</sup> Franzwa, *Oregon Trail Revisited*, 82; O'Brien, *Independence Square*, (page 2); Hickman, *History of Jackson County*, 245, 644.



## Nineteenth-Century Independence and Moore's Addition Part 2, Chapter 7

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1852, the mule-driven three-and one-half-mile railroad connecting Independence with the Missouri at Wayne City was abandoned due to financial difficulties, thus making Independence's access to the river more tedious. Not long afterward, a few enterprising Independence businessmen attempted to recapture some of the western trade by building a rock road, the first rock road in Jackson County, between Independence and the landing at Wayne City. Their efforts were to no avail. By the mid-1850s, trade had bled away from Independence and had become firmly rooted in Westport, Westport Landing, and nearby Kansas City. Between 1856 and 1860, during the heyday of steam boating on the Missouri, at least fifty-six steamers laden with passengers and an average of 500 tons of goods each, plied the Missouri River between St. Louis and Kansas City.<sup>35</sup>

Mounting tensions over slavery and, eventually, secessionist sentiments were probably the greatest hindrances to Independence's continued economic growth in the 1850s. In 1821, Missouri had been admitted to the Union as a slaveholding state. In the 1840s, Missouri's economy and population began to boom. The state's population increased from 385,000 in 1840 to 680,000 in 1850. By 1850, its slave population had reached 87,000; it would climb to 115,000 by 1860. The production of tobacco and hemp on plantations in many western Missouri counties rose swiftly during these years, with the labor of thousands of slaves contributing immensely to farmers' prosperity. This situation led many people, especially speculators and would-be settlers, to demand that lands west of the Missouri River in Kansas Territory (reserved for Indians many years earlier) be opened for settlement and farming. After a bitter debate, the U.S. Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, which allowed residents of Kansas Territory to decide for themselves whether Kansas would be a slave or free state.

A bloody feud soon began along the western border of Jackson County and the eastern border of Kansas. Many of the residents of western Missouri were determined to make Kansas a slave state in order to discourage Missouri slaves from running across the border to gain their freedom. Independence was decidedly southern in its economic outlook and sympathies. Border war erupted in 1855 when ardent abolitionist John Brown followed five of his sons to Kansas with a wagon full of guns, ammunition, and sabres and ruthlessly attacked Lawrence. Several months later, when the Brown band attacked a proslavery settlement on Pottawatomie Creek and brutally murdered their

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<sup>35</sup>Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 18-19; Hickman, *History of Jackson County*, 118, 199-200.

## Nineteenth-Century Independence and Moore's Addition Part 2, Chapter 7

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victims, the Westport, Missouri, *Border Times* newspaper proclaimed "WAR! WAR!" on its front page.<sup>36</sup>

Soon a pro-slavery Missouri militia bearing guns patrolled all roads to Kansas, stopped riverboats, seized weapons, and subjected travelers to frightening interrogations. Other incidents along the border, such as the "Wakarusa War" and the Osawatomie Massacre, destroyed economic harmony in western Missouri, particularly Independence. Many families (that of Anderson Shipp and Mary Jane Truman included) decided to leave Independence and Jackson County during these troubled times. Building activity dropped precipitously after the mid-1850s. The violence of "Bleeding Kansas" contributed to the rapid decline of Independence's economic vitality and building activity as a trading crossroads and became one of numerous episodes leading to a civil war between the North and South. By the time President Abraham Lincoln declared war against the southern Confederacy in April 1861, opening the Civil War, Independence and the Missouri-Kansas border had been experiencing violence, terrorism, and bloodshed for nearly six years.<sup>37</sup>

### Civil War Turmoil, 1861-1865

Independence and Jackson County experienced the Civil War in its most violent and tragic manifestations. Although inherently pro-southern, the town's residents tried to strike a middle ground between pro-Union and pro-Secessionist sentiments on the eve of the nation's Civil War. Consequently, the county seat soon found itself the target of attacks by both the pro-Union Kansas Jayhawkers under "Grim Chieftain" James Lane and the pro-Confederate band of guerrillas led by William Clarke Quantrill. Both groups committed unspeakable acts of brutality throughout Jackson County.

In addition, Independence became the scene of two major Civil War conflicts between Union and Confederate soldiers. Residents of the county were subjected to the infamous Order Number 11 as well. In June 1862, Independence became a federal military post. Two months later, the united Confederate forces of Quantrill, Colonel John T. Hughes, and Colonel Upton Hays attacked the garrisoned Union post in Independence and seized its stores of arms and ammunition. The town reeled from the chaos and destruction that resulted.

In October that same year, Independence became the scene of a second Civil War battle. Late in the month, Confederate General Sterling Price, leading 30,000 troops on a northern war march from Arkansas to Kansas City, arrived in Independence not long after many residents had evacuated. For

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<sup>36</sup> Kelley, *Shaping of the American Past*, 303.

<sup>37</sup> O'Brien, *Independence Square*, (page 2); Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 19.

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two days, fighting between Union and Confederate troops took place around the town. After the fall of Independence to the Confederates, Price and his army pressed on to Kansas City.<sup>38</sup>

In 1863, Brigadier General Thomas Ewing issued the infamous Order Number 11 from the District of the Border headquarters in Kansas City. Its impact on the general citizenry of Jackson County was profound and long lasting. This order demanded that all residents of Jackson, Cass, Bates, and part of Vernon counties living outside Independence (and outside a few small towns) leave their homes within fifteen days unless they could demonstrate their loyalty to the Union. Additionally, Order Number 11 notified all rural residents in these counties that if they did not remove all grain and hay from their fields, it would be destroyed. Many rural residents fled from Jackson County. Federal troops often burned abandoned homes and crops. Many homes in Independence were also burned or severely damaged. In a letter written in December 1863 describing conditions in Independence, William Bone described one house occupied by an "old man who cut up some 10 to 15 hogs in the parlor room. A number of good business houses on the square are now occupied as horse stables by the Kansas 11<sup>th</sup>."<sup>39</sup> By the end of 1863, the courthouse square became a crowded refugee camp of displaced rural Jackson County residents.<sup>40</sup>

At one time during the Civil War, probably in 1862, a group of women took possession of the old brick Methodist-Episcopal Church south of the alley bordering the future Noland house property, which faced North Delaware Street. According to the *Jackson Examiner*, which reported the incident many years later after the new Watson Memorial Methodist-Episcopal Church had been built (in 1903), "a number of the women of the church went to the church and remained there night and day, and dared the soldiers to take them out by force. Thus they held the property. Mrs. [Virginia Willock] Wallace was one of these."<sup>41</sup> The neighborhood of the future Noland house unquestionably experienced the turmoil of the Civil War in a direct and personal way.

For years after the surrender of the Confederate Army in April 1865, Independence and Jackson County residents suffered from divisiveness caused by the physical upheaval and emotional scars of the war. Civil troubles and bloodshed continued in Independence and Jackson County when the so-called "Home Guard," an armed guerrilla group, formed for the alleged purpose

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<sup>38</sup> *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 292-93; Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 20.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in O'Brien, *Independence Square* (page 2).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, (page 2); Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 19; *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 45-46.

<sup>41</sup> "Death From a Fall," *Jackson Examiner*, 29 May 1908.

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of self-protection. Peace did not arrive in Independence until August 11, 1866, when the guerrilla troops laid down their arms. In addition, the "Iron-Clad Oath" was imposed on Independence residents. The oath required that all voting citizens disclose their activities during the Civil War before the county registrar. Such disclosures, especially if disputed, often pitted neighbors and friends against each other and created acrimonious feelings that lasted for years.<sup>42</sup>

Independence turned inward and began to focus more on its cultural and social institutions, including churches and fraternal organizations. By 1867, Independence residents could choose between several different churches—the Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist-Episcopal, Christian, and Roman Catholic. In 1861, a Baptist Church and, in 1866, a Methodist-Episcopal Church were organized expressly for the African American community in town. In 1867, a few members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints returned to Independence after being driven out almost thirty-five years earlier. By the early 1870s, at least five fraternal organizations—two Masonic lodges (AF & AM), two Odd Fellows (IOOF) lodges, and one Knights of Pythias—gave men the opportunity to socialize and undertake charitable pursuits.<sup>43</sup>

Independence's protracted inner turmoil after the Civil War allowed Westport Landing and Kansas City to usurp political and economic leadership from the county seat. Pro-Union merchants located at Westport Landing, twelve miles west of Independence and near the Kansas City townsite, took charge of the county records during the war. In 1869, the town also became the site of the first railroad bridge across the Missouri River in the area. Two years earlier, in 1867, the last overland wagon train outfitted for the West left Independence for Fort Leavenworth and beyond. More than eighty years later, long-time Independence resident Samuel Woodson recalled watching the last freight caravan prepare to leave town: "The prairie schooners were loaded on the west side of the square," ninety-one year-old Woodson fondly reminisced. "Each one was pulled by four or six mules. . . . The wagon boss [rode] up and down among the wagons, as the supplies were loaded."<sup>44</sup> Kansas City soon afterward became the undisputed center of commerce and a center of county government activity.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 295; Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 20.

<sup>43</sup> Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 20-21, 55; *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 651-59, 662-63.

<sup>44</sup> "Samuel Woodson Remembers When Last Wagon Freight Started West," *Independence Examiner*, 2 October 1948; Hickman, *Jackson County History*, 125.

<sup>45</sup> Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 20; O'Brien, *Independence Square*, (page 2).

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Building developments in Independence reflected the years of economic decline and civil turmoil. By the mid-1850s, new construction had slowed considerably. It nearly halted between 1859 and 1865. Only six new additions were platted between 1853 and 1867. Although four additions were platted in 1858, probably due to the real estate speculation that accompanied the construction of a macadam rock road between Independence and the Wayne City landing, the suggestion of building developments is probably artificial and did not materialize. No additions were platted between 1859 and 1867.<sup>46</sup> Many existing buildings received extensive damage during the Civil War. Repair, reconstruction, and new construction became immediate tasks of building contractors once the war ended and even before civil order and peace returned to the town. The return of political stability and social unrest, even though tenuous, must have slowly encouraged some new construction within a year or two after the war.

### Moore's Addition During Years of Decline and Turmoil

Activity in Moore's Addition reflected general economic and political conditions in Independence between the early 1850s and the end of the Civil War. During the period of gradual economic decline, James B. and Margretta S. Slaughter owned lots 4 and 5 (Noland house site) in Moore's Addition for seven years, from 1850 to 1857. Then, as tensions grew between pro- and anti-slavery factions in western Missouri, the Slaughters sold these lots (plus other lots), in February 1857, for \$500, to James T. Thornton and Francis P. Hord (Deed Book Z, p. 527). Before the end of that year, James Thornton, of Turner and Thornton banking house on the courthouse square, bought Hord's interest in only lots 4 and 5, but not the other land, for \$300 (Deed Book 26, p. 181). Born in 1835 in Kentucky, Thornton was twenty-three years old at the time. The substantial increase in the value of these two lots in just a few months suggests that Hord and Thornton may have made some improvements to the property (or that they may have speculatively increased the price) in 1857. Whatever improvements existed on lots 4 and 5 in 1857 could have been accessed only from Tanyard (Truman) Road. North Delaware Street did not yet exist in Moore's Addition.<sup>47</sup>

In March 1858, Frederick F. Yeager bought lots 4 and 5 from James T. and Mary H. Thornton for \$400 (Deed Book 27, p. 335). In 1858 Delaware Street was extended to Tanyard (Truman)

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<sup>46</sup> *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 634-35, 648.

<sup>47</sup> James A. Ryan, "Preliminary Survey Form" for 216 North Delaware Street, in *Independence Historical Survey*, by M. A. Solomon, R. H. Claybaugh, Architects, 1975. Heritage Commission Files, City of Independence, Missouri.

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Road in Moore's Addition, separating lots 4 and 5 from lots 2 and 3.<sup>48</sup> The Noland house site was now better situated for further development, since it had access from Delaware Street. Frederick and Susan Yeager retained ownership of lots 4 and 5 for the next seven years of growing tensions and civil strife, until the Civil War ended in 1865.

Frederick Yeager must have made substantial improvements to lots 4 and 5 in Moore's Addition during his ownership, probably near the close of or immediately after the Civil War. The value of the property jumped from \$400 to \$1,200 between 1858 and May 1865, when the Frederick and Susan Yeager sold these two lots to Charles D. Sayre (Deed Book 42, p. 284). Frederick F. Yeager was born in Boyle County, Kentucky, on April 28, 1828 and received his education in the public schools there. He pursued farming until he was about nineteen years old, when he turned to carpentry and house building. He also studied architecture and became proficient in designing as well as building houses. In 1850, he moved to Independence where, in 1852, he married Susan M. Ray, who had come to Independence from Kentucky at a young age. In 1854, he expanded his carpentry business to include the lumber trade. In 1869, Yeager completed all the carpentry work done in the prominent three-story, brick, Italianate style Chrisman-Sawyer Bank building, constructed at the corner of Liberty and Lexington Avenues on the Independence Courthouse Square at a cost of \$14,000. Over the next forty years, Yeager constructed numerous houses and commercial buildings in and around Independence, thus contributing to the physical development of the town. Yeager also contributed to the civic vitality of the town by serving on the Independence City Council<sup>49</sup>

Frederick Yeager may have been the carpenter, who made further changes and improvements to lots 4 and 5 in Moore's Addition after selling this property to Charles D. and Eliza Sayre in May 1865. In August of that year, Sayre borrowed \$800 against lots 4 and 5, perhaps to make improvements on the property (Deed Book 43, p. 376).<sup>50</sup> Between May and December, when the Sayre couple sold this property to Anthony T. Slack, these two lots again jumped in value from \$1,200 to \$3,500 (Deed Book 47, p. 277).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> The name Yeager is sometimes spelled "Yager." John A. Sea, "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition. Also see Cockrell, *Trumans of Independence*, 15.

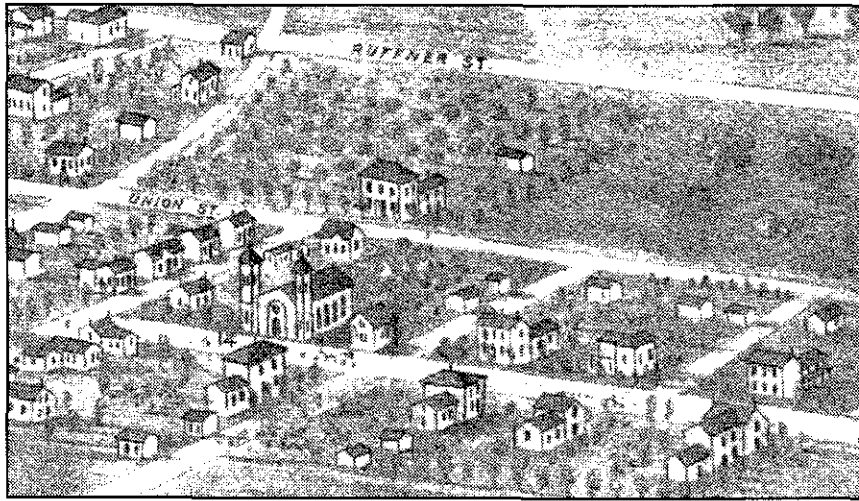
<sup>49</sup> *History of Jackson County*, 645-46, 883-84; Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers*, 469.

<sup>50</sup> John A. Sea, "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

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Although substantial improvements must have been made during 1865 to lots 4 and 5, it is difficult to determine exactly what improvements were made and where they were made on the lots, which together measured approximately 160 x 220 feet. An 1868 bird's-eye-view map of Independence provides a clue about the location and appearance of the structure on this property that may have been built or added to three years earlier.<sup>52</sup>



**This enlargement of a section of the 1868 bird's-eye view of Independence shows a dwelling just to the right of the twin-towered Methodist-Episcopal Church, built around 1868 in the middle of the block on property adjoining the future Noland house.** A. Ruger, *Bird's Eye View of the City of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri* (1868), reprinted by the Jackson County Historical Society.

<sup>52</sup> Although the accuracy of this map has been questioned, it appears to be a reliable source of information about Independence in 1868. Other known design features and locations of structures that existed in 1868 are correctly depicted in this "Bird's Eye View." This map, for example, shows the distinctive twin-towered Methodist-Episcopal Church in the middle of the block just south of the Noland house site. Probably completed just before or as this map was being drawn, the church did stand near the middle of this block, facing North Delaware Street (although it was probably best accessed from Rock Street, later West Maple Avenue). This church stood near the middle of the block until 1902-03, when the Watson Memorial Methodist Church was constructed further south on the block at the corner of North Delaware Street and West Maple Street. The 1868 "Bird's Eye View of Independence" also shows the correct number of windows on the north and east walls of the Methodist-Episcopal Church, as well as the nearby Georgian style David Porter family house built in 1860 and still standing in 2000 on West Maple Street. A. Ruger, *Bird's Eye View of the City of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri*, 1868, reprint (Independence, Mo.: Jackson County Historical Society, n.d).

## **Nineteenth-Century Independence and Moore's Addition Part 2, Chapter 7**

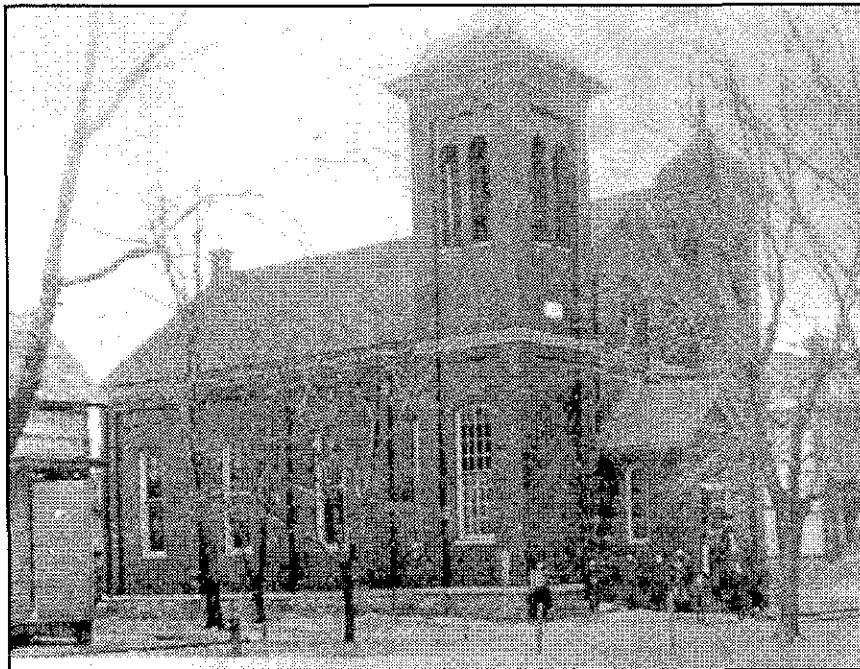
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This angled view of the city, looking from east to west, shows a two-story, gable-roof house, with narrow paired windows on both the first and second floors of the east gable end facing Delaware Street. The house resembles the present front portion of the Noland house, without its wrap-around front porch and rear (west) one-story extension. The house depicted on the map, however, is not in the exact location of the present Noland house; the map shows the house standing near the corner of Delaware and present-day Truman Road and not at its present location about seventy-five feet south of the corner.<sup>53</sup>

### **Slack Family and Cyclical Growth in Independence, 1865-1890**

#### Slack Family on Lots 4 and 5 (Future Noland House), 1865-1885

Anthony Slack and his family arrived in Independence from Indiana immediately after the Civil War and took up residence on the future Noland house property. They witnessed



**A portion of the wrap-around front porch and the south side of the future Noland house can be seen just north of the twin-towered Methodist-Episcopal Church in this turn-of-the-century photograph.** Courtesy of the Jackson County Historical Society, taken from *An Illustrated Description of Independence, Missouri* (1902).

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<sup>53</sup> Sue Gentry, Mary Sue Luff, and Martha Milton, editors, *A Pictorial History of Independence, Missouri* (Marceline, Mo.: Heritage House Publishing, 1992), 24.



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the gradual return of tranquility to Independence in the late 1860s and early 1870s. Anthony Slack also contributed to emergence of Independence as a vital agricultural marketplace in the 1880s.

Anthony T. Slack and his small family arrived in Independence in 1865, perhaps only a few weeks before buying the house on lots 4 and 5 in December of that year, just as winter arrived. For the next twenty years, the Slack family occupied this house (the Noland house). Anthony Torbert Slack was born on April 23, 1833 in Newton, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, about twenty-five miles from Philadelphia. At age four, he moved with his parents to Muncie, Indiana, where he received his education. He spent his youth on a farm and continued his involvement in agricultural pursuits until 1861. Slack also embarked on a business career in Muncie and Indianapolis. Slack married Josephine Harlan in Indianapolis. Two children were born to this marriage; one child died in infancy. During the Civil War, Anthony Slack served in the commissary department of the Forty-Seventh Indiana Volunteers under his brother, General James R. Slack, of Huntington, Indiana.<sup>54</sup>

Not long after the Slacks moved into the future Noland house in winter of 1865-1866, Josephine Slack died, leaving Anthony with one child, Harry S. Slack. On January 16, 1868, Slack, then thirty-five years old, married twenty-three year-old Maria Moore, who had been born in February 1844. (Maria Moore was reportedly the daughter of James F. Moore, who platted Moore's Addition.<sup>55</sup> It is uncertain whether Anthony and Maria Slack raised Harry S. Slack or he went somewhere else to live. Seven children were born to Anthony and Maria Slack between 1868 and 1885. They included Arthur T., born October 10, 1868 (who died in infancy); Edwin Moore, born April 7, 1871; James H., born September 7, 1872; Lulu (Brown), born August 12, 1872; Anthony Torbert, born July 20, 1880; Paul R., born April 21, 1883; and Josephine Hervey (never married), born October 11, 1885.<sup>56</sup>

The Slacks' expanding family, as well as Anthony Slack's growing financial prosperity certainly must have influenced building developments on the Slack property on North Delaware. In August 1870, eight months before the birth of the Slacks'

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<sup>54</sup> "Death of A. T. Slack," *Independence Examiner*, 19 February 1915 (typed obituary). Heritage Commission Files for 216 North Delaware Street, City of Independence; *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 880.

<sup>55</sup> Ardis Haukenberry, granddaughter of Joseph and Ella Noland, reported that Maria Moore's father built the Noland house for his daughter when she married. Haukenberry to James A. Ryan, c. 1975, 216 North Delaware Street, Heritage Commission Files, City of Independence.

<sup>56</sup> "Maria Moore," in RootsWeb's WorldConnect Project (genealogy project) at: <http://worldconnect.genealogy.rootsweb.com>.

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second child, Anthony Slack borrowed \$1,000; the Slack property served as collateral for this loan (Deed Book 75, p. 457)<sup>57</sup>. It is possible that part or all of the \$1,000 was used for an improvement, such as an addition, to the Slack (Noland) house to accommodate the expanding of the family. In April 1871, Edwin Moore Slack was born in the Slack (Noland) house at 216 North Delaware, according to Ardis Haukenberry, who reported a conversation with Virginia Lee Slack, the daughter of Edwin Slack.<sup>58</sup>

Anthony Slack may also have used all or part of the \$1,000 he borrowed for his business. Slack operated a hardware store in Independence for the ten years from 1866 and 1876. In the early 1870s, Independence still suffered from the growing economic vitality of its western neighbor, Kansas City. A newspaper correspondent for the St. Louis *Republican* described lackluster conditions he found in Independence in 1871:

The trade of [Independence's] palmy days has all departed and gone to more western towns, and Independence is left alone 'under the shadow of Kansas City,' with only her local trade. No more are the streets thronged with dusky Indians and swarthy Mexicans, as was the case twenty years ago, and the sight of an ox or mule tea, or prairie schooner . . . would be a strange sight there to-day. Thus from a once busy, bustling frontier town it has settled down into a quiet pleasant place, with a refined and hospitable society and considerable wealth, the proceeds of business in its early days. . . . This is what might be termed an orchard town, beautifully located, and where the dwelling houses are so hidden by foliage and large clumps of forest trees, which have been left standing, that one could scarcely believe at a glance down the green avenues that the place was inhabited . . . how prettily [the houses] look with their neat porches covered with roses and honeysuckle and all manner of sweet climbing shrubs and flowers.<sup>59</sup>

Despite the romantic appeal of this idyllic scene, the newspaper correspondent was quick to note that Independence had lost its energy and its optimism. The streets were now dull and quiet. The correspondent reported that many merchants believed that they "had no chance" under the cloud of booming Kansas City. The construction of a new two-story brick

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<sup>57</sup> John A. Sea, "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition.

<sup>58</sup> Ryan, "Preliminary Survey Form" for 216 North Delaware Street, in *Independence Historical Survey*.

<sup>59</sup> *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 666-67.

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courthouse on the square in 1872 seemed to bring no instant relief from the feeling that Independence had a doomed gloomy economic future.<sup>60</sup> Anthony Slack may have shared this view. His hardware business may have needed a financial boost as well, in an effort to bring farmers and building contractors into his store.

For unknown reasons, Anthony Slack closed his hardware store and, in 1876, opened a grocery business. His success in this venture seems to have coincided with Independence's emergence as a vital agricultural marketplace for surrounding Jackson County farmers. By the early 1880s, Slack's business occupied a substantial stone building measuring 23 x 83 feet on the south side of the courthouse square (on West Lexington Avenue.) Slack's inventory at that time included "a large stock of crockery, glassware, queensware and a full line of staple and fancy groceries." Slack reportedly enjoyed a "large patronage," and he actively "worked for the interests of his many patrons."<sup>61</sup>

Beginning in the early 1880s, the Slack family witnessed a great surge in the optimism, growth, and development in Independence, based largely on schemes to develop transportation links between Independence and rapidly growing Kansas City. In 1881 a few prominent Independence citizens proposed building a seven- and-one-half-mile grand drive between the western edge of Independence and the eastern suburbs of Kansas City. Subscriptions totaling \$15,000 had already been raised by the end of that year. "This enterprise," the author of an 1881 history of Jackson County believed, "when completed, will . . . rapidly enhance the value of real estate."<sup>62</sup> The author went on to affirm that "the most attractive building spots to be found anywhere upon this continent" were along the side of the proposed boulevard, three miles west of Independence.<sup>63</sup> Four years passed before businessmen realized their ambitious plans. In the fall of 1885, the grand boulevard opened.<sup>64</sup>

Anthony Slack, like many Independence merchants, profited greatly from the city's growth and prosperity in the 1880s. "The merchants do a thriving business, supplying the wants of a large farming area," boasted the *Sentinel* newspaper in early 1886. Independence is "a great distribution point for agricultural machinery and implements of all kinds and for buggies and wagons of every make," the newspaper continued. "The buildings of the city, especially the business blocks, are, as a rule, very handsome. . . . There are also many fine and even

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 666, 639.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 880; *Independence City Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: R. S. Dillon & Co., 1888-89).

<sup>62</sup> *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 647.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 648.

<sup>64</sup> Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 54.

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elegant private residences, showing wealth and refinement. In fact, Independence is noted for the culture within her borders."<sup>65</sup> Summing up all of the city's advantages for Independence residents and prospective newcomers, the *Sentinel*, proclaimed:

Independence is by no means the center of the world, but it is the foundation of one of the prettiest, pleasantest, healthiest cities in the world. Good people, good houses, good streets, good schools, good colleges, good water, good climate, good atmosphere, good light, good railroad facilities; and a magnificent country, free from malaria, and abounding in fat chickens and fresh eggs; Jersey cattle and sweet butter; Short-horn, Hereford, Devon, Aberdeen-angus cattle and good beef, and a thousand other good things, are some of the inducements for good people to come here and make this their home.<sup>66</sup>

Anthony Slack's business and financial health must have benefited from the surging growth of Independence as an agricultural center and Kansas City suburb during this period. In 1885, Slack hired building contractor James M. Adams to construct a palatial two-and one-half-story, ten-room Queen Anne style mansion just north of the Slack (Noland) house, at the corner of North Delaware and Rock (Truman) Road. The new Slack house cost \$7,000. Only one other new house built in Independence in 1885 cost more—the fourteen-room home of George P. Gates, constructed for \$8,000.<sup>67</sup> An illustration of the new Slack house was prominently displayed in the January 2, 1886 issue of the *Independence Sentinel*, which summarized the past year's building developments. The Slack couple and their five children, then ranging in age from five to fourteen, had probably already moved into their spacious new house at 220 North Delaware Street by the time the Slacks' last child, Josephine, was born in October 1885.

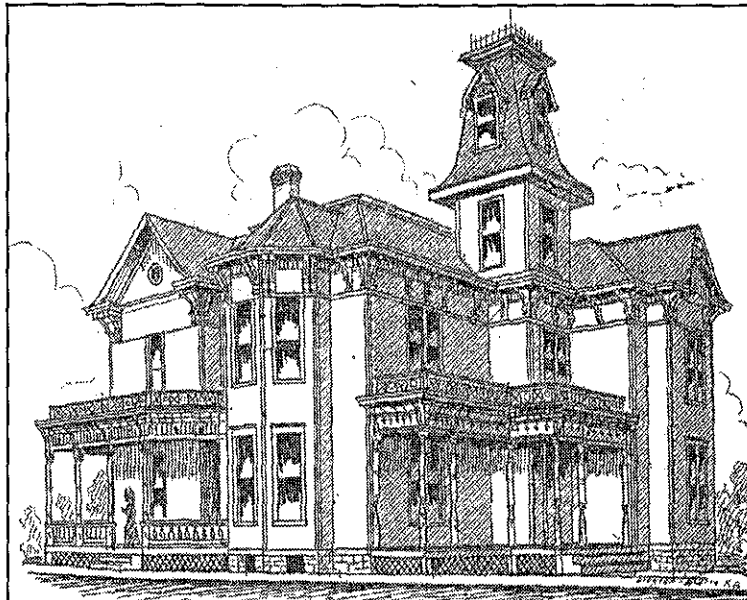
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<sup>65</sup> "Our Beautiful City," *Sentinel*, 2 January 1886, 8, Jackson County Historical Society.

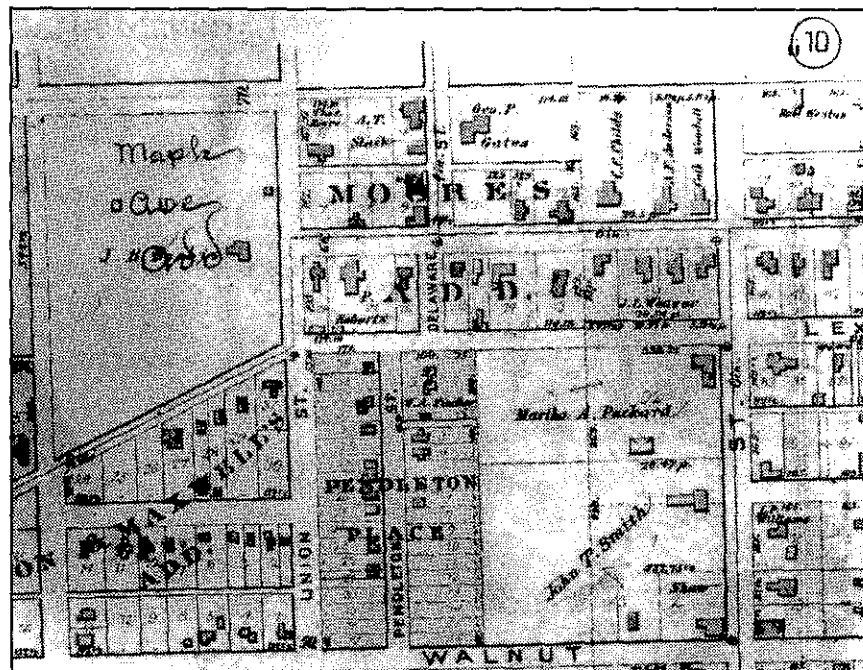
<sup>66</sup> Untitled, *Sentinel*, 2 January 1886, 11.

<sup>67</sup> "The Building Boom," *Sentinel*, 2 January 1886, 4. The majority of houses built in 1885 ranged in price from \$1,500 to \$3,000.

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The Slack family moved from the future Noland house in 1885 upon the completion of their palatial new residence just to the north of their old home at 216 North Delaware Street. From the *Independence Sentinel*, January 2, 1886.



The outline of the new large Slack family house and the future Noland house are clearly visible just to the right of the words, "A. T. Slack," at the center top of this 1886 map of Independence. From *Atlas of the Environs of Kansas City in Jackson County, Missouri* (1886).

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### Slack Family Ages, 1885-early 1920s

An 1886 map of Independence shows the outline of the new and the old Slack houses. Although not very accurate in its details, this map presented the old Slack (Noland) house as a small rectangular form with little setback from North Delaware Street. The building had neither a rear (west side) one-story extension nor a slightly projecting southern portion (to which the wrap-around front and side porch was later attached).<sup>68</sup> It has been speculated that not long after the Slack family moved into their palatial new house, Anthony Slack made improvements to the family's old house in preparation for renting it out.<sup>69</sup> Slack may have had the exterior of the old house "modernized" by adding decorative shingles and spindle work in the gable ends, design features characteristic of the Queen Anne style, which was popular at that time and would not have been in vogue in 1870 when Slack borrowed \$1,000, possibly for earlier improvements. The slightly projecting southern wall and the wrap-around front porch, supported by turned posts and decorated with spindle-work details under the eaves that replicate those decorative details on the new Slack house, may have been added around 1887.



**Ethel and Nellie (seated) in the Noland house yard, with turned balusters on the wrap-around front porch barely visible behind them.**

Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library.

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<sup>68</sup> *Atlas of the Environs of Kansas City in Jackson County, Missouri* (Philadelphia, Penn.: G. M. Hopkins, 1886.)

<sup>69</sup> Ryan, "Preliminary Survey Form" for 216 North Delaware Street, in *Independence Historical Survey*.

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Rear alterations (or an addition) may have also been made around that time. Slack may have used some of the same materials and even the same building contractor that he had used on his new house to repair and update the old Slack (Noland) house. The house probably took on its present overall form and exterior appearance (except for the small two-story addition on the south wall) around 1887, when it received the last of a series of modifications.

In 1887, Independence's building boom intensified with the proposed construction of two railroads. The Citizens Street Railway, started in June 1887, ran from south to north between old South Liberty depot and the College Street, then east to Noland Road. (In March 1888, a steam motor replaced mules to power this railway.) Also in 1887, entrepreneur Willard E. Winner completed his Kansas City, Independence, and Park Railway, known as the "Dummy Line," for commuters and shoppers. The company ended its run at the company's ticket office on West Lexington (not far from the real estate office of Joseph Noland) and never used the tracks constructed along South Noland Road. However, more than anything else, Winner's railroad doubled and tripled land values and initiated a building boom in both Independence and Kansas City, especially along present-day Independence Avenue, Highway 24, and Winner Road, where lots were accessible to both Independence and Kansas City.<sup>70</sup>

In both Independence and Kansas City, real estate values soared. In 1885, land in Independence valued at a total of \$1,000,200 changed hands; in 1887 the total valued of real estate transferred was \$18,200,000. By 1887, over fifty Independence real estate agents (including Joseph Noland) experienced the doubling of land values; one agent reported selling \$526,826 worth of real estate in 1887. Building contractors constructed 200 homes in Independence that year.<sup>71</sup> In Kansas City the enormous real estate activity was no less spectacular. At the close of 1887, the *Kansas City Times* reported that: "the amount of transfers recorded was far beyond the expectation of the most sanguine, reaching \$18,000,000, or six times that of the preceding year."<sup>72</sup> In addition to railroad construction and the boom in real estate activity, the commercial buildings on the Independence Courthouse Square became the home of agricultural firms like Gudgell and Simpson, which became a national leader in the Hereford breeding industry.<sup>73</sup> Everyone's

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<sup>70</sup> Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 54; Pearly Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers*, 470-73.

<sup>71</sup> Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers*, 469-70.

<sup>72</sup> Quoted in Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 54.

<sup>73</sup> O'Brien, *Independence Square*, (page 3).

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image of a fast-growing city contributed to the great boom in the mid-1880s, a boom unequaled in the city's history. By the end of the decade, many considered Independence a "Royal Suburb" whose interests "must hereafter be identical with that of Kansas City."<sup>74</sup>

Sometime around 1887, the Slacks began renting out their old family house (the future Noland house). Located near both the Methodist-Episcopal Church and the Baptist Church, the old Slack house made an ideal parsonage. Baptist Church pastor, Reverend J. S. Connor, is listed as the occupant of the old Slack house in the 1888-1889 Independence city directory.<sup>75</sup> Other ministers may also have rented the old Slack (Noland) house between 1889 and the late 1890s. A family named Taliferro (or Taliaferro) reportedly occupied the old Slack house up until 1900.<sup>76</sup>

In August 1900, Joseph and Ella Noland began renting the house and moved in with two of their three children, Nellie and Ethel Noland. In 1904, their eldest, soon-to-be widowed daughter Ruth Ragland and her family moved into the Noland house. Eight Noland family members occupied the house between 1904 and around 1921. (See next chapter for more details.)

The Slack family continued to own the Noland house until 1908 and occupied their spacious home next door at 220 North Delaware Street until 1924. Anthony Slack retired from his business in 1893 at age sixty, when Independence was in the grips of a national depression. For the next twenty years, he was able to spend more time with his family of six children. By the early 1900s, some of his children who had married and begun families brought their children to visit their grandparents. Lulu Slack, who had married Dr. Columbus Brown in 1902 and moved to Herrin, in southern Illinois in 1906, came with her four children (born between 1903 and 1908) nearly every summer to visit her parents.<sup>77</sup> Edwin Moore Slack, who married Eva Lee Masters in 1904 and lived nearby in Kansas City, also came with their daughter (Virginia Lee Slack, born in 1911) to visit the aging Slack couple. The Slack grandchildren made good playmates for the three young Ragland children living next door in the Noland house.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *Independence City Directory*, 1888-89), unnumbered pages describing Independence.

<sup>75</sup> Ryan, "Preliminary Research Form" for 216 North Delaware Street, in *Independence Historical Survey*.

<sup>76</sup> James A. Ryan, "Conversation with Ardis Haukenberry," March 24, 1976, Heritage Commission Files, City of Independence, Missouri.

<sup>77</sup> "Wife of Dr. Brown Dies," *Herrin Spokesman*, 26(?) May 1953.

<sup>78</sup> Ardis Haukenberry, "Childhood Memories of North Delaware Street"; *Independence Examiner*, 26 February 1912.



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By 1905, it seems that Anthony Slack, then seventy-two and retired for twelve years, began struggling to pay taxes on the Noland house property. In July 1905, he borrowed \$700 and used the Noland property as collateral (Deed Book 260, p. 123). No known improvements were made to the house at that time. One year later, in October 1906, Slack borrowed \$1,500 and, again, used the Noland property as collateral (Deed Book 253, p. 414). No known substantial improvements were made to the house in 1906-1907. It seems probable that Slack used the borrowed money to pay for taxes owed on the property. When Anthony Slack sold his old house to Joseph Noland in July 1908 for \$2,300, Slack owed state, county, and city taxes and a special street paving tax on the Noland property, due in 1907, totaling \$718.<sup>79</sup> Seven years later, in 1915, Anthony T. Slack died at age eighty-two.

Maria Moore Slack continued to live in the large Slack home for another nine years. Then, in March 1924, the *Independence Examiner* announced that Mrs. Slack then in her late seventies, sold her house on North Delaware to Roy Johnson. According to the newspaper article, Johnson planned to move the house toward the west end of the Slack property and convert it into an apartment house. He also planned to build three small houses on the Slack house site facing North Delaware.<sup>80</sup> For an unknown reason, Johnson never moved the enormous Slack house, but demolished it instead.<sup>81</sup> Before the end of 1924, Johnson built three small closely spaced bungalow houses on North Delaware Street, just north of the Noland house property. He also erected in 1924 a three-story brick apartment building, clearly visible in historic photos taken in the Noland's rear yard. All four buildings are standing in 2000.

Before witnessing the demise of the Slack family mansion, Maria Moore Slack had probably moved to Herrin, Illinois, to live with her daughter and son-in-law, Lulu and Columbus Brown. She died of pneumonia in Herrin on December 22, 1927 at age

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<sup>79</sup> J. F. Buchanan, (notary public and conveyancer), regarding A. T. Slack and taxes on Noland property, 17 July 1908, John A. Sea, "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition.

<sup>80</sup> "Slack House Sold," *Independence Examiner*, 24 March 1924.

<sup>81</sup> Ryan, "Conversation with Ardis Haukenberry," March 24, 1976.

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eighty-three. Maria Slack was buried next to her husband Anthony Torbert Slack in Mount Washington Cemetery.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Maria Slack cemetery records, interment number 12048, Mount Washington Cemetery, Independence, Missouri.

## **Chapter 8**

### **The Noland Family and House**

**1847-1923**

#### **Introduction**

**Joseph Tilford Noland**

**Margaret Ellen Truman**

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**Introduction**

The Noland family was supremely important in the life of Harry S Truman. Margaret Ellen (Ella) Noland, the sister of Truman's father, remained Harry Truman's favorite aunt throughout his life. Aunt Ella's daughters, Nellie and Ethel Noland, who were around Harry Truman's age, became his closest young playmates, school study partners, confidantes and friends, and observers and supporters of his political career. As teachers for half a century, Nellie and Ethel Noland contributed to the education of hundreds of Independence youth. Ethel Noland, the family genealogist and scribe, played an invaluable role in recording the Truman, Young, and Noland family histories for Harry Truman, for a curious news media during his years in the public spotlight, and for the general public interested in learning about the ancestors and the life of an uncommon ordinary man.

Although Harry Truman never seemed particularly close to his uncle, Joseph Tilford Noland provided for his family not only economically but also emotionally. He was a father not only to his own three daughters, but was also a surrogate father to his three grandchildren, who grew from infancy to adulthood in the Noland home. Engaged in real estate for over thirty years and actively involved in city government for six years, Joseph Noland contributed to the commercial, civic, and cultural vitality of the Independence community between the 1880s and the early 1920s.

The Queen Anne-style house at 216 North Delaware Street, directly across the street from the Gates-Wallace-Truman house, was, between 1900 and 1986, the home of three generations of the Noland family and a place of passages for Noland family members. It served as the site for spontaneous and planned Noland and Truman family gatherings and festivities. It became Harry Truman's base of operation for his courtship of Bess Wallace, as well as for his social and business pursuits in Independence, especially during his years as a farmer in Grandview. The Noland house provides an opportunity to re-create the Noland family history, the close relationship between the Nolands and Harry Truman, and the evolution of the Independence community over eighty-five years. This chapter tells the story of the Noland family, beginning with the births and marriage of Joseph T. Noland and Margaret Ellen Truman, continuing with the Nolands' move to 216 North Delaware Street, and closing with the departure of four Noland family members from the house and the death of the Noland family patriarch.

**The Noland Family and House, 1847-1923**  
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**Joseph Tilford Noland**

Like so many early residents of Independence and the surrounding area, Joseph Tilford Noland was born in Kentucky, in Estill County (35 miles southeast of Lexington), on November 27, 1847. His parents, Wesley Tilford Noland and Sarah Ann Scrivener Noland, who were married in 1844, named their second son after his maternal grandfather, Joseph Scrivener. Joseph had two older siblings, a brother William Noland, born in Estill County in 1844, and a sister Susan, born in Estill County in 1845.<sup>83</sup> (William Noland later fought and was killed in the Civil War in Kentucky). When Joseph was only a year old, his parents moved the family 630 miles to Jackson County, Missouri, where a Noland relative (a cousin of Francis Marion Noland), Smallwood Noland, operated a hotel on the Independence courthouse square (on the northwest corner of Main Street and Maple Avenue). In addition to Smallwood Noland, many other Nolands, some of whom were related to Joseph T. Noland, had come to the Independence area as early as the 1820s. Many years later, Mary Ethel Noland reported that, according to family folklore, men with the surname of Noland cast eleven of the forty-four votes cast in Independence's first election in 1827. The same year, at least three Noland family members were present and active bidders at the first sale of land in the Independence town plat.<sup>84</sup>

Soon after arriving in Jackson County, Joseph T. Noland's father, Wesley Tilford Noland, and his grandfather, Francis Marion Noland,<sup>85</sup> bought a large tract of land and farmhouse (now gone) on Lee's Summit Road. (Much later, part of their farm became transformed into the Crackerneck Golf Course.) Sarah Ann Noland returned to Kentucky in 1848 or 1849, around the

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<sup>83</sup> Vertical Files: "Genealogical Records, Noland Family," Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

<sup>84</sup> Smallwood Noland, who died in 1858, had married Nancy MacMonegal, a sister of Joseph T. Noland's grandmother. Following Smallwood Noland's death, his son, Jesse Noland, took over the operation of the Noland Hotel. Mary Ethel Noland, interview by James R. Fuchs, transcript of tape-recorded interview, 23 August 1965, 25-26, 33, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri; "Noland Home Once Used by Railroad," *Independence Examiner*, 11 August 1986; Eric Fowler, "Noland Name Traced to Revolutionary War," Vertical Files: "Genealogical Records, Noland Family"; and Vertical Files: "Family History of Joseph Tilford Noland, Truman Family"; both in Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>85</sup> Francis Marion Noland, born in North Carolina, was the son of James Noland, who had fought in the Revolutionary War, first as a private under the Virginia regiment of Colonel William Grayson, then, later, as a captain under Colonel Frank Locke's North Carolina troops. He reportedly also served under Francis Marion, the "Swamp Fox." James Noland moved to Estill County, Kentucky in 1912 and died and was buried there in 1833 at age ninety-three. His widow later (1844) moved to LaPorte County, Indiana, to live with some of her children. Mary Ethel Noland, interview by James Fuchs, 23 August 1965, transcript of taped interview, 28, Harry S. Truman Library; "Independence Streets," Vertical File, Mid-Continent Library, Independence, Missouri.

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time she gave birth to her fourth child, Nancy Noland. Sarah Ann Noland died in Jackson County in the summer of 1849, when Joseph T. Noland was two years old. Less than two years later, Joseph Noland's father, Wesley Noland, also died in Jackson County. Tuberculosis is said to have been the cause of both his parents' deaths. Young Joseph T. Noland continued to live on the Noland farm with his grandfather, Francis Marion Noland, until his early teen years.<sup>86</sup>

At age fourteen, in 1861, Joseph T. Noland joined the Confederate Army, perhaps around the time that martial law was declared in Missouri in August of that year. Noland served as a private soldier in Upton Hayes' Company, Shank's Regiment, in Sterling Price's Army. (Several other Noland family members likewise served in the Confederate Army, including Joseph Noland's relative, Colonel Thomas Pitcher, of Independence. General Joseph Shelby was the commanding officer.)<sup>87</sup> Young Noland fought in battles at Wilson's Creek (August 1861), and Lexington (September 1861), and closer to home, in the Battles of Independence (August 1862 and October 1862), and the Battle of Westport (October 1864). Badly defeated in the Battle of Westport, General Sterling Price, former Missouri governor and hero of the Mexican War, and his men, including Noland, retreated southward down the Kansas border into Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and Louisiana. Although some Noland family members serving under Price fled to and began new lives in Mexico, Joseph Noland chose to remain in the United States. Following General Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox, Virginia, on April 9, 1865, Joseph Noland and hundreds of other former Confederate soldiers were mustered out of service in Shreveport, Louisiana, and swore allegiance to the United States. When the eighteen-year-old Noland returned to St. Louis, Missouri, on a river packet with other Confederate Army veterans in 1865 or early 1866, Harrison Young, Noland's future brother-in-law (and Harry Truman's uncle), who was then attending Christian Brothers College in Alton, Illinois, greeted him at the river landing.<sup>88</sup>

Soon after his return to Jackson County, Joseph Noland joined a company of freighters and helped ship mining machinery

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<sup>86</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 29, Harry S. Truman Library; "Joseph T. Noland Dead," *Jackson Examiner*, 2 February 1923. Also see footnote number 2 in this chapter.

<sup>87</sup> Genealogical Forms, Vertical Files: "Noland Family," Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>88</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 29-31, Harry S. Truman Library; "Joseph T. Noland Dead," *Jackson Examiner*, 2 February 1923; *History of Jackson County, Missouri, Containing a History of the County, Its Cities, Towns, Etc., Indexed Edition*, 1881, reprint (Cape Girardeau, Mo.: Ramfre Press, 1966), 43-44, 277-94; W. Z. Hickman, *History of Jackson County, Missouri* (Topeka, Kan.: Historical Publishing Co., 1920), 202-208.

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and supplies to Canyon City (near Denver), Colorado, by wagon train. Harrison Young's father, Solomon Young, who was still engaged in the freighting business at that time, may have encouraged Noland to take up freighting. But it was apparently not to his liking, for Noland only made one freighting trip before he went back to his birthplace in Estill County, Kentucky, and the home of many of his mother's family. Not long before, Noland's grandfather and namesake, Joseph Scrivener, had died; Joseph Noland was one of the heirs of his estate. During his several-week stay in Kentucky, Joseph Noland became well acquainted with his Scrivener relatives, whom he had never seen before. He also took care of family business matters and collected his share of his grandfather's estate. With the money he inherited, Noland returned to Jackson County in 1867 or 1868 and soon afterward bought a farm north of Hickman Mills, not far from the Solomon Young farm. In 1868 Joseph T. Noland joined the nearby Blue Ridge Baptist Church. Two years later, he and Margaret Ellen Truman married.<sup>89</sup>

**Margaret Ellen Truman**

Margaret Ellen (better known as "Ella") Truman, the older sister of John Anderson Truman, Harry S Truman's father, was born on May 6, 1849, on the farm of Dr. Johnston Lykins near Westport (in what later became part of Kansas City, Missouri).<sup>90</sup> Her parents, Anderson (known to his friends as "Andy") Shipp Truman and Mary Jane Holmes Truman, had married in Christiansburg, Shelby County, Kentucky, in 1846, and then moved to Westport. Mary Jane Holmes had traveled with her parents and lived for about a year, from 1845-1846, in Westport, where family relatives, including Christiana Polk McCoy and Martha (Patsy) Holmes Ford, lived. The young married Truman couple rented the farm owned by a Dr. Lykins and took up farming with five women slaves inherited from the Holmes family, who helped with myriad household chores. At the time of Ella Truman's birth in 1849, the Lykins farm was one of numerous farms that stretched across rolling hills between Westport and the Westport Landing not far away on the Missouri River. Anderson Shipp Truman's brother, John Thomas Truman, began living with the family around 1849. Two of Ella Truman's siblings were born

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<sup>89</sup> Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 33-34, 39; "Joseph T. Noland Dead," *Jackson Examiner*, 2 February 1923.

<sup>90</sup>Dr. Lykins had moved to Jackson County in 1831. Much later in life, he helped organize the "Old Settlers Historical Society of Jackson County and was elected its vice-president." Hickman, *History of Jackson County*, 93, 240.

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on the Lykins farm: an older brother, William Truman, born on April 24, 1847, and a younger brother, John Anderson Truman, born on December 5, 1851, and named after greatly beloved Uncle John Thomas Truman.<sup>91</sup>

In early 1852 (or slightly later),<sup>92</sup> when young Ella Truman was about three years old, the Truman family household, including the children's Uncle John Truman and the family's five female slaves, moved to a farm that Anderson Shipp Truman wanted to work on the north side of the Missouri River in Platte County, Missouri, between present-day Parkville and Barry in Pettis Township. Family relatives Lewis and Patsy Ford, who had moved to Parkville, as well as an abundance of neighboring farmers originally from Kentucky, lived in the area. In 1860 the Truman's Platte County farm was comprised of 160 acres valued at \$3,200. (Uncle John left the family in 1855 to seek his fortune in the California gold fields, then returned to his native Shelby County, Kentucky, and married.)

Ella Truman's family remained in Platte County for the next sixteen years until 1868. During that time, she gained two new siblings: Emily, born on July 25, 1855, and Mary Martha, born on January 7, 1860. The Truman children, including Ella, attended Prairie Point Academy, a subscription school near Parkville. On the staff were teachers who had left Jackson County due to mounting tensions there over slavery. Ella Truman often rode horseback to what was then called the Line Creek Baptist Church.<sup>93</sup>

More than one hundred years later, Noland family members recalled some of the happy childhood memories that Ella Truman had shared with her children and grandchildren about her years growing up in Platte County. During the unusually harsh winter of 1855-1856, temperatures plummeted to below zero for several weeks and the Missouri River froze for nearly sixty-two days. From Christmas Eve 1855 to March 1, 1856, the encrusted Missouri River became a brittle glassy, highway of ice traveled by humans, horses, mules, and oxen

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<sup>91</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 5-11, 13, Harry S. Truman Library; Mary Prewitt Mitchell, *The First Baptist Church, Independence, Missouri, 1845-1945* (Independence: First Baptist Church, n.d.), 84.

<sup>92</sup> Margaret Ellen Truman's granddaughter, Ardis Haukenberry, reported many years later that the Truman family was still living on the south side of the Missouri River as late as the winter of 1855-56. Helen Ardis Ragland Haukenberry, handwritten history of Ragland-Haukenberry families on "First National Bank Safe Deposit Co." stationary, Sue Gentry Collection, Jackson County Historical Society. Also see "Rough Winter? Here's the 1855-56 Version," newspaper clipping, file for 216 North Delaware, Community Development Department, City of Independence, Independence, Missouri.

<sup>93</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 11-16; "Noland Services," *Independence Examiner*, 1 October 1948; "Truman A 'Son' to Aunt," Clippings File, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.



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moving between the north and south banks of the river. Ella Truman vividly remembered her own adventures crossing the river on ice to visit relatives in Jackson County, according to Ella's granddaughter Ardis Haukenberry.<sup>94</sup>

Summers were a time of different delights for Ella Truman and her siblings living on their farm in Platte County. "Once the circus was coming through the country, going from Parkville to Barry, and the little children were all dressed up to go down the lane to the big gate on the road to see the circus go by, because there was an elephant, which they had never seen," Ella Truman had told her daughter, Mary Ethel Noland. For decades after the event, Ella Truman clearly pictured the scene of Mary, the family's African American nurse, leading Ella's favorite younger brother, John, down to the gate where the children all stood "with big eyes and open mouths," looking at the elephant and brightly painted circus wagons as they meandered down the road.<sup>95</sup> Another memorable event for young Ella Truman was the May Day tournament. During this annual social event for the neighborhood, inspired by scenes from Sir Walter Scott's stories, young men on their best steed galloped over a racecourse with spears used for plucking rings off an arm that hung out over the tournament course. The knight with the most rings on his spear was invited to crown the queen of the day.<sup>96</sup> Those "gallant young men made quite an impression on my mother," Mary Ethel Noland reminisced many years later. "I think she thought the people in Platte County were superior to the people in Jackson County," Ethel Noland conjectured, even "though she was born in Jackson County herself."<sup>97</sup>

The local and national tragic upheaval wrought by the Civil War didn't touch the family directly. Ella's father, Anderson Shipp Truman, who favored the Union cause, was too old to fight in the war. Ella's older brother, William, was too young to enlist as a soldier. Although the family's relatives, Lewis and Patsy Ford in nearby Parkville, were banished to Alton, Illinois, for the duration of the war under the infamous Order Number 11, the Truman family was not subject to the mandates of that order and lived peacefully on their farm while violence raged around them. Years after the war, Ella Truman Noland often talked of the war

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<sup>94</sup> Haukenberry, handwritten history of Ragland-Haukenberry families on "First National Bank Safe Deposit Co." stationary, Gentry Collection; "Rough Winter?", newspaper clipping, file for 216 North Delaware, Community Development Department, City of Independence.

<sup>95</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 14.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-16.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.

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days when the Trumans heard of the ravages in counties all around them. Their farm was never raided.<sup>98</sup>

In 1867 or early 1868, about two years after the war ended, Ella Truman and her parents and siblings moved back to Jackson County, on the south side of the Missouri River, and took up residence in Holmes Park, then between the infant Kansas City and the small farming community of Grandview, about twelve miles away. Shortly afterwards, the Truman family, including Ella Truman, apparently moved to the Hickman Mills (then called Hickman's Mills) area, north of Grandview, where Anderson Shipp and Mary Jane Truman bought a farm. Ella Truman joined the Blue Ridge Baptist Church (which later consolidated with the Grandview Baptist Church) in 1868, the same year in which Joseph T. Noland joined the Blue Ridge Baptist Church. Reverend Lee, pastor of the church, baptized Ella Truman and Joseph T. Noland on the same day. Their courtship probably began not long after that. On December 18, 1870, Ella Truman married Joseph Tilford Noland at the home of Ella's parents in Hickman Mills.<sup>99</sup>

**Joseph T. and Ella Truman Noland Family, 1870-1900**



Joseph T. and Ella Truman Noland lived for nearly thirteen years on their farm near Hickman Mills. During that time, the Nolands built a new house and planted an apple orchard that became very profitable. At least four children were born to the Noland couple during their residence near Hickman Mills. William Noland, named after Joseph's brother who was killed in the Civil War and also Ella's brother, William Truman, was born in 1872. He lived only three days. A second

**Ella (Margaret Ellen) Truman, favorite aunt of Harry S Truman, as she appeared around the time of her marriage to Joseph Tilford Noland in 1870.** Courtesy of Harry S. Truman Library.

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 23 August 1965, 2, 20; "Noland Services," *Independence Examiner*, 1 October 1948.

<sup>99</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 20-21, 38; Mitchell, *First Baptist Church*.

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child, probably a boy, may have been born in 1874, but only lived a short time.<sup>100</sup> Ruth Truman Noland, their first daughter, was born on August 3, 1876. Five years later, on July 26, 1881, Ellen Tilford Noland (better known as "Nellie") was born to Joseph and Ella Noland on their Hickman Mills farm. Their youngest daughter, Mary Ethel (known as "Ethel") Noland, named for her grandmother, Mary Jane Holmes Truman, arrived on October 23, 1883 (six months before her cousin, Harry S Truman, was born).<sup>101</sup>

In 1883, shortly after Ethel Noland was born and when Ruth was seven years old, Joseph and Ella Noland decided to move the family into Independence, which offered "educational advantages unsurpassed by any city in the [W]est."<sup>102</sup> Then regarded as a great center of learning and culture, Independence boasted the Woodland College (established in 1869 and located at Waldo and Union streets), the Independence Female College (incorporated in 1866 and a new building constructed in 1871 at North Liberty and Farmer and later known as the Presbyterian College), St. Mary's Convent School (opened in 1878), plus other smaller private subscription schools. There were two public schools, one with nine grades for Euroamericans and another with two grades for African Americans. Additionally, Independence heritage and the sympathies of many residents in the 1880s were decidedly southern. The Independence political and social environment may have seemed comfortable to Joseph Noland, a Confederate Army veteran.

Finally, Independence offered opportunities for economic enrichment at that time. The promise of a narrow-gauge railroad that was to be built from Kansas City to the Independence courthouse square, along Lexington Avenue, and then to be extended further out to the southeast, brought about a small boom in real estate and building and business developments in Independence. Here was an opportunity to earn a living and support a family.<sup>103</sup>

With all this in mind, the Noland couple decided to move to Independence in late 1883. They took up residence in a house on West Maple Avenue (formerly Rock Street until around 1887) near the site of the first William Chrisman School. Soon Joseph

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<sup>100</sup> Genealogical information at the Harry S. Truman Library notes that William Noland was born in July 1872, even though Ethel Noland reported, in a 1965 oral history interview, that he was born in 1874. It is possible that a second boy, not William, was born in 1874. The *History of Jackson County* notes that the Nolands had three children, two deceased, by 1881. *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 984; Vertical Files: "Genealogical Records, Truman Family," Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>101</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 38-40.

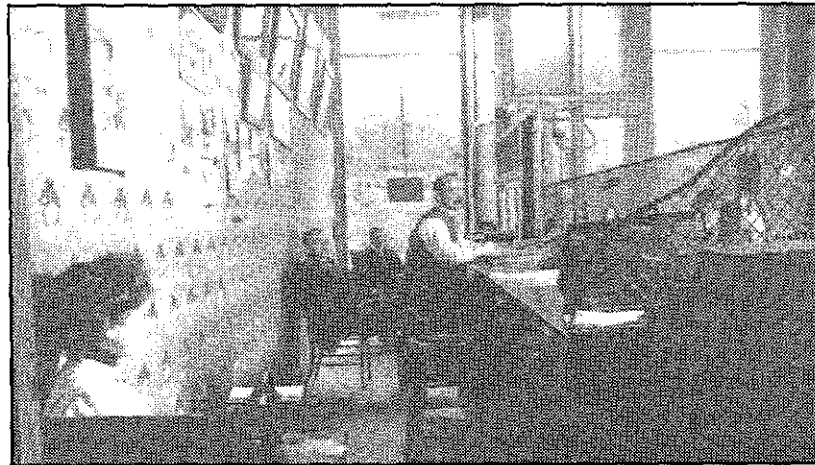
<sup>102</sup> *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 238.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 236-39, 661-62; Ethel Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 41-44.

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Noland became fully engaged in real estate, buying land and building homes all around Independence, as well as outlying farming areas. In 1888, the Nolands lived at 92 West Maple Avenue, according to the *Independence City Directory* published that year. This same city directory listed Joseph Noland's business as real estate. For many years, he was associated with the Rider and Company Real Estate and insurance office, which occupied a long, narrow, high-ceilinged commercial space on the south side of the courthouse square in what certainly must have been an advantageous location on Lexington Avenue along the route of the new interurban railroad. For a few years, the Noland family benefited financially from Joseph Noland's real estate ventures. During the family's residence on West Maple Avenue, Ruth and Nellie Noland attended the Presbyterian College.



**Joseph Noland, seated against the wall, worked for several years, during the 1880s and 1890s, in the Rider and Company Real Estate office on Lexington Avenue across from the courthouse.** Courtesy of the Jackson County Historical Society.

While living on West Maple Avenue, the Noland family enjoyed visits from Noland and Truman relatives living in and near Independence. Years later, Ethel Noland remembered that Anderson Shipp Truman (her and Harry S Truman's maternal grandfather) came to visit the Nolands when they lived on West Maple Avenue before his death in July 1887. In 1888, Ethel Noland remembered that her Uncle John and Aunt Martha (known as "Aunt Mat") Truman and their two young children came to visit the Noland family from the Young farm near Grandview (where they lived from 1887 to 1890). Harry S Truman was four years old at the time; Vivian Truman was less than two years old; Mary Jane had not yet been born. Martha

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Truman entertained the children by playing the piano and singing favorite children's tunes, like the "Little Brown Jug." It is likely that the Nolands lived in this West Maple Avenue house (now gone) until around 1890.<sup>104</sup>

The Noland family not only entertained the Trumans in Independence; they also visited the family on the Solomon and Harriet Young farm near Grandview. Ethel Noland remembered going to see the Trumans on the farm around 1890, not long after Mary Jane had been born in 1889 and shortly before the Truman family moved to Independence. The Nolands drove to the farm in a surrey pulled by a horse named "Doll" to spend a few days with the Young-Truman families. "I remember playing on the long veranda on the stately old home that the Youngs lived in. They had lived there since the early 1840s [*sic*, they did not move there until 1867], I think, and had hundreds, maybe thousands of acres of land, which took in the land between the two rivers, Big Blue and Little Blue," Ethel Noland recalled seventy-five years later. Noland remembered that the Young house was impressive, "very, very comfortable and roomy, because Solomon Young had a big family of daughters and two sons." The house had a "big parlor where the piano was and . . . a long veranda, on the side of the house where we played as children" and swung in the hammock.<sup>105</sup>

Life changed dramatically for the Noland family when the real estate market in Independence turned sharply downward around 1890. By then it had become apparent that the small rail line between Kansas City and Independence wasn't going to support the speculative growth that had brought about the 1880s boom; many people demanded that their invested money be returned. "Along with a great many other people the Noland family went very flat, indeed, financially," Ethel Noland remembered many years later. Joseph and Ella Noland could no longer afford to send their two school-age daughters to the Presbyterian School; instead they started attending public school at the brick ten-room Ott School on North Liberty Street (named in honor of Christian Ott, Sr., member of the school board).<sup>106</sup> "Out of the crash," Ethel Noland remembered, "we had only one house left. . . . It was a place out on West White Oak Street, . . . and we moved out there." The family resided in the small house on West White Oak Street perhaps only a year or two.<sup>107</sup> During that time, Solomon Young came to dinner once, Ethel Noland

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<sup>104</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 24, 43-44, 46-47; Mitchel, *First Baptist Church*, 84; *Independence City Directory* (Independence: R. S. Dillon & Co., 1888-89).

<sup>105</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 49, 52-53.

<sup>106</sup> Mrs. W. L. C. Palmer, interview by James R. Fuchs, 18 January 1962, transcript of taped interview, 6, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>107</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 44, 60, 63, 66.

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later recalled. (His visit took place before late January 1892, when he died.) By 1894, they had moved back to West Maple Avenue, where they took up residence in their second house; this one stood at the corner of Delaware Street and West Maple Avenue.

The Noland family's hard times preceded and then coincided with a great national depression in the 1890s. In mid-1893, a panic on Wall Street signaled the start of a depression that lasted for four years. By the end of 1893, nearly 500 banks and 16,000 businesses had failed. Of the five western transcontinental railroads, only two remained solvent. Human suffering was catastrophic. Estimates of unemployed family breadwinners in early 1894 ranged from 25 percent in the Rocky Mountain states of Montana and Utah to somewhere between 100,000 and 200,000 in New York City. No one remained untouched by the grim years of depression. Even those people fortunate enough to keep their jobs saw their wages slashed by one-fifth or even one-half. In response to the severe human suffering, hundreds of unemployed men from all over the nation became part of a movement led by Jacob S. Coxey, a wealthy sandstone quarry owner from Ohio, to persuade Congress and President Grover Cleveland to create public works jobs and increase the money supply to stimulate the American economy. In 1894, several groups of unemployed protest groups, led by Coxey and others, made their way from points as far west as San Francisco and Seattle to Washington, D.C. where, on May 1, 1894, they demonstrated on the Capitol steps.<sup>108</sup>

In 1894, the Nolands not only suffered personally from the depression; they also became keenly aware of the suffering of others throughout the country. A segment of Coxey's Army, known as "Sanders' Army," marched through Independence on their way to Washington, D.C.. Although only ten years old at the time, Ethel Noland many years later clearly remembered watching this branch of Coxey's Army of unemployed "go up Maple Avenue over here and on to Washington." It was from the Nolands' second house on West Maple Avenue that Ethel Noland watched this small vignette of American history. The Nolands probably lived in this house for only a year or two.<sup>109</sup>

Not long after Ethel Noland had watched a segment of Coxey's Army marched down West Maple Avenue in 1894, the Noland family moved once again. This time they moved to North

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<sup>108</sup> Carlos A. Schwantes, *Coxey's Army: An American Odyssey* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985).

<sup>109</sup> Ethel Noland's clear remembrance of seeing a segment of Coxey's Army while her family lived on West Maple Avenue helps confirm the Nolands' residence on West Maple Avenue in 1894. Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 45-46.

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Liberty Street at the corner of White Oak Street.<sup>110</sup> Here they spent roughly six years, from the latter part of 1894 to August 1900.<sup>111</sup> During these six years, Ruth Noland grew to young adulthood and married, and Nellie and Ethel took part in all the school and summertime activities typical of Independence youth at that time. Both Nellie and Ethel attended the Ott School (no longer standing) at the corner of Liberty and College streets, a short distance from their home. Both grade school and high school classes were held in the Ott School. Nellie received most of her grade school and all of her high school education there. She graduated from high school in 1898 at age seventeen, after the nine to ten years of public schooling (normally received between the ages of seven and seventeen). Ethel began grade school at the Ott School and remained there until her last year of high school, probably her tenth year in school. Both Nellie and Ethel were considered excellent students, according to one of their teachers.<sup>112</sup>

During the Nolands' residence on North Liberty Street, from about 1894 to the summer of 1900, Uncle John and Aunt Matt Truman and their three children were living in Independence, first on South Chrysler Avenue (late 1890 to about 1896) and later, on West Waldo Street (1896 to 1903). Although Harry S Truman attended different schools (Noland School and the Columbian High School, completed in 1893) than Nellie and Ethel Noland, cousin Harry often came to visit the Nolands on North Liberty Street. Their close ages and residences helped the three youngsters develop a friendly relationship.<sup>113</sup>

At their home on North Liberty Street, the Noland family celebrated the first and only marriage among their three Noland daughters. In early May 1898, twenty-two year-old Ruth Truman Noland



**Ruth Truman Noland, Joseph and Ella Noland's oldest daughter and the only child to wed, married Robert Verner Ragland in early May 1898.** Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library.

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<sup>110</sup> Ardis Ragland Haukenberry, "Childhood Memories of North Delaware Street," typescript, no date, Historian's Files, Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>111</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 68.

<sup>112</sup> Mrs. W. L. C. Palmer interview, 18 January 1962, 8.

<sup>113</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 59-60, 62-63, 68; Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs, Vol. I, Year of Decisions* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1955), 115.

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married twenty-four year-old Robert Verner Ragland.<sup>114</sup> The groom's family had migrated from Kentucky to Westport, Missouri, many years earlier. Robert Ragland worked as a clerk in the Santa Fe Railroad offices in Kansas City when he and Ruth Noland married. The newlyweds took up residence in Kansas City (first on Spring Street off Broadway, then, on East 12<sup>th</sup> Street in the new district of Dixon Park). On August 4, 1899, the first of their three children, Helen Ardis Ragland, was born on Spring Street in Kansas City. A little more than three years later, on October 17, 1902, Robert Truman Ragland was born in the Dixon Park neighborhood of Kansas City. Their last child, Josephine Noland Ragland, arrived on December 24, 1904. Robert Ragland died before the birth of his third child.<sup>115</sup>

A year earlier, during the devastating Missouri River flood of 1903, Robert Ragland had stayed damp and chilled while marooned for several hours in the Santa Fe Railroad offices in Kansas City. He contracted pneumonia. By the spring of 1904, he had developed tuberculosis. In an effort to improve his health, Ragland and an aunt (a nurse) went west, first to Arizona, then to California. Following her husband's departure, Ruth Noland Ragland and her two young children went to live with her parents and two sisters. The devastating news of Robert's death reached the Noland and Ragland families in mid-November 1904. He had died on November 6, 1904, in Indio, southern California (southeast of Los Angeles and near present-day Palm Springs). Noland was thirty years old. About ten days later, his body arrived in Independence. Funeral services were conducted at the home of Joseph and Ella Noland. Six weeks later, on December 24, 1904, twenty-eight year-old Ruth Ragland gave birth to her third child, Josephine, in the Noland family home.<sup>116</sup>

**Noland Family at 216 North Delaware Street**  
**1900-1906**

By 1904, the Noland family had moved to the two-story Queen Anne style house at 216 North Delaware Street, across the street from the Gates family residence at 219 Delaware Street. According to Ethel Noland, then sixteen years old, she and her

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<sup>114</sup> *Jackson Examiner*, 14 May 1898.

<sup>115</sup> Haukenberry, handwritten history of Ragland-Haukenberry families on "First National Bank Safe Deposit Co." stationary, Gentry Collection.

<sup>116</sup> Haukenberry, "Childhood Memories of North Delaware Street," typescript, no date, Historian's Files, Truman National Historic Site; Mrs. H. H. (Ardis) Haukenberry, interview by Ron Cockrell, 14 June 1983, transcript of taped interview, 1, 5, and Haukenberry, interview by Cockrell, 2, March 1984, transcript of taped interview, 21; both at Harry S Truman National Historic Site. Also see *Jackson Examiner*, 25 November 1904.



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parents and sister, Nellie, moved into the North Delaware Street house in August 1900. The immediate past renters had been a family named Taliaferro (or Tolivers), whose daughter had been a childhood friend of Ethel Noland. For the next eight years, Joseph and Ella Noland rented this house before Ella (Margaret Ellen) Noland bought it from Anthony and Maria Slack in July 1908 for \$2,300. The aging Slack couple that lived next door in a rambling, ornately decorated Italianate style home at the corner of North Delaware Street and Truman Road (then named "West Blue Avenue" and soon afterward renamed to "West Van Horn Road") had owned the property since December 1865. They probably substantially transformed an older dwelling, around 1886-1887, into the modestly decorated Queen Anne style house that the Noland family moved into in 1900. When the Noland family moved into the house, Joseph and Ella Noland were in their early fifties;

Nellie had just turned nineteen, and Ethel, almost seventeen, had just completed high school at the new Chrisman



**Nellie Noland (left) and Ethel Noland (right) as young women around the time that the Noland family moved into the old Slack house at 216 North Delaware Street.** Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library.

High School, built in 1898, about a block away (at the corner of West Maple Avenue and North Pleasant Street). Beginning in 1904 and continuing for the next seventeen years, the four Noland family members shared the house with young widow Ruth Noland Ragland and her three small children.<sup>117</sup>

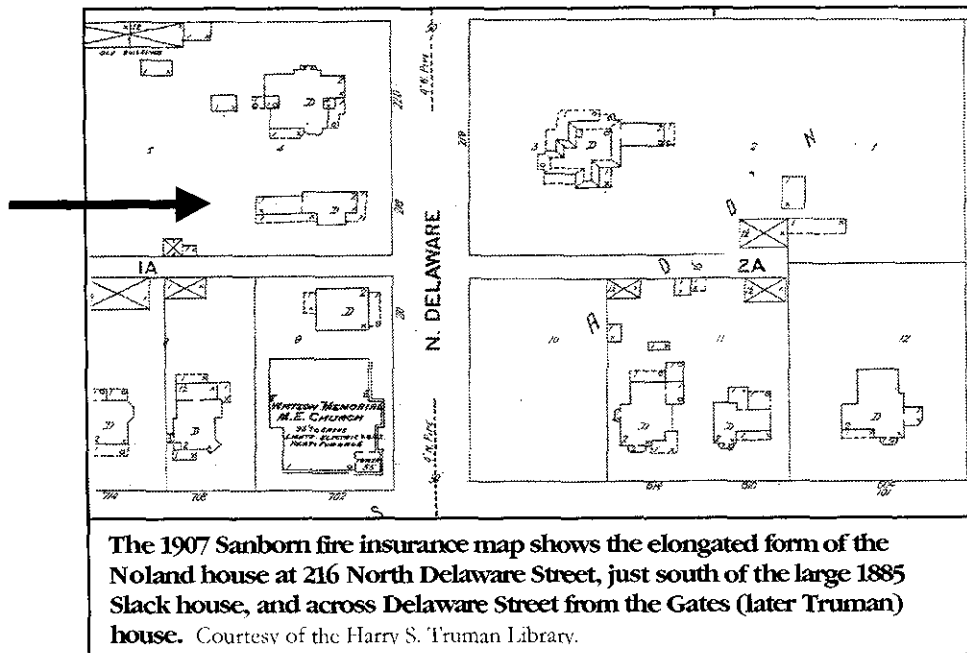
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<sup>117</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 63, 68; "Anthony T. Slack and Maria M. Slack, his wife, to Margaret Ellen Noland," warranty deed, July 20, 1908, Book 281, p. 416, Jackson County Courthouse, Independence, Missouri; Haukenberry, "Childhood Memories of North Delaware Street"; Haukenberry interview, 2 March

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Noland House and Neighborhood

In the early 1900s, the Noland's new home on North Delaware Street stood in a residential neighborhood with gracious moderate- and large-sized gracious homes on 50- to 150-foot-wide lots that lined tree-shaded streets a few blocks north of the courthouse square. At the time, the majority of homes in the neighborhood probably dated from the 1870s and 1880s and displayed characteristic design features typical of the Italianate and Queen Anne architectural styles, popular at that time. Turned spindle work in the gable ends and on porches, decorative wood shingles and a variety of other wood and stucco siding materials, and porches that wrapped around irregular-shaped, one- and two-story house forms were characteristic features of the Noland house and other homes in the neighborhood.



Outbuildings of various sizes, including a few shelters for the new family automobile, stood in the rear yards of many homes in the area. In the fall of 1907, a Sanborn Map Company fire insurance map of Independence depicted the Noland house with a one-story porch that wrapped around the front and south side of the main two-story portion of the house. An elongated one-story section extended to the rear, with a second porch

1984, 20; *Independence, Missouri, City Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: Gate City Directory, Company, 1924).

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running along its south wall. (The small, two-story projecting section on the south wall had not yet been constructed.) A coal furnace in the basement heated the Noland house early on, according to Ardis Haukenberry; a hole was eventually cut in the ceiling of the first floor to allow heat to reach the upstairs bedrooms. Two small outbuildings stood in the rear yard of the Noland house along the alley.

Historic photographs taken in the first decade of the 1900s give more information about the Noland house. The exterior sheathing was horizontal clapboard, as it is in 2000. The house appears to have been painted two or three light shades. Although there are no shutters on the main two-story portion of the house; however, shutters did frame at least one window on the first floor of the rear elevation. The wrap-around front porch appears to have been encircled with a low railing with turned individual balusters and supporting porch posts (unlike the square porch posts that exist in 2000). The same decorative cutout patterned skirting that is present in 2000 encircled the porch below its floor in the early 1900s. Five or six wide wood steps led up to the porch. Luxurious vines covered the first-floor main facade of the house just north of the porch. A low pointed picket fence extended across the raised terraced front yard. Unpainted waist-high fences ran along the alley on the south and the rear and north side property lines. A concrete path led from the front yard, through the south side yard around the bulkhead; it probably ended at the open south side porch. Large shrubs encircled the house's foundation, and small trees shaded the front and south side yards. A wooden swing with two suspended benches facing each other stood in the south side yard next to the alley.<sup>118</sup>

Directly across North Delaware Street, in 1907, stood the expansive three- and two-story Gates house (later Wallace and Truman house) with wrap-around porches, which occupied a quarter of that block. Gnarled old fruit trees grew on a lot adjoining and just south of the Gates house. South of the Noland house was the new substantial red brick Watson Memorial Methodist-Episcopal Church, with its main arched entrance below a square bell tower, at the corner of North Delaware Street and West Maple Avenue.<sup>119</sup> Built in 1903, the church was illuminated with electric and gas lights. Around 1905-1906 the

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<sup>118</sup> *Independence, Missouri*, September 1907 (New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1907); Haukenberry interview, 14 June 1983, 13, 15; several historic photographs of the Noland house in the early 1900s, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>119</sup> The Watson Memorial Methodist-Episcopal Church replaced a brick church, probably known as the Rock Street Methodist-Episcopal Church and constructed around 1867, a few yards south of the alley bordering the Noland property. The name Rock Street was changed to West Maple around 1886-87. *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 657.

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Methodist-Episcopal Church congregation had built a parsonage just north of the church and south of the alley that ran along the southern border of the Noland house property. A block away, at the northwest corner of West Maple Avenue and North Pleasant Street, stood the new two-story high school with its electric- and gas-lit classrooms, central auditorium, and library and manual training wing. Not far away, a tennis court at Woodland College (near the corner of West Waldo and Union Street) was a popular gathering place for the neighborhood children and young adults.<sup>120</sup>

Years later, those who lived or spent time in the North Delaware Street neighborhood in the early 1900s remembered it fondly as a grand place to grow up. For the Ragland children, who lived in the Noland house from 1904 to the early 1920s, there were exciting times spent in the large back yard of the Slack house (destroyed in 1924), investigating the barn where a cow and chickens were kept, and building tree houses with the Slacks' grandchildren who came with their parents, Lulu Slack and Columbus Brown, from Herrin, Illinois, to visit each summer. Many other neighborhood yards, including those of the David and Madge Wallace house further north on North Delaware Street, had enormous and inviting trees with outstretched limbs to perch on.



**Ethel Noland, who helped raise Ardis Ragland, stands in the picket-fence-enclosed rear yard of the Noland house (with the rear of the Slack mansion visible in the background), around 1905.** Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library.

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<sup>120</sup> *Independence, Missouri*, September 1907; (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1907); Ethel Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 72.

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The three Ragland children also delighted in exploring the Methodist-Episcopal Church parsonage during its construction (built around 1905-06), after the workmen left at the end of the day. The luxuriant gardens of many of the houses on North Delaware Street north of the Noland house provided a wonderful playground for the young Ragland and other neighborhood children.

The beautiful gardens behind the Paxton house became the staging ground for summer operettas, in which all the children along North Delaware Street took part. There were birthday parties of other neighborhood children to attend.<sup>121</sup> At the north end of Delaware Street, a wooded area with abundant mushrooms (in the spring), birds, and wildflowers served as a nature park for summertime Sunday afternoon rambles of the three Ragland children and their grandfather Joseph T. Noland, known to the Ragland children as "Daddy." Closer to home and across the street on the Gates property, Ardis Ragland (Haukenberry) remembered spending many happy hours playing in the Gates house attic and their barn with young Fred Wallace, who, with his sister, Bess, two brothers, George and Frank, and mother, had moved into the house in 1904. Young Fred Wallace and Ardis Ragland, who were the same age, watched Halley's Comet through Fred's telescope from the roof of the Noland House. "Many hot croquet games were played on the north lawn" of the Gates house with Fred Wallace," Ardis reminisced many years later.<sup>122</sup>

### Noland and Truman Families Visit

The Noland house itself became a gathering place for friends and family during these years, and a place where Nellie and Ethel Noland developed an endearing and enduring relationship, which continued throughout the years, with their cousin Harry S Truman. After the Nolands moved to 216 North Delaware Street, the Truman family, living then on nearby West Waldo, was only about three blocks away. "We saw each other very often," Ethel Noland recalled, "because going uptown . . . and going to [high] school [located at Pleasant and West Maple] he had to pass here every day."<sup>123</sup> During the 1900-1901 school year, Harry and Bessie (as she was known by many) Wallace, who were in the same class and attended the same high school, would often meet in the Noland house to study with the Noland sisters, who had graduated just ahead of their cousin Harry.<sup>124</sup> "When it came

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<sup>121</sup> *Jackson Examiner*, 24 November 1911, Vertical Files: "Noland Family." Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>122</sup> Haukenberry, "Childhood Memories of North Delaware Street"; Ardis Haukenberry interview, 14 June 1983, 2.

<sup>123</sup> *Ethel Noland interview*, 23 August 1965, 69.

<sup>124</sup> Mrs. W. L. C. Palmer interview, 18 January, 1962, 8.

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to Latin," Ethel Noland remembered, "my sister was very good at it and they would come over here to read their Latin with Nellie. I don't know whether they got much Latin read or not because there was a lot of fun going on."<sup>125</sup> By his senior year in high school in 1900-1901, Harry had become interested in fencing, which he would sometimes practice at the Noland house with cousins Nellie and Ethel and Bessie Wallace. "We had the porch and had a room here to play and have fun, generally, which we did, with a little Latin intermingled, maybe . . . I'm afraid Caesar had a very slim chance with all that was going on," Ethel Noland reminisced.<sup>126</sup>

Looking back at the early 1900s, a half century later, Harry S Truman also recalled that he had spent a lot of time with his Aunt Ella and her three daughters. In his *Memoirs* Truman explained that he started going to his Aunt Ella's house to study algebra and Latin about twice a week with cousins Nellie and Ethel, who had both graduated from high school by the end of 1900. "We grew up and went to school with cousins Nellie and Ethel Noland. . . . Nellie would translate my Latin lesson for me when I was in high school, and I would escort Ethel to parties and learn how to be polite from her. Incidentally," Truman noted, "my beautiful young lady with the blue eyes and golden hair" joined in these playful sessions at the Noland house. "We [Nellie, Ethel, Harry, and Bess] were always just good playmates and good comrades," Ethel Noland characterized their relationship many years later.<sup>127</sup>

The Nolands always welcomed young Harry in their home and delighted in his visits. "Harry was always fun," and "he was a great peacemaker, surely," Ethel Noland remembered. "He was full of fun but he never seemed to get into the scrapes that the other boys did."<sup>128</sup> When the Truman family was still living in Independence (until 1903), Harry would sometimes come by the house and take his cousins to a party in a horse and buggy. "He and his sister, Mary Jane, were often at their Aunt Ella's home," Ardis Haukenberry remembered from her childhood growing up in the Noland house. They had great fun together. [Second] cousin Harry had a "special doorbell ring and whenever we heard it we rushed to the door knowing that we'd have fun and music." Haukenberry recalled that two of Harry Truman's favorite pieces were *Spring Song* and *Melody in F*, which he played with great flamboyance on the Noland's upright piano in the front parlor. When Haukenberry's younger sister, Josephine ("Jodie") Ragland,

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<sup>125</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 70-71.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 August 1965, 71.

<sup>127</sup> Truman, *Memoirs, Vol. I, Year of Decisions*, 115, 122; Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 71.

<sup>128</sup> Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 71; Ethel Noland interview, 9 September 1965, 80.

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was four years old (1908-1909), Harry Truman "set her on the piano bench with him and taught her to play *Chopsticks*."<sup>129</sup> Mary Jane Truman played jacks with the children on the front room floor.

At one Christmas dinner that the Trumans shared with the Nolands, Nellie Noland forgot to add sugar to the dinner's cranberry sauce, causing everyone to pucker from its tartness. For years, Harry Truman teased his cousin Nellie about that cranberry sauce; his reminders not to forget the all-important ingredient of sugar came from far places as his career in politics took him further and further from Independence. His playfulness was not limited to cousin Nellie. He often joked with his cousin Ethel, who became the family genealogist, about quieting any discoveries she might make about unsavory characters on the family tree. "His sense of humor never left him," Ardis Haukenberry clearly remembered, and he never failed to share it with the Noland family.<sup>130</sup>

Harry Truman's visits to the Noland house became somewhat less frequent after, first, he took a job in a bank and moved to Kansas City in 1903 and, later, he moved with his family back to the Young-Truman farm in Grandview in 1905-1906. The Trumans and the fun shared by everyone who took part in gatherings and outings with them were no less memorable, however. When Harry Truman lived on East 29<sup>th</sup> Street in Kansas City with the family of Emily Truman Colgan, his father's sister, Harry's four Colgan cousins and two other boarders in the spacious Colgan house often gave parties and played practical jokes on each other. Sometimes Nellie and Ethel Noland were invited to attend these gatherings and take part in the merriment. Other times they learned second-hand from Harry of the practical jokes played by these young people.

Many years later, Ethel Noland recalled one of the most outlandish pranks ever played by Harry and others. One summer day while the young people in the Colgan house, including Harry Truman, went to the Missouri River for a picnic, two boys in the party (Fred Colgan and Edwin Green) decided it would be great fun to send their names and addresses in a bottle down the river, hoping it might be retrieved. Others in the group of picnickers saw this as a wonderful opportunity to play a hilarious practical joke on the message authors. Secretly they composed a letter, signed by two imaginary girls who supposedly found the bottle on the banks of the Mississippi River, and mailed it to the two boys

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<sup>129</sup> Ardis R. Haukenberry, "Younger Cousin Records Memories," *Jackson County Historical Society* (March 1973), 6; Haukenberry, "Childhood Memories of North Delaware Street."

<sup>130</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 9 September 1965, 82-83; Haukenberry, "Younger Cousin Records Memories," 7.

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who had set the bottle afloat. Correspondence, including large self-portraits, between Colgan and Green and the pranksters pretending to be the two girls soon began. After several exchanges, Fred Colgan and Edwin Green became quite infatuated with the girls, and vowed to go and visit them. The charade continued for weeks, much to the delight of the pranksters, including Harry Truman, who posed as the two girls.

"You've just got to tell them that there's nothing to it," insisted Ella Noland one day when Harry Truman was visiting the Noland family. "It's a myth"! Very reluctantly the pranksters revealed their practical joke to Colgan and Green. "Yes, Harry was in on it," Ethel Noland recounted, "and enjoyed it!"<sup>131</sup>

Harry Truman's visits to the Noland house at 216 North Delaware Street continued after he left the Colgan house and moved to a Kansas City boarding house that was closer to his bank job. Harry made some close friends there. One of them that he brought to see the Nolands was "a young lady . . . [whom] he liked very much," Ethel Noland recalled.<sup>132</sup> One of these women may have been Casby Bailey or Ida Trow, both of whom he entertained with piano tunes and sometimes invited on picnics during his residence at the boarding house.<sup>133</sup> Harry Truman also brought some young men who worked at the bank to the Noland house. Sometimes he came by with James Wright, long-time friend whom he first met when the Truman family lived on Waldo Avenue in Independence. On these and other occasions, Nellie and Ethel Noland, Harry and his friend(s) might play a game called "high five." Other times they might go to the theatre together, especially after Harry Truman began ushering at the Shubert Theatre in Kansas City on Saturdays. Picnics were a favorite summertime activity of the Noland sisters, Harry, and their friends.<sup>134</sup>

### **Passages at the Noland House, 1906-1923**

Harry Truman's relationship with the Noland family remained intimate during his years on the Young-Truman farm near Grandview and his years in the army, and afterward. During this period of renewed growth and optimism across the country and in Independence, members of three generations of the Noland family grew to adulthood, matured in their professions, aged, and died at 216 North Delaware Street. The

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<sup>131</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 9 September 1965, 94-96.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 September 1965, 98.

<sup>133</sup> Jonathan Daniels, *The Man of Independence* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1950), 70.

<sup>134</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 9 September 1965, 97-100.



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combined departure of the Ragland family and the death of Joseph Tilford Noland between 1921 and 1923 brought great change to the Noland house.

### Noland-Ragland Family

For most of the seventeen years between 1906 and 1923, after first arriving in 1904, Joseph and Ella Noland's oldest daughter, widow Ruth Noland Ragland, and her three children continued to live in the Noland house at 216 North Delaware Street. Ruth Ragland's youngest daughter, Josephine Noland Ragland, spent most of her first nineteen years at the Noland House, attending the Ott School and graduating from the William Chrisman High School in Independence. Around 1921 she began coursework at the Kansas City Teacher's College; within the next year or two she started teaching the first grade at the Manchester School in Kansas City.<sup>135</sup> Ruth Noland Ragland's second child, Robert Truman Ragland, lived in the house from age four to age twenty-one during the same period. He, too, attended the Ott School and excelled academically. In the fifth grade, he won the prized McCoy Medal, given by the Independence school district for spelling and academic excellence. After graduating from William Chrisman High School in 1921, he began his adult working life as a collector at the First National Bank in Kansas City.<sup>136</sup>

Ruth Ragland's oldest child, Ardis Ragland, who had arrived in the Noland house at age five, also received the coveted McCoy Medal in grade 4 at the Ott School in 1910. ("Helen" had been dropped from her name two years earlier since there were so many teachers named "Helen" in the Ott School at that time.) At her high school graduation, in 1916, Ardis received another award, the English medal for an essay she had written about the Greek gods and goddesses. Following in the footsteps of her aunts Nellie and Ethel, who both were teachers, Ardis then entered Kansas City Teachers' College. She roomed with her Aunt Sadie Compton, sister of her deceased father, on Woodland (Burton) Avenue in Kansas City. Following graduation in 1920, Ardis began teaching the third grade in Longfellow School (at 29<sup>th</sup> and Holmes) in Kansas City. In 1922 she and a group of close friends attended summer school at the University of California at Berkeley. While there, Ardis delighted in exploring all the attractions of the Bay Area. She celebrated her twenty-third birthday in California, before returning to Longfellow School where she continued teaching for the next fourteen years, until

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<sup>135</sup> "Mrs. J. A. Southern Dies" and "Death Summons Mrs. Southern, 32, of Independence," Newspaper Clippings, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>136</sup> Charles Burke, "McCoy Medal Will Honor Top Students," *Independence Examiner*, 18 January 1984; *Independence, Missouri City Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: Gate City Directory Company, 1924).

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1936. Finally, Ruth Ragland, after raising her three children, began working as a telephone operator in Kansas City, a job that her brother-in-law, John McCoy, helped her secure, probably in the late 1910s.<sup>137</sup>

The Ragland family moved out of the Noland house in the early 1920s, probably 1921, after the youngest Ragland child, Josephine, had graduated from high school in Independence. Around that same time, Ruth and her oldest child, Ardis, finished fixing up an old farmhouse in Fairland Heights (between Independence and Kansas City), bought with insurance money Ruth Ragland received after the death of her husband in 1904. The Ragland family soon moved into this house at 10105 East 18<sup>th</sup> (an address later changed to 9515 East 18<sup>th</sup>) Street in Fairland Heights. The Ragland family continued living on East 18<sup>th</sup> Street for the next several years.<sup>138</sup>

The Noland Women

Both Nellie and Ethel Noland, (Aunt Nellie and Aunt Ethel to the Ragland children), helped raise Ruth's three children and were intimately involved in their childhood activities and education during the Ragland family's residence at 216 North Delaware.



**Joseph Noland holds his granddaughter, Josephine Ragland, on the south side of the Noland house.** Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library.

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<sup>137</sup> Helen Ardis Ragland Haukenberry, handwritten history of Ragland-Haukenberry families on "First National Bank Safe Deposit Co." stationary, Gentry Collection, Jackson County Courthouse.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*; Ardis Haukenberry interview, 14 June 1983.

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Between 1906 and 1923, Nellie and Ethel Noland were also establishing their respective teaching careers in the Independence and Kansas City school districts. As early as 1898, Nellie Noland had begun teaching as a substitute in the Independence school district. Before long, she secured a permanent teaching position at the Ott School (at Liberty and College) in Independence, where she taught into the mid-1910s. Around 1915, she began teaching at the Bristol School.<sup>139</sup> Two years younger than Nellie, Ethel Noland, who graduated from high school in 1900, probably also began teaching as a substitute by 1902 or 1903. By 1908, she had secured a full-time position teaching at the Noland School in Independence. She stayed there until the late 1910s, when she took a position at the Benjamin Harrison School in Kansas City. During this period, both Nellie and Ethel were active members of the Baptist Church in Independence (first located at Pleasant and Truman Road and, later moved to West Maple Avenue and Osage).

By the early 1920s, they both may have begun teaching Sunday school to adult church members, one of their long-term activities. They also both may have started quilting by that time. Always interested in cultural pursuits, Ethel may have taken up painting by this time, an artistic endeavor she continued for many years.<sup>140</sup>

Their mother Ella (Margaret Ellen) Truman Noland, who was fifty-seven when the Raglands arrived at the Noland house in 1906 and seventy-two when they left in 1921, oversaw the operation of the Noland house with its eight occupants. She continued all the myriad chores involved in keeping house, and she



**Ethel Noland strolls along the path on the alley side of the Noland house.** Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>139</sup> "School Notes," *Independence Sentinel*, 10 December 1898; "Miss Nellie Noland, Retired Teacher, Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 8 August 1958.

<sup>140</sup> "Miss Mary Ethel Noland, Truman Cousin, Dies," *Kansas City Times*, 11 August 1971; "Club Section Dedicated to Mary Ethel Noland," *Independence Examiner*, 19 September 1971; *Independence, Missouri, City Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: Gate City Directory Company, 1920); Ethel Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 59; Ardis Haukenberry interview, 14 June 1983, 11; Martha Ann Swoyer, interview by Jon Taylor, 1998, transcript of taped interview, 13, 21, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

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maintained her long-standing reputation as an excellent cook. She always welcomed friends, neighbors, and family, including the Truman family, into her home. Outside her home, she pursued a number of cultural activities. She continued her activities in the Baptist Church in Independence, the Independence Pioneers Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the United Daughters of the Confederacy (eventually disbanded).<sup>141</sup>

#### Harry Truman and the Nolands

Harry Truman remained an extended member of the Noland family during his years from 1906 to 1917 on the Young-Truman farm about one-and-one-half miles from Grandview. Although he came to Independence less often after first moving to the farm, his visits became more frequent when he learned the farm routines and became familiar with the public transportation that circuitously linked Grandview and Independence, about fifteen miles apart. "He was in and out of here a good deal, and



**Left to right, standing: Nellie, Harry S Truman, and Ethel; seated: William Truman, Joseph Noland, and Ella Noland during a 1910s family gathering at 216 North Delaware Street.** Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library.

just whenever he wanted to be," Ethel Noland remembered about his early years on the farm.<sup>142</sup> The Nolands also visited the Trumans on their Grandview farm. Nellie and Ethel sometimes came in the summer to see Aunt Mat and Uncle John, to help with some of the chores, and enjoy themselves with Harry and other relatives. The Noland family was often invited to the farm to celebrate holidays, like Christmas, with close friends and family

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<sup>141</sup> "Noland Services," *Independence Examiner*, 1 October 1948.

<sup>142</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 9 September 1965, 87.

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relatives, like the Colgans and Hornbuckles. The Noland family spent several days in Grandview during the Christmas holidays of 1914, according to Harry Truman in a letter to Bess Wallace.<sup>143</sup>

Visits to the Noland house took on a special meaning when 216 North Delaware Street became the base of operations for Harry's courtship of Bess Wallace, who lived directly across the street at 219 North Delaware Street. Harry's reintroduction to Bess Wallace, with whom he had little or no contact since they had graduated from high school together in 1901, began in 1910 with the infamous cake plate incident.

The Noland house provided the setting for this memorable story, which, over the years, reached almost mythic proportions in the annals of Truman family folklore. "Yes," Ethel Noland affirmed many years later, "that's one legend that's true." Noland went on to tell the story. Mrs. Wallace was very neighborly and she loved to send things. Oh, we did back and forth. . . . She would send over a nice dessert or something, just to share it, and here was a plate. We hadn't taken it back and I said [to Harry], 'Why don't you take that plate home; it's been around here a few days.' 'I certainly will,' Harry announced. And with that, he seized the cake plate "with something approaching the speed of light" and walked across the street to 219 Delaware Street, Margaret Truman wrote in her biography of her father.<sup>144</sup> Bess Wallace happened to open the door after hearing the front doorbell ring; their courtship began soon thereafter.<sup>145</sup>

Now the Noland house became not only a place to enjoy the conviviality and close friendship of his cousins and his Aunt Ella; it also became the staging ground for Harry's courtship of Bess Wallace. Harry now visited the Nolands much more often. Harry's Aunt Ella Noland later remembered that he composed a special piano piece, which he played at the Nolands, whose dominant theme sounded something like the special whistles that Bess Wallace and her friends used to signal each other.<sup>146</sup> "He could stay here very easily, which he did, sometimes two or three times a week," Ethel Noland recalled years later. "He'd come here first and get all freshened up before he went to see his lady love," Ardis Ragland Haukenberry remembered from her teenage years living in the Noland house.<sup>147</sup> "He would stay here all night [in the front parlor or on a sofa in the living room] if he had a date over there [at the Wallace house], because it was a long trip to go out there. . . . That was before he got the Stafford," Ethel

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<sup>143</sup> Harry S Truman to Bess Wallace, December 1914, Family Correspondence File, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>144</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 9 September 1965, 103.

<sup>145</sup> Margaret Truman, *Bess W. Truman* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 30.

<sup>146</sup> Alfred Steinberg, *The Man From Missouri: The Life and Times of Harry S. Truman* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1962), 28.

<sup>147</sup> Ardis Haukenberry interview, 14 June 1983, 6.

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added.<sup>148</sup> Before he bought the Stafford automobile, Harry came to Independence on the Kansas City Southern and the "Frisco" (St. Louis and San Francisco) railroads, according to his cousin Ethel, "which came [through Grandview] to Sheffield [west of Independence], and then he could get on the streetcar and come on in to Independence."<sup>149</sup>

Harry Truman's overnight stays in the Noland house became less frequent when, in 1914, his mother gave him \$650 to buy a used 1911 Stafford automobile. Truman's five-passenger Stafford, usually driven open, was one of about 314 manufactured by Terry Stafford in Topeka (and later in Kansas City). Truman was then able to travel between Grandview and Independence on Blue Ridge Boulevard whenever he pleased, not according to the train and streetcar schedules, and he could return to Grandview at night after a full day with Bess and others, taking care of farm business, or attending Masonic and other cultural activities.<sup>150</sup>

Summer outings in the Stafford became a regular occurrence. Over the next three years, Harry often invited Bess and Wallace family members, Nellie and Ethel Noland, and other family and friends to join him on adventures. In the warmer months, this cohort of young adults often went on picnics to the Missouri River waterworks near Sugar Creek, fishing expeditions on the Little or Big Blue rivers, and jaunts through the countryside in the "machine." Harry's good times with Bess, the Noland sisters, the Wallace family, and others continued until the spring of 1917, when the United States declared war against Germany and entered the Great War (World War I). Harry Truman enlisted in the army, sold his Stafford, and was away at war until the early summer of 1919.<sup>151</sup>

During Harry Truman's two years away in the army, he wrote to the Noland family often, as he noted in his frequent letters to Bess Wallace, to whom he was then engaged.<sup>152</sup> None of his letters to his favorite aunt and cousins, however, have apparently survived. A month after his return to Independence from the war, in June 1919, Harry and Bess were married, after a nine-year courtship. The Nolands attended the wedding. Many years later, Ethel Noland remembered well Truman's radiance that day. Not long after that, the newlyweds took up residence in the Gates-Wallace house across the street from the Noland house. Although greatly involved in the daily lives of the Wallace family—

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<sup>148</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 9 September 1965, 86.

<sup>149</sup> Ethel Noland interview, 9 September 1965, 84; Jane Wall, "When Independence Knew Them as 'Harry and Bess'," *Kansas City Star*, 15 April 1945.

<sup>150</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983), 162.

<sup>151</sup> David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 92-93.

<sup>152</sup> Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 286.

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Bess's mother, who lived with the Truman couple, and her two brothers who lived with their wives in separate Bungalow-style houses next door to the large Gates-Wallace house—Harry often dropped in on the Nolands. Holidays continued to be a special time for Noland family visits. Harry began his regular practice of walking across the street on Thanksgiving and Christmas to spend time with the Nolands at 219 North Delaware Street.

Between 1919 and 1923, the Nolands witnessed, first-hand, Harry Truman's three-year experiment with business, as co-owner of a Kansas City haberdashery, and his first venture into local politics, as the judge (county commissioner) for the rural eastern portion of Jackson County. The Noland family remained busy with their own full lives during these four years. Joseph Noland had by then retired from the real estate business and completed his final two-year term on the Independence City Council. Ruth Ragland and her three children, then adults, had finished their education in Independence schools and moved out of the Noland house. Nellie Noland was teaching at the Bristol School in Kansas City. Ethel Noland then taught at the Benjamin School.

Joseph T. Noland

Ella Noland's husband, Joseph T. Noland, fifty-nine-year-old family patriarch in 1906 and the only man in the Noland house other than young Robert Ragland, became a surrogate father to his Ragland grandchildren. Joseph Noland's deep involvement with his daughter's children may have been spurred by Noland's poignant memory of losing both of his own parents at a young age. Outside the home, Joseph Noland continued to pursue real estate, acting as a department manager in the Walter Rider Real Estate Company around 1906. He may have started his own real estate business soon afterwards. In 1911 and 1914, Noland's real estate office was located in the First National Bank building on the courthouse square. Noland retired in the mid-1910s when he was in his late sixties. Joseph Noland became actively involved in city government late in his life. He served his first two-year term on the Independence City Council from 1910 to 1912, under Mayor Llewellyn Jones. He then served two additional two-year terms, from 1914 to 1916 and from 1916 to 1918, while Christian Ott, Jr., was mayor of Independence. Noland continued his active involvement in the Baptist Church, serving as a deacon. Joseph Noland gained a widespread reputation for his integrity, strong sense of justice, and service to the Independence community.<sup>153</sup>

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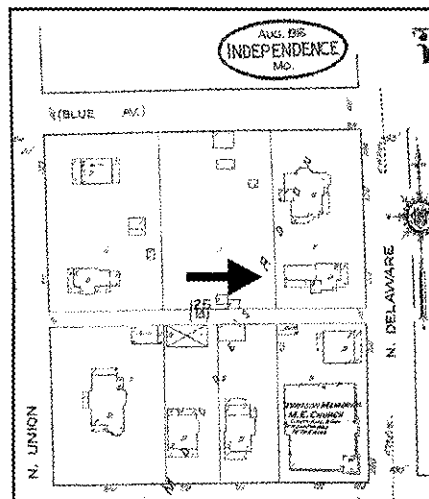
<sup>153</sup> *City Directories of the United States, Kansas City, Missouri, 1905*, (microfilm, Reel 4) Woodbridge, Conn.: Research Publications, Inc., 1986; *Independence City Director*, (Kansas City, Mo.: Gate City Directory Company, 1911 and 1914); Pearl

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Life in the Noland house changed dramatically in the early 1920s. Not long after the Ragland family moved into their own house, the Nolands lost their family patriarch. On January 30, 1923, Joseph Tilford Noland died at age seventy-five at 216 North Delaware Street. Not only the Noland family, but also the Independence community felt a deep sense of loss with his death. The community's high regard for Noland was expressed in his obituary.

Joseph T. Noland is written in the minds of those who knew him well as a good citizen. He was always on the side of right and justice. His life was unostentatious and simple. . . . Mr. Noland gave his service to the community whenever called upon to do so and his long life in Independence helped to make the city a better place in which to live.<sup>154</sup>

Funeral services took place at the Noland home at 216 North Delaware Street.



**Noland House over the Years**

In the early 1920s, the Noland house and yard had changed in only minor ways since the family moved to the property in 1900. By then a very small two-story flat-roofed addition had been built on the south side wall, immediately behind the stairwell. It contained a bedroom on each floor. Sanborn Company fire

**This August 1916 Sanborn fire insurance company map of Independence depicts the Noland house after a small, two-story addition was made on the south wall, probably in the early 1910s when the house had eight occupants.**

insurance maps show that this addition was made between 1907 and 1916. It may have been made around 1913 or 1914, when the house's eight occupants felt that the young teenage Ragland children should have their own bedrooms.

Wilcox, *Independence and 20th Century Pioneers. The Years from 1900 to 1928*, (Independence, Mo.: Pearl Wilcox, 1979), 269, 278-79, 351, 375.

<sup>154</sup> "Joseph T. Noland, Dead," *Jackson Examiner*, 2 February 1923.



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The house may have been painted a different color on the outside; the cornerboards appear to be a darker color than they were in the early 1900s. Perhaps some of the rooms received fresh wallpaper around the time the small new addition was constructed on the south wall. The luxuriant vine framing the front porch and shrubbery and trees in the yard had matured and grown larger. But the low picket fence across the front property line and the higher slate fences encircle the side and rear yards were little changed since the early 1900s.

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## **Chapter 9**

### **Noland Family and House 1923-1991**

#### **Introduction**

#### **Growing Older in the Noland House, 1923-1948**

Ruth Noland Ragland Family  
Nellie and Ethel Noland  
Ella (Margaret Ellen) Noland

#### **The Nolands and Harry S Truman, 1923-1953**

#### **Slowing Down and Continuing in the Old Home, 1948-1971**

The Nolands and Harry S Truman, 1953-1971  
Ethel and Nellie Noland  
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#### **Ardis Haukenberry Comes Home to 216 North Delaware, 1973-1986**

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#### **Renting the Noland House, 1986-1991**

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**Introduction**

The Noland family entered a new era at 216 North Delaware Street in 1923. Joseph Noland's death in January that year, and the recent departure of the Ragland family with three teenage children, had a profound effect on life in the Noland house. The volatility and uncertainties characteristic of a fluctuating real estate market, which had financially supported the Noland family in varying degrees of prosperity for over thirty years, probably now had little or no place in the family's concerns or even conversation. And the volatility and uncertainties that accompanied living with three growing children also disappeared.

This genesis in the Noland family occurred just as Independence experienced another boom in building construction and growth. During the first two decades of the 1900s known as the Progressive Era, prosperity spread to a larger segment of the Independence population. The construction of numerous small and large Bungalow-style houses in between and even replacing some of Independence's large older homes provided visible evidence of progressive growth. In 1924 the Noland family witnessed this change nearly on their doorstep when elderly Maria Slack, widow of Anthony Slack, sold her palatial Italianate style home next door at the corner of North Delaware Street and moved away from Independence to live with her daughter, Lulu Slack Brown, in Herrin, Illinois. Before the end of the year, the grand old Slack home was demolished and replaced with three small, closely spaced Bungalow-style homes constructed beside (north of) and a three-story brick apartment building built behind (northwest of) the Noland house on the old Slack property.

In the mid-1920s, the Noland house became and remained for more than sixty years the home of mature aging women. Three of the four Noland family women who lived in the house up until 1986 pursued careers as teachers. Their interests focused on public education, church activities, women's study groups, family and local Jackson County history, painting, quilting, gardening, and cultural activities that Independence and nearby Kansas City had to offer. Although the Noland family women made sure the aging Noland house and yard were maintained, the small household of three residents, then two, then one required no additions or substantial alterations.

Independence also underwent continued change between 1923 and 1986. Veterans who returned from World War I became leaders in the commercial and political life of the city in the 1920s and 1930s. Jackson County residents elected Harry S Truman county judge in 1922, 1926, 1930, and 1932. As county judge (similar to county commissioner), Truman helped develop improved and additional roads in the rural farming areas around

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Independence at a time when the automobile had become popularized among a rapidly expanding segment of middle-class Americans. Truman also oversaw the renovation and expansion of the Jackson County Courthouse on the Independence central square, which symbolized the expanding role of all levels of government in planning, regulating, and providing social services to citizens. The Golden Acres Subdivision, the first planned community in Independence made possible by the automobile, came into being in 1931.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, which reached its height of human suffering in 1932-1933, the county and city governments took on an important role in developing and overseeing work relief programs for the unemployed. The Works Progress Administration, in particular, completed many public buildings in the Independence-Kansas City area. Further suburban development continued at an erratic pace. Missouri elected Truman to the U.S. Senate in 1934 and 1940. After serving as Franklin Roosevelt's vice president for only a few weeks in 1945, Harry Truman became the thirty-third president of the United State upon Roosevelt's death in April that year. In 1953 Truman returned to his hometown as a private citizen at the end of his second term as president.

The life and political career of Harry S Truman remained of great interest to all the Noland family women throughout their lives at 216 North Delaware Street. Ella Truman Noland remained Harry Truman's favorite aunt throughout her life. Cousins Nellie and Ethel Noland continued to be his dearest family members and closest confidantes. Truman, throughout his career and retired life, maintained an intimate relationship with the Nolands, by regularly exchanging letters and visiting them when he came home to Independence. Ethel Noland became the nationally recognized authority on Truman-Noland genealogy. Harry Truman routinely turned to Ethel with questions or information about their shared family history.

Independence experienced explosive post-World War II growth that continued for more than three decades. Between 1950 and the mid-1970s, the city's population grew from 37,000 to 120,000 and, during the same period, its land area grew to seventy-eight square miles. The construction of interstate highways and shopping malls began to take their toll on the economic vitality of the heart of old Independence in the 1960s. During this postwar period of booming growth, Noland family members whose own history was intimately linked to the 216 North Delaware Street property aged and died. Truman's favorite aunt, Ella Truman, died in early October 1948 on the eve of Truman's unpredicted re-election as president of the United States. Nellie Truman died just ten years later, in 1958, after

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Truman had been back home living across from the Noland house for only five years. Ruth Noland passed away in 1968. Just as with their birth dates, Ethel Noland preceded Harry Truman in death by only a few months. Ethel's death came in August 1971, thus ending a life-long relationship between the Noland family and Harry Truman. Truman passed away in December 1972.

Ardis Haukenberry, Ruth Ragland's daughter and Truman's second cousin, who had grown up in the Noland house and witnessed young Truman's courtship with Bess Wallace, became the last Noland family member to live at 216 North Delaware Street. Her residence extended from 1973 to 1986. Ardis Haukenberry shared Ethel Noland's deep interest in local history, family genealogy, and Harry Truman. Haukenberry reportedly inherited many of her Aunt Ethel's accumulated family records, along with the Noland house after Ethel's death. Haukenberry, who came back to live in the Noland house, during the last twelve years of her life, delighted in recalling stories about Truman and welcoming visitors to the Truman house across the street at 219 North Delaware Street, which opened to the public in the mid-1980s.

### **Growing Older in the Noland House, 1923-1948**

#### Ruth Noland Ragland Family

After moving from the Noland house in the early 1920s, when all three Ragland children had finished high school in Independence, Ruth Noland Ragland, then in her mid-forties and still widowed, moved with her three children to Fairland Heights west of Independence. All three children, Ardis, Robert, and Josephine ("Jodie"), launched their careers and married lives from their home at 10105 East 18<sup>th</sup> Street (the address later changed to 9515 East 18<sup>th</sup>). Ragland family members lived at this address in Fairland Heights for over thirty-five years. (Ruth Noland Ragland's grandson, John T. Southern and his wife, bought the Ragland house at 9515 East 18<sup>th</sup> after Ruth went to live with her daughter, Ardis Haukenberry, thus continuing family ownership of the house.)<sup>155</sup>

In 1924 Josephine ("Jodie"), Ruth Ragland's youngest daughter, completed her studies at Kansas City Teachers' College. In the fall of that year, at age nineteen, she began teaching the first grade in Manchester School in Kansas City. By 1928,

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<sup>155</sup> Helen Ardis Ragland Haukenberry, handwritten history of Ragland-Haukenberry families on "First National Safe Deposit Company" stationary, no date, Sue Gentry Collection, Jackson County Historical Society, Independence, Missouri; *Polk's Independence City Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: R. L. Polk & Company, 1924, 1926, 1928, 1930, 1932, 1934, 1938, 1940, 1942, 1946, 1950, 1954, and 1957).

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Josephine had moved back to the Noland house at 216 North Delaware, possibly to be closer to her fiancé, James Allen Southern, who lived with his family on South Pleasant Street in Independence.<sup>156</sup> Josephine had completed her fourth year of teaching, when at age twenty-three she married James Allen Southern on September 22, 1928. Southern was the son of Retta Latimer and long-time Jackson County Circuit Court Judge Allen C. Southern, and the grandson of John Nelson Southern. John N. Southern had come to Independence in 1868 after serving in the Confederate Army during the Civil War; he soon became the owner and editor of the *Independence Sentinel* newspaper, which he eventually sold. William Southern, Jr., James Allen Southern's uncle, founded a new Independence newspaper, the *Independence Examiner*. James Allen Southern began his association with the *Examiner* as a young newspaper delivery boy. At the time of his marriage to Josephine Ragland in 1928, twenty-two year-old Southern had just graduated from the University of Missouri's School of Journalism and had begun working on the news staff of the *Examiner*.<sup>157</sup>

The September 22, 1928 marriage of Josephine Ragland and James Allen Southern took place at the First Baptist Church in Independence. Robert and Ardis Ragland, Josephine's older siblings, participated in the ceremony. Four-year-old Margaret Truman, Harry and Bess Truman's first and only child, carrying a basket filled with rose petals, served as the flower girl. Ella Truman Noland, Harry Truman's aunt, hosted a wedding breakfast at 216 North Delaware Street.<sup>158</sup>

The young Southern couple immediately settled down and began a family in Independence. In 1929 the newlyweds lived at 905 West Maple Avenue. James Southern continued in his position as a reporter for the *Independence Examiner*, in which he probably wrote of the political activities of Harry S Truman. Josephine became involved in Baptist Church activities, club work (the Saturday Club), and local history activities. In June 1929, she and her second cousin, Harry S Truman, attended a ceremony in Kansas City to unveil a bronze marker at the grave of their ancestor, Nancy Tyler Holmes.<sup>159</sup> Josephine's attention turned to her home when, on July 17, 1930, she gave birth to her

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<sup>156</sup> Polk's *Independence City Directory*, 1928 and 1930.

<sup>157</sup> John Nelson Southern was the grandfather of both James Allen Southern, who married Josephine Ragland, and Mary Southern, who married George Wallace, thus linking Josephine Ragland and George Wallace by their marriages. W. Z. Hickman, *History of Jackson County, Missouri* (Topeka, Kan.: Historical Publishing Co., 1920), 307-308, 813: "Former Examiner Editor Dies Following Three-Month Illness," *Independence Examiner*, 29 December 1980.

<sup>158</sup> "Ragland-Southern," 22 September 1928, Vertical File: "Newspaper Clippings," Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

<sup>159</sup> "Honor Memory of Pioneer Woman," *Kansas City Times*, 15 June 1929.

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first son, Robert ("Rob") Allen Southern. Two years later, on May 9, 1932, John Tilford Southern was born to Josephine and James Allen Southern. At that time, the Southern family made their home at 224 North Delaware, renting one of the three small new Bungalow style houses constructed in 1924 on the site of the old Slack house. Located at the corner of North Delaware and West Van Horn (Truman Road), the young Southern family was just two doors north of the Noland house at 216 North Delaware and across the street from the Truman home at 219 North Delaware. By 1934, the family had moved to North Union Street and James Allen Southern had become the city editor of the *Independence Examiner*. Not long afterwards, the Southern family moved to North River Boulevard in Independence.<sup>160</sup>

Tragedy descended on the Ragland-Southern family in 1937, just as it had thirty-two years earlier when Josephine's father, Robert Verner Ragland, had died in 1904, two months before her birth. After becoming seriously ill with abdominal pain in late April 1937, Josephine was taken to the Independence Sanitarium (Hospital) on May 4<sup>th</sup>. The following day, she underwent surgery and, due to profuse bleeding, was given four blood transfusions. On May 13, 1937, Josephine Ragland Southern died of peritonitis at age thirty-two. Her two sons, Robert Allen and John Tilford Southern, were seven and five at the time. Southern, Noland, and Truman family members, including Senator Harry S Truman, crowded into the First Baptist Church where Josephine Southern's funeral services were held.<sup>161</sup>

After Josephine's death, widower James Allen Southern moved with his two young sons to his parents' home at 1207 South Main Street in Independence. He continued as city editor of the *Independence Examiner* for the next six years. In the early 1940s, he married again. Edith L. and James Allen Southern had no children of their own. Beginning in 1943, he worked at public relations jobs until in the mid-1950s, when he returned to the *Examiner* as managing editor. Later he edited newspapers in nearby Liberty, Clinton, Raytown, and Pleasant Hill. He entered the newspaper brokerage business near the end of his long career in journalism. James Allen Southern died in 1980 at age seventy-five.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Sanborn Map Company, *Independence, Missouri*, August 1926 (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1926); *Polk's Independence City Directory*, 1930, 1932, and 1934; "Truman Attends Funeral," *Missouri Democrat*, 21 May 1937.

<sup>161</sup> "Death Summons Mrs. Southern, 32, of Independence" and "Mrs. J. A. Southern Dies," Newspaper Clippings, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library; Truman Attends Funeral," *Missouri Democrat*, 21 May 1937.

<sup>162</sup> *Polk's Independence City Directory*, 1938, 1940, 1942, and 1954; "Former Examiner Editor Dies Following Three-Month Illness," *Independence Examiner*, 29 December 1980; "President's Aunt, 97, Monday Remembers His Birthday May 8," Newspaper Clippings, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.



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The two young Southern boys remained close to the Noland-Ragland families, spending much time with them while they were growing up. On one occasion, when the boys were teenagers, Ethel and Nellie took Rob and John Southern on a vacation to Zion and Grand Canyon national parks for about ten days.<sup>163</sup> In July 1948, Rob, John, Nellie, and Ethel celebrated together the Democratic Party's nomination of Harry Truman for the presidential election.<sup>164</sup> On the eve of Robert Southern's marriage in 1952, Harry Truman referred to Nellie and Ethel Noland as "*loco parentis*" (in place of parents) to the two boys, suggesting the sisters' deep involvement in raising Josephine's children.<sup>165</sup> John Tilford Southern, in particular, maintained a long, enduring relationship with the families. He has recalled often visiting his great aunts Nellie and Ethel, and his great grandmother, Ella, at their home on North Delaware Street. John Southern likewise spent time with his grandmother Ruth Ragland and his Aunt Ardis Ragland Haukenberry on East 18<sup>th</sup> Street



**Robert and John Southern, the grandsons of Ruth Noland Ragland, Nellie and Ethel Noland's older sister, spent much time in the Noland house after the death of their mother in 1937. Here they celebrated Christmas with the Noland family.** Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library.

Robert Truman Ragland, Ruth Ragland's second child and nephew of Nellie and Ethel Noland, lived with his mother and older sister, Ardis, at 10105 (later 9515) East 18<sup>th</sup> Street in

<sup>163</sup> Ethel Noland to Harry S Truman, Personal File: "Ethel and Nellie Noland," President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>164</sup> Nellie Noland to Harry S Truman, 20 July 1948, Personal File: "Ethel and Nellie Noland," President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>165</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 11 May 1952, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

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Fairland Heights, from the early 1920s through the 1930s. His job as a collector at the First National Bank apparently ended in the mid-1920s. He then worked as a clerk through the 1930s depression years. Robert Ragland married Helen Louise Miller around 1940, and the couple took up residence in Kansas City. In the late 1940s, Ragland lived at 4350 Rockhill Road; however, most of his life he lived at 602 West 40<sup>th</sup> Street in Kansas City.<sup>166</sup>

Ardis Ragland, Ruth Noland Ragland's oldest child, continued to teach the third grade at Longfellow Elementary School in Kansas City, after beginning her career there in the fall of 1920. She lived at home with her mother and brother at 10105 East 18<sup>th</sup> Street in Kansas City until the mid-1930s. For recreation, Ardis took up bridge and became a member of several bridge clubs. Like her aunts, she was a member of the Baptist Church. During the summers of 1935 and 1936, Ardis and a friend went to Denver, Colorado, for summer classes at Denver University and for a vacation in Green Mountain Falls. While in Denver in the summer of 1936, Ardis's long-time beau, Herbert Haukenberry, came to Denver with a wedding ring and proposed marriage to Ardis. Then thirty-seven years old, Ardis Ragland married Herbert Haukenberry in the home of a Baptist minister in Denver on August 20, 1936. They spent the remaining weeks of the summer touring the Southwest.<sup>167</sup>

When Ardis and Herbert Haukenberry returned to Independence, aunts Nellie and Ethel Noland presented the couple with a wedding gift of a handsome rug to lay in the front room of Herbert's home at 1811 South Overton Avenue in Independence. Ardis Haukenberry retired from teaching and devoted her time to housekeeping and cultural activities. She was active in the Baptist Church and a number of cultural and charitable organizations, including the Baptist Memorial Hospital (Medical Center), the Browning Society (founded by Ethel Noland and others in 1926), and the Women's City Club. Ardis was a charter member of the Jackson County Historical Society, and served as a regent of the Independence Pioneers Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), as well as a national registrar and national vice chair of membership of the DAR. Herbert joined the Mount Washington Masonic Lodge and, eventually, became a master and teacher of new members. During the years of his marriage to Ardis, Herbert Haukenberry worked as a chief equipment operator and then a department superintendent for American Telephone and Telegraph (AT & T) in

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<sup>166</sup> *Polk's Independence City Directory*, 1924, 1926, 1928, 1930, 1932, 1938, 1940, and 1942; "Truman a 'Son' to Aunt," Newspaper Clippings, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>167</sup> Haukenberry, handwritten history of Ragland-Haukenberry families on "First National Safe Deposit Company stationary," Gentry Collection.

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the late 1930s and early 1940s. He then clerked and worked as an engineer for AT & T in the 1940s and early 1950s. Herbert Haukenberry died on May 7, 1956 after twenty years of marriage to Ardis Ragland Haukenberry.<sup>168</sup>

Ruth Noland Ragland, Ardis Haukenberry's mother and Nellie and Ethel Noland's older sister, may have continued working as a telephone operator in Kansas City for a short time after the Ragland family moved out of the Noland house in the early 1920s. By the mid-1920s, however, when all three of her children were employed and living at home, Ruth, by then nearly fifty years old, most likely stopped working and devoted her time to housekeeping for her children and participating in various cultural organizations. Like all the Noland family members, Ruth was a member of the First Baptist Church in Independence. She also continued the Noland family's personal link to the Civil War as a "Real Daughter" of the Independence Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Ruth was also an early member of the Jackson County Historical Society. By the early 1940s, the last of her children, Robert, had married, and Ruth lived alone at 9515 East 18<sup>th</sup> Street. She was in her early seventies in the late 1940s.

Nellie and Ethel Noland

In the fall of 1923, Nellie Noland, then forty-three, began her twenty-fifth year of teaching in both Independence and



Kansas City school districts. In 1924 she may have still been teaching at the Ott School in Independence. However, she soon started teaching in Kansas City at the Bristol School (now gone). By the late 1920s or early 1930s, she was teaching at Kansas City's Woodland School, then associated with the Kansas City Teacher's College, where she received wide recognition for her work as a "demonstration teacher."

**Ethel Noland in the 1930s, when she taught school in Kansas City.** Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library.

In 1937 Nellie Noland, then fifty-six, was named teaching principal of the Pinkerton School in Kansas City. Around 1944,

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<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*; Sue Gentry, "Ardis Haukenberry, Truman's Cousin, Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 4 November 1986.

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near the end of World War II, she became principal of Kansas City's Gladstone School, where she stayed for five years.<sup>169</sup>

Her younger sister, Ethel Noland, also continued teaching between 1923 and 1948. By the early 1920s, Ethel, then in her late thirties, had moved from the Noland School in Independence to the Benjamin Harrison School in Kansas City. During the 1920s and 1930s, Ethel also taught at the Pinkerton School in Kansas City. During most of the 1940s, she taught at the Fairmount School, until moving to Northeast Junior High School in 1948.

During summer vacations from school, Nellie and Ethel Noland enjoyed traveling. Scenic places in the West seemed to be favorite destinations of the Noland sisters. In August 1937, for

example, the two sisters and their mother, Ella, took a trip to Colorado.<sup>170</sup> Ten years later, when Ella was ninety-seven and could no longer travel, Nellie and Ethel took a trip in July to Zion and Grand Canyon national parks. Their teenage nephews, Robert and John Southern, went along.<sup>171</sup> The Nolands often took shorter trips to Kansas City and other towns around Missouri.



**In 1945 Nellie (seated) and Ethel Noland (standing, center) honored their mother, Ella Noland, with a Browning Society award in the Noland home.** Courtesy of the Jackson County Historical Society.

Both Nellie and Ethel extended their roles as educators (both teaching and learning) beyond public schools into other arenas between 1923 and 1948. During these years, the Noland sisters became known for their contributions to the study of the literary arts and history; the Noland house became a gathering place for local cultural activities. Both Nellie and Ethel Noland

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<sup>169</sup> "Miss Nellie Noland, Retired Teacher, Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 8 August 1958; *Independence Examiner*, 24 August 1987; Lisa Gutierrez, "Making Way for Progress," *Independence Examiner*, Vertical File: "Noland Family," Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>170</sup> Harry S Truman to Nellie Noland, 21 August 1937, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>171</sup> Ethel Noland to Harry S Truman, 10 July and 27 July 1946, Personal File: "Ethel and Nellie Noland," President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

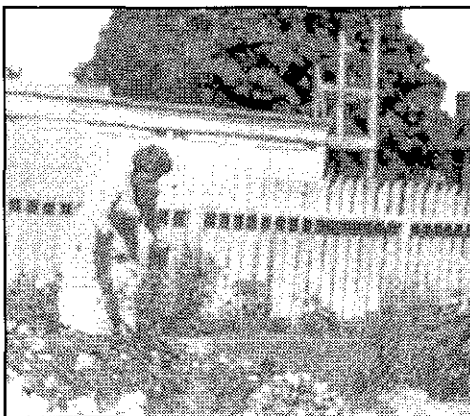
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remained active members of the First Baptist Church in Independence.

Ethel Noland began teaching the Euzalia (adult Bible study) class at the church after the death of the former class teacher, around 1945.<sup>172</sup> Nellie became a member and, at one time, served as president of the Missouri Branch of the Huguenot Society (a group that studied the history of the Calvinistic Protestant movement in France during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a movement which later spread to the United States). Both sisters became more active in study clubs as they matured in their teaching professions. In 1926 Ethel helped organize the Browning Club, devoted to studying the works of poet Robert Browning and his wife. The group met once a month on Monday. Both Ethel and Nellie served as its president several times over the next decades. In 1944 the group started meeting in the Noland house at 216 North Delaware Street and continued gathering there for the rest of its life.<sup>173</sup> Ethel Noland continued to pursue her love of painting. The sisters both enjoyed working in the Noland house gardens.

In memory and honor of their father, who fought under Upton Hayes in the Confederate Army, Nellie Noland was a charter member of the Upton Hayes Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (later disbanded); she and Ethel were "Real Daughters" of that organization since their father had been in



**Nellie Noland enjoyed working in the garden behind the Noland house in the 1930s (after the 1924 construction of the brick apartment building and three bungalow houses on the adjoining former Slack property).** Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library.

the Confederate Army. Both women continued their involvement in the Independence Pioneers Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). Deeply interested in and supportive of local history efforts, both sisters became members of the

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 31 March 1931, Personal File: "Ethel and Nellie Noland," President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>173</sup> "Club Section Dedicated to Mary Ethel Noland," *Independence Examiner*, 19 September 1971; "Miss Nellie Noland, Retired Teacher Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 8 August 1958; Sue Gentry, interview by Jim Williams, 18 June 1991, transcript of taped interview, 43, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

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Jackson County Historical Society and the Missouri Historical Society, possibly in the 1940s, as they neared retirement.<sup>174</sup>

The two sisters' interest in both history and their cousin, Harry Truman, encouraged Nellie and especially Ethel Noland to become the "accurate and available source of information and background on Mr. Truman" and his ancestors for the press, particularly after Harry Truman became president in the spring of 1945. Genealogy became a fascinating hobby for Ethel. "Magazine writers, radio and television reporters and free lance writers have used her as one of their best sources since Truman became President," according to the *Independence Examiner* in 1965. "She has made friends with many writers over the world."<sup>175</sup>

#### Ella (Margaret Ellen) Noland

Ella Truman Noland remained the Noland family matriarch from 1923 through the 1940s. She continued to cook her favorite recipes and attend the First Baptist Church in Independence. She also continued to celebrate and applaud her favorite nephew's political successes. When Harry S Truman won election to the U.S. Senate in 1934, Ella Truman gave the senator-elect, Bess, and Margaret a family dinner at 216 North Delaware Street. The Noland dining room was the site of the victory dinner, according to Ethel Noland many years later.<sup>176</sup> Vietta Garr, the Truman's household helper, assisted with the dinner preparations. Sixteen people attended the special celebratory dinner, including Nellie and Ethel Noland and Martha Truman, Harry's mother.<sup>177</sup>

Ella Truman's relationship with Harry Truman, whom she considered a son, continued to be warm and close, even after the Truman family moved to Washington, D.C. after his election to the U.S. Senate. Truman nearly always dropped in to the Noland house when he came home to Independence to visit his favorite aunt as well as her two daughters, Nellie and Ethel. In July

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<sup>174</sup> "Miss Nellie Noland, Retired Teacher Dies"; "Outstanding Area Women Honored," *Independence Examiner*, 10 April 1965; "Miss Mary Ethel Noland, Truman Cousin Dies," *Kansas City Times*, 11 August 1971; "First Cousin of Truman Dies," *Independence Examiner*, Newspaper Clippings, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>175</sup> Quoted passages from: "Outstanding Area Women Honored." "Miss Mary Ethel Noland, Truman Cousin, Dies"; "Miss Nellie Noland, Retired Teacher Dies"; "Forebears of President Truman Settled in This Country in 1666," May 1945, Newspaper Clippings, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>176</sup> Shirley Davis, "Trumans Stopped By to Welcome Them," Davenport, Iowa, *Democrat-Times*, 10 March 1968. Also see: Ardis Haukenberry, interview by Ron Cockrell, 2 March 1984, transcript of taped interview, 27, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>177</sup> "Family Dinner for the Trumans," Newspaper Clippings, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

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1944, in a letter to Bess, Harry wrote that he "saw Aunt Ella and the cousins. Aunt was feeling better than usual but was in bed. . . She spent the time calling me Mr. Vice President."<sup>178</sup> Less than a year later, when the Nolands readied their house for President Harry Truman's first visit to Independence before traveling to Europe, ninety-six-year-old Ella Noland proudly remarked to her daughters, "My, aren't you proud of your cousin?" Although the anticipation of his coming tired her, she was so looking forward to the visit of her favorite nephew.<sup>179</sup>

The birthdays of Ella and Harry, on May 6 and 8, respectively, continued to be a time of special celebration and warm exchanges. Ella customarily gave or sent Harry Truman linen handkerchiefs for a birthday gift. Truman would send his Aunt Ella greetings on her birthday until his life became intensely hectic as president. Just a month after becoming president and just when World War II hostilities ceased in Europe, Harry wrote to Aunt Ella on May 9, 1945. "I certainly did appreciate the handkerchief which you sent me for my birthday. . . . You had a birthday yourself the day before and I did not even write you a letter. I am sorry that I did not do it."<sup>180</sup> Whenever possible, Truman came to Independence and stopped by 216 North Delaware Street for a special birthday visit. In 1946, on her ninety-seventh birthday, Ethel Noland noted that her mother's "real birthday present will be May 18" . . . when President Truman wrote "saying he will visit her that day."<sup>181</sup> These ritual birthday visits continued up to Ella Noland's last birthday.<sup>182</sup>

Ella Noland's health began to fail when she severely wrenched her back a month after her ninety-seventh birthday. After the accident, Ella Noland was rarely able to leave her bed. By early 1948, her weakened condition made it difficult for her to talk. President Truman made his "birthday visit" to Aunt Ella in early August that year when Truman came home to Independence to vote in the primary presidential election. This was the last time he saw her. In the early morning of October 1, 1948, Ella Truman passed away in her sleep at the family home at 216 North Delaware Street at age ninety-nine. Known throughout the country as President Truman's "favorite aunt," her death was announced in nationally circulated newspapers and news

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<sup>178</sup> Harry S Truman to Bess Truman, (?) July 1944, Family Correspondence File, Harry S. Truman Library. (Quoted in: Sharon Brown, "Noland/Haukenberry House. DRAFT," typescript, Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.)

<sup>179</sup> "Just Rest and Visit a Bit," Vertical File, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>180</sup> Harry S Truman to Ella Noland, 9 May 1945, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>181</sup> "The President's Aunt," no date, Newspaper Clippings, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>182</sup> "Her 93<sup>rd</sup> Birthday," no date, Newspaper Clippings, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

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magazines. Funeral services were held at the First Baptist Church on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. President Truman was unable to attend his Aunt Ella's funeral, however, the family of Harry's brother, Vivian and Luella Truman, attended the services. Four of their sons served as casket pallbearers. Ella Truman's death came twenty-five years after the death of her husband, Joseph T. Noland. It marked a transition from one Noland generation to the next and to a post-World War II period of explosive growth and physical development in Independence and across the nation.

### **The Nolands and Harry S Truman** **1923-1953**

The relationship between the Noland family and Harry Truman remained intimate throughout his years in government service and politics. Aging Ella Truman Noland remained Harry's favorite aunt. Harry Truman and Nellie and Ethel Noland continued to be as adults what they had been as children--the best of friends and comrades. Although Truman certainly enjoyed maintaining a close associate with many family members, the Noland family remained his dearest relatives. In 1949, then President Truman told Ethel Noland in a letter that he would be glad to have both Nellie and Ethel cast a critical eye over his speeches if they lived closer to Washington, D.C. "As President, I've found from tough experience, [I] can't have too much advice from real friends."<sup>183</sup> A month later he expressed stronger feelings of fondness toward his two cousins. "I can have no greater respect and affection for you & Nellie than I have for my first cousins."<sup>184</sup> Between 1923 and 1953, Truman continued his practice of dropping in on the Nolands as often as he could, even after moving to Washington. Beginning in 1934, a regular exchange of letters between the Nolands and Truman supplemented his visits. And as Harry Truman's political career advanced and the press began to scrutinize his family background with great intensity, Ethel Noland assumed the role of family historian. Beginning in the early 1940s, Truman came to rely heavily on his cousin's ability to research, record, and convey the family's historical background with great accuracy.

During Harry Truman's years as Jackson County judge in the 1920s and early 1930s, he no doubt continued to drop in on the Nolands regularly, just as he had up until then. And because Truman lived conveniently across the street from the Nolands in the home of Madge Gates Wallace, Bess's mother, during the

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<sup>183</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 13 August 1949, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 September 1949, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.



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1920s and early 1930s, his visits were probably quite regular, even though the Noland and Truman families shared few of the same daily activities and Truman's attention was extended to Wallace family members as well. Because few letters were exchanged during this period, the written record of the Truman-Wallace-Noland relationship is minimal and largely conjectural.

Harry Truman's life long-habit of writing about his activities and his thoughts helps historians and interpreters understand the relationship between the Truman and Noland families. Correspondence between Truman and the Nolands became regular in the mid-1930s, after the Trumans moved to Washington, D.C. as a U.S. senator, and it continued almost to the end of the cousins' lives (even after the Trumans moved back to Independence and became Noland neighbors again in 1953). The regularity of the letters, alone, conveys something about the intimate relationship between Harry S Truman and his Aunt Ella and his two Noland cousins. On average, Truman wrote at least once a month, and sometimes as many as four times a month to the Noland sisters. Often his letters told of his activities and private thoughts about his work as senator, vice president, and then president. Always, he expressed interest in the Nolands' lives and health, and sent greetings to family members, including the Raglands, the Southern boys, and the Haukenberry couple. He never forgot birthdays of the Noland family, particularly Aunt Ella's birthday, which was just two days before his in May. Nellie Noland's birthday, July 26<sup>th</sup>, was hard for Harry to forget as well; it came on "Turnip Day" in Independence, the day to sow turnips, whether wet or dry.<sup>185</sup> Also he reported the activities of Bess and Margaret and sent greetings from them. Truman customarily apologized if a letter, at least in part, was not written in his own hand. The Nolands delighted in receiving letters from Truman and were equally faithful letter writers. "I am just writing to tell you how much we are enjoying hearing from you so often," Ethel wrote in March 1943. "We are just part of the great silent audience that listens to you whenever you speak by radio or press."<sup>186</sup>

As time went by and Truman received more and more scrutiny by the press and questions from curious individuals, his interest in his family background became more than personal but politically expedient. Not long after he arrived in Washington, Truman began to ask Ethel Noland, who had already taken an interest in genealogy, questions about their shared family history. In early 1938, for example, Truman asked Ethel to send a

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<sup>185</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, ed. *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1980), 187.

<sup>186</sup> Ethel Noland to Harry S Truman, 18 March 1943, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

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Truman cousin in Kentucky information about the family. "I put him in touch with the genealogical expert in our family," Truman wrote.<sup>187</sup> After becoming president in April 1945, Truman became even more reliant on his first cousin as the family genealogist. "You are going to have to keep track of all the family doings from now on," Truman wrote in early October 1945.<sup>188</sup> Ethel Noland received two more letters from Truman in quick succession asking for help with family record keeping. In a letter accompanying some genealogical information, Truman wrote: "The reason I am sending all these things to you is because you have been interested in the family situation and, it is my opinion, that they ought to all be consolidated in one place and when some body [sic] does make inquiry a proper answer can be made for their information. I hate to trouble you with this but you are the only one I know who can take care of it."<sup>189</sup> Less than two weeks later, Truman again expressed his desire for and appreciation of Ethel's help with the family genealogy. "I have no desire or inclination to join the ancestor worshipers but since they are doing a lot of digging around they ought to have the facts. I will sure appreciate it if you will give the facts to them."<sup>190</sup>

Ethel Noland was eager to oblige cousin Harry's request to research and record all genealogical information about the Truman family and respond to questions from the press and individuals curious to know if they might be related to the Truman family. Ethel immediately began to receive and respond to numerous queries about the family that Truman had diverted to 216 North Delaware Street. In December 1945, Ethel reported to Truman that "letters about our family history continue to come in. I haven't found the skeleton in the closet yet, though I suppose there must be one. We seem to have been models of respectability back to Adam and Eve from all accounts so far."<sup>191</sup> About ten days later, Truman, in a letter to Nellie Noland, reported that "reams of information on the family tree" continued to stream into the White House.<sup>192</sup> A day later, Truman expressed to Ethel some relief that "we have found no 'gibbets' in the family tree yet."<sup>193</sup> Five years later, Ethel and Harry Truman

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<sup>187</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 15 February 1938, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 October 1945, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>189</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 4 October 1945, Truman to Noland Family, Presidential Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 October 1945, Truman to Noland Family, Presidential Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>191</sup> Ethel Noland to Harry S Truman, 6 December 1945, Ethel and Nellie Noland, President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>192</sup> Harry S Truman to Nellie Noland, 18 December 1945, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>193</sup> A "gibbet" is a type of gallows with a projecting arm at the top, from which criminals were formerly hung in chains and left suspended after execution. A

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had still not found any gibbets in the family tree. "You know," Harry wrote to Ethel, "I do a lot of kidding about ancestry but I'm always as happy as you are when our progenitors turn out be honorable men and women. And so far as we know to date, our ancestors have all been good people."<sup>194</sup>

Harry Truman expressed similar sentiments in another letter written in the spring of 1950. "My immediate and recognized family have been tops in the trying five years just passed and I appreciate it. All the Presidents have had trouble with eager beaver relatives--particularly the Franklin Roosevelts. Thank God I haven't."<sup>195</sup> Delighted with Truman's compliment, Ethel wrote:

Nellie and I loved your letter in which you said that your recognized relatives had never caused you any embarrassment. You never said a kinder thing than that. If we ever have caused you a moment's chagrin it was through ignorance and not intention. Whether it is true or not it makes pleasant reading. I am reminded of the song, 'I don't believe it, but say it again'.<sup>196</sup>

Always ready to chuckle with Ethel over the foibles of humans and of life, Truman lightly wrote to Ethel again about their family history later that year. "You're right when you say we knew not what was coming when we were having such a fine time 'relatively' speaking. I get a kick out of the folks who are so anxious to be akin to us now, don't you? . . . Mr. Shakespeare said in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, 'Oh what fools these mortals be!' But life wouldn't any fun if mortals were not what they are."<sup>197</sup>

Actual visits between the Truman and Noland families were far less frequent than the letters they exchanged after Harry, Bess, and Margaret moved to Washington, D.C. in early 1935. While a U.S. senator, Harry Truman may have visited the Nolands two or three times a year, in the summer and on special holidays, such Thanksgiving and Christmas. Between 1935 and 1953, Truman wrote to the Nolands many times expressing a plan or desire to visit them, but later apologizing for not being able to

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gibbet more broadly refers to someone or something held up to public scorn. Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 19 December 1945, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>194</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 16 June 1950, Noland Papers, Presidential Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 March 1950, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>196</sup> Ethel Noland to Harry S Truman, undated (probably July 1950), Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>197</sup> Ferrell, ed. *Off the Record*, 185.

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stop by.<sup>198</sup> Most often during his years as senator and president, Harry visited the Nolands alone or with Margaret. During Truman's September 1945 visit to Independence, for example, Harry and Margaret walked across the street to the Noland house with gifts for the entire family--a framed presidential portrait for Aunt Ella and three bottles of perfume from Germany for the three Noland cousins--Nellie, Ethel, and Ruth. Harry played the piano and Margaret sang during their brief visit with the Nolands. Bess often did not accompany Harry for his short jaunts across North Delaware Street to the Noland house, but participated in other gatherings with the Nolands.

Christmas day and dinner were a special time of celebration that nearly always brought the Noland and Truman families together. The Nolands looked forward with great anticipation to a visit from the Trumans on their first Christmas home after Harry Truman had become president. "We are delighted to learn," Nellie wrote to Truman in early December 1945, "that you will be able to be here for Christmas and as has always been the custom, will be with us for a part of the season. The cranberries are ready and I know will pass inspection for I have prepared them according to your chosen recipe."<sup>199</sup> Harry's Aunt Ella Noland had a dinner waiting for the Trumans when they arrived home in Independence that Christmas. In addition to cranberry sauce, Harry's favorite pound cake, made from a recipe that had been in the Truman family two hundred years, awaited his arrival. Soon newspapers around the country printed the recipe of Harry Truman's favorite pound cake, baked that Christmas by Nellie Noland.<sup>200</sup>

Two months before the Christmas of 1946, Nellie wrote of the lovely visit the Nolands had when Bess came home. "We enjoyed having Bess at home," wrote Nellie to Harry, "and had several delightful evenings with her. On[e] evening [there] was a trip to Vivian's to see some of the Texas [c]ousins that we had not seen before."<sup>201</sup> When Truman was unable to be home for

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<sup>198</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel or Nellie Noland, 12 May 1941 and 22 June 1942; Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 13 August, 1947; all in Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>199</sup> Nellie Noland to Harry S Truman, 13 December 1945, Ethel and Nellie Noland, Personal File, President's Secretary's File, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>200</sup> The pound recipe that appeared in many newspapers and recited by Nellie Noland is as follows. Ingredients: 1 lb. white sugar, 1 lb. butter, 1 lb. flour, 9 eggs, 1 tsp. lemon extract. Beat the egg yolks and blend in all other ingredients except egg whites; beat egg whites until stiff and fold into other mixture. Put in pan with flue in center. Bake in very slow oven about two hours. When cool cover with white icing and decorate with walnut halves (originally hickory nut meats, according to Nellie Noland). "Here's Truman's Favorite Cake," "Missouri Pound Cake," both in Newspaper Clippings, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>201</sup> Nellie Noland to Harry S Truman, 13 October 1946, Ethel and Nellie Noland Personal File, President's Secretary's File, Harry S. Truman Library.

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Christmas in 1947, the Nolands expressed great disappointment. "We are so sorry you will not be at 219 for Christmas," Nellie wrote to Harry. "It will seem very unusual to miss that cheery part of the season. Bess said before she left it would be impossible for you to get back home. . . . We enjoyed seeing her before she left for Washington."<sup>202</sup>

The time spent with the Nolands was often only a few minutes during each visit, but seemed greatly enjoyed by all. "Glad to get to see you even if it was only for a little while," Truman wrote to Nellie in February 1947.<sup>203</sup> "Pleasure to see both of you and to get a chance for a short visit," Truman wrote to Ethel in a 1948 letter, "I am sorry that it couldn't have been longer."<sup>204</sup> Truman expressed similar sentiments in a September 1949 letter.

It was a very great pleasure to spend a few minutes with you on the 6<sup>th</sup>. I wish there had been more time to spend. Being what I am—President of 149 millions of people and the representative to the world of the most powerful nation of all time—I find that I can't do what I'd like to do. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think or wish for such a position. . . . I've made all my family, including my sister, my cousins, and my 'aunts,' as much trouble as if I'd robbed the biggest bank in town, pulled a Ponzi, or taken the savings of all the widows and orphans in Missouri. But I'm still having a good time. <sup>205</sup>

Just a few weeks before Truman's second term ended and he went home to North Delaware Street, he expressed great regret about not being able to stop by the Nolands for a Christmas visit. "I am sorry that your door bell could not have the three rings [Truman's familiar door knock at the Noland house since childhood] on Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>. I hope Nellie put enough sugar in the cranberry sauce! I'll live to be 90 and not forget. I'm glad you had a 'high old Christmas," Truman continued. "Wish I could have 'dropped in' on that dinner."<sup>206</sup>

Always eager to see the Nolands, Harry Truman invited them to attend speeches or gala events given by or for him. In

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<sup>202</sup> Nellie Noland to Harry S Truman, 9 November 1947, Ethel and Nellie Noland Personal File, President's Secretary's File, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>203</sup> Harry S Truman to Nellie Noland, 26 February 1947, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>204</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 21 June 1948, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>205</sup> Harry S Truman to Nellie and Ethel Noland, 8 September 1949, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>206</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 2 January 1953, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

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May 1946, for example, the Noland sisters traveled to nearby Liberty to hear Truman give a commencement speech at William Jewell College.<sup>207</sup> Both Nellie and Ethel attended Harry Truman's presidential inauguration in February 1949. "It was a pleasure to have you here."<sup>208</sup> Ethel and Nellie Noland stayed with the Trumans for about a week in the Blair House during their visit to Washington.

### **Slowing Down and Continuing in the Old Home 1948-1971**

#### The Nolands and Harry S Truman

The Noland sisters and Harry Truman continued their relationship as close friends and confidants after Truman returned to Independence in early 1953 as a private citizen. Even though they were neighbors once again, however, they visited each other far less than they had in the 1890s when the Truman family lived near the Nolands and Harry had spent many hours with Nellie and Ethel poring over his high school tales of Caesar and Cicero in Latin. The explanation is, perhaps, three-fold. As a former president, Truman (and his relatives) could never again be a "normal" citizen(s) and cross the street to visit each other without the likelihood of a crowd forming. Truman also found himself exceedingly busy when he arrived back in Independence, working on plans for the Truman Library, his autobiography, and numerous other projects and speaking engagements. And, finally, in the 1960s, both Ethel Noland and Harry Truman, then in their upper seventies, found it increasingly difficult, due to failing health and inclement weather, to walk across the street for visits.

After Harry Truman returned to Independence in 1953, he and the Nolands visited each other occasionally. "Tell Nellie it seems to me you both owe us a call--a visit or whatever close relations do," Harry wrote to Nellie and Ethel in October 1957. "I'll be seeing you on one side of the street or the other. Was surely happy to see you yesterday."<sup>209</sup> Neighborly visits, however, were tedious because of the congestion caused by curious onlookers. "As I told Nellie," Harry wrote to Ethel in 1955, "we had to sit on your front porch a half hour to avoid the hand shakers and

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 21 May 1946, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>208</sup> Harry S Truman to Nellie Noland, 1 April 1949, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>209</sup> Harry S Truman to Nellie and Ethel Noland, 22 October 1957, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

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camera hounds!"<sup>210</sup> Visiting through the crowds became increasingly challenging as both families aged.

Often, instead of making frequent visits, Harry Truman and the Nolands continued their habit of writing letters to each other. Harry and Ethel wrote about twice a month through the 1950s; their correspondence diminished in the 1960s. Family genealogy was the subject of many letters, especially in the 1950s, when both Harry and Ethel were involved in helping gathering and organize material for the staff at the new Truman Library, completed in 1957. Harry and Ethel sometimes made light of their letter writing when they lived only a few paces apart. "Things have come to a pretty pass when neighbors and relatives who live within a hundred yards of each other have to write letters to have a conversation," Harry wrote to Ethel in September 1954. A year later, he quipped: "I think we are setting a record--next door neighbors, first cousins, and have to write when we talk."<sup>211</sup> By the mid-1960s, letters had taken the place of most all visits. In a letter to Harry in August 1965, Ethel noted: "Just heard on the news at 6:00 that you had come home. I'm glad that you are home again as I always am, though I seldom see you."<sup>212</sup>

Their letter-writing habit continued but slowed considerably by the late 1960s. In March 1968, eighty-four year-old Ethel laughed: "Harry and I exchange letters. Had a letter from him just last week. And we talk by phone. Harry jokes about it, too, but we both have trouble walking and letter writing just seems easier. I've got filing case after filing case of correspondence from him."<sup>213</sup> By 1970, letters between the first cousins dropped off as both Harry and Ethel passed their eighty-fifth birthdays.

#### Ethel and Nellie Noland

During the Truman presidency, both Ethel and Nellie Noland entered their final years as teacher and school administrator, respectively. After serving as principal for five years at the Gladstone Elementary School in Kansas City, in 1949, at age sixty-eight, Nellie Noland became principal at the Bristol Elementary School. She retired from the Bristol School in 1951, just before her seventieth birthday, after teaching and administering in Independence and Kansas City public schools

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<sup>210</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 16 May 1955, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 September 1954 and 21 July 1955, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>212</sup> Ethel Noland to Harry S Truman, 23 August 1965, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>213</sup> Quoted in: Davis, "Trumans Stopped by to Welcome Them," *Times-Democrat*, 10 March 1968.

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for fifty-three years.<sup>214</sup> Ethel Noland continued teaching seventh grade at Northeast Junior High School until 1954 when she retired, at age seventy, after fifty-four years of teaching.<sup>215</sup>

The Noland home continued to be a local center of cultural endeavors and learning after the death of Nellie and Ethel's mother and after the both Noland sisters retired. After retiring, Ethel Noland joined the Mary Paxton Study Club, a group organized by Mary Paxton to study classical literature. She served as the club's secretary and later its president.<sup>216</sup> In the mid-1950s, Ethel confessed to Harry Truman that, even after long teaching careers, both she and Nellie enjoyed spending much of their time working on two study classes: the Mary Paxton Study Club and the Browning Society.<sup>217</sup>

The Noland sisters continued to open their house to Browning Society meetings, planned the group's discussions, and presided over the meetings. In 1957, cousin Harry Truman arranged a place for the Mary Paxton club to meet in the new Truman Library. In early October, Truman made opening remarks at the Paxton meeting in the Truman Library.<sup>218</sup> In March 1964, after meeting in the Truman Library for a few years, the Mary Paxton Study Club donated money to the Library Educational Fund.<sup>219</sup> Near the end of Ethel Noland's life, the Browning Society nominated her the *Independence Examiner's*



**Ethel Noland, retired from a fifty-four-year career of teaching in 1954, continued to devote much of her time to educational and cultural activities.** Courtesy of the Jackson County Historical Society.

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<sup>214</sup> Miss Nellie Noland, Retired Teacher Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 8 August 1958.

<sup>215</sup> "Miss Mary Ethel Noland, Truman Cousin Dies," *Kansas City Star*, 11 August 1971.

<sup>216</sup> "Outstanding Area Women Honored," *Independence Examiner*, 10 April 1965.

<sup>217</sup> Ethel Noland to Harry S Truman, 20 January 1955, Family Correspondence: "Ethel and Nellie Noland," Post Presidential Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>218</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 31 July 1957 and 27 September 1957, and Ethel Noland to Harry S Truman, 22 July 1957 and 27 September 1957; all in Family Correspondence: "Ethel and Nellie Noland," Post Presidential Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>219</sup> Harry Truman to Ethel Noland, 6 March 1964, Family Correspondence: "Ethel and Nellie Noland," Post Presidential Files, Harry S. Truman Library.



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"Outstanding Club Woman" for the year. The two sisters, especially Ethel, also remained deeply involved in the First Baptist Church and dedicated to teaching a Sunday school class for women beginning around 1945. Ethel and Nellie also remained members of the Independence Pioneer Chapter of the DAR. Ethel served as its chaplain for a time. After completion of the Truman Library, DAR meetings were held in a meeting room there. On at least one occasion (in September 1959), Harry Truman was the speaker at a meeting.<sup>220</sup>

Ethel Noland continued her interest in local and family history. After the opening of the Truman Library in 1957, she worked closely with the library staff to answer questions about the Truman family. She prepared a genealogical record of Truman ancestors and connecting families for the Truman Library files. In 1965, Theta Sigma Phi recognized for Ethel Noland for her historical and genealogical work at the Truman Library in Independence; she was honored at that organization's annual dinner.<sup>221</sup> In March 1968, at age eighty-four, the Davenport, Iowa *Times-Democrat* reported that the "perky octogenarian, and avid club goer, spends a lot of time at the Truman Library." According to Ethel, "Harry's secretary really loads me up with things concerning Truman history."<sup>222</sup>

Ethel Noland approached her retired years with humanity and humility, which she expressed with stark simplicity in sentiments clearly understood by her and cousin Harry's generation. "Stay where you are in the old home town . . . in the old home. Be satisfied with your income . . . no way to increase it . . . pay bills promptly. . . . Develop old skills and interests and new ones, too. Do not depend on people nor circumstances to make you happy. Joy is from within . . . And always remember love is the greatest thing in the world."<sup>223</sup> Her words captured her essential outlook on life and her approach to her own and her family's inevitable deaths.

In 1951, only weeks after Nellie Noland retired from teaching, she began showing signs of her seventy years when she started having a series of ailments and accidents. In the summer of 1951 she became ill with apparent gall bladder problems. (In a letter to Nellie in July 1951, Harry Truman mentioned that "the doctors found sand in one of your organs and took out

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<sup>220</sup> *Kansas City Star*, 30 August 1959.

<sup>221</sup> "Club Section Dedicated to Mary Ethel Noland," *Independence Examiner*, 19 September 1971; "Miss Mary Ethel Noland, Truman Cousin, Dies," *Kansas City Times*, 11 August 1971.

<sup>222</sup> Davis, "Trumans Stopped By," *Times-Democrat*, 19 March 1968.

<sup>223</sup> Quoted in: "Outstanding Area Women Honored," *Independence Examiner*, 10 April 1965.

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another."<sup>224</sup>) She entered the Independence Hospital in early July for operations.<sup>225</sup> Ill health apparently took her back to the hospital again in early 1952. Truman wrote in mid-January: "It is a relief to know that you are back home and that all you have to do is to gain some weight."<sup>226</sup> Harry Truman continued to express concern for Nellie's health in a letter to Ethel in the late winter of 1952.<sup>227</sup> Only a few days later, Nellie had a bad fall that took her back to the hospital.<sup>228</sup> By March 21, 1952, Nellie seemed to be on the road to recovery from her fall.<sup>229</sup> However, about two months later, Nellie still wasn't well; Truman wrote again to Ethel, expressing his hope that Nellie was "well on the road to recovery."<sup>230</sup> But in July, Nellie was back in the hospital.<sup>231</sup>

By August 1952, Nellie was home again, but her recovery was slow and discouraging. "You tell her," Harry wrote to Ethel, "she'd better write to her cousin and may be (sic) he can cheer her up. As you know, that has been my role since we were eighteen."<sup>232</sup> A month later, Harry wrote to cousin Nellie expressing great pleasure that she would be walking again soon and exasperation over apparent incompetent medical care that had made her recovery so long and tedious.

I am more than happy that you will be walking again soon. You have found out by awful experience what I have been working for in hospital and health care. Doctors are made up of a cross section of humanity as it is. There are good ones, honest ones, conscientious ones, false front ones, and plain incompetents. I am sure happy that you have found a good, competent, and conscientious one. That is what my health program means, to try to educate more honest, conscientious, and able doctors and arrange things so that they can be adequately paid for their work and knowledge.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Harry S Truman to Nellie Noland, 11 July 1951, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>225</sup> Harry S Truman to Vivian Truman, 12 July 1951, Family Correspondence, President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>226</sup> Harry S Truman to Nellie Noland, 16 January 1952, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 March 1952, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 March 1952, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 March 1952, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 June 1952, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 July 1952, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 August 1952, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>233</sup> Harry S Truman to Nellie Noland, 14 September 1952, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

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By late September 1952, Nellie was getting around on crutches and Ethel was able to return to her teaching job at Northeast Junior High School in Kansas City.<sup>234</sup> Nellie, apparently, continued to have physical ailments through 1953, but by December that year, Harry Truman commented: "it looked to me as if you were just about back to normal."<sup>235</sup>

Despite Truman's comment, Nellie Noland probably never regained excellent health after her series of ailments between 1951 and 1953. Her struggle with illness apparently continued for the next five years. In July 1958, Nellie became critically ill. A few days later, on August 8, 1958, Nellie Noland died at the old Noland home at 216 North Delaware Street just after her seventy-seventh birthday.<sup>236</sup>

Ethel Noland began having health problems in the late 1950s. In early 1957, Ethel experienced dizzy spells. Attending to Nellie's health needs probably prevented her from seeing a doctor until June 1959. In a letter to cousin Harry, Ethel noted that she was beginning a series of daily treatments aimed at remedying her two- and one-half year-old problem of dizziness.<sup>237</sup> In response to a letter from Truman, Ethel's doctor explained that Ethel's problem had been caused by a small blood clot in the inner ear and that his prescribed treatments should dissolve the clot and cure the dizzy spells. "However, he added that he was "seriously concerned about her general health. Her blood pressure, especially the diastolic is much too high and she is about 20 pounds overweight. Another clot might form in the same or some other area of the body."<sup>238</sup>

Despite the doctor's concerns, Ethel Noland remained to be a curious learner and avid educator throughout most of her eighties. She continued to work on family history at the Truman Library. She also continued to organize and hold the meetings of the Browning Society in her home at 216 North Delaware Street up until the year of her death, at which time the group disbanded permanently. Mary Ethel Noland died on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1971 in the Independence Hospital, at age eighty-eight.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 26 September 1952, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 19 December 1953, Family Correspondence: "Ethel and Nellie Noland," Post Presidential Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>236</sup> "Miss Nellie Noland, Retired Teacher Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 8 August 1958.

<sup>237</sup> Ethel Noland to Harry S Truman, 7 June 1959, Family Correspondence: "Ethel and Nellie Noland," Post Presidential Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>238</sup> Sam E. Roberts, M.D. to Harry and Bess Truman, 1 July 1959, Family Correspondence: "Ethel and Nellie Noland," Post Presidential Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>239</sup> "First Cousin of Truman Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 10 August 1971.

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#### The Noland-Ragland Family

After Herbert Haukenberry's death in 1956, Ardis Ragland Haukenberry continued living at 1811 South Overton Avenue in Independence. Shortly after her husband's death, Ardis's nephew, John Tilford Southern, came to her home every evening for several weeks to teach her how to drive and successfully pass the driving test. Ardis Haukenberry continued her attendance in the Bible study class for women at the First Baptist Church. She also maintained her membership in the Saturday Club, the Mary Paxton Study Class, and in the Jackson County Historical Society while her mother was at home. Her association with the Browning Society ended in 1971 since no one was able to lead the group after Ethel Noland's death and the group disbanded that year.<sup>240</sup>

Ruth Ragland, Ardis's mother, remained in her long-time home at 9515 East 18<sup>th</sup> Street through the mid-1950s, when she was nearly eighty years old. Around the time of Herbert Haukenberry's death, she then went to live with her daughter, Ardis, at 1811 South Overton Avenue. "My time and interest was closer to home since Mother was not well," Ardis explained many years later.<sup>241</sup> Learning how to drive a car surely helped her care for her mother. At age ninety-one, Ruth Ragland's health began to fail. One year later, on September 7, 1968, she died at the Independence Hospital at age ninety-two.<sup>242</sup>

#### **Ardis Haukenberry Comes Home to 216 North Delaware Street, 1973-1986**

In November 1973, seventy-four year-old Ardis Ragland Haukenberry moved "'back home' in a house on North Delaware Street in which she had spent many happy childhood days," according to Sue Gentry writing for the *Independence Examiner*. "All the Noland family is gone now, the last daughter, Miss Ethel Noland, having died in 1971. A widow now herself," Gentry explained, Ardis Haukenberry "decided to move back into the house, which became hers in the settlement of the estate."<sup>243</sup>

Haukenberry soon settled comfortably into her childhood home, decorated with many Noland and Truman family pieces of

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<sup>240</sup> Haukenberry, handwritten history of Ragland-Haukenberry families on "First National Safe Deposit Company" stationary, Gentry Collection, Jackson County Historical Society; "Mrs. Ruth Ragland," *Independence Examiner*, 9 September 1968.

<sup>241</sup> Haukenberry, handwritten history of Ragland-Haukenberry families on "First National Safe Deposit Company" stationary, Gentry Collection.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*; "Mrs. Ruth Ragland," *Independence Examiner*, 9 September 1968.

<sup>243</sup> Sue Gentry, "She Returns to Live in Home of Childhood," *Independence Examiner*, 15 December 1973.

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furniture and pictures. Ardis, actively involved in the Jackson County Historical Society and deeply interested in family genealogy, an interest she had inherited from Ethel Noland, immensely enjoyed being the second cousin of Harry Truman, who had died in 1972, as well as her close proximity to the Truman house across the street, where Bess Truman continued to live. "A special interest I've enjoyed since I moved back here to Delaware is visiting with [t]ourists. When I'm leaving or coming or digging in the yard, I can always stop and visit if they seem interested. . . . Many write back after they get home to tell me how much they appreciated my talking with them, and many also send Christmas cards," Ardis explained in a short autobiographical account of her life.<sup>244</sup>

With Ethel Noland gone, Ardis Haukenberry became the conveyer of local and family history and folklore on numerous occasions. In the mid-1970s, she provided James Ryan, who conducted an in-depth inventory of historic houses in Independence, information about the Noland house and family. She often shared information about local history with *Independence Examiner* journalists as well. She recorded her own personal history for *Examiner* journalist Sue Gentry. In May 1980, Haukenberry opened up her house to the public as part of the Truman Heritage Tour that year, sponsored by the Junior Service League for the benefit of the Waggoner Mansion renovation project in Independence. The Noland house was one of eight stops on the tour. Journalist Sue Gentry, who wrote a story featuring the Noland house, invited people to stop by and hear Ardis tell stories about "Cousin Harry's early years" and see some of the Truman furnishings, many of which came from Kentucky. "A downstairs bedroom is furnished with Truman family walnut furniture, a small bed cut down from a larger one, a dresser, and marble top table. The uniquely designed hatrack in the front hall is Truman furniture also," Gentry noted. "There are three chairs, now with needlepoint seats, from the family collection."<sup>245</sup> In addition, a love seat, a pie safe in the dining room, and a pie safe in the kitchen, were reportedly from the Truman family.<sup>246</sup> In 1983 and 1984, she described her recollections of the Truman house and changes to it in an oral history interview conducted by National Park Service historian Ron Cockrell. In early 1984, she shared her knowledge and

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<sup>244</sup> Haukenberry, handwritten history of Ragland-Haukenberry families on "First National Safe Deposit Company" stationary, Gentry Collection; Sue Gentry, "Truman Cousin's Home Open to Guests," *Independence Examiner*, 8 May 1980.

<sup>245</sup> Gentry, "Truman Cousin's Home Open to Guests."

<sup>246</sup> "Noland House, January 23, 10:00 am," conversation with Mrs. H. H. Haukenberry, Shirley Holder, Barbara Parrino, Pat Burrus, Virginia Miller, and Mary Sue Luff present, typescript, no year, Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

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personal possession of the McCoy medal, given for academic excellence to Independence grade school children in the early 1900s, with an *Examiner* journalist.<sup>247</sup>

Ardis Haukenberry remained interested in education and history, even as her health began to fail in her eighty-sixth year. In February 1986, she left 216 Delaware Street for the last time to live with her nephew, John Southern and his wife Jane in Sunrise Beach, Missouri. Nine months later, on November 2, 1986, Ardis Haukenberry died in a nursing home in Versailles, Missouri, at age eighty-seven.<sup>248</sup>

### The Noland Property over the Years 1923-1986

During the sixty-three years between 1923 and 1986, the Noland house property at 216 North Delaware Street underwent relatively few changes. The size of the family diminished during this period; thus, new additions would not have been needed. The only new "addition" to the family requiring cover (particularly in the winter) was the family automobile. Probably in the early 1920s, a garage replaced two small outbuildings (possibly old outhouses) along the alley to the rear of the house. Maps of Independence published in 1916 and 1926 by the Sanborn Company showing the Noland property record this change. Ethel Noland makes reference to the family garage in a letter to Harry Truman written in 1945. "The burglars broke into our garage night before last, took one look at the car, and wouldn't have the old thing, thank goodness!"<sup>249</sup>

In 1945, immediately after Harry Truman became president upon the death of Franklin Roosevelt, it seems that the Noland sisters felt it necessary to spruce up their house and yard for Harry's first homecoming in June that year and for the press and public. Both sisters were still teaching and at the peak of their careers as teachers, and so could better afford repair and maintenance work than in the 1950s and 1960s. It is probable that they had the house freshly painted in the spring of 1945 and the yard carefully tended.

The press described the Noland property on the eve of Truman's June 1945 visit. "Noland house is painted a gleaming white . . . and the grass in the yard is neatly cut. . . . The Noland home

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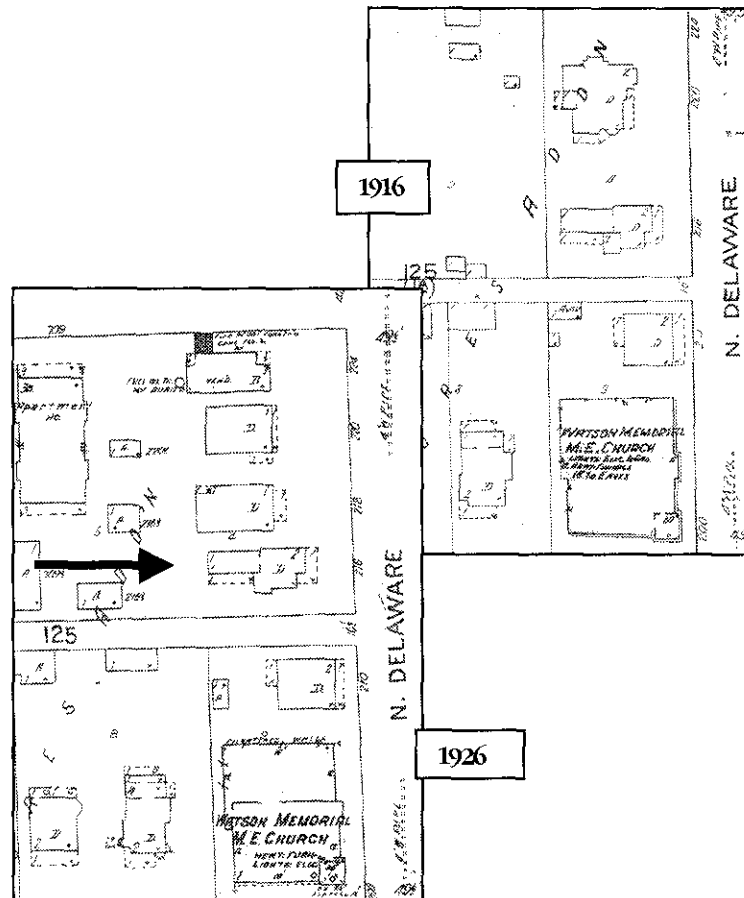
<sup>247</sup> Charles Burke, "McCoy Medal Will Honor Top Students," *Independence Examiner*, 18 January 1984.

<sup>248</sup> Sue Gentry, "Ardis Haukenberry, Truman's Cousin, Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 4 November 1986; "Mrs. Ardis R. Haukenberry," *Kansas City Times*, 4 November 1986.

<sup>249</sup> Ethel Noland to Harry S Truman, 6 December 1945, Ethel and Nellie Noland, President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

**The Noland Family and House, 1923-1991**  
**Part 2, Chapter 9**

remains practically the same as when President Truman stayed there while courting Bess Wallace."<sup>250</sup> (The Truman house was painted that spring as well.)



These August 1916 and August 1926 Sanborn fire insurance maps of Independence show that the form of the Noland house remained unchanged during that decade, however, an automobile garage (marked "A") in the rear (west) yard replaced two small sheds. The Slack property to the north witnessed the demolition of that family's large home in 1924 and the construction of three dwellings and a brick apartment house with a multiple-auto garage.

<sup>250</sup> "Just Rest and Visit a Bit, 15 June 1945." Newspaper Clippings, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

**The Noland Family and House, 1923-1991**  
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Five years later in 1950, a porch addition was made to the Noland house. It is likely that the new porch replaced an older open porch on the south side of the house's rear wing. (A careful physical examination of the porch in 2000 revealed that this porch is relatively new in its construction materials and methods.) Construction of a Noland porch was recorded in letters between Ethel Noland and Harry Truman. "Everyone seems to have gotten 'porch fever,'" Harry wrote in early July 1950. "You built one, so did Lizzie, and Mary Jane [Truman, Harry's sister] is at it now."<sup>251</sup> Ethel responded: "Yes I agree that building porches has reached the epidemic stage. You started something when you built the White House porch. The rest of us are mere copy cats."<sup>252</sup>

Interior changes to the Noland house were probably also minimal between 1923 and 1986. Wallpapering (not painting) the walls probably occurred a little more often after Truman became president and before the Noland sisters retired from teaching. In July 1950, shortly after carpenters had begun work on the Noland porch, Ethel described their wallpapering adventure to her first cousin. "When we got the porch under way we decided to paper the house. When the paper was pulled off the walls a lot of plaster came with it so we had to plaster. We went through a nightmare of disorder, but tonight we are at peace and I was able to find pen and paper again."<sup>253</sup> Sympathetically Harry told Ethel that "I am sorry about the plaster but your experience with paper and plaster is like the experience at the White House" (during its renovation, which occurred at the same time).<sup>254</sup>

Richard Jaques, then a teenager who worked on the wallpapering job with his boss, Elijah Ellsworth Leatch, recalled the plaster incident in an oral history fifty years later. Jaques remembered that the plaster fell from the ceiling in the "living room" (behind the front parlor) with the fireplace and a hutch along the wall, or the dining room (west of the living room). Jaques was in the process of removing seven or eight layers of wallpaper on the ceiling when the plaster underneath, laced with horsehair that no longer held the aged plaster together, started coming down.

Well, it came down around me on that duck board  
[between two ladders] and he—Mr. Leatch had gone to get  
paper from somewhere. And when he came back, boy, he

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<sup>251</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 7 July 1950, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>252</sup> Ethel Noland to Harry S Truman, undated July 1950, Personal File: "Ethel and Nellie Noland," President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>254</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 20 July 1950, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.



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wasn't happy at all because he thought he was going to have to pay for all that himself. . . . And he was reading me the riot act and Miss. [Ethel] Noland had come in. She let him know that it was not my fault. And his attitude changed right in a hurry.<sup>255</sup>

Jaques remembered that he and Elijah Leatch left their wallpaper job until after plasterers repaired the ceiling. They then came back to finish the job of wallpapering both the ceiling and walls of the dining room and possibly one other room in the house.<sup>256</sup>

One other interior change may have taken place in the early 1950s. Nellie's ill health, beginning in the summer of 1951, may have prompted the sisters to move Nellie's bedroom to the ground floor and to add a small bathroom across the hall from the bedroom. The addition of this bathroom would have slightly reduced the size of the dining room. This interior addition probably would have occurred between 1952 and 1954.

It is unknown but unlikely that other interior or exterior changes took place after Ethel's retirement in 1954. The income of both sisters would have been reduced and fixed. This was the case as well when Ardis Haukenberry, retired from teaching long before, came to live in the Noland House in 1973, when in her mid-seventies.

The landscaping around the house probably changed relatively little after the Nolands retired. Trees (maple and paw paw) and lilac bushes grew larger in the yard and at the edges of the property. Bulbs and other perennial flowers probably continued to bloom in flowerbeds along the rear (west) property line and at certain places along the house foundation. A chain-link fence replaced the wood picket fence enclosing the yard, possibly in the 1950s or 1960s. Honeysuckle became established along this fence along the west and south property lines. Ivy began to proliferate on the retaining wall along the sidewalk across the front yard.<sup>257</sup>

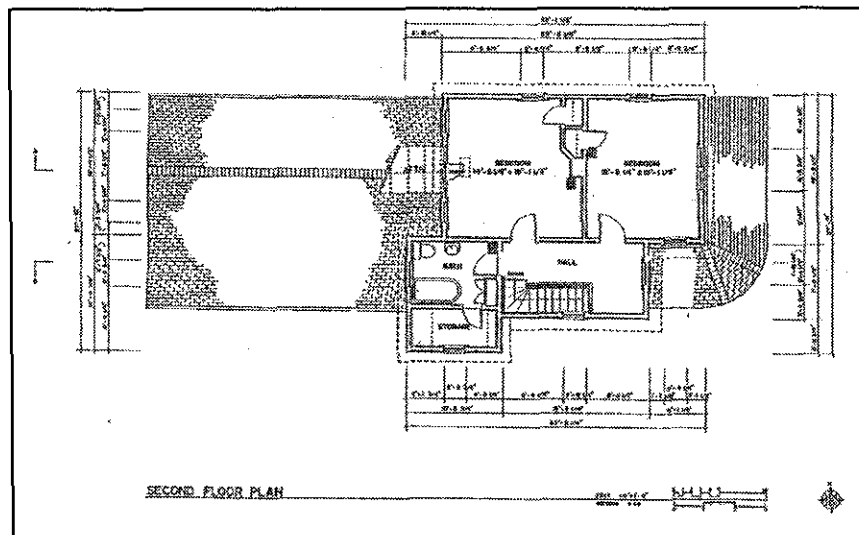
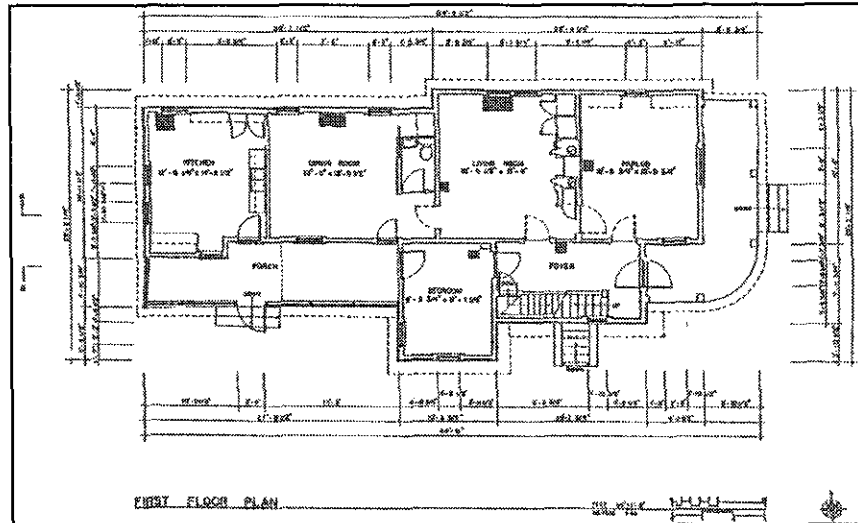
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<sup>255</sup> Richard Jaques, interview by Gail E. H. Evans, 26 May 2000 (in the Noland House), transcript of taped interview, 6, 9-11, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12, 15.

<sup>257</sup> Michael Shaver, memorandum to superintendent, November 29, 1987, Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

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These floor plans of the Noland house, completed by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in 1992, show the configuration and use of rooms in the last fifty years. The addition of a bathroom on the ground floor was probably made in the early 1950s when Nellie Noland's health began to decline and she moved to the bedroom on the first floor. This is the only known change in the configuration of rooms since the early 1910s.

**The Noland Family and House, 1923-1991**  
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**Renting the Noland House**  
**1986-1991**

After Ardis Haukenberry moved out of the Noland house, it sat vacant between February and July 1986, when it was rented. The renting couple separated during the next year; the wife moved out of the house in July 1987. The house was rented again, shortly afterward, for about \$400 to \$450 a month. By that time, Ardis had died and her nephew and his wife, John and Dawna Southern, had inherited the property.<sup>258</sup>

At the end of July 1987, a man in his forties with two teenage sons and a daughter moved into the Noland House. The family had recently moved from Texas to Independence. The renter was probably Michael L. Nissen, according to the Polk city directory for Independence in 1988. Frank Fry rented and occupied the house for approximately two years, 1989-1990.<sup>259</sup> John and Dawna Southern sold the Noland House to the National Park Service in September 1991. The Noland house keys were turned over to the Park Service on September 17<sup>th</sup>.

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<sup>258</sup>Ibid.

<sup>259</sup>Ibid.; *Polk's Independence City Directory*, 1988, 1989, and 1990.

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## **Chapter 10**

### **The Wallace and Gates Families in Independence**

#### **Introduction**

#### **The Wallace Family in Independence**

#### **The Gates Family in Independence**

#### **Gates Property—Site of the Wallace Sons' Future Homes**

#### **David and Madge Gates Wallace**

## **The Wallace and Gates Families in Independence Part 2, Chapter 10**

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### **Introduction**

The family of David Willock Wallace arrived in Independence in 1833, when the town was a bustling center of trade for Santa Fe Trail freighters. In mid-nineteenth-century Independence, the Wallaces witnessed first-hand the mounting tensions and outright conflict between federal and southern sympathizers preceding and during the Civil War. The family of Margaret Elizabeth (Madge) Gates moved to Independence from Illinois immediately after the Civil War. Both Wallace and Gates families contributed to the commercial and political up-building of Independence in the nineteenth century. David Willock Wallace, born in Independence, and Madge Gates, born in Port Byron, Illinois, met and married in Independence in 1883, when the town was experiencing a period of great prosperity and robust growth. Between 1885 and 1900, the Wallace couple had six children (two of whom died in infancy). Frank and George Wallace were the oldest sons, and the younger brothers of Bess Wallace Truman. Life for the David and Madge Wallace family changed dramatically and forever when David Wallace, plagued by debts and depression, took his life in June 1903. His widow, Madge Wallace, and her four children, ranging in age from three to seventeen, sought relief from the pain, shock, and shame of his suicide in Colorado Springs. After nearly a year there, the Wallace family returned to Independence in 1904 to begin life anew.

### **The Wallace Family in Independence**

The father of Frank and George Wallace, David Willock Wallace, was the son of Benjamin F. and Virginia Willock Wallace, born in 1817 in Campbellsville, Green County, Kentucky.<sup>260</sup> He and three brothers (Reuben, John M., and J. Stamper) came to Independence from Kentucky in October 1833, just five years after the original townsite was surveyed and platted. Then a bustling trading center for caravans heading southwest over the Santa Fe Trail, Independence boasted a population of 250 residents. The Wallace family was among the town's pioneer

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<sup>260</sup> Benjamin Wallace's parents, Thomas and Mary Percy Wallace, came to Jackson County in 1833 with their family. They settled on a farm south of Independence (on what is now U.S. highway 40). They raised ten children: three daughters and ten sons, one of whom was Benjamin, Bess Truman's grandfather. Henry A. Bundschu, "'Harry S. Truman, The Missourian.'" *Kansas City Star*, 26 December 1948. For a more comprehensive history of the Wallace family, see: Ron Cockrell's *The Trumans of Independence: Historic Resource Study* (Omaha, Neb.: National Park Service, 1985), 41-46.

## The Wallace and Gates Families in Independence Part 2, Chapter 10

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settlers.<sup>261</sup> One brother, Rueben Wallace, took advantage of the mercantile opportunities in town and engaged in business, becoming the co-owner of a successful general merchandise store in Independence, which supported the construction of a palatial residence in town.<sup>262</sup>

Benjamin F. Wallace, like so many others at that time, made several trips across the Santa Fe Trail as a trader. When Independence began to lose its trading vigor to Westport Landing and other landings further upstream on the Missouri, Benjamin Wallace went into the mercantile business operating a store on the north side of the courthouse square. Eventually, Wallace went into banking and became a member of the firm of Waldo and Wallace bankers of Independence.<sup>263</sup> Benjamin Wallace, who was known as a quiet and thoughtful man with sound ethical judgment, was elected by Jackson County residents to represent them in local and state government. He served as the mayor of Independence in 1869. From then until his death in 1877, he represented Jackson County in the Missouri State Assembly (Legislature).<sup>264</sup> Later in life, Benjamin Wallace also became an active early member of the Old Settlers of Jackson County, a group organized in 1871 to recognize and record the early history of Independence and Jackson County. Benjamin Wallace died at age sixty in 1877, leaving his wife, Virginia, a widow for the next thirty years.<sup>265</sup>

In 1847, twenty-nine-year-old Benjamin F. Wallace had married the young Virginia Willock, a native of Green County, Kentucky, born on May 20, 1824. Virginia Willock's father, David Willock of Green County, Kentucky, had come to Missouri in 1830. He served as a captain in the Black Hawk War, and later became a general in the army. He died in Palmyra, Missouri, in 1854.<sup>266</sup>

Virginia and B. F. Wallace had two children: Mary Albina Wallace, who was born in May 1848 and died less than four years later, and a son, David Willock Wallace, born on June 15, 1860,

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<sup>261</sup> W. Z. Hickman, *History of Jackson County, Missouri* (Topeka, Kans.: Historical Publishing Co., 1920), 246-47; *Political History of Jackson County; Biographical Sketches of Men Who Have Helped to Make It* (N.p.: Marshall & Morrison, 1902), 14.

<sup>262</sup> Pearl Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers* (Independence, Mo.: Pearl Wilcox, 1975), 53, 158; *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Jackson County, Missouri* (Independence, Mo.: n.p., 1877), 61.

<sup>263</sup> Bundschu, "Harry S. Truman, The Missourian."

<sup>264</sup> *History of Jackson County, Missouri. Containing a History of the County, Its Cities, Towns, Etc., Indexed Edition*, 1881, reprint (Cape Girardeau, Mo.: Ramfire Press, 1966), 182; Margaret Truman, *Bess W. Truman* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 3; "Services for Frank Wallace Monday," *Independence Examiner*, 13 August 1960.

<sup>265</sup> Hickman, *History of Jackson County*, 92, 188, 240-47.

<sup>266</sup> "Mrs. Wallace Is Dead," *Kansas City Star*, 5 December 1952, Newspaper Clippings, Missouri Valley Room, Kansas City Library.

## **The Wallace and Gates Families in Independence**

### **Part 2, Chapter 10**

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three months after the declaration of civil war between the North and South. David Willock Wallace attended the Independence public schools, and took a classical course of classes at Finley's High School.<sup>267</sup>

Like his own father, David Willock Wallace earned a living from employment in government jobs. In 1874, when only fourteen, Benjamin Wallace used his influence to have David Wallace appointed an assistant docket clerk of the Missouri State Senate. Three years later, he became assistant engrossing clerk. In late April 1878, the year after his father died, David Wallace was appointed deputy recorder of marriage licenses in Independence.<sup>268</sup> He still held this position five years later, when, at twenty-three, he married Margaret Elizabeth Gates.

### **The Gates Family in Independence**

Frank Wallace's mother, Margaret Elizabeth ("Madge") Gates, was the daughter of George Porterfield and Elizabeth Emery Gates, who came to Independence from Rock Island County, Illinois, in 1866, when Jackson County was recovering from the social scars left by the Civil War. George P. Gates had been born on April 2, 1835 in Lunenburg, Essex County, Vermont, and moved with his family to Port Byron, Rock Island County, Illinois in 1850. For about ten years, George Gates engaged in the lumber business there. Elizabeth Emery, his future wife, was a native of Rounds, North Hampshire, England, born on February 21, 1841. She had come to the United States at age seven. Elizabeth Emery and George P. Gates married in Moline, Illinois in 1860 and moved to Independence soon afterward.<sup>269</sup>

George and Elizabeth Gates arrived in Independence around the time that other Gates family members came to town, including George P. Gates's parents, George Washington and Sarah Todd Gates, and several of his brothers. The elder George W. Gates, who had served as a United States marshal in Vermont under President Van Buren (1837-1841), served as a presiding judge of the Jackson County Court (similar to today's county commission) in 1868-1869. Three years later, the elder George

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<sup>267</sup> *History of Jackson County, Missouri*, 1881, reprint, 881; Bundschu, "Harry S. Truman, The Missourian."

<sup>268</sup> *History of Jackson County, Missouri*, 1881, reprint, 881; Truman, *Bess W. Wallace*, 3; Bundschu, "Harry S. Truman, The Missourian."

<sup>269</sup> "Closed a Useful Life, *Jackson Examiner*, 28 June 1918; "Mrs. George P. Gates Dead," *Independence Examiner*, 20 June 1924. For a more comprehensive history of the Gates family, see Cockrell's *The Trumans of Independence: Historic Resource Study*, 18-27.



## The Wallace and Gates Families in Independence Part 2, Chapter 10

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W. Gates was elected to the Missouri State Legislature (1871-1872).<sup>270</sup>

George P. Gates's younger brother, Edward Payson Gates, was born in Lunenburg, Vermont in 1845 (March 5<sup>th</sup>). He graduated with high honors from Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, in 1867. Arriving in Independence soon afterward, he entered the law office of Comings and Slover, and was admitted to the Missouri bar in 1868. In 1877, Gates formed a partnership with William H. Wallace, which became known as Gates and Wallace. John A. Sea and Theodoric Boulware Wallace later joined the firm. The firm was dissolved in early 1896. That year, Edward Payson Gates was nominated by the Democratic Party and elected by county residents to serve as circuit court judge of Jackson County. He also served as the Independence city attorney from 1886 to 1890<sup>271</sup>

George Porterfield Gates also distinguished himself in the community, becoming one of Independence's leading businessmen. After first arriving in town in 1866, he engaged in the lumber business, which milled lumber to satisfy the needs of the post-Civil War building boom. He also became active in local government, school, and church affairs. From 1867 to 1869, he served as one of three justices on the Jackson County Court. In 1869-1870, he was the Jackson County Superintendent of Schools. Gates also sat on the first board of trustees of the Independence Female College, founded by the First Presbyterian Church in 1871. George Gates was active in the First Presbyterian Church, where he served as an elder for many years.<sup>272</sup>

Around 1880, George P. Gates joined the flour milling company of Peter Waggoner and Son, when the Waggoners enlarged and modernized the mill. Nearly twenty-five years earlier, in 1866, Peter Waggoner had bought a sizeable flour and woolen mill in Independence (originally built in 1846 by Jacob Haller and later bought by John A. Overfelt), near present-day Pleasant Street and Pacific Avenue.<sup>273</sup> In 1883, William H.

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<sup>270</sup> Howard L. Conard, ed., *Encyclopedia of the History of Missouri: A Compendium of History and Biography for Ready Reference*, Vol. III (New York: Southern History Company, 1901), 8; "Closed a Useful Life," *Jackson Examiner*, 28 June 1918; *Jackson Sentinel*, 8 December 1898.

<sup>271</sup> Conard, ed., *Encyclopedia of the History of Missouri*, Vol. III, 8-9; "Political History of Jackson County," 13; "Judge E. P. Gates Dead," *Independence Examiner*, 22 April 1920, typescript, Vertical File: "Judge E. P. Gates," Harry S. Truman Library; "Closed a Useful Life," *Jackson Examiner*, 28 June 1918.

<sup>272</sup> *History of Jackson County, Missouri*, 1881, reprint, 178; 236; Nancy M. Ehrlich, *Ask Now of the Days That Are Past: A History of First Presbyterian Church, Independence, Mo.: First Presbyterian, 1890*, 123.

<sup>273</sup> *History of Jackson County, Missouri*, 1881, reprint, 646. According to one source of information, John A. Overfelt, the owner of this mill, in 1857, on Spring Creek, bought milling machinery from E. A. Hickman, who had closed his mill

## The Wallace and Gates Families in Independence Part 2, Chapter 10

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Waggoner, son of Peter Waggoner, and successful lumberman George P. Gates organized and incorporated as the "Waggoner-Gates Milling Company." George P. Gates became the company's secretary-treasurer. A few years later, the mill was again reorganized; Judge Edward P. Gates (George Gates's brother), C. C. Chiles, and Thomas L. Wilson joined George Gates and William Waggoner as the mill owners. Over the years, several enlargements were made to the mill and adjoining grain elevator. By 1903, the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company grain elevator increased its holding capacity from 75,000 bushels to 350,000 bushels. The mill produced 1,000 barrels of flour a day. The mill's twelve-story grain elevator and rolling mill, located less than a mile south of the courthouse square, dominated the Independence landscape. The Waggoner-Gates Company's "Queen of the Pantry" flour, a brand name used at least as early as 1867 (and a registered trademark since 1878), was distributed throughout the Midwest. The Waggoner-Gates Mill provided employment for hundreds of Independence families over the years, bolstered the economy of the community, and gave farmers in the area a place to sell their harvest and buy grain for their stock. Frank Gates Wallace, who with other Gates family members inherited stock in the company from George P. Gates, would later take part in the daily operation of the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company and, eventually, help direct it.<sup>274</sup>

Even before arriving in Independence in 1866, George P. and Elizabeth Emery Gates had begun raising a family. In Port Byron, Illinois, Elizabeth had given birth to three daughters: Margaret Elizabeth ("Madge"), born on August 4, 1862; Maud Louise, born on February 23, 1864; and Myra, born in 1866. After arriving in Independence, four more children were born to the Gates couple: George Walter, born in 1868; Frank E., born in 1871; Tillie, born in 1874 (who died in 1877), and Bessie, born in 1883 (who died in 1884).<sup>275</sup>

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near Hickman Mills in southern Jackson County. Hickman sold the lumber from his mill to Solomon Young, who used it to construct a large barn on his property, the future Young-Truman farm near Grandview. "History Burns With an Old Barn," *Kansas City Times*, 1 November 1966.

<sup>274</sup> "Old Waggoner-Gates Flour Mill Threatened After 50 Years Life," c. 1933 and "Family Dynasty Ends With Waggoner's Death," *Independence Examiner*, 8 November 1976; both articles in Vertical File: "Waggoner-Gates Mill," Harry S. Truman Library; "Closed a Useful Life," *Jackson Examiner*, 28 June 1918; Pearl Wilcox, *Independence and 20th Century Pioneers: The Years from 1900 to 1928* (Independence, Mo.: Pearl Wilcox, 1979), 118-19.

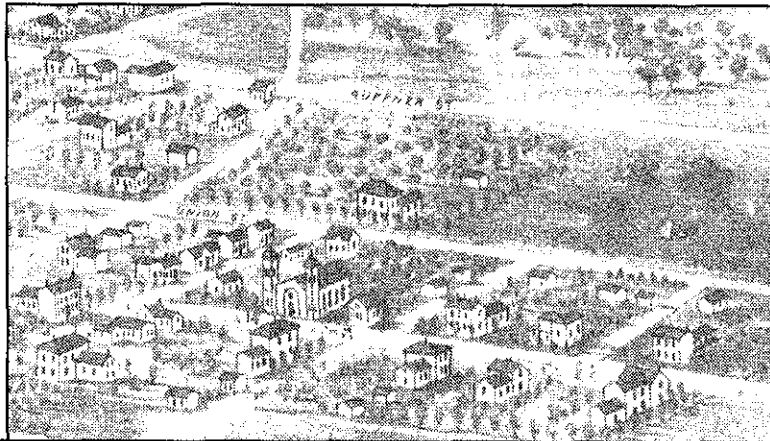
<sup>275</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, no page number (family tree); Cockrell, "A President's Private Domain," *Gone West* 2: 2 (Spring 1984), 2.

**The Wallace and Gates Families in Independence  
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**Gates Property—Site of the Wallace Sons' Future Homes**

When the George and Elizabeth Gates family first arrived in Independence in 1866 with three young children, they may have lived for about a year with the elder George W. Gates, who had bought a farm about three and one-half miles southwest of the Independence courthouse square. In June 1867, George P. Gates bought lots 2 and 3 in Moore's Addition for \$700. Historical evidence and a careful visual examination of the extant Gates-Truman house strongly suggest that a small house, dating from 1848-1850, stood on the Gates family's newly acquired property, at the corner of North Delaware Street and Tanyard Road (later renamed Blue, Van Horn, then Truman Road). No doubt in need of additional space for their growing family, George and Elizabeth Gates enlarged the diminutive dwelling by constructing a two-story addition on the west side of the existing structure.<sup>276</sup> An 1868 "Bird's Eye View of the City of Independence, Missouri," map depicts the new two-story addition with the older one-story ell. To the east side (rear) of the present



**This enlargement of a section of the 1868 bird's-eye view of Independence depicts two small buildings on open land behind the two- and one-story Gates house (lower left), which would later become the site of the two Wallace brothers' homes on West Truman Road.** A. Ruger, *Bird's Eye View of the City of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri* (1868), reprinted by the Jackson County Historical Society.

Truman house stood two small buildings, on the adjoining lot 1, that fronted on Blue Avenue.<sup>277</sup>

<sup>276</sup> A comprehensive early pre-1867 history of the Gates property history can be found in Cockrell's *The Trumans of Independence: Historic Resource Study*, 11-18, 24-26.

<sup>277</sup> A. Ruger, *Bird's Eye View of the City of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri*, 1868, reprint (Independence, Mo.: Jackson County Historical Society, n.d.).

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In November 1868, George P. Gates bought lot 1 as well as lot 12 (which adjoined lot 1) in Moore's Addition. By 1886 these two small buildings on lot 1 no longer existed. All of lot 1 and the eastern half of lot 2 were by then probably used for grazing a cow or two and for a garden.<sup>278</sup> Just one year earlier, the Gates house to the west had been greatly enlarged, acquiring the appearance of a grand mansion, a reflection of the prosperity of George P. Gates, part owner of the prominent Waggoner-Gates Milling Company.<sup>279</sup>

The Gates's eldest child, Madge Gates, grew from age five to young adulthood in the Gates house at 219 North Delaware Street in an atmosphere of relative ease and comfort, although she no doubt had some responsibilities caring for her five younger siblings that were born before she married and left home. As a young woman, she attended the Presbyterian Church's Female College in Independence, a popular women's boarding school in the area, which her father helped found when Madge was nine years old. Interested in music and proficient as a piano player, she studied for two years at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music.<sup>280</sup>

### David and Madge Gates Wallace

Madge Gates was not yet twenty-one years old when she married tall, handsome, popular, twenty-three year-old David Willock Wallace on June 13, 1883. Although George P. Gates took a dim view of the match because he feared that David Wallace might be unable to support his wife's expensive tastes, he consented to the marriage when the couple threatened to elope. The wedding ceremony took place in the Presbyterian Church in Independence. The Gates held a reception for the newlyweds at their home on North Delaware Street.<sup>281</sup>

Following the marriage, David Wallace continued working as the deputy recorder of marriage licenses in Independence. The young couple took up residence at 117 West Ruby Street, off of Chrysler Street and southwest of the courthouse square, about two miles from the Gates house. Their first child, Elizabeth Virginia (Bess) Wallace, was born February 13, 1885. Two years

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<sup>278</sup> G. M. Hopkins, comp., *Atlas of the Environs of Kansas City in Jackson County, Missouri* (Philadelphia, Penn.: G. M. Hopkins, 1886), Missouri Valley Room, Kansas City Library.

<sup>279</sup> Cockrell, *The Trumans of Independence*, 26, 31-33.

<sup>280</sup> "Mrs. Wallace Dies in the White House," Vertical Files: "Genealogical, Madge Gates Wallace," Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri; "Mrs. Wallace Is Dead," *Kansas City Star*, 5 December 1952.

<sup>281</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 3; Ron Cockrell, "The Summer White House," *Jackson County Historical Society* 26: 2 (Fall 1984), 11-12.

## The Wallace and Gates Families in Independence Part 2, Chapter 10

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later, on March 4, 1887, Madge Wallace gave birth to her first son, Frank Gates Wallace.<sup>282</sup>

By that time, there were already ominous signs of financial strain in the Wallace marriage. In the first year of marriage, David Wallace mortgaged the Ruby Street house to secure a \$700 loan. In 1885, the year of Bess Wallace's birth, David Wallace wrote to President Grover Cleveland, addressing him as "dear sir and friend," and asked him for a job in the customs house in Kansas City, which presumably paid a higher wage. Cleveland's secretary declined his request. Financial problems continued. The young Wallace family moved into George and Elizabeth Gates's recently enlarged house at the corner of North Delaware and Blue avenues, around the time of Frank Gates's birth.<sup>283</sup> In 1887, David Wallace sold the Ruby Street house for a profit. In the late 1880s, the Wallaces' financial situation may have improved slightly. In 1888 and again in 1890, he ran for Jackson County deputy treasurer and won both times. Perhaps somewhat encouraged by his political success and growing popularity, around 1890, David Wallace bought a large house at 608 (later renumbered 610) North Delaware Street, two blocks from the Gates house, in the town's most fashionable neighborhood. Financial problems besieged the Wallaces again in 1892, when David Wallace's second term as Jackson County treasurer expired, and the factionalized Democrats did not offer him another position. The Wallace's third child, George Porterfield Wallace, was born on May 1, 1892, just a few months before David Wallace became unemployed for nearly a year.<sup>284</sup>

Finally, in late 1893, Wallace managed to secure an appointment as a U.S. deputy surveyor of customs for the port of Kansas City, and left elective politics forever. His salary of \$1,200 in 1894 was a respectable sum, but not enough to support three children and a wife with expensive tastes and little apparent awareness of her husband's financial straits. Added to continuing money problems were conflicted feelings of joy, increased financial burden, and grief when Madge Wallace gave birth to one more child in 1898, who died in infancy.<sup>285</sup> A

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<sup>282</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 3; Cockrell, "A President's Private Domain," 3.

<sup>283</sup> The 1888 city directory for Independence shows both the George Gates and the David Wallace families living at 11 Delaware, at the corner of North Delaware and Blue (later Truman Road) avenues. *Independence City Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: R. S. Dillon and Company, 1888-89).

<sup>284</sup> Jeff Wade, "The President's Mother-in-Law: An 'Impossible Old Woman?'" *Newsletter from Harry S Truman National Historic Site* 14 (Winter 1998), 1; Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 3-4, 6-7.

<sup>285</sup> According to Margaret Truman Daniel, granddaughter of Madge Wallace, another daughter, Madeline, was born to Madge and David Wallace in the mid-1890s. She died when about three years old. Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 7;

## The Wallace and Gates Families in Independence Part 2, Chapter 10

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daughter was born in early May 1898 but lived only a day, according to the *Jackson Examiner*. "The infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. D. W. Wallace, born Monday, died Tuesday night."<sup>286</sup> For David Wallace, who played with and adored his own children, as well as for his wife, the loss of two children within a year must have been a devastating tragedy.

Through this time of anxiety and grief, David Wallace's personal problems continued. Around 1900, when the Wallace's fifth and last child, David Frederick, was born, David Wallace attempted to start an importing business in Kansas City, a logical adjunct to his customs job. His efforts went nowhere and probably put him deeper in debt. In April 1900, the *Jackson Examiner* announced that the "D. W. Wallace family will in a short time move to the home of Mr. and Mrs. George P. Gates (at 219 North Delaware) and make their home with Mr. and Mrs. Gates." The A. C. Cowan family was to move from the nearby Paxton home, where they had been staying, into the Wallace house, which they could rent.<sup>287</sup> If this move actually did occur, the Wallaces probably lived in the Gates house for only a few months (perhaps while they were away with their ill son, Frank), and then returned to their home at 608 North Delaware. In great need of money, David Wallace tried to get a raise in his customs job. After one request for an increase failed, in 1901, David Wallace was given \$200 of additional annual compensation. Another \$200 increase came the following year, raising Wallace's total yearly income to \$1,600 in 1902. These increases, however, could not cover the family's expenses and debts. In 1901, David Wallace was two years in arrears in paying his property taxes. The following year, he was unable to pay a collection agency, which contacted him repeatedly, about a \$3.50 debt (equivalent to about \$100 in 2000). Reluctantly, David Wallace turned to his father-in-law, George Gates for help. Gates paid the Wallace family's back taxes. Also in 1901, George Gates, paid several hundred dollars for some badly needed shingling and painting of the Wallace house on North Delaware Street.<sup>288</sup> George Gates probably rescued David Wallace, financially, on many occasions. In a series of faded letters, found in a box many years later by Margaret Truman in the basement of the Gates-Truman house,

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Christine Wallace and David F. Wallace, Jr., interview by Jim Williams, 26 August 1991, transcript of taped interview, 49, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>286</sup>*Jackson Examiner*, 7 May 1898.

<sup>287</sup> It is not known with certainty that the Wallace family actually moved to the Gates house, but this possibility suggests that the expenses of their own home may have been more than David Wallace could bear. *Jackson Examiner*, 20 April 1900.

<sup>288</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 11-15.

## The Wallace and Gates Families in Independence Part 2, Chapter 10

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David Wallace thanked his father-in-law again and again for "your many kindnesses to me and my family."<sup>289</sup>

As David Wallace's debts increased, so too did his drinking and his struggle to remain optimistic about the future. When not at his customs job, he spent time on the Independence Square, not in the courthouse, but in a saloon patronized by local politicians. Young Bess, Frank, and George Wallace must have known about their father's drinking; often David Wallace's friends carried him home and deposited him on his front porch. Known by everyone to have a sweet and cheerful disposition, David Wallace was uncharacteristically gloomy about his finances in a letter to his father-in-law, written in the early 1900s, when the Gateses were away from Independence. "To be frank with you," he confided in George P. Gates. "I get pretty *blue* [his emphasis] over matters. I do the very best that I can but it seems that little good results. I try to look on the bright side of things, but even then it is dark."<sup>290</sup>

An end to all of David Wallace's seemingly insurmountable problems finally came on June 17, 1903, four days after his twentieth wedding anniversary and two days after his forty-third birthday. Early that morning, he arose, opened the drawer of a writing desk in the bedroom, and reached for a revolver. He walked into the bathroom, placed the muzzle just behind his left ear, and pulled the trigger. "The ball passed through his head and out the right temple."<sup>291</sup> The explosion of the discharging gun broke the morning silence and awakened the household. Sixteen-year-old Frank Wallace ran down the hall to the bathroom. "Papa! Papa's shot himself!," Frank cried out in stunned disbelief and anguish.<sup>292</sup>

More than eighty years later, family members gave differing accounts of who found David Wallace after the shooting. Margaret Truman Daniel, who was twenty when she first learned from her Aunt Natalie about her grandfather's suicide, wrote in 1986 that Frank Wallace, Natalie's husband, had "found" his father.<sup>293</sup> In 1984, May Southern Wallace, George Wallace's wife, reported that her husband, then eleven years old, found his slain father.<sup>294</sup> There is probably some truth in both recollections. According to the local newspaper, which printed a front-page story about the incident two days after it took place, David Wallace "fell unconscious to the floor and died within thirty

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>291</sup> "D. W. Wallace Dead," *Jackson Examiner*, 19 June 1903.

<sup>292</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Wallace*, 17.

<sup>293</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Wallace*, 234.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 17; May Wallace, interview by Ron Cockrell, 2 March 1984, transcript of taped interview, 44, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

## The Wallace and Gates Families in Independence Part 2, Chapter 10

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minutes."<sup>295</sup> While help was being summoned and David Wallace lay motionless, both Frank and George, as well as others in the family, may all have witnessed his demise.

Regardless of who was present immediately after the shooting, David Wallace's suicide unquestionably had a profound affect on everyone in the family. Each responded to the tragedy in a different way. Bess Wallace never in her lifetime talked with her daughter, Margaret, about David Wallace's suicide.<sup>296</sup> May Wallace assessed the impact of the tragedy on George Wallace this way: "I think it [his father's suicide] affected his nervous system the rest of his life, it was such a shock."<sup>297</sup> Natalie Wallace may have no difficulty believing that her husband was the first one at the scene of the shooting, since she too understood what a devastating impact David Wallace's suicide had on her husband. Madge Wallace forever after remained extremely protective of all her children, encouraging Frank and George Wallace to build their homes in the Gates backyard (perhaps even insisting that they do so) and always keeping a watchful eye on their and their wives' every action.

The shock of David Wallace's death was even more profound since no one seemed able, at the time, adequately to explain why he had chosen to take his life. He left no note explaining his action. "Never did he appear despondent," the *Jackson Examiner* reported, "and his joke and ready sympathy always brightened those with whom he came in contact."<sup>298</sup> "It was not scandal, . . . nor pecuniary embarrassment; all who knew David Wallace would assist him if necessary; . . . it was not domestic trouble. . . . On the eve of the fatal deeds the neighbors heard his laugh as loud as any of the family circle as they all sat playing at games." Subtly suggesting the role that alcohol may have played in David Wallace's death, the article concluded that: "it was the insidious disease against which he battled for years, which slowly creeping upward toward the brain paralyzed the functions of the mind and directed them willfully against himself."<sup>299</sup>

Shattered, stunned, and even shamed and disgraced by her husband's suicide, Madge Wallace and her four children, who were instantly "flung from the top of Independence's social hierarchy to the bottom," took refuge in her parents' house at 219 North Delaware Street. The grief-stricken family, however, could not be comforted for long by retreating into George and Elizabeth Gates's house. Instead, the family decided to retreat from

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<sup>295</sup> "D. W. Wallace Dead," *Jackson Examiner*, 19 June 1903.

<sup>296</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 235.

<sup>297</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 44.

<sup>298</sup> "D. W. Wallace Dead," *Jackson Examiner*, 19 June 1903.

<sup>299</sup> "With Imposing Ceremony," *Independence Sentinel*, June 1903, Vertical File: "Genealogical File, David Willock Wallace," Harry S. Truman Library.



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Independence. Within days, Madge and her children, Bess, Frank, George, and David Frederick, boarded the Missouri Pacific's *Santa Fe*. The next day they got off the train at Colorado Springs. For nearly a year, the Wallace family stayed with Gates family relatives in Colorado. Madge Wallace and her four children returned to Independence in mid-1904, and moved into the home of George and Elizabeth Gates at 219 North Delaware Street—permanently.<sup>300</sup>

Madge Wallace remained a widow for the rest of her life. Nearly all of her widowed years were spent in the company of Bess and Harry Truman, and within a few yards of the homes of Frank and George Wallace. In her elderly years, she moved to the White House with Bess Truman and Harry, where Bess could take care of her needs. Margaret Elizabeth Gates died in the White House on December 5, 1952, almost fifty years after the death of her husband, David Willock Wallace.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Wallace*, 19; May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 44.

<sup>301</sup> "Mrs. Wallace Is Dead," *Kansas City Star*, 5 December 1952.

**The Wallace and Gates Families in Independence**  
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## **Chapter 11**

### **Frank and Natalie Ott Wallace Family and House**

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Ott Family in Independence  
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## **The Frank and Natalie Ott Wallace Family House**

### **Part 2, Chapter 11**

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#### **Introduction**

Frank Gates Wallace was born in Independence to David and Madge Gates Wallace in 1887. After spending a year in Colorado Springs following the death of his father in 1903, Frank began his early association with his grandfather's milling company, Waggoner-Gates. In 1915, he married the diminutive Natalie Ott, born in Independence in 1891 to a prominent attorney and banker. By the end of 1915, they had moved into their modest, new Bungalow-style house, on the site of former garden and grazing area of the Gates-Wallace house at 219 North Delaware Street. Frank and Natalie Wallace lived their entire married lives in their home at 601 Truman Road.

The Frank and Natalie Wallace house became an intimate part of the larger compound of buildings and landscaping features at 219 North Delaware Street, now the Truman home, and 605 Truman Road, the George and May Wallace house. Since the Frank and Natalie Wallace home was built in 1915, there was constant interaction between the Wallace couple and the occupants in the "big house" at 219 North Delaware Street. The physical proximity of the Frank and Natalie Wallace house and the other two houses, as well as the long history of their occupants' interaction, represents Harry Truman's and the Gates-Wallace families' close ties and commitment to home, family, and community.

#### **Frank Wallace—Birth and Childhood**

Frank Wallace, the second child of Madge Gates and David Wallace, was born in Independence on March 4, 1887. As a child, Frank had a companion—a big black dog—and also a dry wit. Visitors to the Wallace house at 610 North Delaware Street would often ask him the name of the mongrel. With a deadpan expression, he would say, "U-Know." "No, I don't know," the visitor would reply. Again, Frank would say, "U-Know." Back and forth the conversation would go. As the visitor became more and more exasperated, anyone else who knew the dog's name was "U-Know," quietly smirked and eventually collapsed in gales of laughter.<sup>302</sup>

As a child, Frank had gone to the Presbyterian Church with his parents and grandparents. However, in 1901, his mother disagreed with the congregation's decision to let go of a long-time minister, whose new wife was a divorcee. Madge indignantly left the church. Frank became interested in a vibrant

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<sup>302</sup> Margaret Truman, *Bess W. Wallace* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 8-9.

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young minister at the Trinity Episcopal Church, and started attending services there. Eventually Madge Wallace began attending services there, as well as George Wallace.<sup>303</sup> Frank and Bess were confirmed in the Episcopal Church in 1903.<sup>304</sup>

Frank Wallace attended the Ott School as a youngster. He then went to the old Independence high school and enjoyed playing on the football and tennis teams. His strong interest in sports in his youth continued throughout his life. He played golf and followed baseball closely in the news.<sup>305</sup>

Frank never finished high school. His father's suicide, the family's move to Colorado just before his last year of high school, and the debts left by David Wallace may have smashed any plans he might have had for his education. As the oldest son in the Wallace family, he may have felt the need to begin his working career as soon as possible after his father's death.<sup>306</sup> Not long after the Wallace family returned to Independence from Colorado, Grandfather George P. Gates may have helped Frank get a job at the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company. In 1905, at age eighteen, Frank worked as a clerk for the company.<sup>307</sup> In September 1911, after apparently considering other employment or investment opportunities in Mexico, Kansas City, and Memphis, Tennessee, he landed a new job in the Independence-Kansas City area, most likely as a clerk.<sup>308</sup> By 1914, he was listed as a bookkeeper in the Independence city directory.<sup>309</sup> Frank worked as a clerk/bookkeeper when he began courting Natalie Ott, probably sometime after she returned from her extended trip to Europe in early 1912. By the time Frank and Natalie met, Frank was taking on the characteristics of sobriety and dignity that would

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<sup>303</sup> May Wallace, interview by Lisa Bosso and Steve Harrison, 20 December 1985, transcript of taped interview, 61, Harry S Truman National Historic Site; Mary Paxton Keeley, interview by James Fuchs, 12 July 1966 transcript of taped interview, 48-49, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>304</sup> May Wallace, interview by Ron Cockrell, 2 March 1984, transcript of taped interview, 55, Harry S Truman National Historic Site; Ron Cockrell, *The Trumans of Independence: Historic Resource Study* (Omaha, Neb.: National Park Service, 1985), 61.

<sup>305</sup> "Services for Frank Wallace to Be Monday," *Independence Examiner*, 13 August 1960.

<sup>306</sup> May Wallace, interview by Ron Cockrell, 14 June 1984, transcript of taped interview, 24. One of Frank Wallace's obituaries notes that he was a graduate of the old Independence High School, however, this is the only place Frank's graduation is mentioned.

<sup>307</sup> *Hoye's Kansas City Directory, Including Kansas City, Missouri, Kansas City, Kansas, Independence, Missouri, Argentine, Kansas, Rosedale, Kansas* (Kansas City: Hoye's Directory Company, 1905).

<sup>308</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess: The Letters from Harry to Bess Truman, 1910-1959* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983), 34, 39, 47.

<sup>309</sup> *Independence City Directory, Vol. XLI, 1911* (Kansas City, Mo.: Gate City Directory Company, 1911).

## The Frank and Natalie Ott Wallace Family House Part 2, Chapter 11

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characterize his demeanor as an adult.<sup>310</sup> In the years to come, Frank Wallace would also assume the responsibility and the burden of taking care of all of his mother's and the Wallace family's business affairs.<sup>311</sup>

### Natalie Ott and the Ott Family

#### Ott Family in Independence

Christian Ott, Sr., Natalie Ott's paternal grandfather, came to Independence around 1849, when the town was declining as a busy hub of trade and transportation for freighters and emigrants traveling west on the Santa Fe and Oregon trails. The small town of a few hundred residents was also entering a period of great upheaval foreshadowing the coming of civil war. Christian Ott, a furniture maker and dealer, founded a business in Independence that became one of the substantial commercial enterprises in Independence. Convinced of the value of education, he gave of his time, money, and energy to the public schools in Independence. He was a stalwart member of the Independence school board for many years. The Ott School was named in his honor.<sup>312</sup>

Christian Ott married Louise Mohr in the early 1850s. The couple parented seven children: twin sons Lambert Ott and Henry J. Ott, born in 1855; Christian Ott, Jr., born in 1858; Rose Ott, Anna Barbara Ott (Bundschu), born in 1863; and Albert Mohr Ott, born in 1865.<sup>313</sup>

The children of Christian and Louise Mohr Ott contributed in many ways to the commercial, civic, social, and cultural vitality of the Independence community from the late 1800s to the depression era of the 1930s. After attending the public schools in Independence, Henry J. Ott, the twin brother of Lambert Ott, went into business with his father. By 1881, C. Ott and Son, furniture and undertakers, advertised in the Independence business directory.<sup>314</sup> Henry Ott took over the furniture business upon his father's death, and then did business as H. J. Ott and

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<sup>310</sup> Sue Gentry, interview by Jim Williams, 18 June 1991, transcript of taped interview, 31, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>311</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 6.

<sup>312</sup> "Death Comes to Albert M. Ott," *Independence Examiner*, 26 March 1932; "Dr. Lambert Ott Dies; Born in Independence," *Independence Examiner*, 26 March 1932; both in Clippings File, Jackson County Historical Society.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>314</sup> *History of Jackson County, Missouri. Containing a History of the County, Its Cities, Towns, Etc., Indexed Edition*, 1881, reprint (Cape Girardeau, Mo.: Ramfire Press, 1966), 664.

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Company, dealers of furniture, undertakers, and embalmers.<sup>315</sup> He later became a senior member of Ott and [R. B.] Mitchel Undertakers, located on North Main Street. In the 1920s, Henry Ott and his brother, Albert M. Ott, held the positions of president and secretary, respectively, of the Independence Ice and Creamery Company.<sup>316</sup> Henry Ott served several terms on the Independence City Council. At the time of his death in 1930, he was on the board of directors of the Chrisman-Sawyer Bank in town, over which his brother, Albert M. Ott, presided. (Henry Ott's twin brother, Lambert Ott, left Independence in 1876 to attend medical school in Philadelphia and developed a distinguished career in medicine in Pennsylvania.)<sup>317</sup>

Christian Ott, Jr., after attending Independence public schools, took a job briefly in a drug store, then worked in banking before embarking on a career in real estate. He eventually owned a considerable amount of property in and around Independence. He was a popular Independence mayor from 1912 to 1920, during an era of exuberant growth and progressive government activity in public works and social improvements. (Christian Ott bought the former Presbyterian Female College building for \$10,000 in 1908. It served as his home during his eight years as mayor.)<sup>318</sup>

Anna Barbara Ott, a daughter of Christian and Louise Mohr Ott, married Anton J. Bundschu in 1885. She raised two daughters. Like her husband, an Independence merchant who gave to those in need, Anna Bundschu undertook charity work for the Catholic Church and for other organizations. Mrs. Bundschu furnished the doctors' consultation and rest rooms in the new wing of the Independence Sanitarium/Hospital, which opened in 1942. Her husband, Anton Bundschu, became a leading businessman in Independence. In 1904, the *Jackson Examiner* reported that A. J. Bundschu operated probably the largest mercantile business in Independence. At that time, Bundschu's merchandise store, consisting of dry goods, clothing, boots and shoes, hats and caps, gents furnishings, ladies cloaks, carpets, and window shades, occupied two large adjoining buildings, the two- and the three-story Wilson building and the Roberts building, on the east side of the courthouse square.<sup>319</sup> A. J.

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<sup>315</sup> *Plat Book of Jackson County, Missouri. Compiled from County Records and Actual Surveys* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Northwest Publishing Co., 1904), Mid-Continent Library, Independence, Missouri.

<sup>316</sup> *Polk's Independence City Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: R. L. Polk & Company, 1926).

<sup>317</sup> Pearl Wilcox, *Independence & 20th Century Pioneers. The Years from 1900 to 1928* (Independence, Mo.: Pearl Wilcox, 1979), 106-107; "Dr. Lambert Ott Dies; Born in Independence," *Independence Examiner*, 26 March 1932, Clippings File, Jackson County Historical Society.

<sup>318</sup> Wilcox, *Independence and 20th Century Pioneers*, 317, 419-20.

<sup>319</sup> "A. J. Bundschu," *Jackson Examiner*, 1904 (reprinted in *Independence Examiner*, 20 March 1974).

## The Frank and Natalie Ott Wallace Family House Part 2, Chapter 11

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Bundschu held stock in and promoted one of the town's major banks (Chrisman-Sawyer Bank) and the Independence Fair Association, and he owned and operated one of the major general merchandise and clothing stores on the courthouse square for many decades in the late 1800s and early 1900s.<sup>320</sup> The Bundschu couple's niece, Natalie Ott Wallace, and other Wallace family members no doubt, patronized the Bundschu Store.

### Albert M. Ott and Julia Rogers/Margaret Bryant Ott

Albert Mohr Ott, Natalie Ott's father, was the last child born to Christian and Louise Mohr Ott on January 4, 1865. After attending schools in Independence, Albert Ott went to the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, where he received a law degree in 1887. That same year, he was admitted to the bar in Philadelphia and also in Jackson County, Missouri. Soon afterward, he began practicing law with J. G. Paxton in Independence. Active in county politics, he became a member of the Democratic Committee in Jackson County in 1896, and, in 1900, he became the committee's secretary. He became the city attorney of Independence, and then assistant prosecuting attorney of Jackson County.<sup>321</sup> By the early twentieth century, Albert Ott presided over the Chrisman-Sawyer Bank on the corner of Lexington and Liberty streets in Independence.<sup>322</sup>

In the late 1880s, Albert M. Ott married Julia Rogers, daughter of I. N. and Rogers. Albert and Julia Ott parented two children: Natalie Ott (Wallace) and Julia Ott (Henkes). Julia Rogers Ott died in 1897. Nine years later, in 1906, Albert Ott married Margaret Bryant, the daughter of Helen and George S. Bryant, a professor and later the owner of Woodland College in Independence, in the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s. Albert and Margaret Bryant Ott raised two children: Albert J. Ott, Jr., and Margaret Louise (Barnes). Albert M. Ott died in 1936 at age seventy-one of causes related to heart disease.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Wilcox, *Independence & 20<sup>th</sup> Century Pioneers*, 68-70.

<sup>321</sup> *Political History of Jackson County: Biographical Sketches of Men Who Have Helped to Make It* (N.p.: Marshall & Morrison, 1902), 103.

<sup>322</sup> *Directory of Independence, Missouri, and Lee's Summit, Missouri for 1899-1900* (Independence, Mo.: Waler Brothers, 1900; *Independence, Missouri Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: Hoyer Directory Co., 1905).

<sup>323</sup> "Death Comes to Albert M. Ott," *Independence Examiner*, 26 March 1932; "Woodland College," *Sentinel*, 2 January 1881.



### **Natalie Ott—Birth and Childhood**

Natalie Ott was born to Albert M. and Julia Rogers Ott at the family home at 804 North Main Street in Independence on June 25, 1891.<sup>324</sup> Natalie's mother died when she was six years old. She and her younger sister, Julia, acquired a stepmother when Natalie was fifteen years old.

Natalie Ott graduated from high school in 1908. As the child of a well-to-do lawyer and banker, Natalie Ott benefited from travel opportunities not available to many Independence residents. In the spring of 1911, she and a traveling companion, "Miss Rose" (probably Rose Ott, Natalie's father's sister), traveled through Europe for nine months. Their itinerary included visits to England, Scotland, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Belgium, and France. Upon their return to North America, they traveled from Quebec City to Philadelphia, where they spent about three months in Philadelphia with Dr. Lambert Ott, Natalie's uncle. They arrived back in Independence in early February 1912.<sup>325</sup>



**This portrait of Natalie Ott (left) and Julia Ott was taken in the late 1890s, around the time of their mother's death.** Courtesy of the Jackson County Historical Society.

### **Frank Wallace and Natalie Ott**

#### Courtship and Marriage

Natalie Ott, four years younger than Frank Wallace, probably met her future husband not in school but through mutual friends or family members. At a young age, Frank began volunteering his time to work for the Jackson County Democratic

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<sup>324</sup> "Mrs. Frank Wallace Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 26 May 1960.

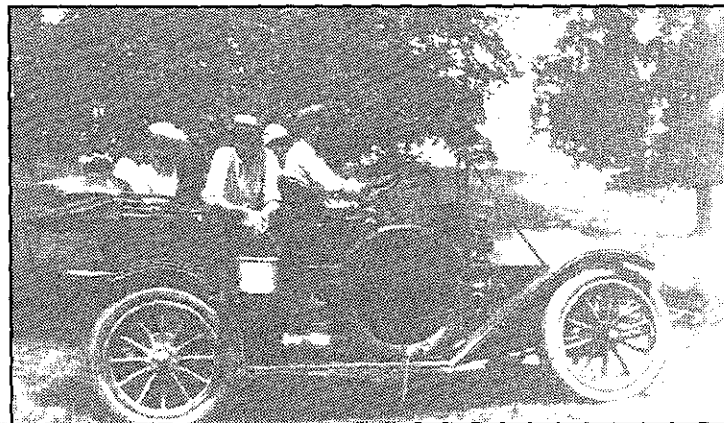
<sup>325</sup> *Independence Examiner*, 5 February 1912.

## The Frank and Natalie Ott Wallace Family House Part 2, Chapter 11

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Party, with which Natalie's father had played a leadership role in the early 1900s. Both Natalie and Frank, who enjoyed playing tennis as young people, may have met at the tennis court on Park Avenue built and owned by the Southern family in Independence, a favorite neighborhood-gathering place. Lean six-foot-one-and-one-half-inch Frank probably began dating Natalie Ott, known for her diminutive stature, after she returned from her extended trip to Europe.<sup>326</sup>

Natalie Ott and Frank Wallace became well acquainted with Harry Truman during his nine-year courtship of Bess Wallace. Before Harry bought his car, which allowed him to stay the night in Independence when visiting Bess on weekends, he sometimes spent the night sleeping in Frank Wallace's room at 219 North Delaware Street. Harry and Bess often invited Frank and Natalie (as well as George and May Wallace) on picnics, fishing expeditions, and other recreational outings around Independence. In 1914, Harry's acquisition of a 1911 Stafford automobile opened up new possibilities for sharing adventures around the countryside with the Wallace-Ott couple and other family members and friends. The three young couples, sometimes joined by other friends and family, ventured on summertime picnics along River Road, Cave Spring, the Little Blue River, and the nearby Sugar Creek at the waterworks.<sup>327</sup>



**In the mid-1910s, Natalie Ott (back seat with dark hair) and Frank Wallace (with pail) often went on outings with Harry Truman and Bess Wallace in Harry's Stafford, during the two couples' courtship.** Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>326</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 19.

<sup>327</sup> Cave Spring, a gushing spring forming a waterfall and the entrance of a small cave, was not only a delightful retreat, but famous in the history of the Santa Fe Trail. Here covered wagons stopped to get fresh spring water before crossing the Big Blue River and striking out across the Kansas prairies. Alfred Eisenstaedt, photographer, "Harry Truman's Missouri: It's a Country Rich in Border History," *Life*, 25 June 1945.

## Frank and Natalie Ott Wallace Family and House Part 2, Chapter 11

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Frank Wallace and Natalie Ott were married in the First Presbyterian Church in Independence on April 6, 1915. Just two weeks after their marriage, Madge Wallace and her daughter Bess gave a bridge luncheon for Natalie Wallace. Close family and friends assisted Natalie's new mother-in-law and sister-in-law in preparing for the luncheon: Mary Paxton (Bess Wallace's close friend), Julia Ott (Natalie's sister), Helen Bryant (Natalie's stepmother), May Southern and Caroline Southern (George Wallace's fiancé and her sister), and Frederick Wallace (Bess Wallace's youngest brother). The Gates-Wallace house was beautifully decorated with spring flowers for the event.<sup>328</sup>

### Transfer of Land and Wallace House Construction

On March 15, 1915, just three weeks before Frank and Natalie Wallace married, George P. and Elizabeth Gates sold the couple the eastern 50 feet of lot 1 in Moore's Addition.<sup>329</sup> Margaret Truman Daniel contended, years later, that Madge Wallace persuaded her father to make this virtual gift of land to Frank (and later George) in order to keep them close to home and under her direct observation.<sup>330</sup> The Frank and Natalie Wallace house (like the George and May Wallace house) was constructed on land once used for a small pasture and a garden. In the early 1910s, the Gates family owned a single cow, called "Susie Dam" by George Wallace, who begrudged his daily chore of milking her. Many years later, May Southern Wallace, who was dating George Wallace at the time, recalled that a fence enclosed an area behind (east of) the Truman house in which the cow grazed. A garden occupied a plot along Blue Avenue (now Truman Road), where the two Wallace houses were later built.<sup>331</sup> (After the George and May Wallace house was built, asparagus continued to grow in the front yard until May pulled it up in 1917.)

It is very likely that an architect did not design the Frank and Natalie Wallace house. Throughout Independence and across the country, Bungalow-style dwellings were built in great profusion in the 1910s and 1920s, when their design characteristics, such as broad porches, multiple windows, and unpainted wood interiors and furnishing, reflected people's belief in the healthful qualities of nature and the desire to make the outside natural world more a part of interior spaces. Books that presented dozens of Bungalow-style house patterns that could be easily adapted by local builders to their level of skill and available materials made this house style exceedingly popular and affordable. In the early twentieth century, when Independence

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<sup>328</sup> "For Mrs. Frank Gates Wallace," *Jackson Examiner*, 30 April 1915.

<sup>329</sup> General Warranty Deed, No. 100759, Jackson County Courthouse.

<sup>330</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 55-56.

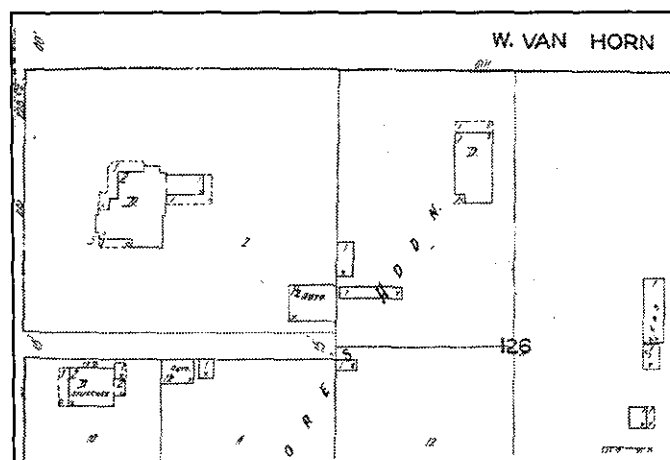
<sup>331</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 7.

## The Frank and Natalie Ott Wallace Family House Part 2, Chapter 11

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experienced a boom in building construction and expansion of its middle-class population, hundreds of modest Bungalow-style homes were built throughout the city and across the country.

A local Independence builder named Shaupe (who probably built the George and May Wallace house) may have constructed Frank and Natalie Wallace's house.<sup>332</sup> The Wallace house wasn't built until the summer of 1915; Frank and Natalie rented an apartment for a few months until their new house was completed.<sup>333</sup> The young Wallace couple probably moved into their one-story Bungalow-style home at 601 Van Horn (later renamed Truman) Road in the late summer or early fall of 1915. An August 1916 map of the property shows the rectangular-shaped house with an open porch extending across the length of the main facade and an open recessed porch at the southwest rear corner of the house.<sup>334</sup> Characteristic of the Bungalow style, the 1915 Wallace house had broad overhanging eaves (boxed in) and a low-sloping hip roof. A small bay window projected slightly from the west side wall.



This August 1916 Sanborn fire insurance map of Independence shows the Frank and Natalie Wallace one-story home (center), a year after their marriage and the construction of the house. It stands behind the Gates (later Truman) house to the west.

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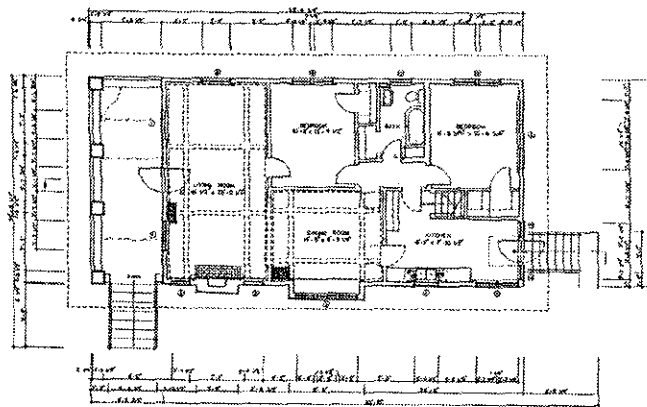
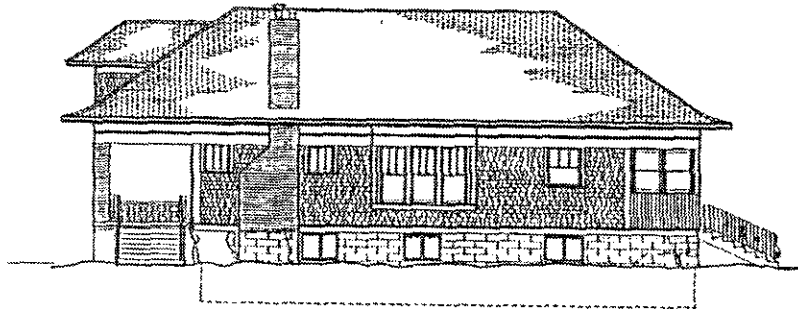
<sup>332</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 42.

<sup>333</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 4.

<sup>334</sup> *Independence, Missouri*, August 1916 (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1916).

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FIRST FLOOR PLAN

These two reduced drawings of the Frank and Natalie Wallace house, completed by the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1992, depict the west side elevation and the floor plan of this one-story Bungalow-style house as it appeared around the time of its construction (except for the much later enclosure of the small rear porch).

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Although slightly larger, this one-story, wood-frame, Bungalow-style dwelling was similar in its style and rectangular form to the George and May Wallace house, built just to the west a year later. Unlike its neighbor, the Frank and Natalie Wallace house included two bedrooms (not one) and separate living and dining rooms. Floors throughout were hardwood. Madge Wallace may have made curtains for the couple's new house (just as she did for the May and George Wallace house.) Some of the couple's early and most cherished furnishings came from the Gates-Wallace and Ott families. Before her death in 1924, Elizabeth Gates gave Natalie one chair from her parlor set, which consisted of four to six individual chairs and a settee.<sup>335</sup>

### Life with Frank and Natalie Ott Wallace 1915-1960

#### Daily Lives: Work and Relaxation

Frank Wallace continued to work as a bookkeeper after his marriage to Natalie Ott. When the United States entered the First World War, thirty-year-old Frank did not enlist in the service, possibly because Madge Gates would not permit the departure of her eldest son from the family fold. Madge Wallace "went up in smoke" at the thought of either of her sons going to France, according to her granddaughter, Margaret Truman. When Frank was called into the draft, Harry wrote to Bess: "Hope Frank will be blind the day of his exam."<sup>336</sup> Everyone in the family rejoiced when Frank failed the eye exam and was not accepted in the military. Frank could continue his daily ritual of stopping by 219 North Delaware and spending half an hour with his mother on his way home from work.<sup>337</sup> Even when both Frank and Natalie, in 1918, contracted serious cases of influenza in the worldwide epidemic that took the lives of nearly 500,000 in 1918 and early 1919, Madge Wallace was close by to encourage their recovery.

By the late 1910s, Frank Wallace was employed by the Simons-Shields Lonsdale Grain Company. He held this job until around 1925,<sup>338</sup> when he began working as a bookkeeper for the Independence Ice and Creamery Company, operated by Natalie's father, Albert Ott, and her uncle, Henry Ott. Over the next eight years, Frank worked his way up in the administration of the

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<sup>335</sup> May Wallace interview, 20 July 1983, 26.

<sup>336</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 65.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, quote from 66; 60-61, 65..

<sup>338</sup> *Independence City Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: Gate City Directory Company, 1920 and 1924).

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company. In the late 1920s, he was the assistant manager of that company, and by early 1933, had become its president.<sup>339</sup>

In the spring of 1933, fifty years after its founding by William H. Waggoner and George P. Gates, the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company suffered greatly from reduced grain supplies and slumping market prices of the Great Depression. It was struggling for its corporate existence when a fight erupted among the financially hard-pressed heirs to the estate of George P. Gates, who had inherited shares in the company. While the majority of the fourteen Gates and Waggoner shareholders favored liquidation of the company, then valued at \$670,000, one heir and shareholder, Madge Wallace, adamantly opposed liquidation. Frank Wallace, her son, was the only company trustee (and also an heir and shareholder) who voted to re-charter the company. At the request of Madge Wallace, an Independence circuit court judge, Rufus Burrus, issued an order to restrain the other trustees from taking any action on the re-chartering question. Madge's sister, Maud Gates Wells, and her brother-in-law, T. B. Wallace, retaliated by hiring attorneys who contended that they should be given the power to override Frank Wallace's decision to re-charter the company. The stormy battle over the future of the Waggoner-Gates Company, which pitted Gates family members against each other, raged for weeks.<sup>340</sup> In the end, the company remained in existence for another twenty-five years as a Waggoner-Gates family-owned corporation, although struggling financially at times to do so.

Around the time of the company dispute and possibly because of it, Frank Wallace rejoined the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company. Nearly thirty years after clerking for the company, he returned as its vice-president around 1933. Frank Wallace held this position until the early 1940s, when he became secretary of the company.<sup>341</sup>

During the late 1930s and early 1940s, a series of problems besieged the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company (as well as hundreds of other milling companies). Frank Wallace and other company officers often wrote to Senator Truman and later President Truman to ask for advice and help. In early 1939, the Waggoner-Gates Company experienced problems with weevil infestation. T. O. Cunningham encouraged Senator Truman to approve an appropriation of money for a federal government

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<sup>339</sup> *Polk's Independence City Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: Gate City Directory Company, 1926 and 1928, 1930, 1932, and 1934); May Wallace interview, 20 December 1985, 12, 28; "Old Waggoner-Gates Flour Mill Threatened After 50 Years' Life," c. May 1933, Vertical File: "Waggoner-Gates Mill," Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>340</sup> "Old Waggoner-Gates Flour Mill Threatened After 50 Years' Life," c. May 1933.

<sup>341</sup> *Polk's Independence City Directory*, 1934, 1938, 1940, and 1942.

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agency to investigate the weevil situation.<sup>342</sup> In the fall of 1941, just before the United States' entered World War II, milling companies throughout Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas suffered financially because cheap Canadian wheat (milled across the Canadian border in Buffalo, New York) was eroding the foreign wheat markets for Midwest millers and creating a greater and greater surplus (which lowered prices and diminished profits). Several Midwest millers, including Frank Wallace, sent letters to Senator Truman urging him to help increase the federal government's existing subsidy from the Commodity Credit Corporation. The corporation's express purpose was to encourage the exportation of burdensome wheat surpluses to Central and South America. (The European market by then had been destroyed by the war.)<sup>343</sup>

In the summer and fall of 1942, Missouri millers east of Kansas City experienced yet another problem, which they described to Senator Truman in telegrams and letters. The mills suffered from a shortage of soft red winter wheat. "In order to keep these mills in operation," telegraphed several western Missouri millers to Truman, "it is necessary that someone in authority instruct the regional director [of the Commodity Credit Corporation] of Kansas City to release this wheat on a fair and equitable basis."<sup>344</sup> Truman and Frank Wallace regularly communicated about all these matters. Despite Truman's efforts to urge action by Secretary of Agriculture Claude Wickard, the problem of the soft red winter wheat shortage did not improve. The financial struggle for Waggoner-Gates Milling Company continued, as did the strain on Frank Wallace. In 1953, adverse prices for freighting wheat and wheat products brought a halt to Waggoner-Gates's milling operations forever. After milling wheat for eighty-seven years, in 1953, Waggoner-Gates Milling Company only kept its grain elevator operating as a storage facility. The familiar "Queen of the Pantry" brand name flour continued to be marketed, but only by milling agreements with area mills.<sup>345</sup>

For a brief few months in late 1950, President Harry Truman, concerned about Frank Wallace's declining health,

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<sup>342</sup> T. O. Cunningham to Harry Truman, 22 February 1939 and Truman to Cunningham, 15 February 1939, Senatorial Files: "Wheat," Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>343</sup> C. A. Barrows, export manager of Midland Four Milling Company, to Harry S. Truman, September 25, 1941; J. B. Smith, president of Associated Millers of Kansas Wheat, to Harry S. Truman, October 9, 1941; Frank Wallace of Waggoner-Gates Milling Company to Colonel Harry Vaughn (an assistant to Senator Truman) October 27, 1941 and November 19, 21, and 27, 1941, all in Truman Senatorial Files: "Wheat," Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>344</sup> Several millers, Western Union Telegram, 5 August 1942 to Senator Truman, Truman Senatorial Files: "Wheat," Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>345</sup> "Family Dynasty Ends With Waggoner's Death," *Independence Examiner*, 8 November 1976.



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which was aggravated by worries related to his job at the mill, helped him get a position with the newly opened General Services Administration office in Kansas City. Poor health forced him to leave this job only a few weeks later, and he soon went back to the Waggoner-Gates Mill. When he retired from the company around 1957, Frank Wallace was chairman of the board of Waggoner-Gates Milling Company.<sup>346</sup> In 1958, the company passed out of Waggoner-Gates family ownership. At that time, the company was one of the oldest continuously operated businesses in Jackson County. The company's final demise came in 1967, seven years after the death of Frank Wallace, when much of the mill was destroyed by an explosion and fire.<sup>347</sup>

In addition to his work-related duties, Frank Wallace was also responsible for taking care of his mother's and the Wallace family's business affairs. He kept a watchful eye on and managed Madge Wallace's investments. Upon the death of his mother in December 1952, Frank Wallace became the administrator of her estate.<sup>348</sup>

Frank Wallace found pleasure in a few cultural and political activities unrelated to work and managing family finances. After Frank married Natalie, he remained a member of the Episcopalian Church, but sometimes went with her to services at the Presbyterian Church.<sup>349</sup> Politically, Frank was a staunch Democrat. He was a ward leader of the Democratic Party in Independence in the late 1910s and early 1920s. For many years, Frank served as the secretary of the Jackson County Board of Election Commissioners.<sup>350</sup>

Throughout his life, Frank Wallace was an avid sports enthusiast. Although his frail constitution and declining health in later years prevented him from participating in exhausting sports, Frank did play golf and avidly followed professional baseball on the radio. In the summer, Frank enjoyed sunbathing or sitting in a canvas-sling lounge chair, enjoying the privacy of the Wallace backyard.<sup>351</sup> Frank and Natalie occasionally traveled to other cities, such as Santa Fe, either alone or with Harry and Bess Truman or George and May Wallace.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> Polk's *Independence City Directory*, 1946, 1950, and 1954.

<sup>347</sup> "Family Dynasty Ends With Waggoner's Death," *Independence Examiner*, 8 November 1976.

<sup>348</sup> "Wallace Estate Total," *Kansas City Times*, 10 March 1953, Newspaper Clippings, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>349</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 55.

<sup>350</sup> "Services for Frank Wallace to Be Monday," *Independence Examiner*, 13 August 1960; Rufus B. Burrus, interview by Niel M. Johnson, 22 November 1985, transcript of taped interview, 18, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>351</sup> Christine Wallace and David Wallace, Jr., interview with Jim Williams, 26 August 1991, transcript of taped interview, 76-77, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>352</sup> Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 378.

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Natalie Ott Wallace occupied her time with a variety of activities. She was known as a very industrious person and an immaculate housekeeper.<sup>353</sup> She probably bought groceries weekly, which, for many years, were delivered by markets to their customers throughout Independence. Natalie took care of other shopping needs by walking roughly four blocks to the commercial district, which encircled the courthouse square. She probably patronized Bundschu's, Independence's prominent general merchandise store that was owned by Natalie's uncle, Anton J. Bundschu. Numerous Independence families, including the Wallace family, did their department store shopping at Bundschu's.<sup>354</sup> Natalie never learned to drive a car; she either walked or she rode with others bound for the same destination.<sup>355</sup> Many years later, Natalie's next-door neighbor, May Wallace, reported that the two sisters-in-law were good neighbors. "I helped her and she helped me. We lived here in peace and got along fine."<sup>356</sup>

On at least one shopping excursion to Kansas City, Natalie made every effort to escape the watchful eye of Madge Gates in the big house. Before leaving on her adventure, she told May Wallace of her plan. "I'm not going through the yard up here . . . I'm going to Pleasant Street. I'm not going to do anything I shouldn't, but I don't want Mother Wallace to ask me where I'm going or what I'm going to do," May Wallace remembered Natalie telling her. "She was a spunky little soul," May recalled.<sup>357</sup>

Natalie Wallace also pursued a number of cultural and social activities. She was a very active member of the First Presbyterian Church. Natalie Wallace opened her house to Bible Study classes on occasion.<sup>358</sup> In 1939, Natalie organized and led the World Friendship Guild in the church, a missionary society of young matrons and business and professional women that provided financial support for a student attending the Presbyterian's Menaul mission school in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and also cared for the church's communion glasses. Natalie also served as president of the church Women's Association. Upon the death of her and her husband in 1960, Natalie bequeathed \$3,000 to the Women's Association of the First Presbyterian Church, which was spent on mission work.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 42.

<sup>354</sup> Christine Wallace and David Wallace interview, 11, 25.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>356</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 42.

<sup>357</sup> May Wallace interview, 20 December 1985.

<sup>358</sup> *Independence Examiner*, 19 June 1916.

<sup>359</sup> Nancy M. Ehrlich, *Ask Now of the Days that Are Past: A History of the First Presbyterian Church, Independence, Missouri* (Independence, Mo.: First Presbyterian Church, 1990), 62, 80.

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Natalie Wallace was also a member of charitable and social organizations. She was a member and served as the secretary of the Jackson County Tuberculosis Association. During World War II, she became active as a volunteer chairman in the Red Cross. She also belonged to the Saturday Study Club.<sup>360</sup>

Natalie Wallace was an avid bridge player as well. She participated in the Tuesday Bridge Club, a bridge group of about ten women, sometimes hosted by Bess Truman. Each club member took her turn having the club meet in her home for the Tuesday bridge game, which met about every two weeks.<sup>361</sup> In the spring of 1946, not long after Harry and Bess Truman had moved into the White House, Bess invited the Tuesday Bridge Club members to come to Washington for a four-day weekend. Natalie joined her sister-in-law May Wallace and the other club members for the trip to the capital city for sightseeing and bridge games in the White House. Many years later, Margaret Truman vividly described the good time had by all.

Mother had a schedule lined up for them that would have wilted the iron campaigner, Harry S. Truman himself. They raced from Congress to the Smithsonian to a luncheon in the State Dining Room to the circus. They had dinner each night at the White House, with Dad presiding, and played bridge aboard the *Williamsburg* as it cruised the Potomac.<sup>362</sup>

Natalie continued to participate in the Tuesday Bridge Club gatherings after Bess and Harry Truman returned to Independence in 1953. Both Bess Truman and Natalie periodically hosted the club meetings at their homes.

Association with the Truman Family

1919-1935. Harry Truman's close association with Frank and Natalie Wallace became more intimate after Harry married Bess Wallace in the summer of 1919 and became officially part of the Wallace family. Frank Wallace drove the newlywed Truman couple to the train station in Kansas City after their wedding.<sup>363</sup> Soon after the Trumans returned from their honeymoon, Harry and Bess moved into the Gates house at 219 North Delaware, just

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<sup>360</sup> "Services Saturday for Mrs. Wallace," *Independence Examiner*, 27 May 1960.

<sup>361</sup> May Wallace recalled nearly forty years later, that the ten original bridge club members included: Natalie and May Wallace, Bess Truman, Edna Hutchinson, Mary Shaw, Lucy Peters, Thelma Palette (Sibel), Mag Knoll, and the two Minors, who lived on Spring Street in Independence.. May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 46.

<sup>362</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 285.

<sup>363</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 52.

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a few feet west of the two Wallace brothers' homes. When Harry Truman and Eddie Jacobson opened their haberdashery in Kansas City, Frank loaned them money to launch this business venture.<sup>364</sup> When Harry decided to enter politics by running for the eastern judgeship (counselor) of Jackson County in the fall of 1921, Frank Wallace supported him. Frank, a staunch Democrat and then the leader of the Fourth Ward of Independence, began taking Harry around the ward and introducing him to people. In 1922, he introduced Harry to Rufus Burrus, an Independence attorney (1921-1980s) and assistant county counselor (1927-1941) who became Harry and Bess Truman's long-time friend and legal counselor.<sup>365</sup>

Frank and Natalie Wallace regularly socialized with the Trumans as well, hosting numerous family gatherings. Since Natalie and Frank's house, furthest to the east, was slightly larger than the neighboring George and May Wallace house, it was the scene of more family gatherings. And as part of the Wallace compound, the Frank and Natalie Wallace house provided an atmosphere of quiet relaxation and familial support and comfort. The Wallace house and yard served as a refuge from the strain of heavy responsibilities on Harry Truman, especially during his presidency. The Wallace gardens, with thick shrubbery that enclosed the yard, provided privacy for outdoor picnics that was always appreciated, especially after Truman became president in 1945.

The Truman family's practice of sharing meals with Natalie and Frank Wallace (and with George and May Wallace) in one of the Wallace or Truman houses, or outside, probably began not long after the two Wallace houses were completed in the mid-1910s. Summertime picnics were a favorite activity of both Wallace couples and the Truman family. Frank and Natalie Wallace's backyard most often was the site of these gatherings. "We always had picnics down in Mrs. Frank Wallace's yard," recalled May Wallace. "She had a flat place over there where we always had family picnics."<sup>366</sup> The women prepared steaks, potato salad, and other foods in their kitchens. Although the Wallace family liked onions in their potato salad, Harry did not. Onions were always left out, according to May Wallace.<sup>367</sup>

Frank and Natalie Wallace participated in festive holiday family gatherings. Early in their marriage, the couple sometimes went to Platte City, Missouri with other Wallace family members, to share Thanksgiving dinner with Madge Wallace's sister, Maud Louise, and her husband, William Strother Wells. Occasionally

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<sup>364</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 85; Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 480.

<sup>365</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 86-87; Rufus B. Burrus interview, 18.

<sup>366</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 50.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

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the Wells family came to Independence for family gatherings. After the families began to raise their own children, trips to Platte City became less frequent, and Thanksgivings were spent in Independence. The Wallace couple always took part in family Christmas dinners, which took place in Independence.<sup>368</sup> The celebration of Christmas took on special meaning for both Wallace couples after the birth of Margaret Truman.

The birth of Margaret Truman to Harry and Bess, in 1924, added a new dimension to the Truman's association with Frank and Natalie Wallace. Since the Wallaces had no children of their own and lived in close proximity to the Trumans, Frank and Natalie treated Margaret as their own. They enjoyed regular visits with Margaret as she grew to adulthood. When Margaret was about four or five, she began paying visits first, to Natalie, and then, to May Wallace, in the late afternoon. Natalie came to expect Margaret's tap on the door and her eager request for cookies or ice cream. These little forays, unfortunately for Margaret, did not continue for long. Bess Truman, suspicious of her daughter's loss of appetite at dinner, soon learned about her sweet treats at the homes of both Aunt Natalie and Aunt May (or "Beufie," as Margaret called her), and asked her two sisters-in-law to refrain from giving Margaret food on her late afternoon visits.

1935-1953. After Harry Truman became a U.S. senator and the Truman family began to spend considerable time in Washington, D.C., Frank and Natalie Wallace (as well as George and May Wallace) became more than close family members, friends, and neighbors; increasingly they supported the life and activities of the Trumans when they came home to Independence to visit. A typical example of the Wallace's supportive role in the Trumans' life came in July 1944, just after Truman's nomination as vice-president at the Democratic national convention. After the weary couple arrived in Independence late on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Trumans spent their first night in the home of Natalie and Frank Wallace. Too busy to shop for groceries the next day, the Trumans were given breakfast by the Wallaces, the Nolands across the street brought over a salad for lunch, and the two Wallace couples gave them a picnic dinner that evening.<sup>369</sup>

During the same visit to Independence, Margaret Truman remembered that she retreated to my Uncle Frank Wallace's [house]. . . . Frank's wife, Natalie, was good company, and I was leery about staying alone in the big house when almost anyone was liable to show up at the door wanting to see the nominee.

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<sup>368</sup> May Wallace interview, 20 July 1983, 25, 31; Sue Gentry, interview by Jim Williams, 18 June 1991, transcript of taped interview, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>369</sup> Cockrell, *The Trumans of Independence*, 143.

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Aunt Natalie had a piano, and I could practice my scales or otherwise amuse myself on it.<sup>370</sup>

The practice of sharing meals continued through Harry Truman's years in public office. During the Truman presidency, the press often reported on the Trumans' visits to Independence and family gatherings for meals. In June 1945, on the Trumans' first trip home to Independence after Harry Truman became president, the family ate at least twice in Frank and Natalie's back yard. In early June 1945, the *Kansas City Times* disclosed that the Trumans had enjoyed a family picnic in Frank and Natalie's backyard. Later in the month and just hours before Harry Truman returned to Washington, D.C., he and his family again had supper in Frank and Natalie's backyard.<sup>371</sup> In August 1946, the *Kansas City Times* reported that "President Truman, who since his county court days always has kept his home a place apart from politics and public life, last night held true to his tradition and relaxed with his family at a Missouri back yard picnic."<sup>372</sup> Natalie, May Wallace, and Bess Truman all came from their houses with covered dishes, which were placed on white-clothed tables set with silverware, glassware, and napkins. When the Trumans came to Independence for short one- or two-day visits, they often ate meals with the Wallaces. In April 1947, for example, Harry and Margaret Truman drove from Kansas City, where they were staying overnight at the Muehlebach Hotel, to share a country ham dinner with Natalie and Frank Wallace.<sup>373</sup> In March 1950, the press reported that the Trumans dined with Frank and Natalie Wallace in their home when they came home to hear Margaret sing in a concert in Kansas City and before the two Wallace couples and the Trumans went to Margaret's concert.<sup>374</sup>

After Harry Truman became the focus of public attention, the press also reported Wallace-Truman family gatherings that took place on the back porch of the Truman house and sometimes on the front porches of the two Wallace homes. The Wallace brothers often visited with Truman on the back porch at 219 North Delaware Street in the summertime. This was also the gathering place for Bess Truman's bridge club meetings, which included Natalie Wallace and May Wallace.

During the vice-presidential and presidential years from 1944 to 1953, Natalie and Frank Wallace, as well as George and May Wallace, supported the Truman family in other ways. When the Trumans returned to Independence for visits, Frank and Natalie Wallace and George and May Wallace often greeted the

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<sup>370</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 233.

<sup>371</sup> "The Trumans Are Home," *Kansas City Times*, 4 June 1945; "Into Peace Role," *Kansas City Times*, 1 July 1945.

<sup>372</sup> "Truman at Ease," *Kansas City Times*, 4 August 1946.

<sup>373</sup> "Truman Is Home," *Kansas City Star*, 12 April 1947.

<sup>374</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 47.

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Trumans in Kansas City at the airport or at the Independence railroad station and accompanied them home. Frank and Natalie Wallace often attended political functions in or near Independence held for Truman, such as the public meeting held for Truman in Independence after he announced he would run for a second term as president. On June 27, 1947, Frank and Natalie joined the George and Fred Wallace families and the Truman-Noland families on the front platform, when Harry Truman spoke to a crowd of 10,000 that gathered in the Saints' Auditorium of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (RLDS), less than a mile southwest of their homes.<sup>375</sup>

If the Trumans planned a one-or two-day visit, the presidential family often stayed at Frank and Natalie Wallace's house, which was slightly larger than neighboring May and George Wallace's house. The Trumans felt it was impractical to open up their own large house at 219 North Delaware during short visits. Frank and Natalie Wallace opened their home to the Trumans for overnight accommodations on numerous occasions after Truman became president. In early June 1945, when Bess, Margaret, and Madge returned to Independence for a visit, Margaret stayed with Frank and Natalie Wallace on their first night home. In late March 1946, on their return from visiting relatives in Denver, Bess and Madge Wallace stayed one night with Frank and Natalie Wallace before continuing on to Washington the next day.<sup>376</sup> In November 1946, Madge Wallace stayed with Frank and Natalie Wallace in their home, after Harry and Bess Truman left Independence, where they had voted in the mid-term congressional election.<sup>377</sup> In February 1947, when the Trumans came home to visit Harry's ailing mother in Grandview, Margaret again stayed overnight with Natalie and Frank Wallace in their extra bedroom. Bess Truman stayed with her brother and sister-in-law in March 1950, when she came home briefly to hear Margaret sing in a concert at the Music Hall in Kansas City.<sup>378</sup>

Holidays, especially Christmas, were always a time for Wallace-Truman family gatherings and meals together after the Trumans moved to Washington, D.C. Frank and Natalie Wallace and other Wallace family members spent many Christmases with Harry and Bess Truman during his presidential years. On Christmas day, he usually spent time visiting and dining with three families: the Trumans in Grandview, the Nolandts at 216 North Delaware Street, and the two Wallace couples, who usually

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<sup>375</sup> "To a Familiar Crowd," *Kansas City Times*, 298 June 1948.

<sup>376</sup> "A Visit By Mrs. Truman," *Kansas City Times*, 26 March 1946.

<sup>377</sup> "Lights on Again This Week at Home of Nation's First Family," *Independence Examiner*, 16 December 1946.

<sup>378</sup> "Mrs. Truman Arrives for Concert Tonight," *Independence Examiner*, 21 March 1950.

## The Frank and Natalie Ott Wallace Family House Part 2, Chapter 11

gathered around the large Christmas tree and, later, the dining room table for a meal in the Truman home. "We all went up there [to the Truman house] and put our things around, and we had quite a commotion at one time," May Wallace reminisced many decades later.<sup>379</sup> The two Wallace couples also spent several Christmases in the White House with the Trumans.

The relationship between Frank and Natalie Wallace and the Truman family in Grandview was cordial, but not exceedingly friendly. On one occasion, Harry Truman's mother and sister came to the Gates-Truman house at 219 North Delaware Street for a Christmas dinner. In 1945, Truman's arrival in Independence for Christmas was delayed due to bad flying weather. Since he was unable to get Grandview for a Christmas meal, Truman's sister and mother came to Independence for the Wallace Christmas dinner in the big house. Madge Wallace rarely invited the Trumans to 219 North Delaware, however. According to May Wallace many years later: "I think the Wallaces, all of them, were a little bit snooty about their things."<sup>380</sup>



**Frank and Natalie pose on the steps ascending the west side of their front porch in the 1950s, less than ten years before their deaths in 1960.** Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library.

concern, and devotion to the Gates-Wallace family (as well as his own family) was clearly expressed in numerous ways over the years. In late May and early June 1946, a year after Truman became president, Harry Truman flew Frank and Natalie Wallace (plus George and Fred Wallace and their families and Mary Jane Truman) in the *Sacred Cow* to Washington, D.C. for a family reunion in the White House.<sup>381</sup> When Truman received an abundance of certain gifts, he often gave them to his brothers-in-law when he felt they might find them useful. "People always kept him in ties," remarked May Wallace. "He couldn't possibly

<sup>379</sup> May Wallace, interview with Niel Johnson, 17 and 23 February 1988, transcript of taped interview, 59, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence.

<sup>380</sup> May Wallace interview, 17 and 23 February 1988, p. 42.

<sup>381</sup> "Home in White House." *Kansas City Times*, 29 May 1946.



## Frank and Natalie Ott Wallace Family and House Part 2, Chapter 11

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wear all those ties that were sent to him," May Wallace later remarked. Frank and George Wallace became the recipients of Truman's overstock.<sup>382</sup>

Harry and Bess Truman invited Natalie and Frank Wallace to Truman's presidential inauguration in 1948. The couple spent several days in Washington, D.C. celebrating this gala event with the Trumans and other family members.

When the Trumans were away from Independence, communication by letters and telephone calls between the president and Frank and Natalie was friendly and frequent. Frank Wallace and Truman communicated regularly by letter regarding milling matters and Waggoner-Gates Milling Company's effort to survive in the 1930s and 1940s (as described above in the section, "Daily Lives"). Sometimes, Truman even attempted to assist the couple when difficulties arose, such as when Frank's health declined noticeably in the early 1950s (as described in the section, "Slowing Down").

### Slowing Down

Frank Wallace's health began to weaken around 1950. His problem was mostly related to heart and, possibly, blood pressure problems, aggravated by heavy smoking. Family members, including Harry S Truman, expressed concern and tried to help. In the fall of 1950, Truman encouraged the new regional director of the General Services Administration (GSA) in Kansas City to hire Frank when that new GSA office opened. "I'm afraid he'll [Frank will] go back to the 'Mill' and kill himself with worry," Truman wrote in September 1950.<sup>383</sup> Shortly afterward, Frank Wallace began working for the GSA. But within weeks he resigned due to poor health.<sup>384</sup> By the summer of 1951, Frank's health had not improved. At Truman's insistence, Major General Wallace Graham the White House physician, conducted tests and prescribed medications for Frank Wallace aimed at addressing his heart problems and persistent coughing. "I wish he would at least slow down on the cigarettes tremendously," Graham wrote in a letter to Natalie Wallace in August 1951.<sup>385</sup>

Despite his failing health, Frank Wallace continued his association with his maternal grandfather's milling enterprise, Waggoner-Gates. He was serving as the chairman of the board of the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company when he retired in 1957. He also continued as the director of the Independence Savings

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<sup>382</sup> May Wallace interview, 20 July 1983, 38.

<sup>383</sup> Harry S Truman to "Don S. D.," 9 September 1950, Family Correspondence, President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>384</sup> Jess Larson to Frank Wallace, 5 December 1950, Family Correspondence, President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>385</sup> Wallace H. Graham to Natalie Wallace, 10 August 1951, Family Correspondence, President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

## The Frank and Natalie Ott Wallace Family House Part 2, Chapter 11

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and Loan Association and the Independence Ice and Creamery Company until he retired.<sup>386</sup>

Natalie Wallace, her husband's primary caretaker, probably suffered physically from the strain of his care for a number of years. She herself became ill in the spring of 1960, and was taken to the Independence Hospital on May 6<sup>th</sup>. After about a week of observation, she underwent major surgery. Her recovery was progressing normally when in the late morning of May 26<sup>th</sup> she died unexpectedly at age sixty-eight.<sup>387</sup>

Frank's demise came less than three months later. Frank Gates Wallace died in the Independence Hospital on August 12, 1960. He was seventy-three. Over 200 Truman and Wallace family and friends attended his funeral service.<sup>388</sup>

Frank Gates Wallace's last will and testament, written just two years before his death, distributed his assets to organizations and family members considered worthy by the Wallace couple. Since Frank Wallace survived his wife, the will specified that undivided interests in the Wallace house property at 601 North Delaware be willed to four nieces and nephews: Margaret Truman Daniel, Marion Wallace Brasher, David Wallace, and the guardian for Charlotte Margaret (Margo) Wallace. Since the four relatives lived several hundred miles from Independence, they all chose to sell their quarter interest in the property. According to May Wallace, both she and Bess Truman wanted to own the Frank and Natalie Wallace house, since they were anxious about the nearby African American community encroaching on their own property. In 1983, May Wallace explained, "the Colored segment of Independence at that time was just about half a mile north of here. They'd come up the alley [behind the Wallace houses], and we thought they just might creep into here, and if it was just sitting, and nobody owned it or cared for it, someone might sell it to Colored people, and we didn't want that."<sup>389</sup> In early 1962, Harry and Bess Truman and George and May Wallace each bought an undivided one-half of the four separate interests, valued at \$2,875 a piece. Thus, the Trumans and the Wallaces each paid a total of \$5,750 to keep the Natalie and Frank Wallace property a part of the family compound.<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> "Frank Gates Wallace," *Kansas City Times*, 13 August 1960.

<sup>387</sup> "Mrs. Wallace in Hospital," *Independence Examiner*, 6 May 1960; "Mrs. Frank Wallace Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 26 May 1960.

<sup>388</sup> "Services for Frank Wallace to Be Monday," *Independence Examiner*, 13 August 1960; "Frank Gates Wallace," *Kansas City Times*, 13 August 1960.

<sup>389</sup> May Wallace, 14 June 1983, 10.

<sup>390</sup> "Last Will and Testament of Frank G. Wallace": "Final Settlement Approved," Probate Court of Jackson County; and Warranty deeds for the sale of property from Margaret Truman and Clifton Daniel, David F. Wallace, Marion Wallace and Richard J. Brasher, and Charlotte Margaret Wallace's guardian (Harry F. Murphy) to Harry and Bess Truman and to George and May Wallace.

## Frank and Natalie Ott Wallace Family and House Part 2, Chapter 11

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Frank Wallace's will also specified his wishes for the disposition of the house's furnishings. All household goods, furniture, and furnishings were to be distributed by the will's executor, in accord with Frank's written instructions, and "put into the possession of the lineal descendents of the original owners."<sup>391</sup> The contents of their house were passed on to the Truman family and George and May Wallace.

### The Wallace House as a Rental, 1960-1990

George and May Wallace and Harry and Bess Truman began renting out Natalie and Frank Wallace's house most likely by the end of 1960. As joint owners, the two couples no doubt wanted the rental income to help recover the cost of purchasing the house and the cost of maintenance.<sup>392</sup> May Wallace and Bess Truman took primary responsibility for renting the house and taking care of the renters' needs.<sup>393</sup>

Doris A. Beebe, a nurse, became the first tenant of the Frank and Natalie Wallace house. She rented the house for nearly three years, until the spring or summer of 1963. She apparently moved away from Independence.<sup>394</sup>

James and Clare Stone, who moved to Independence in 1962 from Kansas City, began renting the Wallace house in the summer (June or July) of 1963. James Stone worked for the Missouri Pacific Railroad. Furniture in the house, probably Frank and Natalie's, was moved into the Truman's large barn-garage so that the Stones could use their own furniture. The Stones came and went from their rental house through May Wallace's backyard to the Truman driveway, where the Stones parked their car. "Mr. Truman," recalled Clare Stone, "when we first moved there and for quite awhile afterwards, he always liked to be in charge of locking the big gate to all three places. And he'd wait until he was sure we were in. . . . We visited back and forth a good deal."<sup>395</sup> The Stones remained renters until 1967 or 1968.<sup>396</sup>

In early 1968, a young couple, "Mr. and Mrs. Michael Taylor," rented the five-room Wallace house for \$100 a month. The Taylors, like the Stones, parked their car in the Trumans' driveway, inside the iron gates that enclosed the compound. The

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<sup>391</sup> "Last Will and Testament of Frank G. Wallace."

<sup>392</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 10.

<sup>393</sup> James and Clare Stone, interview by Andrew Dunar and Mike Shaver, 22 August 1989, transcript of taped interview, 42. Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, 42; *Polk's Independence City Directory*, 1962, 1963, 1964.

<sup>395</sup> James and Clare Stone interview, 22 August 1989, 6.

<sup>396</sup> *Polk's Independence City Directory*, 1964, 1965, 1966.

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tenure of the Taylors and their poodle, Peanuts, lasted for only about a year.<sup>397</sup>

In 1969, John M. Stone, a claims examiner working for the Social Security Administration, and his wife Virginia moved into the Wallace house at 601 Truman Road. The Stone couple remained there into 1972.<sup>398</sup>

Probably in the summer of 1972, when Harry Truman was hospitalized, first after a fall and then for gastrointestinal problems, a medical corpsmen stayed in the Wallace house. It provided immediate access to the Truman house in case medical help was needed. Following Truman's death in December 1972, Bess Truman and May Wallace put Frank and Natalie Wallace's house up for sale. Doris P. Hecker wanted to buy the house, and was disappointed when the families decided not to sell the property. Hecker then received a call from a Secret Service agent who asked if she might be interested in renting the house.<sup>399</sup>

In February 1973, Doris P. Hecker began renting the Frank and Natalie Wallace house. During Hecker's long tenure in the house, Bess Truman died (in 1983), leaving Margaret Truman Daniel as half owner of the property, along with May Wallace, who continued to own the other half. Doris Hecker witnessed the aging of her next-door neighbor, May Wallace. In 1983, after Hecker had lived in the house about ten years, May Wallace expressed great gratitude for Hecker's helpful presence. "She's been a great help and comfort to me," May Wallace affirmed. "When I fell and broke my leg in '76, I called Doris. She had a key to the back door; she called an ambulance."<sup>400</sup> Perhaps in gratitude to Doris Hecker for her neighborly companionship and because May Wallace knew of Doris Hecker's interest in owning the house, May Wallace, in April 1989, signed a quit claim deed transferring her share of the Frank and Natalie Wallace house to Hecker for \$1.<sup>401</sup>

Doris Hecker, however, never realized her long-term desire to own the Frank and Natalie Wallace property. In early 1990, while hospitalized for pneumonia, she experienced a severe heart attack. Heart bypass surgery failed to remedy her failing heart condition and, on January 12, 1990, Doris Hecker died.<sup>402</sup> After

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<sup>397</sup> "Trumans Stopped By to Welcome Them," *Times Democrat* (Davenport, Iowa), 10 March 1968.

<sup>398</sup> *Polk's Independence City Directory for 1968* lists a "John Taylor" at 601 Truman Road. *Polk's Independence City Directory*, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972.

<sup>399</sup> Ron Cockrell communication with Doris Hecker, memorandum of telephone conversation, 13 December 1986, Truman National Historic Site, Independence.

<sup>400</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 10.

<sup>401</sup> "Quit Claim Deed," April 1, 1989, No. I1902P 779, both in Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>402</sup> *Polk's Independence City Directory*, 1973, 1974, 1976, 1980, 1985, 1986-87, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1993, "Acquisition of Wallace/Haukenberry Properties," no date, Historian's Files, Harry Truman National Historic Site.

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several months of discussions, the National Park Service acquired the property from Margaret Truman Daniel and E. Clifton Daniel in October 1990. The Park Service took possession of the Frank and Natalie Wallace house in February 1991.<sup>403</sup>

**Physical Evolution of the Property**

Landscaping and Outbuildings

Historically, Frank and Natalie Wallace's property included thriving gardens. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, soon after both Wallace houses were built, a single row of hollyhocks ran along their rear backyards. At the wedding of Harry and Bess Truman in late June 1919, Natalie Wallace and May Wallace picked dozens of hollyhock flowers, seared their stems to keep the juice from running out, and placed them in umbrella stands in the Episcopal Church to serve as decorations.<sup>404</sup>

In 1949, a metal fence was constructed around the Truman home and most of the two Wallace properties. According to May Wallace, this fence encircled the entire complex of three houses—the Gates-Truman house and the rear and side yards of the two Wallace houses—to protect the properties from curious, uninvited visitors who wanted to wander around the houses. A section of this fence, with a locked gate, extended between the two Wallace houses, paralleling Truman Road. Frank and Natalie Wallace often used this gate to enter and leave their property.<sup>405</sup> The physical enclosure of the Wallace family compound serves as a testament to the family's tight-knit relationship.

Thick hedges, running along the east and south property lines, enclosed the rear yard for years, and created secluded privacy much appreciated by Frank Wallace and the Trumans, especially after Harry Truman became president. Many years later, James and Clare Stone, who rented the house from 1963 to early 1968, remembered that they trimmed "lots of bushes" on the property. Lilacs extended across the rear yard along the fence. Rose bushes with tiny small flowers also grew in the yard, according to the Stones. A thick carpet of lily of the valley grew on the east side of the house.<sup>406</sup> May Wallace also recalled that Natalie Wallace grew flowers on the west side of the house;

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<sup>403</sup> Palma Wilson Buell, "Acquisition of Wallace/Haukenberry Properties," typewritten, c. 1990, Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site; Margaret Truman Daniel and E. Clifton Daniel to the United States (c/o the National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office), Missouri Warrant Deed (12068P), October 15, 1990.

<sup>404</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 51.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid., 14 June 1983, 9.

<sup>406</sup> James and Clare Stone interview, 22 August 1989, 45-46.

## The Frank and Natalie Ott Wallace Family House Part 2, Chapter 11

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however, a photograph taken of the west side of the house in the 1950s shows that very little was growing along the house at that time. Spirea grew thickly along the front porch. The Wallaces liberally watered their yard to keep the grass, flowers, and shrubs green and lush.<sup>407</sup>

Doris Hecker, who rented the Wallace house from February 1973 to the early 1990s, described the Wallace house landscaping as it looked when she first moved into the house. The back yard "resembled a jungle," she recalled later. Overgrown honeysuckle (with yellow and white blossoms) grew along the chain-link fence on all three sides of the rear yard, along with mock orange and lilac bushes (with white and purple blooms). The lilacs grew to a height of twelve feet and a width of four to five feet out from the fence. Frank Wallace encouraged this overgrown "jungle" to become thick and high, since it afforded him secluded privacy when he napped on a cot in the backyard, Hecker reported that she had been told.<sup>408</sup>

Several landscaping changes were made during Hecker's eighteen-year tenure in the house. In the spring of 1973, Hecker, who feared an over abundance of bees and a lack of air circulation in the backyard, received permission from May Wallace (who consulted with Bess Truman) to clear out all the bushes encircling the back yard. Workman took out ten-to-twelve-foot mock orange and lilac bushes from the east, south, and west sides of the rear yard along the fence. They also removed abundant honeysuckle and red trumpet vines growing in profusion on the south rear and west side fences behind the mock orange. (The honeysuckle and the trumpet vines kept coming back every spring). New sod was then laid in a four-foot-wide strip along the fence. Evergreen bushes, along the east foundation wall, were also removed in 1973 to make way for the installation of a gravel driveway. Hecker had tired of the inconvenience of carrying groceries from her car parked in the Truman driveway, across May Wallace's backyard, to her house.<sup>409</sup>

In 1974, additional bushes on the property were removed. When Hecker noticed water seeping into her basement, May Wallace hired someone to take out all the overgrown double row of taller spirea bushes and shorter "prickly" evergreens along the front porch wall, and the evergreen bushes along the rear foundation wall so that waterproofing whitewash could be applied to the exterior walls. During the process of the foundation work,

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<sup>407</sup> Christine Wallace and David Wallace, 26 August 1991, 74-76.

<sup>408</sup> Cockrell communication with Hecker, December 13, 1986.

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*: Jim Williams communication with Doris Hecker (memorandum of interview in July 1987), July 31, 1987, accompanied by sketch maps of landscaping around two Wallace houses. Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

**Frank and Natalie Ott Wallace Family and House  
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several hexagonal stone steps extending from the rear porch steps to the fence gate east of the house, which May Wallace had recently purchased, were covered up by workman. The water problem continued. May Wallace then had the entire foundation dug out so that a layer of tar could be applied and a bed of gravel laid along the foundation wall. May Wallace had the spirea bushes replanted along the front of the porch, a little further back from the wall than the original bushes. The evergreen bushes along the front porch were never replanted. Across the rear of the house, plain concrete stones replaced the buried hexagonal stepping stones. Reverend Hobby kept the grass around the concrete stones trimmed between the back steps of the two Wallace houses for May Wallace's safety. By the early 1980s, the California ivy growing on the west side foundation wall had been removed almost completely. In the mid-1980s, a sole lilac bush at the southeast corner of the house succumbed to heavy trimming, and the lilies of the valley, also near the southeast rear corner of the house, had barely survived continual lawn mowing.<sup>410</sup>

During Doris Hecker's residence at 601 Truman Road, Secret Service agents mowed all the lawns in the Truman-Wallace compound, until the death of Bess Truman in 1982. Hecker then coordinated the lawn care for both her and May Wallace's house. Periodically, she had Chem Lawn apply treatments to both lawns to combat a webworm infestation (around 1984 or 1985). Chem Lawn treated the lawn again in 1986 for webworm. Doris Hecker hired Jenson Landscaping to power rake her front yard and till and seed the damaged sections of the back yard. Unfortunately, weeds and clover grew instead of grass. In 1987, Dan Cordes did the lawn work at the two Wallace houses.<sup>411</sup>

Frank and Natalie Wallace had no outbuildings on their property. They had no real need for a garage. Natalie never drove a car. Frank Wallace kept his car on the east side of the former barn behind the Gates-Wallace-Truman house; Harry and Bess parked their car on the west side of the barn, nearest to the "big house."<sup>412</sup> For years, Frank Wallace owned a 1936 or 1939 Chevrolet. Often it remained parked in the Trumans' driveway, since he generally walked to his work at the Waggoner-Gates Mill.<sup>413</sup>

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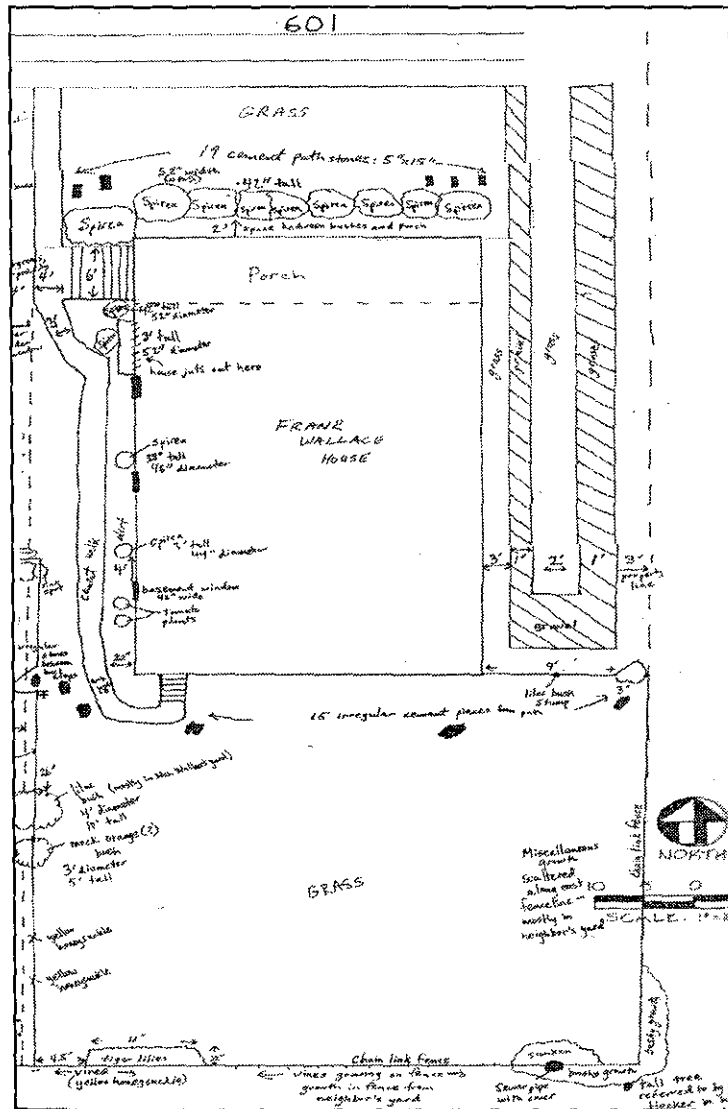
<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid.

<sup>412</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 5.

<sup>413</sup> Christine Wallace and David F. Wallace, Jr., interview, 26 August 1991, 18.

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**This sketch map of the Frank and Natalie Wallace property shows the landscaping around the house, as Doris Hecker, long-time renter, recalled it in the 1970s. Sketch map drawn by Doris Hecker and Jim Williams in 1978.**



## Frank and Natalie Ott Wallace Family and House Part 2, Chapter 11

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### The House—Changes Over the Years

The overall form of the Frank and Natalie Wallace house has remained unchanged since its construction in 1915; no additions have been made.<sup>414</sup> The 1916, 1926, and the 1962 (updated from the 1926 map) Sanborn maps of Independence depict the Wallace house as the same rectangular structure, with a porch across the main façade and a small recessed porch on the southwest rear corner of the house.

The exterior sheathing and color of the Frank and Natalie Wallace have also remained the same dark brown stained wood shingles since the house's construction. Only small exterior changes have taken place. The roof of the house probably had wood shingles originally.<sup>415</sup> Additional windows were added in the back bedroom to allow breezes to circulate through the room on warm, muggy summer nights. According to May Wallace, Natalie Wallace suffered greatly from the summer heat and humidity. The windows were probably installed not long after the house was constructed since they replicate the design of the other windows.<sup>416</sup>

Canvas awnings, which were pushed back against the wall in the winter, shaded the windows and the front porch and helped cool the house during the hot summer months.<sup>417</sup> Undoubtedly, these needed to be replaced from time to time. A 1950s photograph showing the west side of the house, with Natalie Wallace sitting on the front steps, shows a wide-striped awning extending from the west end of the front porch and over a small side window. Sometime before the 1950s (as evidenced in this same photograph), steps ascending up the center of the porch were moved to the west end of the porch. Marks indicating where support posts for the brick railing used to stand at the top of these central steps were still visible in 1987. "In the old days," a six-foot wicker swing hung from the porch ceiling, May Wallace recalled.<sup>418</sup>

James and Clare Stone, who rented and moved into the Wallace house in the summer of 1963, recalled some features of the house and yard that probably existed during the Wallaces residence there, at least in their later years. In the small kitchen, a gas stove was replaced with an electric one. Clare Stone remembered well the low kitchen counters, built that way to accommodate Natalie's small stature.

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<sup>414</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 42.

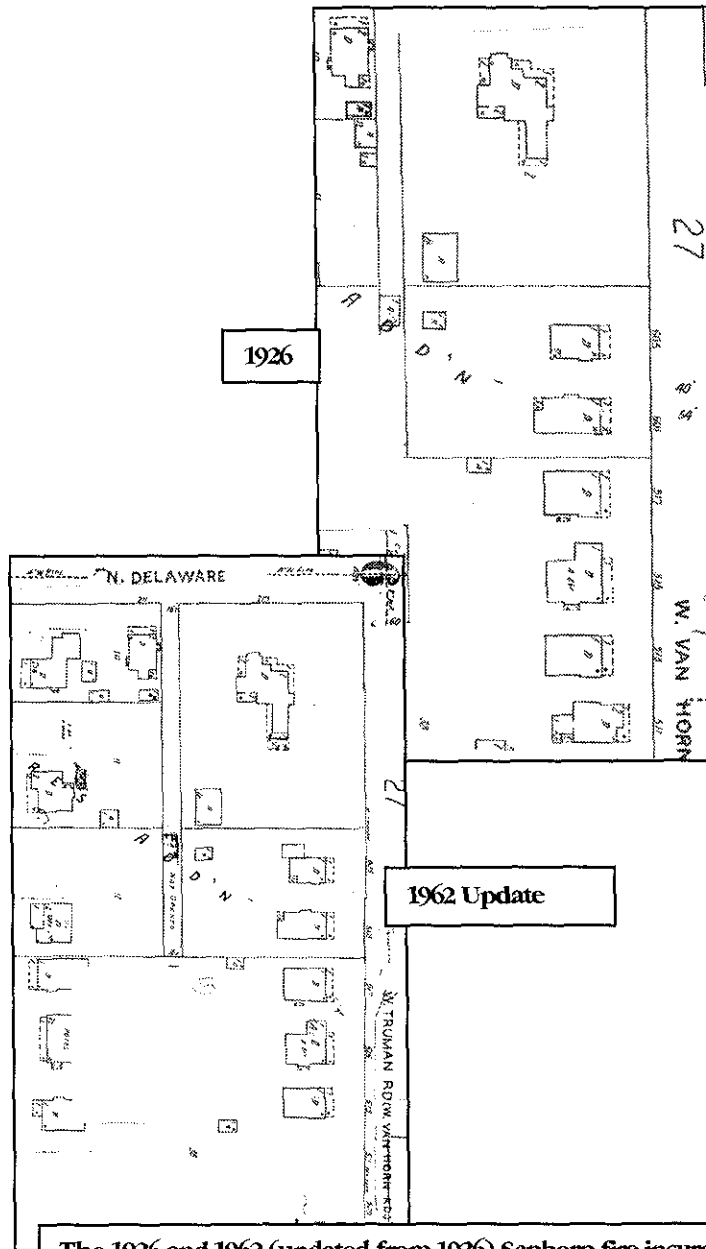
<sup>415</sup> James and Clare Stone interview, 22 August 1989, 41.

<sup>416</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 42.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 June 1983, 8.

<sup>418</sup> Jim Williams communication with Doris Hecker, July 31, 1987.

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The 1926 and 1962 (updated from 1926) Sanborn fire insurance maps of Independence show that the Frank and Natalie Wallace house at 601 West Van Horn (later West Truman) Road had remained the same size since its construction in 1915.

**Frank and Natalie Ott Wallace Family and House**  
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In 1963, a sterling silver and crystal chandelier hung in the dining room. "Cabbage rose carpets" adorned the wood floors. In the basement stood an old Bendix automatic washer, fixed to the floor.<sup>419</sup>

Doris Hecker made a few small changes to the interior of the house during her eighteen years as a renter there. Around 1985-1986, Hecker modernized the kitchen and bathroom, with the approval of May Wallace. In the bathroom, she had a shower added and a vanity table built into an alcove on the north side of the room where there had once been a linen closet. This closet was widened one and one-half feet to the east to accommodate the vanity table. Hecker also had the 1944-1945 gray ceramic tile removed from the walls and replaced with a pink and gray washable wallpaper.



**In the 1950s, Natalie Wallace posed on the front steps at the west end of the front porch; originally the steps ascended the center north side of the porch.** Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library.

In the kitchen, Doris Hecker had three new cabinets installed, one of which was put in by Hecker's former son-in-law. A new steel sink replaced the original; three inches of the counter (rotten) were removed to accommodate the new sink. "The best sealant available" was used to cover the space between the new sink and counter. Hecker stored the old kitchen sink, cabinets, doors, and a few other replaced fixtures in the basement of the Frank and Natalie Wallace house in case they might be used for the possible future restoration of the house. Hecker kept all the

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<sup>419</sup> James and Clare Stone interview, 22 August 1989, 41, 44.

## The Frank and Natalie Ott Wallace Family House Part 2, Chapter 11

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original hardware in place; only a few new deadbolt locks were added to doors.<sup>420</sup>

The small rear corner porch was not enclosed until after James and Clare Stone left as renters in 1967 or 1968. (They indicated that the back porch, where they kept their refrigerator since the kitchen was so small, was exposed to view.<sup>421</sup>) The back porch enclosure and incorporation into the existing kitchen occurred around 1988-1989, near the end of Doris Hecker's tenure in the house as a renter.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> Constance Odom-Soper, handwritten notes after visiting Doris Hecker in Wallace house, September 5, 1988, Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site; Jim Williams communication with Doris Hecker, July 31, 1987.

<sup>421</sup> James and Clare Stone interview, 22 August 1989, 43.

<sup>422</sup> Odom-Soper, handwritten notes, September 5, 1988.

## **Chapter 12**

### **George and Mary Frances Southern Wallace Family and House**

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#### **Southern Family and Mary Frances (May) Southern**

Southern Family in Independence  
William N. and Emma Procter Southern

#### **Mary Frances (May) Southern—Birth and Childhood**

#### **George Wallace and May Southern**

Courtship and Marriage  
Transfer of Land and Wallace House Construction

#### **Life with George and May Southern Wallace, 1916-1963/1993**

Daily Lives: Work and Relaxation  
Association with Truman Family  
Slowing Down

#### **Physical Evolution of the Property**

Landscaping and Outbuildings  
The House—Changes Over the Years

## **George and Mary Frances Southern Wallace Family and House Part 2, Chapter 12**

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### **Introduction**

George Porterfield Wallace was the second son born to David and Madge Wallace in Independence in 1892. After spending a year in Colorado Springs following the death of his father in 1903, the Wallace family returned to Independence where George, then twelve, continued his public school education. Eight years later, he graduated from high school at age twenty and soon afterward began working as a clerk at a door and sash mill. His courtship with Mary Elizabeth (May) Southern began around this time. May Southern, born in 1894 to the influential editor of the *Independence Examiner*, married George Wallace in 1916. They moved into their new modest Bungalow-style house, on the site of a former garden and grazing area behind the Gates-Wallace house at 219 North Delaware Street and beside the newly constructed Frank and Natalie Wallace house, when they returned from their honeymoon in the fall of 1916. George and May Wallace resided in their home at 605 Truman Road for their entire married lives.

Along with the Frank and Natalie Wallace house, George and May Wallace's house became an intimate part of the larger compound of dwellings and landscape features that encompassed the old George P. and Elizabeth Gates property. There was constant interaction between the residents of all three houses in the Wallace-Truman compound, including the Truman family, from 1916 until the death of Harry Truman in 1972 and Bess Truman in 1982. May Wallace moved out of her house in late 1990 at age ninety-six.

### **George Wallace Birth and Childhood**

George Porterfield Wallace, the third child of David and Madge Wallace, was born on May 1, 1892. He was probably born at 608 North Delaware Street (later renumbered 610), where the Wallace family lived for several years in the 1890s. George attended elementary school in Independence. He graduated from the old Independence High School (later William Chrisman High School) in 1912 at age twenty. The traumatic death of his father when George was only eleven years old, and his family's subsequent move to Colorado for a year, may have slowed his progress in school. Despite this tragic incident (or perhaps

**George and Mary Frances Southern Wallace Family and House  
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because of it), as a young man George early on developed a reputation for his friendly, smiling public face.<sup>423</sup>

During high school, George developed an interest in working with wood. He took a "manual training" class in high school, May Wallace recounted. Sometime before he graduated in 1912, George made his sister Bess "a set of furniture," that included a double bed, in which she slept until she married Harry Truman in 1919. "It was just very straight, . . . very plain," May Wallace remembered. "He was quite a carpenter."<sup>424</sup>

As a small child George went to the Presbyterian Church with his parents and grandparents. George P. Gates had been an elder in the church for years. In 1901, however, his mother disagreed with the church congregation's decision to let go of a long-time minister, whose new wife was a divorcee. Madge Gates indignantly left the church. George's older brother, Frank, became interested in a vibrant young minister at the Trinity Episcopal Church, and started attending services there. Madge Wallace also began to attend services there. Eventually, George Wallace followed suit. (Later in life, George Wallace occasionally attended services at the Presbyterian Church with Natalie Wallace. "He lost interest in it [church-going] along the way," May Wallace later explained.<sup>425</sup>

George Wallace's working life began soon after he graduated from high school. By 1914, he was employed as an ordering clerk, probably at Hutig Mill Works Company, which manufactured sashes and doors at a plant in Fairmount, between Independence and Kansas City. He was working at Hutig Mill when he and May Southern married in 1916. He continued working at this lumber mill until the late 1920s.<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> "George Wallace Dies," *Kansas City Times*, 25 May 1963; Sue Gentry, interview by Jim Williams, 18 June 1991, transcript of taped interview, 27, 31, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>424</sup> May Wallace, interview by Lisa Bosso and Steve Harrison, 20 December 1985, transcript of taped interview, 13, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>425</sup> May Wallace, interview by Ron Cockrell, tape-recorded transcript, 2 March 1984, transcript of taped interview, 55 and May Wallace interview, 20 December 1985, 61; both at Harry S Truman National Historic Site. Also see Mary Paxton Keeley, interview by James Fuchs, 12 July 1966, transcript of taped interview, 48-49, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>426</sup> *Independence City Directory*, Vol. XLIX (Kansas City, Mo.: Gate City Directory Company, 1914, 1920, 1924); *Polk's Independence City Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: Gate City Directory Company, 1926, 1928); May Wallace, interview by Niel M. Johnson, 17 and 23 February 1988, transcript of taped interview, 46 and 94, Harry S. Truman Library; "George Wallace Dies," *Kansas City Times*, 25 May 1963.

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### Southern Family and Mary Frances (May) Southern

#### Southern Family in Independence

May Southern's paternal grandfather was John Nelson Southern, who became one of Jackson County's leading attorneys. Born on August 25, 1838, in Tazwell County, Tennessee, he attended schools there and then taught for two years before leaving at age twenty. He taught school for two years before studying law in Morristown, Tennessee. John Southern was admitted to the bar in the spring of 1860, just as the war between the North and South erupted. For about twelve months, he acted as the attorney for the State of Tennessee. After becoming connected with a Confederate supply camp on the Richmond & New Orleans Railroad, John Southern enlisted in Company I of the Fifty-ninth Tennessee Regiment in the Confederate Army. After serving on detached duty, Southern went into active service. He served with General Bragg on his march into Kentucky, and later under General Pemberton and with Generals Longstreet and Breckenridge. While carrying out an order of General Bragg's, Southern received a severe wound in the spring of 1864, and was unable to serve for the rest of the war. He remained disabled, walking with two canes for the rest of his life. At the war's end in April 1865, he was discharged from a hospital in Bristol, Virginia. Since the railroads had been completely decimated during the war, he made his way slowly home to Morristown, Tennessee, in an old buggy hitched to old army horse.<sup>427</sup> Eventually, he arrived home to his wife and one son, William Neil Southern.

John Nelson Southern had married Martha Allen, a native of Tennessee, on December 20, 1860. She gave birth to their first child, William Neil Southern, in Morristown, Tennessee, on November 4, 1864. Other children born later to their marriage included Ethel Southern, who became an artist; John N. Southern, who became a physician in Monroe City, Missouri; Mattie Southern, later Cortner of Florence, Alabama; Mabel Southern, who became a music teacher; and Allen C. Southern, who became a judge in the Jackson Circuit Court.<sup>428</sup>

In July 1865, three months after the Civil War ended, John and Martha Southern moved by boat to Lexington, Lafayette County, Missouri, with their small son, William. "He landed at

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<sup>427</sup> *History of Jackson County, Missouri. Containing a History of the County, Its Cities, Towns, Etc., Indexed Edition*, 1881, reprint (Cape Girardeau, Mo.: Ramfire Press, 1966), 880; W. Z. Hickman, *History of Jackson County, Missouri* (Topeka, Kan.: Historical Publishing Company, 1920), 307-309.

<sup>428</sup> Judge Allen C. Southern and his wife Retta O. were the parents of James A. Southern, who married Josephine Ragland, the niece of Ethel and Nellie Noland. *History of Jackson County, Missouri*, 880; *Hoye Independence, Missouri Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: Hoye Directory Company, 1905).



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Lexington, Missouri, with his two canes, a wife (and a baby son, my father), and thirty dollars," May Southern Wallace recounted many years later.<sup>429</sup> He taught school for two years. In 1866, the Southern family journeyed up the Missouri River to the Wayne City Landing, where they disembarked and made their way to Independence. John Southern worked for about ten years as an editorial writer for the *Kansas City Times*. In 1869 he also became the proprietor and editor of the *Independence Sentinel* newspaper, which he owned for nearly twelve years before turning it over to his brother, William Southern. During the 1870s, Southern also engaged in the stock business and in real estate. Around 1880, John Southern returned to practicing law. Over the next fifty years, John Southern and his associates won the most important cases tried in the courts of western Missouri, a few of which were appealed and won by Southern in the United States Court of Appeals and Supreme Court. By the early 1900s, John and his son Allen C. Southern practiced law together in the firm of Southern and Southern, located in the prominent Chrisman-Sawyer Bank building on the courthouse square. John Southern continued practicing law into his eighties. In addition to his law practice, Southern was active throughout his life in educational, religious, and fraternal groups. A great promoter of education, he helped found the Presbyterian Women's College. In 1920, he had been a member of the Presbyterian Church for fifty years and served part of that time as an elder. He was also the oldest member of the Masonic Lodge in Jackson County in 1920. John and Martha Southern lived on a farm east of Independence for thirty-five years, in an imposing Queen Anne-style farmhouse constructed of stone quarried on their property, before moving to Independence around 1905.<sup>430</sup>

### William N. and Emma Procter Southern

William N. Southern, John and Martha Allen Southern's oldest child and May Southern's father, distinguished himself in the newspaper business and as a leader of commercial and political developments in Independence. Born in Morristown, Tennessee, on November 4, 1864, William Southern came to Missouri with his parents as an infant. William Southern grew up on his parents' farm, where he had responsibilities for daily chores, including delivering milk door-to-door. Church services and activities filled his Sundays. As a boy, William Southern

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<sup>429</sup> May Wallace, "May Wallace—Her Story, February 1984," handwritten, Sue Gentry Collection, Jackson County Historical Society.

<sup>430</sup> *History of Jackson County, Missouri*, 880; Hickman, *History of Jackson County*, 308-309; Pearl Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers* (Independence, Mo.: Pearl Wilcox, 1975), 457-58; "Southern and Southern," *Independence Examiner*, 20 March 1974 (reproduced from a 1904 issue of the *Jackson Examiner*); "Independence," *The Illustrated World*, c. 1899, 16, 19, 26.

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attended private schools in Independence—the Presbyterian Women's College and then Woodland College. He graduated from Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. Young William Southern began working as a reporter for the *Kansas City Star* in 1886, and began work for the *Independence Sentinel*, then owned by his father's brother, William Southern, in 1891. In order to distinguish himself from his uncle, young William Southern began to attach "Jr." after his name, and was known as William N. Southern, Jr., throughout the rest of his life. When the *Sentinel* changed hands, William Southern, Jr., left the newspaper. In February 1898, he founded the *Jackson Examiner*, a weekly. The *Examiner*, which first occupied an office in the Music Hall building on West Maple Street, became the third weekly newspaper published in Independence. Although generally supportive of the Democratic Party and its views, the *Examiner's* editor became known for his independent thinking and fearless editorial expressions. The *Independence Examiner* became a daily newspaper in 1905. The weekly *Jackson Examiner* continued publishing until 1928. The *Independence Examiner* still exists in the year 2000.<sup>431</sup>

Over the next several decades, Southern built up the circulation of his *Independence Examiner*, which eventually became the only Independence newspaper. His daily editorial, written under the pen name of "Solomon Wise" in plain Missouri language, became one of the most widely quoted newspaper columns in Missouri. Southern and his newspaper also became known for their policy of supporting worthwhile civic projects in Jackson County and of championing decent and honest government, regardless of political party affiliation. Later in his life, newspaper friends respectfully bestowed on him the title of "colonel," which was adopted by all who knew him. "No citizen ever started a business, changed jobs, or ran for public office without seeking the colonel's good ear," Sue Gentry, who began working for Southern at the *Examiner*, in 1929, wrote many years later. Harry Truman was no exception. Truman went to Southern for advice when he ran for Jackson County judge. Southern's *Examiner* supported Truman then and also when he ran for the U.S. Senate in 1934 and 1940. When Franklin Roosevelt's death gave Truman the presidency, Colonel Southern wrote in his "Solomon Wise" column: "the country is in the hands of an honorable man, not just a politician."<sup>432</sup> In addition to his newspaper work, William Southern often led worthwhile

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<sup>431</sup> Hickman, *History of Jackson County*, 813; Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers*, 458-59; "May Southern Wallace (Mrs. George P. Wallace)," no date, "Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>432</sup> Sue Gentry, "Southern Worthy Addition to Press Hall of Fame," *Independence Examiner*, 3-4 August 1996.

## George and Mary Frances Southern Wallace Family and House Part 2, Chapter 12

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community projects. He also helped organize the Independence Chamber of Commerce and served as its first president.<sup>433</sup>

William Southern married Emma Procter on February 11, 1892. Emma was the daughter of Caroline Prewitt and Reverend Alexander Procter, born on March 22, 1867 in the large brick Procter home on Lexington Avenue. Reverend Procter, a native of Kentucky, came to Independence from Saint Louis around 1860, and served as the minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) from 1860 to his death in 1900. Procter was considered one of the "great forward-looking men of his time," according to May Wallace many years later.<sup>434</sup> Emma Procter graduated from the Woodland College in Independence. She was a life-long member of the Christian Church. For twenty-five years, she organized and led the Good Samaritan Class in the church. Emma also became very active in Independence literary circles, including the Mary Paxton Study Class and the Saturday Club. After marrying, Emma Procter and William Southern lived in the Procter family home until shortly after Emma Procter's death around 1908. In 1910, the Southern family, then with two children, built their own home at 639 South Park Street. Unlike the Procter home, the Southern's new house had central heat and an indoor bathroom. The Southern couple raised two daughters: Caroline (later Mrs. Edward Carnes), born in 1892, and Mary Elizabeth (May), the future wife of George Wallace, born in 1894. Emma Southern gave birth to a third daughter, probably around 1895 or 1896, which didn't survive.<sup>435</sup>

Colonel Southern retired from the *Examiner* in 1951 at age eighty-seven, when Stauffer Publications of Topeka, Kansas, bought the newspaper. He died in Independence in 1956. Emma Procter Southern died in 1961 at age ninety-two.<sup>436</sup>

### Mary Frances (May) Southern Birth and Childhood

Mary Frances Southern, better known as May Southern, was born in the home of her maternal grandparents, Alexander and Caroline Procter, on Lexington Avenue in Independence, on

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<sup>433</sup> Pearl Wilcox, *Independence and 20th Century Pioneers. The Years from 1900 to 1928* (Independence, Mo.: Pearl Wilcox, 1979), 57-59.

<sup>434</sup> Wallace, "May Wallace—Her Story, February 1984"; "Widow of Examiner's Founder Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 3 March 1961.

<sup>435</sup> Hickman, *History of Jackson County*, 813; Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers*, 459-60; Wilcox, *Independence and 20th Century Pioneers*, 58-59; "Widow of Examiner's Founder Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 3 March 1961; May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 41; May Wallace interview, 17 February 1988, 2-3.

<sup>436</sup> "Widow of Examiner's Founder Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 3 March 1961; Wallace, "May Wallace—Her Story."

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July 9, 1894. In 1904, at age ten, May Southern became a member of the First Christian Church in Independence. May Wallace attended the old Ott School on North Liberty Street in Independence. She graduated from the old Independence high school (later William Chrisman High School) in 1911. She spent a year at the University of Missouri in Columbia. She and her sister, Caroline, joined Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority. May remained a member of this sorority for more than fifty years.<sup>437</sup>

After she returned to Independence in 1912, May Southern very much wanted to work in the composing room as a linotype operator at her father's newspaper office. William Southern, however, insisted that that type of work wasn't suitable for a woman. May's father believed that library work or teaching was much more fitting for a woman. Prevented from going into newspaper work, May turned to other pursuits. She continued her informal education relating to the literary arts and culture, with the encouragement of her mother. On October 4, 1913, Emma Southern organized the Saturday Club for the purpose of broadening her daughters' and other interested women's cultural education. The group took its name from the famous Saturday Club in Boston, Massachusetts. May became a charter member of the group. An Independence High School English teacher, Matilda Brown, led the class for many years until her death.<sup>438</sup>



### **George Wallace and May Southern**

#### Courtship and Marriage

May Southern, two years younger than George Wallace but one year his senior in high school, probably met her future husband in high school. They graduated only one year apart—May

**May (Mary Frances) Southern as a young woman, around the time she met George Wallace.** Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library

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<sup>437</sup> May Wallace interview, 20 July 1983, 25; Wallace, "May Wallace—Her Story."

<sup>438</sup> Jon Taylor, "George and May Wallace House," no date, typed page, Historian's Files, Truman National Historic Site; "May Southern Wallace, (Mrs. George P. Wallace)."

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Southern in 1911 and George in 1912.<sup>439</sup> May and George were probably dating by early 1911, when Harry Truman mentioned Miss Southern's name in a letter to Bess Truman.<sup>440</sup> May probably became even better acquainted with the jovial, six-foot-tall George Wallace at the tennis court that May's parents built in the spring or summer of 1911, just one year after they built their own home at 639 South Park Avenue. Located on Park Avenue, just south of the Southern home, William and Emma Southern had given May and her sister Caroline the tennis court as a high school graduation present.<sup>441</sup> "Frank and George were good tennis players and so was Bess," May recalled nearly seventy years later.<sup>442</sup>



**A group of May and Caroline Southern's friends, including George, Bess, and Frank Wallace, gathered at the Southern's tennis court at 639 South Park Avenue. From left to right: Jack Montague, Alden Millard, George Wallace, Bess Wallace (with hat), Emma Proctor Southern (head barely visible), Caroline Southern, Dorothy Patterson, Natalie Ott (head barely visible), Helena Crow, Frank Wallace, and Edwin Patterson (with tennis racket). Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library.**

The court became a center of neighborhood activity. "We all played tennis down there," May later reminisced about her family and George, Frank, and Bess Wallace, "and went on picnics and just had a good time."<sup>443</sup> Occasionally, Madge Wallace invited a group of young people to her house for dinner.

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<sup>439</sup> "George Wallace Dies," 25 May 1963.

<sup>440</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess: The Letters from Harry T Bess Truman, 1910-1959* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983), 22.

<sup>441</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 15.

<sup>442</sup> May Wallace, "Dear Friends Cherish Memories of Bess Truman," *Independence Examiner*, 18 October 1982.

<sup>443</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 41.

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"I was terribly shy about that," May recalled. "And she turned out to be my mother-in-law, and she was a lovely lady."<sup>444</sup>

Harry Truman never played tennis, but joined George Wallace and May Southern on picnics, after he began spending time with Bess Wallace in 1910. The possibilities and the range of their picnic and other outdoor outings expanded greatly after Harry Truman bought his Stafford automobile in 1914. The three couples and others frequently went to such favorite picnic spots as the waterworks at Sugar Creek, the Little Blue River, and Cave Spring. Harry's Stafford became the center of photographic attention; often the young couples would pose for pictures in the car with Harry at the wheel. Harry was always good company, May Wallace later reported.<sup>445</sup>

George Wallace and May Southern had been "sweethearts for a long time," according to May Wallace, when they married on October 24, 1916. The following day, William Southern made sure that the Southern-Wallace wedding received front-page coverage in the *Independence Examiner*.<sup>446</sup> The Reverend L. J. Marshall, pastor of the Christian Church in Kansas City officiated at the wedding ceremony held at 8:30 in the evening in the home of William and Emma Southern at 609 South Park Avenue. The Southern's house was tastefully decorated with autumn yellow chrysanthemums, palms, and ferns. The couple exchanged vows in the midst of a large number of relatives and friends. Many family members, representing some of Independence's most prominent citizens, received guests after the ceremony, including the bride's parents, Allen C. Southern and his wife, George P. and Elizabeth Gates, Madge Wallace, Frank and Natalie Wallace, and Bess Wallace.<sup>447</sup>

After their wedding and reception, George and May Wallace went to St. Louis on the midnight train in order to avoid being subjects of wedding pranks. "We knew that they [their young friends] would come down here and throw rats and shoes at us," May Wallace explained many years later.

One friend took us to Kansas City and we got into the sleeper. George had a lightweight coat, a raincoat that would do as a topcoat, too. So we looked like we'd been married for years. We were in this big car. He got up to put his coat up into the top shelf up there and the rice just poured! Mother Wallace and Natalie had filled his pockets with rice! And the rice was all over that entire

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<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 July 1983, 25.

<sup>445</sup> David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 93.

<sup>446</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 41.

<sup>447</sup> "Southern-Wallace," *Independence Examiner*, 25 October 1916.

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car! I was so embarrassed, I wanted to kill them! We had a nice family.<sup>448</sup>

George and May Wallace returned to Independence a few days later to their new bungalow at 605 Van Horn Road, West (now 605 Truman Road).<sup>449</sup>

Transfer of Land and Wallace House Construction

On August 22, 1916, George P. and Elizabeth Gates sold the west 50 feet of the east 100 feet of lot 1 in Moore's Addition to George P. Wallace for \$1 "and other valuable considerations." This deed gave the Wallace couple the right to maintain and use the sewer line to the Gates house, which ran across the Wallaces' property. In 1926, George and May Wallace bought, for \$1, the western-most fourteen feet of lot 1 from Madge Wallace, who acquired the property after both of her parents died.<sup>450</sup>

The George and May Wallace house (as well as the Frank and Natalie Wallace house) was constructed on land once used by the Gates as pasture and a garden. As late as the early 1910s, the George P. and Elizabeth Gates family owned a single cow, called "Susie Dam" by George Wallace, who begrudged his responsibility of milking the cow every day. Many years later, May Southern, who was dating George Wallace at the time, recalled that a wooden fence enclosed an area east of the Gates-Truman house in which the cow grazed. A garden occupied a plot behind the big house and along Blue Avenue. "This was the garden before Mr. [George P.] Gates gave the two lots to his two grandsons [Frank and George]," May Wallace recalled many years later.<sup>451</sup> May Wallace remembered digging asparagus up in her front yard in the spring of 1917.<sup>452</sup>

A local Independence builder, a man named Shaupe, probably constructed the house. Work must have begun in late August or early September. (The house does not appear in the August 1916 Sanborn map of Independence.) George Wallace, always interested in lumber and woodworking, supervised its construction. The second Wallace house was built in the Bungalow style, popular and built by the hundreds in Independence and around the country at that time. A modest example of that style, the Wallace house had characteristic overhanging roof eaves with exposed rafters on the sides and knee braces on the gable ends. An open porch extended across the front of the house; an open recessed porch was at the southeast

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<sup>448</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 51.

<sup>449</sup> "Southern-Wallace," *Independence Examiner*, 25 October 1916.

<sup>450</sup> "General Warranty Deed," No. 109271, and also "Warranty Deed," No. 219645, both in Vertical Files: "Gates Family," Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>451</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 7.

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

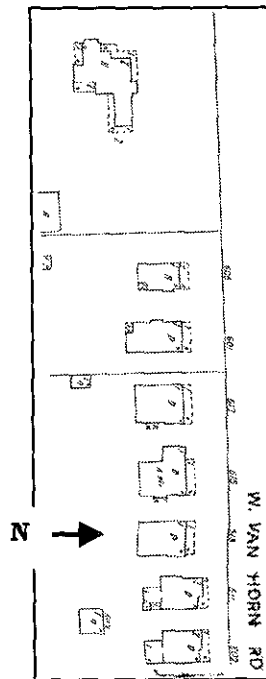
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rear corner. A small square bay window projected slightly from the east side wall of the rectangular house form. Upon completion, the exterior siding was stained a deep pine green.

The George and May Wallace house was slightly smaller than the neighboring Frank and Natalie Wallace house, built the year before. It had only four rooms—a combined living and dining room, a bedroom (now the present dining room), a kitchen, and a small sleeping porch. Inside, the Wallace house consisted of four rooms. Floors were laid with hardwood. Madge Wallace, an avid seamstress, helped May Wallace make curtains for the new house.<sup>453</sup>

The new house was wired with electricity when the newlyweds moved into the house in the fall of 1916. A coal furnace initially provided heat for the Wallace house. "I shoveled a lot of coal in this house," May Wallace clearly remembered many years later. "Of course our furnace was small as this house has only four rooms. Anytime we were away we had to hurry home and put coal in the furnace. Then, of course, we all put in gas heat."<sup>454</sup> The new house was connected to city water.<sup>455</sup>

May Wallace, many years later, recalled how it "rained and it rained and it rained like Noah and the Ark" just before her wedding. After George and Carolyn Southern returned from a shopping trip to gather some things for the wedding, they parked George P. Gates's car near the wedding couple's new house on soft soil covering recently buried pipes between the house and the road. The car sank deeply into the water-saturated soil, and could not be used to take any of the Gates family to the wedding. "And it rained and rained!" May Wallace remembered.<sup>456</sup> Despite the deluge, George and May Wallace were able to move into their new



The August 1926 Sanborn fire insurance map of Independence shows the George and May Wallace house at 605 West Van Horn (later West Truman) Road just to the west of the Frank and Natalie Wallace house and to the east of the Gates (later Truman) house.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., 8, 29.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid., 7



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house after their wedding on October 24, 1916 and their honeymoon in St. Louis.<sup>457</sup>

The young couple furnished their new house with items that came out of the old Gates attic at 219 North Delaware. Other pieces of furniture were wedding gifts from the Wallace, Gates, and Southern families.<sup>458</sup> Madge Wallace made curtains for the couple's new house. Before her death in 1924, Elizabeth Gates gave May (and Natalie) one chair from her parlor set, which consisted of four to six individual chairs and a settee. May Wallace made a needlepoint cover for the chair's seat cushion.<sup>459</sup>

**Life with George and May Southern Wallace  
1916-1963/1993**

Daily Lives: Work and Relaxation

After his marriage to May Southern, George continued to work as a clerk at the Hutig Mill Works Company, manufacturer of doors and sashes. Well known in the family for his ability to work with wood and also to fix nearly anything that needed it, George seemed well suited to work in an environment with wood and machines. For years, he rode the streetcar everyday to the mill in Fairmount.<sup>460</sup>

At the end of the work day, George never stopped by the big house and visited with his mother Madge Wallace, as did his solicitous older brother Frank. George related to his mother very differently. George, remembered by Margaret Truman Daniel as "sharp-tongued and high spirited," seemed to resent his mother's smothering presence. Although he could not break away from her, "he seldom went near her, and when he did the result was frequently a quarrel."<sup>461</sup>

George, like his brother Frank, never enlisted in the armed forces during World War I. Their mother Madge Wallace's extremely protective nature may have kept George from even contemplating such a decision. When George was later put on the draft rolls, Madge Wallace erupted. The war ended before George was drafted.<sup>462</sup> In December 1918, however, George's work was suddenly and unexpectedly interrupted for another reason; he, like thousands of others across the United States and

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<sup>457</sup> Ibid., 2 March 1984, 41.

<sup>458</sup> May S. Wallace. "George P. Wallace Home," n.d., Sue Gentry's Collection, Jackson County Historical Society.

<sup>459</sup> May Wallace interview, 20 July 1983, 26.

<sup>460</sup> *Independence City Directory*, Vol. XLIX (Kansas City, Mo.: Gate City Directory Company, 1914, 1920, 1924); *Polk's Independence City Directory*, 1926, 1928); May Wallace interview 17 and 23 February 1988, 46.

<sup>461</sup> Margaret Truman, *Bess W. Truman* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 110.

<sup>462</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 60-61, 66.

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Europe, came down with influenza. George and May, along with other Wallace family members, had just returned to Independence from Platte City, where they celebrated Thanksgiving with the family of Maud Gates Wells, Madge Wallace's sister, when George began shivering and developed a high temperature. Following the doctor's orders, May Wallace put her husband to bed and surrounded him with mason jars filled with hot water (in lieu of hot water bottles). After an extremely feverish night and a week of bed rest, George regained enough strength to go back to work. May Wallace never succumbed to influenza; however, Bess, Natalie, and Frank Wallace developed severe cases of it.<sup>463</sup>

George Wallace's job with Hutig Works Company came to an abrupt end around 1928 when the company closed down. "Hutig went broke and we went broke with them," May Wallace reported many years later.<sup>464</sup> This "enforced vacation between jobs," as May Wallace described it, probably lasted for several weeks.<sup>465</sup> By 1930, George Wallace was working as a salesman. However, like so many people during the Great Depression of the 1930s, it appears that he struggled to stay employed and started new jobs frequently in the early 1930s. In 1934, George Wallace worked as an assistant manager. By the end of 1934, before Harry Truman left his position as judge of eastern Jackson County, Truman helped George Wallace get a job with the Jackson County Highway Department. For the next twenty-seven years, Wallace worked as first an engineer and then maintenance superintendent for the Jackson County Highway Department. He retired from this position in 1961.<sup>466</sup>

When he was not employed, George often busied himself fixing things at home and for his extended family. During one involuntary vacation from work, he decided to try to fix an old clock in the Wallace-Gates house, dating from the 1700s, that didn't have any hour and minute hands. "He took some real thin aluminum pie pans of mine and came up here and made a pattern. Then he made it out of cardboard and then he drew around it on the pans, cut them out, and painted them," May Wallace explained many years later. He put the new hands on the clock and installed a battery. The Gates's old clock began running again. (Apparently, the clock was at some time also electrified.)<sup>467</sup> "He loved woodwork," May Wallace commented many years later.<sup>468</sup> Over the years, George Wallace built up a well-equipped workshop in the basement of the Wallace house at

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<sup>463</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 54.

<sup>464</sup> Ibid., 23 February 1988, 94.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid., 20 July 1983, 24; *Polk's Independence City Directory*, 1928.

<sup>466</sup> *Polk's Independence City Directory*, 1930, 1932, 1934, 1938, 1940, 1942, 1946, 1950, 1954, 1957; "George Wallace Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 25 May 1963.

<sup>467</sup> May Wallace interview, 20 July 1983, 24.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid., 23 February 1988, 94.

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605 Truman Road. His reputation as a skilled handyman grew over time. Those who knew him admired him and often commented on his ability as a "fixer."<sup>469</sup>

It may have been during the weeks between jobs, when George Wallace had time on his hands that he began imbibing more liquor. "He was one of these people that had to be doing something all the time," commented May Wallace in 1985, "which was real good when it was something useful. When it wasn't, why, it wasn't so good."<sup>470</sup> May Wallace hinted that her husband had a problem with alcohol when, in 1984, she assessed the affect of David Wallace's suicide on publicly friendly, always-smiling George Wallace. "I think it [David Wallace's suicide] affected his nervous system for the rest of his life, it was such a shock. . . . My father [who knew David Wallace] always said that Mr. Wallace was more like my husband in disposition, more friendly, that kind of a person."<sup>471</sup> Further evidence of George Wallace's struggle with alcoholism was found around the time the Park Service acquired the Wallace house. A sizeable cache of alcohol bottles filled a large niche in the basement wall.

George may have been like his father in other ways as well. Years after his death in 1963, those who knew George Wallace or who were able to observe his behavior told of his struggle with alcohol. Margaret Truman Daniel, George's flamboyant niece, wrote in 1986 that it was around 1930 that George Wallace "began displaying signs of instability. Every so often he would drink heavily. With him, Bess did not hesitate to unleash her temper. She gave George some lectures that would have turned Falstaff himself into a total abstainer."<sup>472</sup> In 1991, Sue Gentry, retired journalist for the *Independence Examiner* who reported on activities of the Truman-Wallace families for years, when asked about George Wallace, confessed that "some of them [Wallace family members] had a drinking problem." Gentry went on to explain further. According to Gentry,

The only thing I ever heard from Colonel Southern [editor of the *Examiner*], he said, "You know I always said that I printed all the news. I didn't hold anything out. If it was on the police record, I put it there [in the newspaper]." He said, "The only time that I ever did that [withheld news from the paper] was my own son-in-law, and I did that for my daughter [May Southern Wallace]."<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>469</sup> Sue Gentry interview, 18 June 1991, 27.

<sup>470</sup> May Wallace interview, 18 December 1985, 2.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 March 1984, 44. See also May Wallace interview, 20 December 1985, 22.

<sup>472</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 118.

<sup>473</sup> Sue Gentry interview, 18 June 1991, 28.

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In addition to working at his job and fixing things around the Wallace family compound, George Wallace worked for many years in eastern Jackson County democratic politics. In 1922, both George and Frank Wallace helped Harry Truman with his election campaign for judge of eastern Jackson County. For many years, George served as an election judge for eastern Jackson County.<sup>474</sup>

For relaxation, both George and May Wallace enjoyed playing golf during their younger and middle-aged years. George and May belonged to a golf club (no longer extant, south of Independence on Chrysler), where they played frequently.<sup>475</sup> George also occasionally played bridge with May and some of her friends.<sup>476</sup> Once in a while, according to May Wallace, he went downtown to a "gaiety picture or something like that" with a good man friend. On these occasions, George's mother, Madge Wallace would "stay up and wait till he got home because she didn't trust me to get him home," May Wallace said chuckling.<sup>477</sup>

After marrying George Wallace, May, known for her sociability and friendly, energetic nature, continued her active participation in cultural organizations and social groups. The Saturday Club took a prominent place in self-education in the literary arts. Throughout her life, May served in various offices of the Saturday Club. Following the death of Matilda Brown, who had led the club for many years, May eventually was chosen to direct the class. May also later joined the Mary Paxton Study Class, which, like the Saturday Club, encouraged the broad exploration of the literary arts through reading and group discussion.<sup>478</sup> May Wallace and her sister Caroline Carnes also continued their association, as alumni, with the Kappa Kappa Gamma (KKG) sorority, which they had joined when attending the University of Missouri. In 1962, May and Caroline both received fifty-year membership pins from KKG.<sup>479</sup>

Playing bridge with the Tuesday Bridge Club was one of May's life-long delights. The group of ten women generally met twice a month on Tuesdays in different members' homes. Each club member, including Bess Truman and Natalie Wallace, took

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<sup>474</sup> "George Wallace Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 25 May 1963; McCullough, *Truman*, 163.

<sup>475</sup> Bill and Mary Ellen Carnes, interview by Gail Evans, 2 June 2000, transcript of taped interview, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>476</sup> Sue Gentry, "Wallace Was Historic Woman," *Independence Examiner*, 21 May 1990; May Wallace interview, 17 and 23 February 1988, 48, 94.

<sup>477</sup> May Wallace interview, 20 December 1980, 9.

<sup>478</sup> Jon Taylor, "George and May Wallace House," no date, typed page, Historian's Files, Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>479</sup> Wallace, "May Wallace—Her Story, February 1984"; Sue Gentry interview, 18 June 1991, 20.

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their turn hosting the games.<sup>480</sup> When May Wallace invited the bridge club to her home, she entertained them in her living room.<sup>481</sup> The group played two or three different kinds of bridge. In the spring of 1946, not long after Harry and Bess Truman had moved into the White House, Bess invited the Tuesday Bridge Club members to come to Washington for a long four-day weekend. May joined her sister-in-law Natalie Wallace and the other club members for the trip to the capitol city for sightseeing and, incidentally, bridge games in the White House. Many years later, Margaret Truman vividly described the good time had by all.

Mother had a schedule lined up for them that would have wilted the iron campaigner, Harry S. Truman himself. They race from Congress to the Smithsonian to a luncheon in the State Dining Room to the circus. They had dinner each night at the White House, with Dad presiding, and played bridge aboard the *Williamsburg* as it cruised the Potomac.<sup>482</sup>

May, known as a shrewd bridge player, continued to participate in the Tuesday Bridge Club gatherings after Bess and Harry Truman returned to Independence in 1953.<sup>483</sup>

May Wallace continued her life-long involvement in the Christian Church. Having joined the church at age ten, she remained a member throughout her life. May also never hesitated to become involved in worthwhile or charitable causes. During World War I, May, along with Bess Wallace and dozens of other women in Independence, rolled bandages for the American Red Cross. She volunteered her time to the Red Cross again during World War II. She also crocheted needed clothing for American soldiers during the Second World War.<sup>484</sup>

May Wallace, like her sister-in-law Natalie, spent considerable time taking care of the Wallace home and close family members. She prepared meals, cleaned clothes and her house, and did some crocheting, embroidery, and other handicrafts. May most likely ordered groceries and had them

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<sup>480</sup> The original bridge club members included: Natalie and May Wallace, Bess Truman, Edna Hutchinson, Mary Shaw, Lucy Peters, Thelma Palette (Sibel), Mag Knoll, Grace Minor, ? Minor, and Adelaide Twyman. Other women, including Ardis Haukenberry, Mag Noel, Linda King, and Sue Gentry replaced some of the original members of the Tuesday Bridge Club later. May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 46-47 and Sue Gentry interview, 18 June 1991, 22-23.

<sup>481</sup> Bill and Mary Ellen Carnes, 2 June 2000, 13.

<sup>482</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 285.

<sup>483</sup> May Wallace interview, 17 and 23 February 1988, 48-50.

<sup>484</sup> "May Wallace Dies at 98," *Independence Examiner*, 18 May 1993; "Wallace Was Historic Woman," *Independence Examiner*, 21 May 1993; May Wallace interview, 17 and 23 February 1988, 66.

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delivered once a week, a common custom before World War II.<sup>485</sup> May probably did other shopping at Bunschu's general merchandise store on the courthouse square, since it had a large inventory of clothing and household goods and could accommodate many of her needs. Unlike Natalie Wallace who never learned to drive, May had a far greater array of choices for shopping and taking care of household business, since she drove a car. No doubt, May drove to Kansas City on occasion to take care of her household responsibilities. May Wallace often stopped by her father's *Independence Examiner* office on her outings.<sup>486</sup> May probably invited Natalie Wallace, as well as Emma Southern, to join her on shopping excursions in her car. Both May and Natalie helped their mother-in-law Madge Wallace do her shopping, especially after Fred Wallace and his family moved out of the big house at 219 North Delaware in 1943 and left eighty-one year-old Madge to take care of all her needs alone.<sup>487</sup> Many years later, May affirmed that her sister-in-law Natalie Wallace was a good neighbor. "I helped her and she helped me," May reported. "We lived here in peace and got along fine."<sup>488</sup>

George as well as May Wallace drove a car. May acquired her first car, an Essex, in the early 1920s. May's parents bought the Essex for her mother, Emma Southern. When she didn't "take to driving at all," the Southern's gave the car to May Wallace. "I had a car with all expenses paid," May recalled many years later. May Wallace became her family's chauffeur and drove her mother as well as her father, Col. William Southern, wherever they wanted to go. Around 1922, the Wallaces built a small garage for May's car, in the rear, southwest corner of their yard.<sup>489</sup> Later, she drove a Packard, about a 1932 model, according to Bill Carnes, May's nephew.<sup>490</sup> By the 1940s, May Wallace drove a Hudson. George probably didn't drive regularly until after he started working for the Jackson County Highway Department in 1934, which provided him a county car. He usually parked it under a large tree in the side yard.<sup>491</sup>

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<sup>485</sup> Christine Wallace and David Wallace, interview by Jim Williams and Carol Dage, 26 August 1991, transcript of taped interview, 25, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>486</sup> Sue Gentry interview, 18 June 1991, 19.

<sup>487</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 219.

<sup>488</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 42.

<sup>489</sup> Both quotes from May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 5. The Sanborn Map Company map of Independence shows no garage in the rear of the George and May Wallace house in August 1916 and a small garage on its August 1926 map, confirming the approximate construction date of 1922 given by May Wallace. *Independence, Missouri* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1916 and 1926).

<sup>490</sup> Bill and Mary Ellen Carnes interview, 2 June 2000, 14.

<sup>491</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 5; Wallace and Wallace interview, 26 August 1991, 18, 17.

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May and George Wallace had no children of their own. Margaret Truman, born in 1924, was like a daughter to them. Probably sometime after Margaret, Harry, and Bess Truman moved to Washington in 1935, May and George acquired a dog they named "Spot." May Wallace later remembered a comical incident involving Spot and President Truman. "One night [Truman, while visiting May and George] sat down in the dog's chair before I could stop him. His navy blue suit was covered with gray and white hairs of Spot, our very spoiled dog. I was so dumbfounded at the sight that I just kept talking and ushered him out without a word."<sup>492</sup>

### Association with the Truman Family

1919-1935. Harry Truman's close association with George and May Wallace became more intimate after Harry married Bess Wallace in the summer of 1919 and became officially part of the Wallace family. Soon after the Trumans returned from their honeymoon, Harry Truman became physically closer to the Wallaces when he moved into the Gates house at 219 North Delaware, just a few feet west of the two Wallace brothers' homes. After Harry decided to enter politics by running for the eastern judgeship of Jackson County in the fall of 1921, George Wallace, like Frank Wallace, lent a hand in Truman's campaign effort.<sup>493</sup>

The Truman family's practice of sharing meals with May and George Wallace (as well as Natalie and Frank Wallace) in one of the Wallace or Truman houses or outside, probably began not long after the two Wallace houses were completed in the mid-1910s. Customarily George and May Wallace would have Sunday dinner, promptly at 1:00 p.m., every other week with the Trumans in the big house. The other Sunday dinners were shared with the Southern family.<sup>494</sup> Summertime picnics were a favorite activity of both Wallace couples and the Truman family. Although many of these outdoor gatherings took place in Frank and Natalie Wallace's backyard, May Wallace brought dishes to these family affairs.<sup>495</sup> These backyard picnics never included barbecued dishes. The women prepared steaks, potato salad, and other foods in their kitchens, since none of the men in the families could cook. Although the Wallace family liked onions in their potato salad, Harry did not. Onions were always left out, according to May Wallace.<sup>496</sup>

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<sup>492</sup> May Wallace, "Relative Recalls Christmas," no date, *Independence Examiner*, Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>493</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 86-87.

<sup>494</sup> Steve Harrison, report of conversation with May Wallace on her ninety-first birthday, 9 July 1985, Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>495</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 50.

<sup>496</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

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Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays were always a time of festive celebrations for the Gates, Wallace, and Southern families. May and George Wallace alternated their holidays between the Southern and Truman-Wallace family. One year they would spend Christmas with the Truman-Wallace family and Thanksgiving with the Southerns. The next year, they spent Christmas with the Southerns and Thanksgiving with the Truman-Wallaces.<sup>497</sup> After first marrying, May and George Wallace spent their alternate Thanksgiving with the Wallaces in Platte City, Missouri, with Madge Wallace's sister, Maud Louise, and her husband, William Strother Wells. At other times, the Gates and Wallace families celebrated Thanksgiving in Independence, around an enormous dining room table at 219 North Delaware Street. After the Strother and Truman families began to raise their own children, trips to Platte City became less frequent, and Thanksgivings were more often spent in Independence. George and May Wallace (as well as Natalie and Frank Wallace) always took part in family Christmas meals in the dining room at 219 North Delaware Street.<sup>498</sup> At Christmas, May Wallace often visited with her family, the Southerns as well as the Wallace family.<sup>499</sup> The celebration of Christmas took a special meaning for both Wallace couples after the birth of Margaret Truman.

The birth of Margaret Truman to Harry and Bess, in 1924, added a new dimension to the Truman's association with May and George Wallace. Since the Wallaces had no children of their own and lived on property adjoining the Wallace-Truman house, May and George treated Margaret like a surrogate daughter. They enjoyed constant contact with Margaret as she grew from an infant to a young adult. When Margaret was about four or five, she began paying visits first, to Natalie, and then, to May Wallace, in the late afternoon, asking for sweets at both aunts' houses. These little forays, unfortunately for Margaret, did not continue for long. Bess Truman, suspicious of her daughter's loss of appetite at dinner, soon learned about her sweet treats at both Aunt Natalie's and Aunt May's (or "Beufie" as Margaret called her) houses, and asked her two sisters-in-law to refrain from giving Margaret any food on her late afternoon visits. Shoes were another matter. Many, many times, Margaret, who loved shoes, was allowed to play shoe store when she came to visit May Wallace.<sup>500</sup>

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<sup>497</sup> Steve Harrison, report of conversation with May Wallace on her ninety-first birthday, 9 July 1985.

<sup>498</sup> May Wallace interview, 20 July 1983, 25, 31; May Wallace interview, 17 and 23 February 1988, 48; Sue Gentry interview, 18 June 1991.

<sup>499</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 48.

<sup>500</sup> Wallace, "May Wallace—Her Story."



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George and May Wallace also enjoyed Margaret's dependency on George Wallace to fix anything that needed repairing in her life. When Margaret was a small child and fell on the gravel walk behind the Wallace-Truman house and skinned both of her knees, she tearfully went to George and pleaded: "Da Fix." ("Da" became Margaret's shortened pronounceable version of "George" when she was a child.) "She thought he could fix anything," May recalled.<sup>501</sup> A break in the close relationship between Margaret and both Wallace couples came in 1934, when Truman became a Missouri senator and Margaret was eleven years old.<sup>502</sup> "I can see Margaret now," May Wallace reminisced, "sitting in the back seat of the car, holding Raggedy Ann in her arms as they drove out of their yard on the first lap of their journey to Washington, D.C."<sup>503</sup> Her Aunt Beufie had recently sewed a new dress and some hair for well-used battered Raggedy Ann.<sup>504</sup>

Even after Margaret Truman lived in Washington with her parents, George and May Wallace continued their close and playful relationship with Margaret. In the spring of 1946, when Beth Truman invited her Tuesday Bridge Club to come to Washington, George Wallace went along on the trip with May. Twenty-one-year-old Margaret invited George, her "Uncle Da," to attend a formal party. When they both realized that none of George's typical brown shoes and brown suits would be appropriate for such an occasion, George assured Margaret that he would "fix it." After locating one of Harry's fancy dark suits that he could wear, George then went out and bought some black shoe polish. Upon his return, he sat on the floor of the White House and rubbed his own brown shoes with black polish just to please Margaret and go to her party. "Oh, they would have stood on their head for that gal," May Wallace later proclaimed.<sup>505</sup>

### 1935-1953

The ritual of sharing meals with the Wallaces continued through Harry Truman's years in public office and moved to Washington as senator, vice-president, and then president. Following the 1944 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, where Senator Harry Truman accepted his party's nomination as Franklin Roosevelt's running mate, the Truman family drove home to Independence. May and George Wallace quietly

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<sup>501</sup> May Wallace interview, 20 December 1985, 2.

<sup>502</sup> Wallace, "May Wallace—Her Story."

<sup>503</sup> Ibid.

<sup>504</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 134.

<sup>505</sup> May Wallace interview, 17 and 23 February 1988, 49.

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welcomed the weary couple and served them dinner in their small house. They then relaxed with the Wallaces in their back yard.<sup>506</sup>

During the Truman presidency, the press often reported on the Trumans' visits to Independence and family gatherings over meals. In August 1946, the *Kansas City Times* reported that "President Truman, who since his county court days always has kept his home a place apart from politics and public life, last night held true to his tradition and relaxed with his family at a Missouri back yard picnic."<sup>507</sup> May and Natalie Wallace and Bess Truman all came from their houses with covered dishes, which were placed on white-clothed tables set with silverware, glass, and napkins. When the Trumans came to Independence for one- or two-day visits, they usually ate meals with the Wallaces. In March 1950, the press reported that the Trumans dined with Frank and Natalie Wallace in their home when they came home to hear Margaret sing in a concert in Kansas City and before the two Wallace couples and the Trumans went to Margaret's concert.<sup>508</sup> "Harry never brought his office problems to any of the family gatherings," May recalled years later. "Harry and I had lots of fun over the various religions in the family. The Wallaces were all Episcopalians, Harry was a Baptist, and I was a member of the Christian Church. . . . With his keen sense of humor, he was a very interesting conversationalist," May reminisced.<sup>509</sup>

After Harry Truman became the focus of public attention, the press also reported Wallace-Truman family gatherings that took place on the back porch of the Truman house and sometimes on the front porches of the two Wallace homes. The Wallace brothers often visited with Truman on the back porch at 219 North Delaware Street in the summertime. This was also the gathering place for Bess Truman's bridge club meetings, which included May Wallace (and also Natalie Wallace).

During the vice-presidential and presidential years from 1944 to 1953, George and May Wallace (as well as Frank and Natalie Wallace) became more than close family members and neighbors; increasingly they supported the life and activities of the Trumans when they came home to Independence to visit. When the Trumans returned to Independence for visits, George and May Wallace (as well as Frank and Natalie Wallace) often greeted the Trumans in Kansas City at the airport or at the Independence railroad station and accompanied them home. George and May Wallace also attended political functions in or

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<sup>506</sup> "Big Cheer for Truman," *Kansas City Star*, 22 July 1944"; Truman of Missouri: A Vice-Presidential Candidate Comes Home to His Relatives and Friends in Independence, *Life* (August 21, 1944), 75.

<sup>507</sup> "Truman at Ease, *Kansas City Times*, 4 August 1946.

<sup>508</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 47.

<sup>509</sup> May Wallace, "Relative Recalls Christmas," no date, *Independence Examiner*, Historian's Files, Truman National Historic Site.

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near Independence held for Truman, such as the public meeting held for Truman in Independence after he announced he would run for another term as president. On June 27, 1947, George and May joined other Wallace family members and the Truman-Noland families on the front platform when Harry Truman spoke to a crowd of 10,000 assembled in the RLDS Saints' Auditorium.<sup>510</sup> When the Trumans came home to Independence from Washington for the last time in early 1953, George and May Wallace were in the "mob of well-wishers"<sup>511</sup> that greeted them "when they got off the train in Independence to begin another phase of their interesting lives."

When the Trumans came home for longer visits, George and May often took primary responsibility for preparing the "big house" at 219 North Delaware for the Trumans' arrival. They opened and aired the house out, sometimes brought in a few groceries, and closed up the house after the Trumans departed. George Wallace, the family "fixer," took care of draining all the water pipes in the big house in the fall when the Truman family was away in Washington, D.C.<sup>512</sup> George helped around the "big house" in other ways. George Wallace and Harry Truman had an unforgettable moving experience in the Truman house once when the Trumans were home from Washington for a visit. Together the two men were attempting to carry a unwieldy liquor serving cabinet up the attic stairs. "My husband was underneath it and when they got three or four steps from the top, Harry let go—his hands let go of it—and it came down and chased George down. It hit [the wall] and broke both of his legs above the ankles. . . . We thought the world was coming to an end when that thing crashed down!"<sup>513</sup> George went to the hospital for treatment of a fractured left ankle. He wore a cast for the next six months; his left leg never regained its full size.

After Harry Truman became president, May Wallace became a liaison between the Wallace family and the press. Although Truman depended on Ethel Noland to answer all questions relating to the Truman family genealogy, May became the principal Wallace family member to report on the Trumans' activities.<sup>514</sup> "After Mr. Truman became president, she was wonderful, because I could always find out what was going on," chuckled Sue Gentry, reporter for the *Independence Examiner*. "She was loyal to the *Examiner*, and I would find out some things that some other papers wouldn't."<sup>515</sup>

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<sup>510</sup> "To a Familiar Crowd," *Kansas City Times*, 298 June 1948.

<sup>511</sup> Wallace, "May Wallace—Her Story."

<sup>512</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 13; Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 233.

<sup>513</sup> May Wallace interview, 20 July 1983, 37.

<sup>514</sup> "May Wallace Dies at 98," *Independence Examiner*, 18 May 1993.

<sup>515</sup> Gentry interview, 18 June 1991, 20.

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Holidays, especially Christmas, became even more festive for the Wallace couple after Truman became president. May and George Wallace (along with other Wallace family members) nearly always spent part of Christmas Eve and Christmas day with the Trumans during the presidential years, either in Independence or in the White House. One Christmas Margaret Truman announced that she wanted a Christmas tree that was nine feet tall and would touch the ceiling in the Truman house. "We got a tree that touched the ceiling," May recalled, "and it left a spot on the ceiling, which Bess wasn't too happy about." It was placed in the bay window of the parlor, and on Christmas Eve everyone gathered around to help with the decorating. "Actually," May chuckled, "my husband and Bess did the real trimming, with much comment on the sidelines."<sup>516</sup>

On Christmas day, the two Wallace couples usually gathered around the stately Christmas tree in the morning and then the dining room table for a mid-day meal in the Truman home. "We all went up there [to the Truman house] and put our things around, and we had quite a commotion at one time," May Wallace reminisced many decades later.<sup>517</sup> May and George usually had Christmas dinner with May's parents, William and Emma Southern, and then came back to the Truman house for a late evening "pick-up supper."<sup>518</sup>

May and George Wallace (as well as Frank and Natalie Wallace) also traveled to Washington to celebrate at least two Christmases with the Trumans in the White House.<sup>519</sup> "Believe you me, Christmas in the White House is really something," May Wallace exclaimed many years later.<sup>520</sup> In 1947, Truman invited the Wallace and Truman family to spend Christmas in the White House. At the end of Christmas day, Truman recorded his impressions of the day in his diary.

We have [had] a most happy and pleasant Christmas, with all the brothers of Bess present, Frank, George and Fred, with their wives, Natalie, May, and Christine. . . . My sister, Mary Jane, came on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and I am sure spent an enjoyable time. My brother [Vivian] could not come. . . . He has four boys, all married but one, and a lovely daughter. I called him, and he said 22 sat down at his house. I am sure they had a grand dinner—a much

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<sup>516</sup> Laura Rollins Hockaday and Henri Rix, "Warm Memories of Christmases Past," *Independence Examiner*, 21 December 1986.

<sup>517</sup> May Wallace interview, 17 and 23 February 1988, 59.

<sup>518</sup> Hockaday and Rix, "Warm Memories of Christmases Past."

<sup>519</sup> Bill and Mary Ellen Carnes interview, 2 June 2000, 22.

<sup>520</sup> Wallace, "May Wallace—Her Story."

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happier one than a formal, butler-served one, although ours was nice enough.<sup>521</sup>

The relationship between George and May Wallace and Harry Truman's family was cordial, but not especially close. On one occasion, Harry Truman's mother and sister came to the Gates-Truman house at 219 North Delaware Street for a Christmas dinner. In 1945, Truman's arrival in Independence for Christmas was delayed due to bad flying weather. Since he was unable to get Grandview for a Christmas meal, Truman's sister and mother came to Independence for the Wallace Christmas dinner in the big house. Customarily, however, Madge Wallace rarely invited the Trumans to her home at 219 North Delaware. According to May Wallace many years later: "I think the Wallaces, all of them, were a little bit snooty about their things."<sup>522</sup> May and George Wallace also rarely went out to Grandview to visit the Trumans. And, although they had a social relationship with the Noland family at 216 North Delaware Street, they were not close. Years later, May Wallace's nephew Bill Carnes, suggested that the difference in age between the Noland sisters and the Wallace couple may have kept their relationship with the Nolands on a platonic level.<sup>523</sup>

When Harry Truman's mother, Martha Ellen Truman, died in July 1947, Truman could not be immediately present. Wallace family members supported the president by going to the home of Martha and Mary Jane, Harry Truman's sister, in Grandview, when ninety-four-year-old Martha's condition suddenly worsened. George Wallace joined Vivian Truman at the Truman cottage in Grandview in the late morning, around the time of Martha Truman's death. Bess and Margaret Truman arrived at Martha Truman's home in the early afternoon.<sup>524</sup>

Harry Truman's interest, concern, and devotion to the Wallace family were clearly expressed in numerous ways over the years. In late May and early June 1946, a year after Truman became president, Harry and Bess Truman held their first family reunion in the White House. The president's *Sacred Cow* airplane flew Mary Jane Truman, George and May, and the two other Wallace brothers and their families to Washington.<sup>525</sup> In early 1949, the Trumans invited May and George Wallace (as well as Frank and Natalie Wallace, Mary Jane Truman, Vivian Truman and his daughter Martha Ann, and Nellie and Ethel Noland) to

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<sup>521</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S Truman* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 120.

<sup>522</sup> May Wallace interview, 17 and 23 February 1988, 42.

<sup>523</sup> Bill and Mary Ellen Carnes, 2 June 2000, 30.

<sup>524</sup> "President's Devotion to Mother Evident in a Remark," *Kansas City Star*, 26 July 1947.

<sup>525</sup> "Home in White House," *Kansas City Times*, 29 May 1946.

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Harry Truman's inauguration. The Wallace couple spent several days in Washington, D.C. attending the inaugural ball and other inaugural festivities with the Trumans, and sightseeing in the capital city.<sup>526</sup> George and May Wallace visited the Trumans in Washington, D.C. on other occasions during their eight-year residence in the White House and the Blair House (when the White House was undergoing renovation during Truman's second term). Many years later, May Wallace remarked that she and her husband "had many exciting visits to Washington. To stay in the White House was really a great privilege, not granted to many."<sup>527</sup>

Also, when Truman received an over-abundance of a certain gift, he often gave the surplus to his brothers-in-law. "People always kept him in ties," remarked May Wallace. "He couldn't possibly wear all those ties that were sent to him." Frank and George Wallace became the recipients of Truman's overstock.<sup>528</sup>

When the Trumans were away from Independence, communication by letters and telephone calls between the president and George and May Wallace was friendly and frequent. May, more than George, wrote letters to Harry Truman in Washington. Probably the best-known exchange between May and Truman took place in April 1945. On April 9<sup>th</sup>, May mailed a chatty letter to Harry asking if he could do a small favor of sending his autographed photograph to the young son of a long-time friend. She went on to mention news of the household—listening to Harry's recent speech in Buffalo on the radio, George's anticipated heavier work load at his job for the Jackson County Highway Department, and the fattening of their dog Spot. Harry dictated and sent a letter to May four days later on April 12<sup>th</sup>. "I imagine Spott [*sic*] is getting fatter and fatter. I have gained nine pounds myself. . . . So Spot and I will be in the same class," Truman mused. Truman closed this typed letter with well wishes to all the Wallaces. In stark contrast to the light tone of this typed letter was Harry Truman's scrawled handwriting at the bottom of the page, communicating the sudden gravity of his situation after learning just hours before that President Roosevelt had died. "This was dictated before the world fell in on me," Harry wrote. "But I've talked to you since and you know what a blow it was. But—I must meet it."<sup>529</sup>

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<sup>526</sup> McCullough, *Truman*, 733

<sup>527</sup> Wallace, "Dear Friends Cherish Memories of Bess Truman."

<sup>528</sup> May Wallace interview, 20 July 1983, 38.

<sup>529</sup> May Wallace to Harry Truman, April 9, 1945 and Harry Truman to May Wallace, April 12, 1945, both in Senatorial Papers, Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1944-45, Harry S. Truman Library.

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### Margaret Truman's Wedding

Following Harry and Bess Truman's return to private life in Independence, the most significant event for May and George and the entire Wallace-Truman family took place in 1956. On April 21<sup>st</sup>, thirty-two-year-old Margaret Truman married *New York Times* journalist E. Clifton Daniel, Jr. Before the wedding ceremony, the Truman, Daniel, and Wallace families ate lunch at May and George Wallace's house. Everyone feasted on ham with biscuits, chicken salad, tea, coffee, and milk. Margaret and Clifton were married in the Episcopal Church in Independence; the reception took place in the big house at 219 North Delaware Street. For George and May Wallace, Margaret's wedding was one of the great highlights of their adult life. It represented the opening of a new chapter in her life and also in George and May Wallace's lives—a chapter without Margaret's regular presence.<sup>530</sup>

### Slowing Down

After George Wallace retired in 1961 at age sixty-nine as maintenance superintendent at the Jackson County Highway Department, he and May enjoyed relaxing and visiting friends. In December 1962, George became seriously ill. Over the next five months, he was hospitalized several times. In early April 1963, he entered the hospital for the last time. On May 24, 1963, George Wallace died at the Independence Hospital at age seventy-one.<sup>531</sup> "He killed himself with cigarettes," May Wallace concluded many years later, a habit he began around the time of his father's suicide, when George was eleven.<sup>532</sup>

Following George's death, May Wallace continued many of her past activities. She remained a loyal member of the Christian Church, which her grandfather had ministered from 1860 to 1900. Having joined the church at age ten, she remained a member throughout her life. By 1990, May had been a member of the church for over eighty-five years and was the church's oldest member at the time of her death in 1993. May also continued her active participation in several literary arts clubs, including the Saturday Club and the Mary Paxton Study Class. In 1984, on the centennial of Harry Truman's year of birth, the American Association of University Women honored May Wallace for her contribution to home-making and cultural interests. She also continued her avid pursuit of bridge and her participation in

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<sup>530</sup> "Day for Remembering," *Kansas City Star*, 21 April 1956.

<sup>531</sup> "George Wallace Dies," *Kansas City Times*, 25 May 1963.

<sup>532</sup> May Wallace interview, 17 and 23 February 1988, 47.

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the Tuesday Bridge Club. By the late 1980s, she was the last original member of the Tuesday Bridge Club still living.<sup>533</sup>

She also continued her role as family liaison to the press and anyone interested in the Truman and Wallace families. After the death of Truman family historian Ethel Noland in 1971 and the death of Harry Truman in 1972, May Wallace increasingly took on the role of family historian. She obliged research historians associated with the Truman Library, the National Park Service, and other institutions, and well as independent scholars and journalists. "She never refused a writer an interview," journalist Sue Gentry reported in the *Independence Examiner*, at the time of May Wallace's death.<sup>534</sup>

May Wallace traveled to many countries in her later years. She joined the Browning Tour (led by Dr. Herring, head of the Browning Library in Waco, Texas) to Europe, to Australia, and to the Holy Land. On other trips, May Wallace traveled to many parts of the United States, Canada, and Europe. She often went on tours with friends, such as Garnet Stall, Margaret Woodson, and Helen Berry. "I have many wonderful memories of the places I have been and the beautiful things I have seen," May Wallace reminisced in 1984.<sup>535</sup>

After Harry Truman died in 1972, May Wallace provided an important supportive role for Bess Truman, who continued to live in the big house next door. In 1986, Margaret Truman Daniel wrote of the two women's increasingly close and meaningful relationship as members of their family died and they both aged. "One of the happiest things about Mother's last years was the presence of her sister-in-law, May Wallace, who lived only a few dozen feet away in her house. . . . She visited Mother frequently and was a cheerful, attentive link to the past. On Mother's ninety-sixth birthday, in 1981, May was the spirit behind a festive party."<sup>536</sup> Bess lived another year and a half; May Wallace carried on alone for another decade.

May continued living at 605 Truman Road for nearly eight more years. When she was in her early nineties, May Wallace showed clear signs of aging. Her nephew, William Carnes, began attentively looking after her needs. Then in November 1989, at age ninety-five, May Wallace left her house for the last time, when she was hospitalized after a fall in her home. In the hospital she suffered a series of small strokes. Her family decided that it was no longer wise for her to live at home alone. Not long afterward

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<sup>533</sup> "Wallace Was Historic Woman," *Independence Examiner*, 21 May 1993"; May Southern Wallace (Mrs. George P. Wallace), Historian's Files: Wallace Homes, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>534</sup> Sue Gentry, "Wallace Was Historic Woman," *Independence Examiner*, 21 May 1993.

<sup>535</sup> Wallace, "May Wallace—Her Story."

<sup>536</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 431.



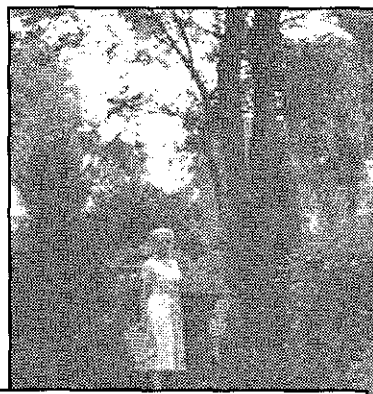
she was moved to a nursing home. The expense of her nursing home care and the realization that May could never live independently again prompted Carnes family members to consider selling the May Wallace's house to the National Park Service. In early 1990, an assessment of the property's value was completed. The National Park Service acquired the Wallace house in 1991; they received the keys to the house in September that year. A year and a half later, on May 18, 1993, May Wallace died at the Independence Regional Health Center at age ninety-eight.<sup>537</sup> The Truman and Wallace families kept a few items in the Wallace home. The National Park Service selected other pieces from the Wallace house that related to the life of Harry and Bess Truman and their home. The remaining contents of the Wallace house were sold at an auction.

### **Physical Evolution of the Property**

#### Landscaping and Outbuildings

May and George Wallace planted trees, shrubs, and flowers on ground previously occupied by a garden and pasture behind the Gates-Truman house. Landscaping to accommodate the Wallace house began shortly after its construction in 1916. When May and George Wallace moved into their new house, several maple trees extended across the front yard along Blue Avenue (later Van Horn, then Truman Road). A few trees were planted in the side and rear yards to shade the house. Photographs taken in the 1950s, show that these trees had matured and reached a substantial height.

When Van Horn Road was widened and extended to Kansas City during World War II, road workers cut down the street trees along both sides of Truman Road, including those in front of the Wallace homes, May Wallace recalled. Many years later, in the early 1980s, a "cyclone" destroyed additional trees along Truman



**Large trees and shrubs, behind Natalie Wallace, shaded the rear yards of both Wallace houses in the 1950s.** Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>537</sup> "May Wallace Dies at 98"; "May Wallace Recalled as Helpful Source for Decades," *Kansas City Star*, 29 May 1993; "Acquisition of Wallace/Haukenberry

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Road, according to May Wallace, including an old soft maple, which "crashed right across the driveway."<sup>538</sup>

Shrubs, vines, and perennials historically grew around the foundation of the house and along the property boundaries. By the late 1910s and early 1920s, a single row of hollyhocks ran along the rear backyards of both Wallace houses soon after they were built. At the wedding of Harry and Bess Truman in late June 1919, Natalie Wallace and May Wallace picked dozens of hollyhock flowers, seared their stems to keep the juice from running out, and placed them in umbrella stands in the Episcopal Church to serve as decorations.<sup>539</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s, several shrubs and flowers probably proliferated in the Wallace's yard. Pussy willows grew along the east side of the garage; they were probably planted soon after the garage was constructed in 1922. Bordering the east side of the driveway near the garage were several large bushes, including an Elderberry bush, which screened the drive from the yard. Peonies grew in great profusion along both the east and west sides of the driveway shared by the Trumans and May and George Wallace.<sup>540</sup> Yellow and white honeysuckle vines grew along a fence across the rear and east side property lines and on a trellis on the east end of the porch. Lilac, mock orange, and *Euonymus* (a brilliant red in the fall) bushes grew along the east side and south rear property lines that were shared with Frank and Natalie Wallace. Mint plants and lily of the valley grew on the east side of May's garage and in the southeast corner of the rear yard.<sup>541</sup> The spirea, which encircles the house foundation in 2000, may have been planted somewhat later, possibly in the 1930s or 1940s (and then replanted after work on the foundation was completed much later). May and George Wallace probably chose shrubs and perennial flowers that required little care; they apparently spent minimal time pruning and trimming their shrubbery.

Around 1922, the Wallace property acquired a gravel driveway and one outbuilding on the west side of the house. "After I had a car, we built my little garage," May Wallace remembered more than sixty years later. The original garage door was probably of wood and with two sections that opened outward in the middle.

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Properties," c. 1990, Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>538</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 8.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 March 1984, 51.

<sup>540</sup> Wallace and Wallace interview, 26 August 1991, 68.

<sup>541</sup> Jim Williams, record of communication with Doris Hecker, July 23, 1987; Jim Williams, memorandum to the file, July 31, 1987, Historian's Files, Truman National Historic Site. Some of the shrubs drawn on the map accompanying Williams's memorandum are large in height and diameter, suggesting that they (pussy willows, lilacs, mock orange, etc.) probably date from the 1920s or 1930s.



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Much later, a more modern garage door that could be raised and lowered replaced the original two-leaf door.<sup>542</sup> Later, perhaps in the late 1940s or 1950s and around the time that a new door was installed, the garage was lengthened about eight or ten feet in the rear (south side) to allow longer cars of that time to fit into the garage.<sup>543</sup> This small extension is clearly visible in 2000.

A wood fence painted green "stood around George's house for a long time," in the 1930s or possibly earlier, on which the honeysuckle grew.<sup>544</sup> In 1949, both Wallace house properties were enclosed with a metal fence, after Harry Truman was elected president for a second term. According to May Wallace, this fence encircled the entire complex of three properties—the Truman house and the rear and side yards of the two Wallace houses—to protect the properties from curious uninvited visitors who wanted to wander around the houses. A section of this fence with a locked gate, which paralleled Truman Road, extended between the two Wallace houses.<sup>545</sup>

In more recent years, a few landscaping changes have taken place. A "May Wallace" climbing rose bush, a gift to May, was planted along the west side property line between the Wallace and Truman houses, probably sometime in the 1970s.<sup>546</sup> Around 1976, Bill Carnes, May Wallace's nephew, planted a maple tree in the backyard along the Wallace driveway. And at nearly the same time, May Wallace planted a maple tree in the front yard. Both trees remain standing in 2000. In the early 1980s, mint plants and lilies of the valley growing near the pussy willows along the east side of the small Wallace garage, were removed during a general thinning out of the bushes. Aside from these changes, no other vegetation was removed from the Wallace property between 1973 and 1987. In 1987, low bushes, vines, and weeds along the west wall of the bedroom wing were removed. Perhaps around the same time, honeysuckle growing on a trellis at the east end of the porch was also removed.

The yard work was accomplished by various people. David Wallace, the son of Fred Wallace, occasionally mowed the lawn around the big house and the Wallace house, before the Fred and Christine Wallace family moved out of 219 North Delaware around 1940. During the 1970s and early 1980s, May Wallace paid former President Truman's Secret Service men to mow her lawn. Around the same time, Reverend Edward Hobby began methodically trimming and pruning existing trees and

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<sup>542</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 5.

<sup>543</sup> Bill and Mary Ellen Carnes interview, 2 June 2000, 15.

<sup>544</sup> Wallace and Wallace interview, 25 August 1991, 9, 55.

<sup>545</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 9.

<sup>546</sup> Jim Williams handwritten note to Steve Harrison, c. 1987-1988, Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

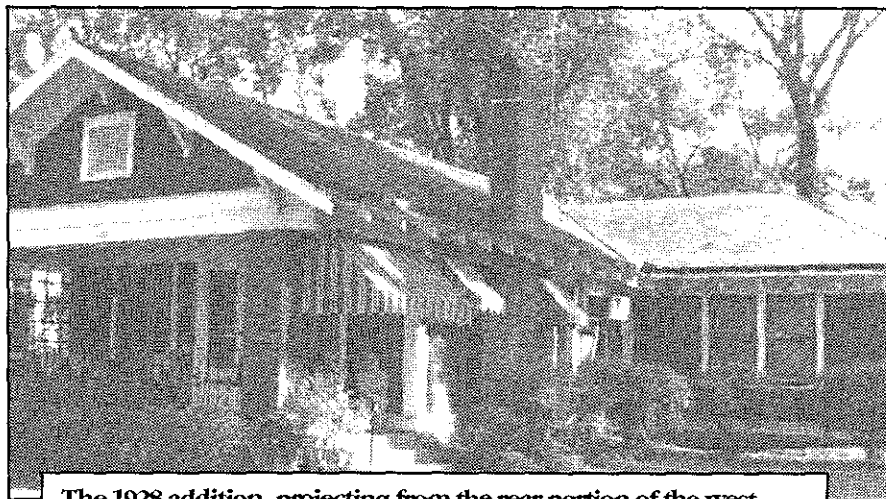
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shrubs around the house and yard. Reverend Hobby was an African American Baptist minister with a congregation in Kansas City. He worked as a handyman part-time to supplement his salary as a minister. After the Secret Service left following Bess Truman's death in 1982, neighbor Doris Hecker oversaw yard maintenance for both her house at 601 Truman Road and May Wallace's house. In 1986, after webworms killed lawn in sections of the yard, Hecker hired Jensen Landscaping to rotor till and plant grass seed in both Wallace back yards. Hecker later reported that clover and weeds came up instead of grass.<sup>547</sup>

### The House—Changes over the Years

The George and May Wallace House, completed in 1916, has received only minor exterior alterations since its construction. The original roofing material was probably wood shingles (similar to the roofing material on the Frank and Natalie Wallace house); the addition of composition shingles probably occurred after 1950. Exposed wood rafters under the eaves, and also window openings and nine-over-one, double-hung sash window frames on most of the walls date from the house's construction or 1928 when an addition was made.<sup>548</sup> Stripped canvas awnings, periodically replaced when old ones wore out, shaded the windows for decades. In the 1970s and early 1980s, Reverend Hobby hung May Wallace's green-stripped awnings every spring.)<sup>549</sup>



**The 1928 addition, projecting from the rear portion of the west wall, can be seen in this 1950s photograph of the George and May Wallace house.** Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>547</sup> Jim Williams, record of communication with Doris Hecker, July 23, 1987, Historian's Files: Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>548</sup> Bill and Mary Ellen Carnes interview, 2 June 2000, 8.

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The exterior wood shingle sheathing remains unchanged in 2000. It was stained a deep pine green when constructed (in 1916 and 1928) and has remained the same color green ever since, according to May Wallace. The trim color has always been white. "These house[s] were always these colors; they were stained," May Wallace reported, referring to both her house and the Frank and Natalie Wallace house.<sup>550</sup> George Wallace restained the house himself, at least once, until an accident occurred. May Wallace told the story many years later:

My husband was a heathen, and he liked to work on Sundays because he didn't have much other time. He was painting the house on Sunday morning. The rope broke and, trying to grab it, the thing and everything fell and the green paint went all over everywhere. The preacher said it happened because he was doing it on Sunday! He came right in the house and called a painter and gave him the job of painting the house. He didn't want to paint it anymore. . . . But that green stain—I can remember how he looked with green stain dripping off him.<sup>551</sup>

In 1928, the George and May Wallace enlarged their four-room house by adding a bedroom and bath on the west side of the house at the rear. The front room, which originally served as both living and dining room, then became the living room only. The original bedroom became the new dining room. A very small sleeping porch next to the original bedroom was enclosed and enlarged into one bedroom measuring approximately 14.75' x 11.5'. A second new bedroom, approximately 17.75' x 10.75', and bath were also added onto the southwest corner of the house.<sup>552</sup>

Around 1950, the small recessed porch on the southeast rear corner of the house was enclosed and incorporated into the kitchen.<sup>553</sup> "Originally, which was sort of a practice years ago, their refrigerator set out there [on the porch]," recalled Bill Carnes, May Wallaces's nephew. "They did take in a little enclosed back porch and made it an all-weather room to make it sort of like a little breakfast room," Mary Ellen Carnes, Bill Carnes's wife added. When they created a small breakfast room, the electric refrigerator came inside. They "put regular double-hung windows out there and made it just weather-tight."<sup>554</sup>

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<sup>549</sup> Jim Williams, record of Communication with Doris Hecker, July 23, 1987.

<sup>550</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 8.

<sup>551</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 June 1983, 8.

<sup>552</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 42; National Park Service, "George Wallace House." HABS drawing and description, 1992. Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>553</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 49.

<sup>554</sup> Bill and Mary Ellen Carnes interview, 2 June 2000, 10-11.

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George and May Wallace completed this small porch alteration around the time that a "porch craze" took hold in the Truman and Noland families. Ethel and Nellie Noland, Mary Jane Truman, and Harry and Bess Truman all made porch additions or alterations around 1950.

Around the same time, the May and George's house began developing a serious problem in the basement. "The basement wall started giving way . . . from years and years of improper drainage on the outside," Bill Carnes reported. "They finally had to have a contractor bring a backhoe in and dig a large trench along that basement wall and re-pour it with a great big slab of concrete."<sup>555</sup> The edge of the slab of concrete along the east wall of the house is visible in 2000.<sup>556</sup>

Sometime after the addition of the bedroom addition in 1928, a balustrade with plain rails was later constructed on the roof of addition. By 1987, some of the 2 x 4 rails had rotted in places. In April or May that year, May Wallace had the entire balustrade replaced with pressure-treated (with a green tint) 2 x 4 rails.<sup>557</sup>

The interior of the house has retained much of its original integrity. Hardwood floors, decorative ceiling beams, built-in cabinets, a brick fireplace mantel and chimney remain intact in the living room. In the living room and elsewhere, the house still has its original wood baseboards. Gas heat replaced a coal furnace (in the basement), probably in 1940s.<sup>558</sup> Wall-to-wall carpeting has been installed recently in the two bedrooms.

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<sup>555</sup> Ibid., 2 June 2000, 27-28.

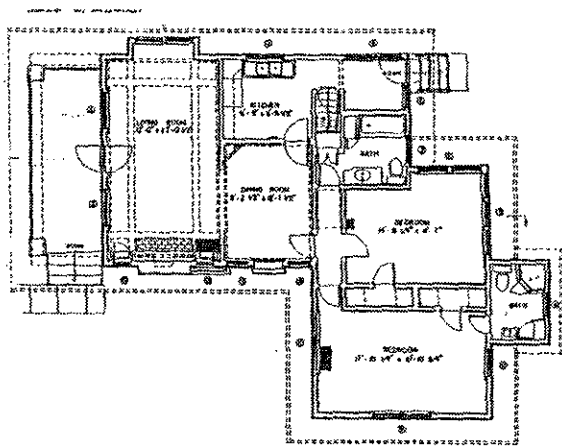
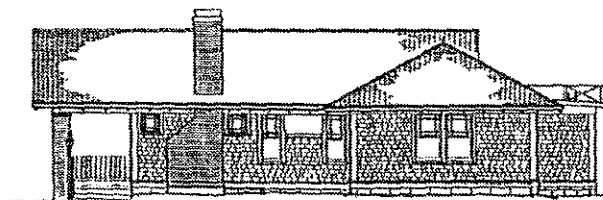
<sup>556</sup> In 1998, the National Park Service had the east basement wall further stabilized on the inside of the wall. This work included the installation of both I-beams for reinforcement and of masonry materials between the beams. "FY98 CRPP Accomplishment Reports," n.d., Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>557</sup> Michael Shaver, memorandum to Chief Ranger, I&VS, November 1987, Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>558</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 14.

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These two reduced drawings of the George and May Wallace house, completed by the Historic American Building Survey in 1992, depict the west elevation and the floor plan, which shows how the 1928 extension of this one-story Bungalow-style house in the southwest corner added two bedrooms and a bathroom.



**Appendix A**  
**Record of the formal education of Harry S Truman**

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| <u>Grade</u>  | <u>Years</u>            | <u>School Building</u>                        |
|---|-------------------------|---|
| First Grade   | 1892-93                 | Noland School                                 |
| Second Grade  | 1893-Jan 1894           | Noland School                                 |
|   | Jan-June 1, 1894        | Non-attendance (Ill)                          |
| Second Grade  | 1894<br>(summer school) | Columbian School                              |
| Third grade   |                         | Skipped                                       |
| Fourth Grade  | 1894-95                 | Columbian School                              |
| Fifth Grade   | 1895-96                 | Columbian School                              |
| Sixth Grade   | 1896-97                 | Columbian School                              |
| Seventh Grade   | 1897-98                 | Columbian School                              |
| High School Freshman                                    | 1898-99                 | Ott School                                    |
| High School Junior                                      | 1899-1900               | Ott School                                    |
| High School Senior                                      | 1900-1901               | Independence High School                      |
| Graduated from Independence High School on May 30, 1901 |                         |   |
| Spalding's Commercial College                           | 1901-1902               | New York Life Building, Kansas City, Missouri |
| Kansas City School of Law                               | 1923-25                 | Kansas City, Mo.<br>(did not graduate)        |

**Appendix B**  
**Residences of Harry S Truman**

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- 1884-1885: Lamar, Barton County, Missouri
- 1885: Harrisonville, Cass County, Missouri
- 1885-1887: Farm southeast of Belton, Cass County, Missouri
- 1887-90: Farm near Grandview, Jackson County, Missouri (Solomon & Harriet Young farm)
- 1890-96: 619 South Chrysler Street, Independence, Jackson County, Missouri
- 1896-02: 909 West Waldo Street, Independence, Jackson County, Missouri
- 1902: 902 North Liberty, Independence, Jackson County, Missouri
- 1902-05: 2108 Park, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri
- 1905: 2560 East 29<sup>th</sup> Street, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri
- 1905-06: 1314 Troost Street, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri
- 1919-1972: 219 North Delaware Street, Independence, Jackson County, Missouri
- 1906-17: Farm near Grandview, Jackson County, Missouri (Harriet Young farm)  
**[NOTE: This was his legal residence; however, during much of this time his physical domicile was in the District of Columbia]**

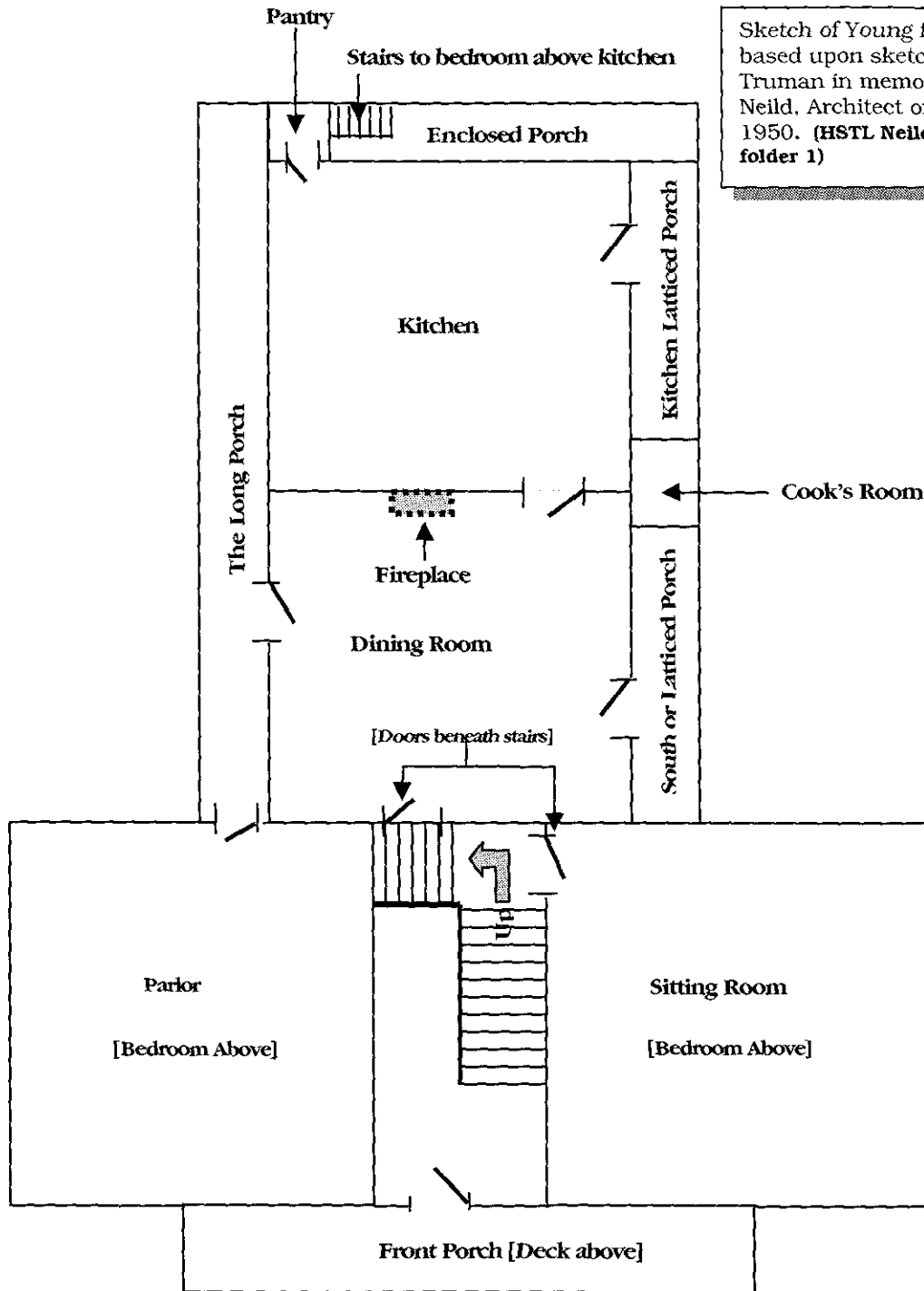
Physical Domiciles in the District of Columbia from 1935-53:

- 1935: 3000 Tilden, NW (3016 Tilden Gardens)
- 1936: 3726 Connecticut Avenue, NW (The Sedgwick Gardens)
- 1937: 301 First, NE (The Carroll Arms)
- 1938: 3051 Idaho Avenue, NW (Warwick Apartments)
- 1939: 3000 Tilden, NW (Tilden Gardens)
- 1940: 3930 Connecticut Avenue NW
- 1941-45: 4701 Connecticut Avenue, NW
- 1945-53: The White House and the Blair House

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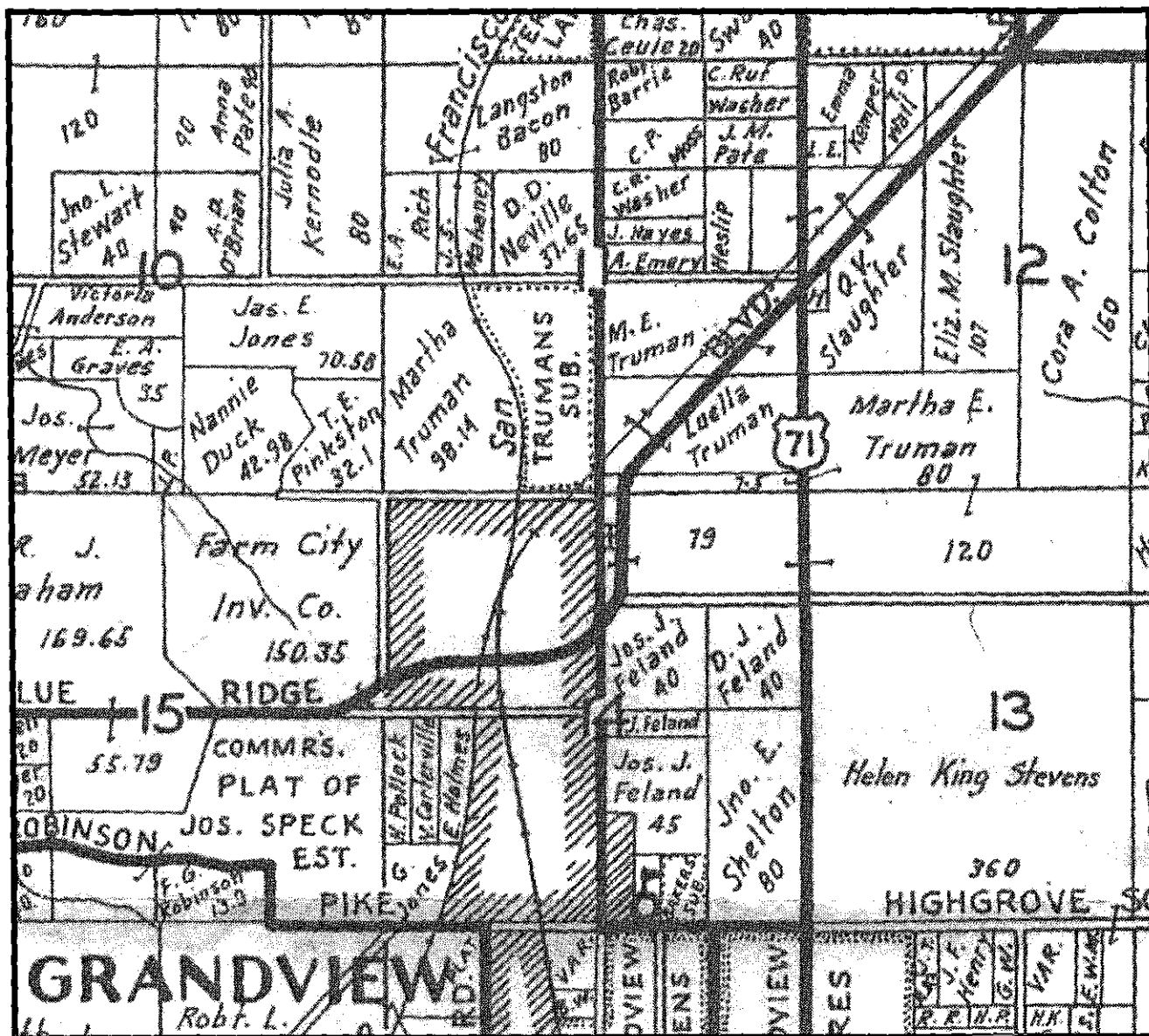
Source: Daniels, Jonathan, *Man of Independence*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1950.  
Truman, Harry S *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, Vol. I, Year of Decisions*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1955

**Appendix C**  
**Floor Plan of the Young Farmhouse, c. 1906**



Sketch of Young farmhouse c. 1906, based upon sketch made by Harry S Truman in memo sent to Edward Neild, Architect on November 20, 1950. (HSTL Neild-Somdal Papers, folder 1)

Appendix D  
 1931 Atlas Map of the Young-Truman Farm Environs



**Bibliography**

**Books, Atlases, Maps**

**Journals**

**Popular Magazines and Newspapers**

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**Oral History Interviews/Transcripts**

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## **Additional Research and Related Needs at the Harry S Truman National Historic Site**

A great deal has been accomplished in the last fifteen years since the completion of Ron Cockrell's historic resource study, *The Trumans of Independence* (1985), and the National Park Service's (NPS) acquisition and management of the two Wallace houses, the Noland house, and the Truman farm. Continued NPS efforts to preserve, protect, interpret, and to generally manage the valuable cultural resources in the Truman National Historic Site would be enhanced by considering the following recommendations. Some of these suggested recommendations reiterate those presented in the Cockrell study, but need repeating since the newly acquired properties would benefit from these suggestions as well. Other recommendations are new. The recommendations briefly described below are not listed in any particular order of priority.

1. The need for a **park historian** continues and is, perhaps, even more critical with the acquisition of new properties by the National Park Service since 1990. A park historian could support the needs of the curatorial, interpretative, and resource management activities of the park.

2. Several additional **oral history interviews** need to be conducted. Although many individuals with significant knowledge of the Truman, Noland, and Wallace families have died a number of individuals are known who are knowledgeable about these families, their activities, and their properties. Additionally, oral interviews with individuals familiar with the management of the properties in the Truman National Historic Site would be especially helpful in the completion of an administrative history of the park. A few of the many individuals who should be interviewed include:

John Southern (Ozark, Missouri, additional interviews), nephew of Ardis Haukenberry and grandnephew of Ethel and Nellie Noland;

Robert A. Brown (Macon, Georgia?), great grandson of the A. T. Slack family, which occupied the Noland house from possibly the late 1860s to 1885. (Brown may know the location of photos and other information about the Noland house when it was occupied by the Slacks.);

Mary Huber Buntin, daughter of Brownie Huber, hired hand on the Truman farm;

Virginia Colgan Brunner (Hermitage, Tennessee), relative of the Trumans and knowledgeable about the Truman farm after Mary Jane and Martha left it;

Robert Hornbuckle, uncle of Roy Hornbuckle, Colgan family, relative of the Trumans and knowledgeable about the Truman farm in the 1940s and 1950s;

James D. Turnbaugh, journalist at the *Kansas City Star* and, then, editor/publisher of the *Jackson County Advocate*, who has

## Additional Research and Related Needs

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written and published articles on the Truman family for forty years;

Robert Bray, archeologist who conducted work on the Truman farm in 1983 for the Truman Farm Home Foundation, as well as other individuals who worked on the restoration of the farmhouse;

Bob Lockwood, Secret Service agent who looked after Bess Truman, knowledgeable about the Noland and Wallace properties as well as the larger Delaware Street neighborhood;

Mary Shaw Branton, knowledgeable about the Wallace families;

Selected individuals associated with the work of the Truman Farm Home Foundation and NPS management of the national historic site.

3. Several **National Park Service studies** should be prepared for the Harry S Truman National Historic Site. The park historian might complete these studies or help oversee their preparation by private contractors. These studies include:

- Historic structures reports, including an architectural data section, for the Wallace, Noland properties, and the Truman farm;
- Cultural landscape reports for the Wallace, Noland, and Truman farm properties;
- Historic furnishings reports for the Wallace and Noland houses;
- Administrative history for the Truman National Historic Site;
- Archeological survey of the Wallace, Noland, and Truman farm properties;

4. Additional research on the **early developmental history of the Noland house** needs to be pursued. Considerable effort has already been made to ascertain exactly when the original structure was constructed and when additions and alterations were made before the Noland family moved into the house in 1900. Since property transactions do not provide conclusive information and Independence newspapers for the later decades in the 1800s no longer exist, it has been speculated that historic photographs might provide the only and most useful documentation of the property's changes, at least since the late 1860s or 1870s. Former ministers of the Watson Memorial Methodist Church (Howard Woodruff and Milton Parks) have been contacted to learn if they have knowledge and photos of the church, which stood directly south of the Noland house until around 1904. An effort has been made to locate descendants of the original Slack family, Anthony T. and Maria Moore Slack, who occupied the house from the late 1860s to 1885, also to learn if old photos of the Slack family home may still exist. This line of inquiry has traced the children and grandchildren of the original Slack owners to Herrin, Illinois, where Lulu Slack and Columbus Brown and their children lived for many years (but visited their parents in Independence every summer. Also, Marie Slack lived with Lulu and Columbus Brown in Herrin, from 1924 until her death). No historic photos of the Slack home in Independence have yet been uncovered, however Slack family photos may still exist in the Herrin area. Also a grandchild of the Herrin Slack family, in Macon, Georgia, may have useful information about the Slack home in Independence. A record of Noland house changes will



## Additional Research and Related Needs

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become increasingly faint as time passes. Knowledge of such additions and alterations would benefit future NPS interpretation and restoration/rehabilitation of the Noland house.

5. Additional **archeological survey work** at the Truman farm is particularly important. Robert Bray's "Archaeological Survey and Testing at the Truman Farm Home and Grounds," completed in 1983, raised many questions, which remain unanswered about the existence and exact location of earlier structures on the Young-Truman farm that were extant during Truman's years on the farm. Historic photographs alone cannot determine the location, for example, of the Harriet and Solomon Young farmhouse, destroyed by fire in the early 1890s. Uncertainty still remains about the age, location, and evolution of barns and other outbuildings that once stood on the Young-Truman farm, even after thorough historical research has been done on the property. A team of individuals comprised of an archeologist, historian, and perhaps a landscape architect, who are familiar with historic western Missouri farming practices, is needed to adequately and effectively uncover additional information about the arrangement of buildings and landscape features at the farm over time.

The Noland house might also benefit from archeological survey work that focuses on below ground evidence suggesting the evolution of the Noland house. Historical research alone has not conclusively determined the precise construction date of the original structure on the Noland property and the sequence and ages of the early additions. Independence newspapers for that period, which might shed light on the properties physical development, no longer exist. Again, it is imperative that the archeologist engaged in this project work in tandem with a historian so that each specialist can explore and add to the discoveries of the other as the project progresses.

6. A thorough **organization of historical research material** in the Truman NHS headquarters needs to be completed so this valuable information can be used to augment the interpretation and management of park cultural resources. The existing workload of the present park staff has not made it possible to undertake this large and time-consuming task. Once organized, a method might be devised for permitting park personnel to access this material without the possibility of its loss. For example, material related to a particular person, event, or historical theme might be placed in separate three-ring binders that could be checked out for a specified time period.

7. Additional **educational and interpretative material**, such as brochures, booklets, and a computer WEB page, which presents the history of the Noland, Wallace, and Truman farm properties, should be created for park visitors. These educational materials would present selected information contained in this historic resource study and in the park's historical files. The National Park Service might participate with the City of Independence and/or a "friends" of the park group in collaborative efforts to produce a publication that places the history of the park properties in the broader context of the Delaware-Maple streets neighborhood (i.e. the Truman National Historic Landmark District) and Independence historical developments. A walking tour brochure is only one possible product of such a collaborative effort.

## **Additional Research and Related Needs**

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8. Future **restoration/rehabilitation work** completed on the Noland, Wallace, and Truman farm properties should make use of the most current historical information about the physical development of these properties during their period of significance. Historically accurate and authentic materials, design, and workmanship, as recommended in the Secretary of Interior's Standards for such work, should be used for all exterior restoration/rehabilitation work. Knowledge of the landscaping around these properties should also be applied to re-create historically appropriate settings for the buildings. (In the case of the Frank and Natalie Wallace house, for example, this might involve re-creating the jungle-like setting that once enclosed the rear and side yards of the house during Truman's residence at 219 North Delaware Street, which provided essential privacy during his presidency.)

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Harry S Truman National Historic Site

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 601 and 605 Truman Road; and 216 North Delaware Street  not for publication

city or town Independence  vicinity

state Missouri code 29 county Jackson code 095 zip code 64050

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFE Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the property is:  
 entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Harry S Truman National Historic Site  
Name of Property

Jackson, Missouri  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

| Contributing | Noncontributing |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| <u>4</u>     | <u>0</u>        | buildings  |
|              |                 | sites      |
|              |                 | structures |
|              |                 | objects    |
| <u>4</u>     | <u>0</u>        | Total      |

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
TRANSPORTATION/garage

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
GOVERNMENT/office

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne (1)  
EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY/Bungalow (2)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete/stone/brick  
walls Wood  
roof Asphalt  
other Brick (exterior wall chimney)

**Narrative Description**  
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheets

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1900 - December 26, 1972

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Dates

1900/c. 1912

1915

1916/1928

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Harry S Truman

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

See continuation sheet

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register (in district)
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark (in district)
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # MO-1909, MO-1910, MO-1911
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

National Park Service

Name of Property

County and State

**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of Property 0.63**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

See continuation sheet

1 

|      |         |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1    | 5       | 3 | 7 | 6 | 8        | 8 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Zone | Easting |   |   |   | Northing |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

3 

|      |         |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1    | 5       | 3 | 7 | 6 | 9        | 4 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 6 |
| Zone | Easting |   |   |   | Northing |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

2 

|      |         |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1    | 5       | 3 | 7 | 6 | 9        | 3 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 6 |
| Zone | Easting |   |   |   | Northing |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

4 

|      |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|------|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|      |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Zone | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**name/title Gail E. H. Evans, Ph.D. ; and Michael Hatch, J.D.organization Evans-Hatch & Associates, P.C. date October 2000street & number 427 Grant Street telephone (503) 873-5854city or town Silverton state OR zip code 97381**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name National Park Service, Midwest Regional Officestreet & number 1709 Jackson Street telephone \_\_\_\_\_city or town Omaha state NE zip code 68102**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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### 7. DESCRIPTION

#### Amendment

Properties associated with President Harry S Truman in Jackson County, Missouri, were first listed in the National Register of Historic Places as "Truman, Harry S, Historic District, North Delaware Street area, Independence, 11/11/71, NHL, 71001066." The second entry came in 1978: "Young, Solomon, Farm, 12121 and 12301 Blue Ridge Extension, Grandview, 5/05/78, 780001650" and was upgraded to National Historic Landmark on February 4, 1985, as the "Truman, Harry S, Farm." Also in 1985, the National Park Service unit comprised solely of the Truman home at 219 North Delaware Street, Independence, entitled "Harry S Truman National Historic Site" was listed (5/31/85: 85001248). This latter nomination is hereby amended to include documentation for 216 North Delaware Street (Noland house and landscape), 601 West Truman Road (Frank and Natalie Wallace house and landscape), and 605 West Truman Road (George and May Wallace house and landscape). Documentation approved in 1985 for the Harry S Truman Farm, which is now a component of the National Park Service, is added by reference to this amendment for the "Harry S Truman National Historic Site."

#### Summary

The three properties added to the Harry S Truman National Historic Site and described in this nomination amendment include: the Noland House, the Frank and Natalie Wallace house, the George and May Wallace house, and the May Wallace garage. All three tax lots also include landscape features that reflect the owners' preferences and lifestyles, during the period of significance (1900-1972). All three properties are in one of Independence's oldest residential, tree-shaded neighborhoods with large fashionable homes, which were once occupied by the city's most prominent citizens.

The two- and one-story Queen-Anne style Noland house, directly across North Delaware Street and to the west of the Truman house, stands on a raised, terraced tax lot that is .19 acres. An alley bounds the Noland property on the south, a small parking lot for a 1924 brick apartment building is on the rear, west property line, and three small Bungalow-style dwellings dating from 1924, stand to the north of the Noland house on three tax lots. A chain-link fence runs along the north and west rear property lines.

The two modest, wood-frame, Bungalow-style Wallace houses and the May Wallace garage stand on parcels that are contiguous with the Harry S Truman property on the east. The Wallaces' land was originally part of the larger George P. and Elizabeth Gates property until 1915/1916 when George P. Gates gave each Wallace brother a lot on which to build their house. The Wallace properties consist of two adjoining tax lots of about equal size, which together are slightly less than one-half acre. The Wallace properties are nearly level and are encircled by a chain link fence that also encloses the Truman house. The two Wallace houses and the Truman house are all part of the Wallace compound. (A complete legal description of these properties is given in the "Verbal Boundary Description" in Section 10 of this nomination amendment.)

All three properties received only minor exterior alterations during the overall period of significance (1900-1972). Since 1972 the three properties have retained their historic integrity of

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location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Landscaping changes made to their immediate setting since 1972 can be reversed and the integrity reclaimed.

**Noland House** (216 North Delaware Street)

The Late Victorian Queen Anne-style Noland house is of wood frame construction and irregular in shape. The front (east) portion is two-stories high. The rear (west) portion is one-story. The foundation under the front section of the house is brick and mortar; the rear section stands on coursed limestone. Steps sheltered under a bulkhead on the south side of the house descend to the basement under the two-story section of the house. Painted horizontal clapboards and corner boards sheath the exterior walls of the house. The composition-shingle-clad roof is predominantly a medium-pitch gable, with a medium-pitch gable and a nearly flat hip-roof sections projecting from the south elevation of the house. A one-story, L-shaped, hip roof open porch wraps around the main façade, and an enclosed shed-roof porch extends from the south side of the rear one-story section. Slightly overhanging eaves are boxed. Windows throughout are one-over-one, double-hung sash framed by plain boards and a slightly project lintel over their heads. Decorative Queen-Anne style details include umbricated wood shingles in the gable ends of main façade and projecting gable on the south elevation. Small stain glass windows are set in the east and south gable ends and the first floor of the south side. A spindle-work frieze adorns the eaves of the wrap-around porch, which is supported by square boxed columns. Latticework encloses the space under this porch.

The interior of the Noland house consists of a total of seven main rooms, two bathrooms, and foyer and hall at the stairs between first and second floors. The ground floor has five rooms: a parlor, living room, dining room, kitchen, bedroom, small bathroom, and a foyer. The second floor is comprised of two bedrooms, a hall, and a bathroom. A right-angle dogleg stairway ascends from the first-floor foyer to the second-floor hall. A turned Newell post is at the base of the stairs; turned balusters ascend the stairs to the second floor. The interior is distinguished by decorative wood door and window molding with corner blocks and decorative metal hardware dating from the late 1800s. Floors are predominantly hardwood.

The Noland house sits on a small lot, terrace with coursed cut limestone blocks of varying sizes along the sidewalk (east property line) and along a portion of the alley (on the south property line). The yard is shaded by several mature deciduous trees, including a group of five paw paw trees in the south yard, a large maple tree in the front yard, and a locust tree in the rear yard. Shrubbery along the foundation walls and in the yard is non-existent in 2000. A few bulbs and perennials have survived from earlier gardens in the rear yard.

The Noland house has evolved into its present form and appearance over about 135 years. Although its precise developmental history is still unclear, it appears, from physical inspection and from property deeds that the house is comprised of four sections built or moved to this site at four different times. The four sections include: the front two-story section; the middle one-story section (dining room); the rear one-story section (kitchen); and the projecting hip-roof two-story section on the south side wall. The two-story front section of the house was most likely completed between 1865 and 1868 by local carpenter Frederick Yeager. The middle and rear one-story sections of the house were probably added (by moving older structures to the site or building anew) to the two-story section around 1886-87. Queen Anne detailing of the main two-story section were most likely also made at this time. Independence building contractor James M.

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Adams may have completed this work. The last addition, consisting of the small, hip-roof section on the south elevation, was added around 1913. The rear porch was added or, most likely, reconstructed in 1950. Since then, the Noland house has received no additions or major alterations, except for the replacement of turned columns supporting the front wrap-around porch. Landscaping on the Noland property once included luxuriant ivy enveloping the wrap-around front porch, large shrubs (including lilac and honeysuckle), and an array of flowering bulbs and perennial plants. These have disappeared in recent years but could be planted again.

**Frank and Natalie Wallace House (601 West Truman Road)**

The Frank and Natalie Wallace house is a small, one-story, wood-framed, Bungalow-style house, clad in wood shingles. Its hip roof is accented by a hipped-roof front dormer and a dominant, brick wall chimney that projects up through the west overhanging eaves of the roof. The broad roof overhang has enclosed rafters, and projects out to cover the full-width front porch. That portion of the roof that covers the porch is supported by brick, square columns with capitals. The front porch includes a three-foot-high solid wall constructed of coursed brick. The west wall of the house is accented by a slightly projecting bay window. Most of the windows are three-over-one, double-hung sash. A porch area on the southwest corner of the house has been enclosed in recent years.

The interior is enhanced with many details typical of the twentieth century Bungalow-style houses in this area. It has hardwood floors, wood baseboards, a brick fireplace, decorative wood ceiling beams in the living and dining rooms, and locally-made brass hardware throughout.

The landscaping of the front yard is dominated by mature shrubs (spirea) planted along the porch foundation. A mature maple tree shades the rear yard. The west side yard and the rear yard are completely enclosed by a four-foot-high chainlink fence.

**George and May Wallace House and the May Wallace Garage (605 West Truman Road)**

The George and May Wallace house is a modest wood-frame Bungalow-style one-story residence, L-shaped in overall form. An open porch extends across the entire width of the main façade. A small bay window projects from the south wall. The foundation is poured concrete, nearly totally concealed. Exterior walls are sheathed with wood shingles stained green. A substantial exterior brick wall chimney adorns the west side wall. Windows throughout are nine-over-one, double-hung sash with plain board surrounds. The roof, clad with composition shingles, is a gable over the original 1916 main portion of the house, with a hip-roof addition (1928) extending from the southwest rear corner of the house. Decorative features of this Bungalow house include broad overhanging eaves with exposed rafters, and with knee braces and a wide verge board in the gable end of the main façade. A short wood lattice balustrade is above the roof eaves of small projecting bathroom on the rear (south) of the house.

The interior of the George and May Wallace house consists of five major rooms: a living room, dining room, kitchen, and two bedrooms. There are also two bathrooms, accessed from the bedrooms. The interior is distinguished by wood floors and baseboards, brick fireplace, built-in bookcases, decorative wood ceiling beams in the living room, and some of the original hardware on doors and windows. A basement is accessed through a door in the kitchen.

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Mature shrubs (mostly spirea) encircle the foundation of the George and May Wallace house. Mature shrubs are also along the driveway leading from Truman Road and a small board and batten, gable-roof garage in the rear yard, constructed around 1922. Lawn fills most of the front, side, and rear yards. A concrete walkway leads from the sidewalk to the front porch. A chain-link fence encircles the rear and portions of the side yards.

The George and May Wallace house, constructed in 1916, received the L-shaped addition (containing two bedrooms) in 1928. At a latter date, the small recessed porch on the southeast corner of the house was enclosed and incorporated into the kitchen. The house has been little changed since the enclosure of the small rear porch.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Summary**

The Noland house, the Frank and Natalie Wallace house, and the George and May Wallace house and garage were acquired by the National Park Service and added to the Harry S Truman National Historic Site in 1991. All three homes are nationally significant because of their association with the life of Harry S Truman, thirty-third president of the United States. Throughout his presidency and life, Truman placed the highest value on his close relationship with his family. The Noland house at 216 North Delaware Street, directly across the street from the Truman house, was the home of Margaret Ellen Noland, Harry's aunt, and Nellie and Ethel Noland, Harry's cousins, from 1900 until 1971, when Ethel Noland died. Harry Truman spent many hours with the Noland family when living in Independence as a young man. The Noland house served as Truman's base of operations for courting Bess Wallace, when he lived and farmed on the Young-Truman farm in Grandview, from 1910 until his entrance into World War I. Truman's association with his favorite aunt and cousins was intimate throughout his presidency (1945 to 1953). He wrote and visited the Noland family often during trips home to the "Summer White House." He assigned Ethel Noland with the task of researching and communicating the Truman family history to the news media and other interested persons.

The Frank and Natalie Wallace home and the George and May Wallace home and garage at 601 and 605 West Truman Road, respectively, are also nationally significant for their association with the life and presidency of Harry S Truman. Truman's association with Bess Truman's brothers, Frank and George Wallace, began around 1910, when Truman began courting his future wife. Not long after Frank and George married and built their homes (in 1915 and 1916) on small lots behind the Gates-Wallace house, in 1919, Harry Truman married and moved into the Gates-Wallace home. The two Wallace couples and the Truman family lived in these three houses, contained in the so-called "Wallace compound," for the rest of their lives (except for the Trumans' residence in Washington between 1935 and 1953). The two Wallace couples enriched and supported the Truman family and their activities in numerous ways, before, during, and after Harry Truman was president. The two Wallace couples played an important supportive role for the Truman family when they came home to the "Summer White House" in Independence from Washington, D.C. The Wallace compound, and the Wallace couples occupying it, provided a respite and retreat from Truman's worldly responsibilities.

These four buildings have retained their integrity of location, design, setting, workmanship, feeling, and association during their period of significance, extending from 1900 to 1972. Relatively modest alterations have been made to the exterior roofing materials and the interior kitchens and bathrooms. All three homes are notable for the numerous interior features, dating from the period of significance, that remain intact. Although many landscaping features around all three homes have deteriorated or been destroyed in recent years, sufficient historical information exists to restore the landscaping of these properties to its period of significance.



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**Noland House** (216 North Delaware Street)

Introduction

The Noland family played an important role in the life of Harry S Truman. Margaret Ellen (Ella) Noland, the sister of Truman's father, remained Harry Truman's favorite aunt throughout his life. Aunt Ella's daughters, Nellie and Ethel Noland, who were around Harry Truman's age, became his closest young playmates, school study partners, confidantes and friends, and observers and supporters of his political career. Ethel Noland, the family genealogist and scribe, played an invaluable role in recording the Truman, Young, and Noland family histories for Harry Truman during his years in the public spotlight, for the news media and for the general public interested in learning about the ancestors and the life of an uncommon ordinary man.

The Queen Anne-style house at 216 North Delaware Street, directly across the street from the Gates-Wallace-Truman house, was, between 1900 and 1986, the home of three generations of the Noland family and a place of passages for Noland family members. It served as the site for spontaneous and planned Noland and Truman family gatherings and festivities. It became Harry Truman's base of operation for his courtship of Bess Wallace, as well as for his social and business pursuits in Independence, especially during his years as a farmer in Grandview. During his presidency, Harry Truman continued his close relationship with the Noland family through regular letters and family visits.

Margaret Ellen (Ella) Truman

Margaret Ellen (better known as "Ella") Truman, the older sister of John Anderson Truman, Harry S Truman's father, was born on May 6, 1849, on the farm of Dr. Johnston Lykins near Westport (in what later became part of Kansas City, Missouri). At the time of Ella Truman's birth in 1849, the Lykins farm was one of numerous farms that stretched across rolling hills between Westport and the Westport Landing on the Missouri River. Anderson Shipp Truman's brother, John Thomas Truman, began living with the family around 1849. Two of Ella Truman's siblings were born on the Lykins farm: an older brother, William Truman, born on April 24, 1847, and a younger brother, John Anderson Truman, born on December 5, 1851, and named after greatly beloved Uncle John Thomas Truman.<sup>1</sup>

In early 1852 (or slightly later),<sup>2</sup> when young Ella Truman was about three years old, the Truman family household, including the children's Uncle John Truman and the family's five female slaves, moved to a farm that Anderson Shipp Truman wanted to work on the north side of the Missouri River in Platte County, Missouri, between present-day Parkville and Barry in Pettis Township. Ella Truman's family remained in Platte County for the next sixteen years until 1868. During that time, she gained two new siblings: Emily, born on July 25, 1855, and Mary Martha,

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<sup>1</sup> W. Z. Hickman, *History of Jackson County* (Topeka, Kans.: Historical Publishing Co., 1920), 93, 240; Mary Ethel Noland, interview by James R. Fuchs, 23 August 1965, transcript of tape-recorded interview, 5-11, 13; Harry S. Truman Library; Mary Prewitt Mitchell, *The First Baptist Church, Independence, Missouri, 1845-1945* (Independence: First Baptist Church, n.d.), 84.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Ellen Truman's granddaughter, Ardis Haukenberry, reported many years later that the Truman family was still living on the south side of the Missouri River as late as the winter of 1855-56. Helen Ardis Ragland Haukenberry, handwritten history of Ragland-Haukenberry families on "First National Bank Safe Deposit Co." stationary, Gentry Collection, Jackson County Historical Society. Also see, "Rough Winter? Here's the 1855-56 Version," newspaper clipping, file for 216 North Delaware, Community Development Department, City of Independence, Independence, Missouri.

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born on January 7, 1860. The Truman children, including Ella, attended Prairie Point Academy, a subscription school near Parkville. On the staff were teachers who had left Jackson County due to mounting tensions there over slavery. Ella Truman often rode horseback to what was then called the Line Creek Baptist Church.<sup>3</sup>

In 1867 or early 1868, about two years after the war ended, Ella Truman and her parents and siblings moved back to Jackson County, and took up residence in Holmes Park, then between the infant Kansas City and the small farming community of Grandview, about twelve miles away. Shortly afterwards, the Truman family, including Ella Truman, apparently moved to the Hickman Mills (then called Hickman's Mills) area, north of Grandview, where Anderson Shipp and Mary Jane Truman bought a farm. Ella Truman joined the Blue Ridge Baptist Church in 1868, the same year in which Joseph T. Noland joined the Blue Ridge Baptist Church. Reverend Lee, pastor of the church, baptized Ella Truman and Joseph T. Noland on the same day. Their courtship probably began not long after that. On December 18, 1870, Ella Truman married Joseph Tilford Noland at the home of Ella's parents in Hickman Mills.<sup>4</sup>

Joseph T. and Ella Truman Noland Family, 1870-1900

Joseph T. and Ella Truman Noland lived for nearly thirteen years on their farm near Hickman Mills. During that time, the Nolands built a new house and planted an apple orchard that became very profitable. At least four children were born to the Noland couple during their residence near Hickman Mills. William Noland was born in 1872. He lived only three days. A second child, probably a boy, may have been born in 1874, but only lived a short time. Ruth Truman Noland, their first daughter, was born on August 3, 1876. Five years later, on July 26, 1881, Ellen Tilford Noland (better known as "Nellie") was born to Joseph and Ella Noland. Their youngest daughter, Mary Ethel (known as "Ethel") Noland, named for her grandmother, Mary Jane Holmes Truman, arrived on October 23, 1883 (six months before her cousin, Harry S Truman, was born).<sup>5</sup>

In 1883, shortly after Ethel Noland was born and when Ruth was seven years old, Joseph and Ella Noland decided to move the family into Independence, which offered "educational advantages unsurpassed by any city in the [W]est."<sup>6</sup> In late 1883, they took up residence in a house on West Maple Avenue near the site of the first William Chrisman School. Soon Joseph Noland became fully engaged in real estate, buying land and building homes all around Independence, as well as outlying farming areas. In 1888, the Nolands lived at 92 West Maple Avenue. In 1888, Ethel Noland remembered that her Uncle John and Aunt Martha (known as "Aunt Mat") Truman and their two young children came to visit the Noland family from the Young farm near Grandview (where they lived from 1887 to 1890). Harry S Truman was four years old at the time; Vivian Truman was less than two years old; Mary Jane had not yet been born. Martha

<sup>3</sup> Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 11-16; "Noland Services," *Independence Examiner*, 1 October 1948; "Truman A 'Son' to Aunt," Clippings File, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>4</sup> Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 20-21, 38; Mitchell, *First Baptist Church, Independence, Missouri, 1845-1945*, 84; *Kansas City Times*, 10 May 1945.

<sup>5</sup> *History of Jackson County, Missouri, Containing a History of the County, Its Cities, Towns, Etc., Indexed Edition*, 1881, reprint (Cape Girardeau, Mo.: Ramfre Press, 1966), 984. Also see Vertical Files: Truman Family; Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 38-40; both in Harry S. Truman Library. *History of Jackson County, Missouri*, reprint, 238 *History of Jackson County, Missouri*, reprint, 238

<sup>6</sup> *History of Jackson County, Missouri*, reprint, 238.

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Truman entertained the children by playing the piano and singing favorite children's tunes. It is likely that the Nolands lived in this West Maple Avenue house (now gone) until around 1890.<sup>7</sup>

The Noland family not only entertained the Trumans in Independence; they also visited the family on the Solomon and Harriet Young farm near Grandview. Ethel Noland remembered going to see the Trumans on the farm around 1890, not long after Mary Jane had been born in 1889 and shortly before the Truman family moved to Independence. The Nolands drove to the farm in a surrey pulled by a horse named "Doll" to spend a few days with the Young-Truman families.

Life changed dramatically for the Noland family when the real estate market in Independence turned sharply downward around 1890. By then it had become apparent that the small rail line between Kansas City and Independence wasn't going to support the speculative growth that had brought about the 1880s boom; many people demanded that their invested money be returned. "Along with a great many other people the Noland family went very flat, indeed, financially," Ethel Noland remembered many years later. "Out of the crash we had only one house left. . . . It was a place out on West White Oak Street, and we moved out there."<sup>8</sup> The family resided in the small house on West White Oak Street perhaps only a year or two. By 1894, they had moved back to West Maple Avenue; this house stood at the corner of Delaware Street and West Maple Avenue. In 1894, the Noland family moved once again. This time they moved to North Liberty Street at the corner of White Oak Street. Here they spent roughly six years, from the latter part of 1894 to August 1900.<sup>9</sup> During these six years, Ruth Noland grew to young adulthood and married, and Nellie and Ethel took part in all the school and summertime activities typical of Independence youth at that time.

During the Nolands' residence on North Liberty Street, Uncle John and Aunt Matt Truman and their three children were living in Independence, first on South Chrysler Avenue (late 1890 to about 1896) and later, on West Waldo Street (1896 to 1903). Although Harry S Truman attended different schools than Nellie and Ethel Noland, cousin Harry often came to visit the Nolands on North Liberty Street. Their close ages and residences helped the three youngsters develop a friendly relationship.<sup>10</sup>

At their home on North Liberty Street, the Noland family celebrated the first and only marriage among their three Noland daughters. In early May 1898, twenty-two-year-old Ruth Truman Noland married twenty-four-year-old Robert Verner Ragland. Robert Ragland worked as a clerk in the Santa Fe Railroad offices in Kansas City when he and Ruth Noland married. The newlyweds took up residence in Kansas City. On August 4, 1899, the first of their three children, Helen Ardis Ragland, was born on Spring Street in Kansas City. A little more than three years later, on October 17, 1902, Robert Truman Ragland was born in the Dixon Park neighborhood of Kansas City. Their last child, Josephine Noland Ragland, arrived on December 24, 1904.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Independence City Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: R. S. Dillion and Company, 1888); Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 24, 43-44, 46-47; Mitchel, *First Baptist Church, Independence, Missouri*, 84.

<sup>8</sup> Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 44, 60, 63, 66.

<sup>9</sup> Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 44, 60, 63, 68; Ardis Ragland Haukenberry, "Childhood Memories of North Delaware Street," typescript, no date, Historian's Files, Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>10</sup> Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 59-60, 62-63, 68; Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs, Vol. I, Year of Decisions* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1955), 115.

<sup>11</sup> *Jackson Examiner*, 14 May 1898; Haukenberry, handwritten history of Ragland-Haukenberry families, Gentry Collection, Jackson County Historical Society.

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A year earlier, during the devastating Missouri River flood of 1903, Robert Ragland had stayed damp and chilled while marooned for several hours in the Santa Fe Railroad offices in Kansas City. He contracted pneumonia. By the spring of 1904, he had developed tuberculosis. In an effort to improve his health, Ragland and an aunt (a nurse) went west, first to Arizona, then to California. Following her husband's departure, Ruth Noland Ragland and her two young children went to live with her parents and two sisters at 216 North Delaware Street. The devastating news of Robert's death reached the Noland and Ragland families in mid-November 1904. He had died on November 6, 1904, in Indio, southern California, at age thirty.<sup>12</sup>

Noland Family at 216 North Delaware Street, 1900-1906

At the turn of the century, the Noland family moved into the two-story Queen Anne-style house at 216 North Delaware Street, directly across the street from the Gates family residence at 219 Delaware Street. According to Ethel Noland, then sixteen years old, she and her parents and sister, Nellie, moved into the North Delaware Street house in August 1900. For the next eight years, Joseph and Ella Noland rented this house from Anthony and Maria Slack before Ella Noland bought it, in July 1908, for \$2,300. The aging Slack couple that lived next door in a rambling, ornately decorated Italianate-style home at the corner of North Delaware Street and Truman Road had owned the property since December 1865. They probably substantially transformed an older dwelling on the site, around 1886-1887, into the modestly decorated Queen Anne style house that the Nolands rented and later bought. Between 1904 and about 1921, the four Nolands shared the house with young widow Ruth Noland Ragland and her three small children.<sup>13</sup>

The Noland and Truman Families Visit

The Noland house itself became a gathering place for friends and family during these years, and a place where Nellie and Ethel Noland developed an endearing and enduring relationship, which continued throughout the years, with their cousin Harry S Truman. After the Nolands moved to 216 North Delaware Street, the Truman family, living then on nearby West Waldo, was only about three blocks away. "We saw each other very often," Ethel Noland recalled, "because going uptown . . . and going to [high] school [located at Pleasant and West Maple] he had to pass here every day."<sup>14</sup> During the 1900-1901 school year, Harry and Bessie (as she was known by many) Wallace, who were in the same class and attended the same high school, would often meet in the Noland house to study with the Noland sisters, who had graduated just ahead of their cousin Harry.<sup>15</sup> "When it came to Latin," Ethel Noland remembered, "my sister was very good at it and they would come over here to read their Latin with Nellie. I don't know whether

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<sup>12</sup> Haukenberry, "Childhood Memories of North Delaware Street"; Mrs. H. H. (Ardis) Haukenberry, interview by Ron Cockrell, 14 June 1983; transcript of tape-recorded interview, 1, 5; and Haukenberry interview by Cockrell, 2, March 1984, 21, both at Harry S Truman National Historic Site. Also see *Jackson Examiner*, 25 November 1904.

<sup>13</sup> Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 63, 68; "Anthony T. Slack and Maria M. Slack, his wife, to Margaret Ellen Noland," warranty deed, July 20, 1908, Book 281, p. 416, Jackson County Courthouse, Independence, Missouri; Haukenberry, "Childhood Memories of North Delaware Street," Truman National Historic Site; Haukenberry interview, 2 March 1984, 20; *Independence, Missouri, City Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: Gate City Directory, Company, 1924).

<sup>14</sup> Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 69.

<sup>15</sup> Palmer interview, 18 January, 1962, 8.

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they got much Latin read or not because there was a lot of fun going on."<sup>16</sup> By his senior year in high school in 1900-1901, Harry had become interested in fencing, which he would sometimes practice at the Noland house with cousins Nellie and Ethel and Bessie Wallace. "We had the porch and had a room here to play and have fun, generally, which we did, with a little Latin intermingled, maybe . . . I'm afraid Caesar had a very slim chance with all that was going on," Ethel Noland reminisced.<sup>17</sup>

Looking back at the early 1900s, a half century later, Harry S Truman also recalled that he had spent a lot of time with his Aunt Ella and her three daughters. In his *Memoirs* Truman explained that he started going to his Aunt Ella's house to study algebra and Latin about twice a week with cousins Nellie and Ethel, who had both graduated from high school by the end of 1900. "Nellie would translate my Latin lesson for me when I was in high school, and I would escort Ethel to parties and learn how to be polite from her. Incidentally," Truman noted, "my beautiful young lady with the blue eyes and golden hair" joined in these playful sessions at the Noland house. "We [Nellie, Ethel, Harry, and Bess] were always just good playmates and good comrades," Ethel Noland characterized their relationship many years later.<sup>18</sup>

The Nolands welcomed young Harry in their home and delighted in his visits. "Harry was always fun," and "he was a great peacemaker, surely," Ethel Noland remembered. "He was full of fun but he never seemed to get into the scrapes that the other boys did."<sup>19</sup> When the Truman family was still living in Independence (until 1903), Harry would sometimes come by the house and take his cousins to a party in a horse and buggy. "He and his sister, Mary Jane, were often at their Aunt Ella's home," Ardis Haukenberry remembered from her childhood growing up in the Noland house. They had great fun together. [Second] cousin Harry had a "special doorbell ring and whenever we heard it we rushed to the door knowing that we'd have fun and music." Haukenberry recalled that two of Harry Truman's favorite pieces were *Spring Song* and *Melody in F*, which he played with great flamboyance on the Noland's upright piano in the front parlor. When Haukenberry's younger sister, Josephine ("Jodie") Ragland, was four years old (1908-1909), Harry Truman "set her on the piano bench with him and taught her to play *Chopsticks*."<sup>20</sup> Mary Jane Truman played jacks with the children on the front room floor.

At one Christmas dinner that the Trumans shared with the Nolands, Nellie Noland forgot to add sugar to the dinner's cranberry sauce, causing everyone to pucker from its tartness. For years, Harry Truman teased his cousin Nellie about that cranberry sauce; his reminders not to forget the all-important ingredient of sugar came from far places as his career in politics took him further and further from Independence. His playfulness was not limited to cousin Nellie. He often joked with his cousin Ethel, who later became the family genealogist, about quieting any discoveries she might make about unsavory characters on the family tree. "His sense of humor never left him," Ardis Haukenberry clearly remembered, and he never failed to share it with the Noland family.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 70-71.

<sup>17</sup> Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 71.

<sup>18</sup> Truman, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, *Year of Decisions*, 115, 122; Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 71.

<sup>19</sup> Noland interview, 23 August 1965, 71; Noland interview, 9 September 1965, 80.

<sup>20</sup> Ardis R. Haukenberry, "Younger Cousin Records Memories," *Jackson County Historical Society* (March 1973), 6; Haukenberry, "Childhood Memories of North Delaware Street," Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>21</sup> Noland interview, 9 September 1965, 82-83; Haukenberry, "Younger Cousin Records Memories," 7.

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Harry Truman's visits to the Noland house became somewhat less frequent after he took a job in a bank and moved to Kansas City in 1903 and later, he moved with his family back to the Young-Truman farm in Grandview in 1905-1906. The Trumans and the fun shared by everyone who took part in gatherings and outings with them were no less memorable, however. When Harry Truman lived on East 29<sup>th</sup> Street in Kansas City with the family of Emily Truman Colgan, his father's sister, Harry's four Colgan cousins and two other boarders in the spacious Colgan house often gave parties and played practical jokes on each other. Sometimes Nellie and Ethel Noland were invited to attend these gatherings and take part in the merriment.

### The Nolands and Harry Truman, 1906-1923

Harry Truman remained an extended member of the Noland family during his years from 1906 to 1917 on the Young-Truman farm, about twelve miles from Independence. Although he came to Independence less often after first moving to the farm, his visits became more frequent when he learned the farm routines and became familiar with the public transportation that circuitously linked Grandview and Independence, about fifteen miles apart. "He was in and out of here a good deal, and just whenever he wanted to be," Ethel Noland remembered about his early years on the farm.<sup>22</sup> The Nolands also visited the Trumans on their Grandview farm. Nellie and Ethel sometimes came in the summer to see Aunt Mat and Uncle John, to help with some of the chores, and enjoy themselves with Harry and other relatives. The Noland family was often invited to the farm to celebrate holidays, like Christmas, with close friends and family relatives, like the Colgans and Hornbuckles.<sup>23</sup>

Visits to the Noland house took on a special meaning when 216 North Delaware Street became the base of operations for Harry's courtship of Bess Wallace, who lived directly across the street at 219 North Delaware Street. Harry's reintroduction to Bess Wallace, with whom he had little or no contact since they had graduated from high school together in 1901, began in 1910 with the infamous cake plate incident. The Noland house provided the setting for this memorable story, which, over the years, reached almost mythic proportions in the annals of Truman family folklore.

"Yes," Ethel Noland affirmed many years later, "that's one legend that's true." Noland went on to tell the story.

Mrs. Wallace was very neighborly and she loved to send things. Oh, we did back and forth. She would send over a nice dessert or something, just to share it, and here was a plate. We hadn't taken it back and I said [to Harry], "Why don't you take that plate home; it's been around here a few days." "I certainly will,"<sup>24</sup>

Harry announced. And with that, he seized the cake plate "with something approaching the speed of light" and walked across the street to 219 Delaware Street, Margaret Truman wrote in her biography of her father. Bess Wallace happened to open the door after hearing the front doorbell ring; their courtship began soon thereafter.<sup>25</sup>

Now the Noland house became not only a place to enjoy the conviviality and close friendship of his cousins and his Aunt Ella; it also became the staging ground for Harry's

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<sup>22</sup> Noland interview, 9 September 1965, 87.

<sup>23</sup> Harry S Truman to Bess Wallace, December 1914, Family Correspondence File, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>24</sup> Noland interview, 9 September 1965, 103.

<sup>25</sup> Margaret Truman, *Bess W. Truman* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 30.

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courtship of Bess Wallace. Harry now visited the Nolands much more often. Harry's Aunt Ella Noland later remembered that he composed a special piano piece, which he played at the Nolands, whose dominant theme sounded something like the special whistles that Bess Wallace and her friends used to signal each other.<sup>26</sup> "He could stay here very easily, which he did, sometimes two or three times a week," Ethel Noland recalled years later. "He'd come here first and get all freshened up before he went to see his lady love," Ardis Ragland Haukenberry remembered from her teenage years living in the Noland house.<sup>27</sup> "He would stay here all night [in the front parlor or on a sofa in the living room] if he had a date over there [at the Wallace house], because it was a long trip to go out there. . . . That was before he got the Stafford," Ethel added.<sup>28</sup> Before he bought the Stafford automobile, Harry came to Independence on the Kansas City Southern and the "Frisco" (St. Louis and San Francisco) railroads, according to his cousin Ethel, "which came [through Grandview] to Sheffield [west of Independence], and then he could get on the streetcar and come on in to Independence."<sup>29</sup>

Harry Truman's overnight stays in the Noland house became less frequent when, in 1914, his mother gave him \$650 to buy a used 1911 Stafford automobile. Truman's five-passenger Stafford, usually driven open, was one of about 314 manufactured by Terry Stafford in Topeka (and later in Kansas City). Truman was then able to travel between Grandview and Independence on Blue Ridge Boulevard whenever he pleased, not according to the train and streetcar schedules, and he could return to Grandview at night after a full day with Bess and others.<sup>30</sup>

Summer outings in the Stafford became a regular occurrence. Over the next three years, Harry often invited Bess and Wallace family members, Nellie and Ethel Noland, and other family and friends to join him on adventures. In the warmer months, this cohort of young adults often went on picnics to the Missouri River waterworks near Sugar Creek, fishing expeditions on the Little or Big Blue rivers, and jaunts through the countryside in the "machine." Harry's good times with Bess, the Noland sisters, the Wallace family, and others continued until the spring of 1917, when the United States declared war against Germany and entered the Great War (World War I). Harry Truman enlisted in the army, sold his Stafford, and was away at war until the early summer of 1919.<sup>31</sup>

During Harry Truman's two years away in the army, he wrote to the Noland family often, as he noted in his frequent letters to Bess Wallace, to whom he was by then engaged.<sup>32</sup> A month after his return to Independence from the war, in June 1919, Harry and Bess were married, after a nine-year courtship. The Nolands attended the wedding. Many years later, Ethel Noland remembered well Truman's radiance that day. Not long after that, the newlyweds took up residence in the Gates-Wallace house across the street from the Noland house. Although greatly involved in the daily lives of the Wallace family—Bess's mother, who lived with the Truman couple, and her two brothers who lived with their wives in separate Bungalow-style houses next door to

<sup>26</sup> Alfred Steinberg, *The Man From Missouri: The Life and Times of Harry S. Truman* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1962), 28.

<sup>27</sup> Haukenberry interview, 14 June 1983, 6.

<sup>28</sup> Noland interview, 9 September 1965, 86.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 September 1965, 84; Jane Wall, "When Independence Knew Them as 'Harry and Bess,'" *Kansas City Star*, 15 April 1945.

<sup>30</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983), 162.

<sup>31</sup> David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 92-93.

<sup>32</sup> Ferrell, *Dear Bess*, 286.

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the large Gates-Wallace house—Harry often dropped in on the Nolands. Holidays continued to be a special time for Noland family visits. Harry began his regular practice of walking across the street on Thanksgiving and Christmas to spend time with the Nolands at 219 North Delaware Street.

Between 1919 and 1923, the Nolands witnessed, first-hand, Harry Truman's three-year experiment with business, as co-owner of a Kansas City haberdashery, and his first venture into local politics, as the judge (similar to today's county commissioner) for the rural eastern portion of Jackson County. The Noland family remained busy with their own full lives during these four years. Joseph Noland had by then retired from the real estate business and completed his final two-year term on the Independence City Council. Ruth Ragland and her three children, then adults, had finished their education in Independence schools and moved out of the Noland house. Nellie Noland was teaching at the Bristol School in Kansas City. Ethel Noland then taught at the Benjamin School in Kansas City.

Nellie and Ethel Noland, 1923-1945

In the fall of 1923, Nellie Noland, then forty-three, began her twenty-fifth year of teaching in both Independence and Kansas City school districts. In 1924, she may have still been teaching at the Ott School in Independence. However, she soon started teaching in Kansas City at the Bristol School (now gone). By the late 1920s or early 1930s, she was teaching at Kansas City's Woodland School, then associated with the Kansas City Teacher's College, where she received wide recognition for her work as a "demonstration teacher." In 1937, Nellie Noland, then fifty-six, was named teaching principal of the Pinkerton School in Kansas City. Around 1944, near the end of World War II, she became principal of Kansas City's Gladstone School, where she stayed for five years.<sup>33</sup>

Her younger sister, Ethel Noland, also continued teaching between 1923 and 1948. By the early 1920s, Ethel, then in her late thirties, had moved from the Noland School in Independence to the Benjamin Harrison School in Kansas City. During the 1920s and 1930s, Ethel also taught at the Pinkerton School in Kansas City. During most of the 1940s, she taught at the Fairmount School, until moving to Northeast Junior High School in 1948.

During summer vacations from school, Nellie and Ethel Noland enjoyed traveling. Scenic places in the West seemed to be favorite destinations of the Noland sisters. In August 1937, for example, the two sisters and their mother, Ella, took a trip to Colorado. Ten years later, when Ella was ninety-seven and could no longer travel, Nellie and Ethel took a trip in July to Zion and Grand Canyon national parks. Their teenage nephews, Robert and John Southern, went along.<sup>34</sup> The Nolands often took shorter trips to Kansas City and other towns around Missouri.

Between 1923 and 1945, both Nellie and Ethel extended their roles as educators beyond public schools into other arenas. During these years, the Noland sisters became known for their contributions to the study of the literary arts and history; the Noland house became a gathering place for local cultural activities. Both Nellie and Ethel Noland remained active members of the First Baptist Church in Independence. Ethel Noland began teaching the Euzalia (adult Bible

<sup>33</sup> "Miss Nellie Noland, Retired Teacher, Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 8 August 1958; *Independence Examiner*, 24 August 1987; Lisa Gutierrez, "Making Way for Progress," *Examiner*, Vertical File: Noland Family, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>34</sup> Harry S. Truman to Nellie Noland, 21 August 1937, Noland Papers; Ethel Noland to Harry S. Truman, 10 July and 27 July 1946, Personal File: Ethel and Nellie Noland, President's Secretary's Files; both at Harry S. Truman Library.



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study) class at the church after the death of the former class teacher, around 1945.<sup>35</sup> Nellie became a member and, at one time, served as president of the Missouri Branch of the Huguenot Society (a group that studied the history of the Calvinistic Protestant movement in France during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a movement which later spread to the United States). Both sisters became more active in study clubs as they matured in their teaching professions. In 1926, Ethel helped organize the Browning Club, devoted to studying the works of poet Robert Browning and his wife. The group met once a month on Monday. Both Ethel and Nellie served as its president several times over the next decades. In 1944, the group started meeting in the Noland house at 216 North Delaware Street and continued gathering there for the rest of its life.<sup>36</sup> Both women continued their involvement in the Independence Pioneers Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). Deeply interested in and supportive of local history efforts, both sisters also became members of the Jackson County Historical Society and the Missouri Historical Society, possibly in the 1940s, as they neared retirement.<sup>37</sup>

The two sisters' interest in both history and their cousin, Harry Truman, encouraged Nellie and especially Ethel Noland to become the "accurate and available source of information and background on Mr. Truman" and his ancestors for the press, particularly after Harry Truman became president in the spring of 1945. Genealogy became a fascinating hobby for Ethel. "Magazine writers, radio and television reporters, and free lance writers have used her as one of their best sources since Truman became President," according to the *Independence Examiner* in 1965. "She has made friends with many writers all over the world."<sup>38</sup>

The Nolands and the Truman Family, 1924-1953

The relationship between the Noland family and Harry Truman remained close throughout his years in government service and politics. Aging Ella Truman Noland remained Harry's favorite aunt. Harry Truman and Nellie and Ethel Noland continued to be as adults what they had been as children—the best of friends and comrades. Although Truman certainly enjoyed maintaining a close association with many family members, the Noland family remained his dearest relatives.

During Harry Truman's years as Jackson County judge in the 1920s and early 1930s, he no doubt continued to drop in on the Nolands regularly, just as he had up until then. And because Truman lived conveniently across the street from the Nolands in the home of Madge Gates Wallace, Bess's mother, during the 1920s and early 1930s, his visits were probably quite regular, even though the Noland and Truman families shared few of the same daily activities and

<sup>35</sup> Ethel Noland to Harry S Truman, 31 March 1931. Personal File: Ethel and Nellie Noland, President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>36</sup> "Club Section Dedicated to Mary Ethel Noland," *Independence Examiner*, 19 September 1971; Miss Nellie Noland, Retired Teacher Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 8 August 1958; Sue Gentry, interview by Jim Williams, 18 June 1991, transcript of tape-recorded interview, 43, Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>37</sup> Miss Nellie Noland, Retired Teacher Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 8 August 1958; "Outstanding Area Women Honored," *Independence Examiner*, 10 April 1965; "Miss Mary Ethel Noland, Truman Cousin Dies," *Kansas City Times*, 11 August 1971; "First Cousin of Truman Dies," *Independence Examiner*, Newspaper Clippings, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted passages from: "Outstanding Area Women Honored," *Independence Examiner*, 10 April 1965. "Miss Mary Ethel Noland, Truman Cousin, Dies," *Kansas City Times*, 11 August 1971; "Miss Nellie Noland, Retired Teacher Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 8 August 1958; "Forebears of President Truman Settled in This Country in 1666," May 1945, Vertical File: Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

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Truman's attention was extended to Wallace family members as well. Because few letters were exchanged during this period, the written record of the Truman-Wallace-Noland relationship is minimal and largely conjectural.

Correspondence between Truman and the Nolands became regular in the mid-1930s, after the Trumans moved to Washington, D.C. as a U.S. senator. It continued almost to the end of the cousins' lives, even after the Trumans moved back to Independence and became Noland neighbors again in 1953. The regularity of the letters, alone, conveys something about the intimate relationship between Harry S Truman and his Aunt Ella and his two Noland cousins. On average, Truman wrote at least once a month, and sometimes as many as four times a month to the Noland sisters. Often his letters told of his activities and private thoughts about his work as senator, vice president, and then president. Always, he expressed interest in the Nolands' lives and health, and sent greetings to family members, including the Raglands, the Southern boys, and the Haukenberry couple. He never forgot birthdays of the Noland family, particularly Aunt Ella's birthday, which was just two days before his in May. Nellie Noland's birthday, July 26<sup>th</sup>, was hard for Harry to forget as well; it came on "Turnip Day" in Independence, the day to sow turnips.<sup>39</sup> Truman's letters sometimes conveyed his great respect and fondness for the Noland sisters. In 1949, then President Truman told Ethel Noland in a letter that he would be glad to have both Nellie and Ethel cast a critical eye over his speeches if they lived closer to Washington, D.C. "As President, I've found from tough experience, [I] can't have too much advice from real friends."<sup>40</sup> A month later he expressed stronger feelings of fondness toward his two cousins. "I can have no greater respect and affection for you & Nellie than I have for my first cousins."<sup>41</sup> In writing to the Nolands, Truman also reported the activities of Bess and Margaret and sent greetings from them. Truman customarily apologized if a letter, at least in part, was not written in his own hand. The Nolands delighted in receiving letters from Truman and were equally faithful letter writers. "I am just writing to tell you how much we are enjoying hearing from you so often," Ethel wrote in March 1943. "We are just part of the great silent audience that listens to you whenever you speak by radio or press."<sup>42</sup>

As time went by and Truman received more and more scrutiny by the press and questions from curious individuals, his interest in his family background became more than personal but politically expedient. Not long after he arrived in Washington, Truman began to ask Ethel Noland, who had already taken an interest in genealogy, questions about their shared family history. In early 1938, for example, Truman asked Ethel to send a Truman cousin in Kentucky information about the family. "I put him in touch with the genealogical expert in our family," Truman wrote.<sup>43</sup> After becoming president in April 1945, Truman became even more reliant on his first cousin as the family genealogist. "You are going to have to keep track of all the family doings from now on," Truman wrote in early October 1945.<sup>44</sup> Ethel Noland received two more letters from Truman in quick succession asking for help with family record keeping. In a letter accompanying some

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<sup>39</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, ed. *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1980), 187.

<sup>40</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 13 August 1949, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>41</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 8 September 1949, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>42</sup> Ethel Noland to Harry S Truman, 18 March 1943, Letters from Senator Truman to Noland Family, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>43</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 15 February 1938, Noland Correspondence, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>44</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 3 October 1945, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

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genealogical information, Truman wrote: "The reason I am sending all these things to you is because you have been interested in the family situation and, it is my opinion, that they ought to all be consolidated in one place and when [somebody] does make inquiry a proper answer can be made for their information. I hate to trouble you with this but you are the only one I know who can take care of it."<sup>45</sup> Less than two weeks later, Truman again expressed his desire for and appreciation of Ethel's help with the family genealogy. "I have no desire or inclination to join the ancestor worshipers but since they are doing a lot of digging around they ought to have the facts. I will sure appreciate it if you will give the facts to them."<sup>46</sup> Truman came to rely heavily on his cousin's ability to research, record, and convey the family's historical background with great accuracy.

Ethel Noland was eager to oblige cousin Harry's request to research and record all genealogical information about the Truman family and respond to questions from the press and individuals curious to know if they might be related to the Truman family. Ethel immediately began to receive and respond to numerous queries about the family that Truman had forwarded to 216 North Delaware Street. In December 1945, Ethel reported to Truman that "letters about our family history continue to come in. I haven't found the skeleton in the closet yet, though I suppose there must be one. We seem to have been models of respectability back to Adam and Eve from all accounts so far."<sup>47</sup> About ten days later, Truman, in a letter to Nellie Noland, reported that "reams of information on the family tree" continued to stream into the White House.<sup>48</sup> A day later, Truman expressed to Ethel some relief that "we have found no 'gibbets' in the family tree yet."<sup>49</sup> Five years later, Ethel and Harry Truman had still not found any gibbets in the family tree. "You know," Harry wrote to Ethel, "I do a lot of kidding about ancestry but I'm always as happy as you are when our progenitors turn out be honorable men and women. And so far as we know to date, our ancestors have all been good people."<sup>50</sup>

Harry Truman expressed similar sentiments in another letter written in the spring of 1950. "My immediate and recognized family have been tops in the trying five years just passed and I appreciate it. All the Presidents have had trouble with eager beaver relatives—particularly the Franklin Roosevelts. Thank God I haven't."<sup>51</sup> Delighted with Truman's compliment, Ethel wrote: Nellie and I loved your letter in which you said that your recognized relatives had never caused you any embarrassment. You never said a kinder thing than that. If we ever have caused you a moment's chagrin it was through ignorance and not intention. Whether it is

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<sup>45</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 4 October 1945, Truman to Noland Family, Presidential Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>46</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 20 October 1945, Truman to Noland Family, Presidential Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>47</sup> Ethel Noland to Harry S Truman, 6 December 1945, President's Secretary's Files: Ethel and Nellie Noland, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>48</sup> Harry S Truman to Nellie Noland, 18 December 1945, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>49</sup> A "gibbet" is a type of gallows with a projecting arm at the top, from which criminals were formerly hung in chains and left suspended after execution. A gibbet more broadly refers to someone or something held up to public scorn. Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 19 December 1945, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>50</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 16 June 1950, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>51</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 31 March 1950, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

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true or not it makes pleasant reading. I am reminded of the song, 'I don't believe it, but say it again'.<sup>52</sup>

Always ready to chuckle with Ethel over the foibles of humans and of life, Truman lightly wrote to Ethel again about their family history later that year. "You're right when you say we knew not what was coming when we were having such a fine time 'relatively' speaking. I get a kick out of the folks who are so anxious to be akin to us now, don't you? . . . Mr. Shakespeare said in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, 'Oh what fools these mortals be!' But life wouldn't be any fun if mortals were not what they are."<sup>53</sup>

Actual visits between the Truman and Noland families were far less frequent than the letters they exchanged after Harry, Bess, and Margaret moved to Washington, D.C., in early 1935. While a U.S. senator, Harry Truman may have visited the Nolands two or three times a year, in the summer and on special holidays, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas. Between 1935 and 1953, Truman wrote to the Nolands many times expressing a plan or desire to visit them, but later apologizing for not being able to stop by.<sup>54</sup> Most often during his years as senator and president, Harry visited the Nolands alone or with Margaret. During Truman's September 1945 visit to Independence, for example, Harry and Margaret walked across the street to the Noland house with gifts for the entire family—a framed presidential portrait for Aunt Ella and three bottles of perfume from Germany for the three Noland cousins—Nellie, Ethel, and Ruth. Harry played the piano and Margaret sang during their brief visit with the Nolands.<sup>55</sup> Bess often did not accompany Harry for his short jaunts across North Delaware Street to the Noland house, but participated in other gatherings with the Nolands.

Christmas day and dinner were a special time of celebration that nearly always brought the Noland and Truman families together. The Nolands looked forward with great anticipation to a visit from the Trumans on their first Christmas home after Harry Truman had become president. "We are delighted to learn," Nellie wrote to Truman in early December 1945, "that you will be able to be here for Christmas and as has always been the custom, will be with us for a part of the season. The cranberries are ready and I know will pass inspection for I have prepared them according to your chosen recipe."<sup>56</sup> Harry's Aunt Ella Noland had a dinner waiting for the Trumans when they arrived home in Independence that Christmas. In addition to cranberry sauce, Harry's favorite pound cake, made from a recipe that had been in the Truman family two hundred years, awaited his arrival. Soon newspapers around the country printed the recipe of Harry Truman's favorite pound cake, baked that Christmas by Nellie Noland.<sup>57</sup>

Two months before the Christmas of 1946, Nellie wrote of the lovely visit the Nolands had enjoyed with Bess when she came home. "We enjoyed having Bess at home," wrote Nellie to Harry, "and had several delightful evenings with her. On[e] evening [there] was a trip to Vivian's

<sup>52</sup> Ethel Noland to Harry S Truman, undated (probably July 1950), Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>53</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, ed. *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1980), 185.

<sup>54</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel or Nellie Noland, 12 May 1941, 22 June 1942, Noland Papers; Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 13 August, 1947; both in Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>55</sup> *Kansas City Times*, 15 September 1945.

<sup>56</sup> Nellie Noland to Harry S Truman, 13 December 1945, Ethel and Nellie Noland Personal File, President's Secretary's File, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>57</sup> "Here's Truman's Favorite Cake." "Missouri Pound Cake," both in Newspaper Clippings, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library

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to see some of the Texas [c]ousins that we had not seen before."<sup>58</sup> When Truman was unable to be home for Christmas in 1947, the Nolands expressed great disappointment. "We are so sorry you will not be at 219 for Christmas," Nellie wrote to Harry. "It will seem very unusual to miss that cheery part of the season."<sup>59</sup>

The time spent with the Nolands was often only a few minutes during each visit, but seemed greatly enjoyed by all. "Glad to get to see you even if it was only for a little while," Truman wrote to Nellie in February 1947.<sup>60</sup> "Pleasure to see both of you and to get a chance for a short visit," Truman wrote to Ethel in a 1948 letter. "I am sorry that it couldn't have been longer."<sup>61</sup> Truman expressed similar sentiments in a September 1949 letter.

It was a very great pleasure to spend a few minutes with you on the 6<sup>th</sup>. I wish there had been more time to spend. Being what I am—President of 149 millions of people and the representative to the world of the most powerful nation of all time—I find that I can't do what I'd like to do. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think or wish for such a position. . . . I've made all my family, including my sister, my cousins, and my 'aunts,' as much trouble as if I'd robbed the biggest bank in town, pulled a Ponzi, or taken the savings of all the widows and orphans in Missouri. But I'm still having a good time.<sup>62</sup>

Just a few weeks before Truman's second term ended and he went home to North Delaware Street, he expressed great regret about not being able to stop by the Nolands for a Christmas visit. "I am sorry that your door bell could not have the three rings [Truman's familiar door knock at the Noland house since childhood] on Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>. I hope Nellie put enough sugar in the cranberry sauce! I'll live to be 90 and not forget. I'm glad you had a high old Christmas," Truman continued. "Wish I could have 'dropped in' on that dinner."<sup>63</sup>

Always eager to see the Nolands, Harry Truman invited them to attend speeches or gala events given by or for him. In May 1946, for example, the Noland sisters traveled to nearby Liberty to hear Truman give a commencement speech at William Jewell College.<sup>64</sup> Both Nellie and Ethel attended Harry Truman's presidential inauguration in February 1949. "It was a pleasure to have you here."<sup>65</sup> Ethel and Nellie Noland stayed with the Trumans for about a week in the Blair House during their visit to Washington.

Slowing Down and Continuing in the Old Home, 1948-1971

**Ella (Margaret Ellen) Noland.** Ella Truman Noland remained the Noland family matriarch from 1923 through the 1940s. She continued to cook her favorite recipes and attend the First Baptist Church in Independence. She also continued to celebrate and applaud her favorite nephew's political successes. When Harry S Truman won election to the U.S. Senate in 1934, Ella Truman gave the senator-elect, Bess, and Margaret a family dinner at 216 North

<sup>58</sup> Nellie Noland to Harry S Truman, 13 October 1946, Ethel and Nellie Noland Personal File, President's Secretary's File, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>59</sup> Nellie Noland to Harry S Truman, 9 November 1947, Ethel and Nellie Noland Personal File, President's Secretary's File, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>60</sup> Harry S Truman to Nellie Noland, 26 February 1947, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>61</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 21 June 1948, Noland Papers, Harry S Truman Library.

<sup>62</sup> Harry S Truman to Nellie and Ethel Noland, 8 September 1949, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>63</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 2 January 1953, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>64</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 21 May 1946, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>65</sup> Harry S Truman to Nellie Noland, 1 April 1949, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

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Delaware Street<sup>66</sup> Vieta Garr, the Truman's household helper, assisted with the dinner preparations. Sixteen people attended the special celebratory dinner.<sup>67</sup>

Ella Truman's relationship with Harry Truman, whom she considered a son, continued to be warm and close, even after the Truman family moved to Washington, D.C. Truman nearly always dropped in to the Noland house when he came home to Independence to visit his favorite aunt. In July 1944, in a letter to Bess, Harry wrote that he "saw Aunt Ella and the cousins. Aunt was feeling better than usual but was in bed. . . . She spent the time calling me Mr. Vice President."<sup>68</sup> Less than a year later, when the Nolands readied their house for Harry Truman's first visit to Independence after becoming president, ninety-six-year-old Ella Noland proudly remarked to her daughters, "My, aren't you proud of your cousin?" Although the anticipation of his coming tired her, she was so looking forward to the visit of her favorite nephew.<sup>69</sup>

The birthdays of Ella and Harry, on May 6 and 8, respectively, continued to be a time of special celebration and warm exchanges. Ella customarily gave or sent Harry Truman linen handkerchiefs for a birthday gift. Truman would send his Aunt Ella greetings on her birthday until his life became intensely hectic as president. Just a month after becoming president and just when World War II hostilities ceased in Europe, Harry wrote to Aunt Ella on May 9, 1945. "I certainly did appreciate the handkerchief which you sent me for my birthday. . . . You had a birthday yourself the day before and I did not even write you a letter. I am sorry that I did not do it."<sup>70</sup> Whenever possible, Truman came to Independence and stopped by 216 North Delaware Street for a special birthday visit. In 1946, on her ninety-seventh birthday, Ethel Noland noted that her mother's "real birthday present will be May 18" . . . when President Truman wrote promising to "visit her that day."<sup>71</sup> These ritual birthday visits continued up to Ella Noland's last birthday.<sup>72</sup>

Ella Noland's health began to fail when she severely wrenched her back a month after her ninety-seventh birthday. After the accident, Ella Noland was rarely able to leave her bed. By early 1948, her weakened condition made it difficult for her to talk. President Truman made his "birthday visit" to Aunt Ella in early August that year when Truman came home to Independence to vote in the primary presidential election. This was the last time he saw her. In the early morning of October 1, 1948, Ella Truman passed away in her sleep at the family home at 216 North Delaware Street at age ninety-nine. Known throughout the country as President Truman's "favorite aunt," her death was announced in nationally circulated newspapers and news magazines. Funeral services were held at the First Baptist Church on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. President Truman was unable to attend his Aunt Ella's funeral, however, the family of Harry's brother, Vivian and Luella Truman, attended the services. Four of their sons served as casket pallbearers. Ella Truman's death came twenty-five years after the death of her husband, Joseph T. Noland. It marked a transition from one Noland generation to the next.

<sup>66</sup> Shirley Davis, "Trumans Stopped by to Welcome Them," Davenport, Iowa, *Democrat-Times*, 10 March 1968. Also see Ardis Haukenberry interview, 2 March 1984, 27.

<sup>67</sup> "Family Dinner for the Trumans," Clipping File, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>68</sup> Harry S Truman to Bess Trumann, July 1944, Family Correspondence File, Harry S. Truman Library. )

<sup>69</sup> "Just Rest and Visit a Bit," Vertical Files: Newspaper Clippings, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>70</sup> Harry S Truman to Ella Noland, 9 May 1945, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>71</sup> "The President's Aunt," no date, Newspaper Clippings, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>72</sup> "Her 93<sup>rd</sup> Birthday," no date, Newspaper Clippings, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

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**Nellie Noland.** During the Truman presidency, Nellie Noland entered her final years as teacher and school administrator, respectively. After serving as principal for five years at the Gladstone Elementary School in Kansas City, in 1949, at age sixty-eight, Nellie Noland became principal at the Bristol Elementary School. She retired from the Bristol School in 1951, just before her seventieth birthday, after teaching and administering in Independence and Kansas City public schools for fifty-three years.<sup>73</sup>

In 1951, only weeks after Nellie Noland retired from teaching, she began showing signs of her seventy years when she started having a series of ailments and accidents. In the summer of 1951 she became ill with apparent gall bladder problems. (In a letter to Nellie in July 1951, Harry Truman mentioned that "the doctors found sand in one of your organs and took out another."<sup>74</sup>) She entered the Independence Hospital in early July for operations.<sup>75</sup> Ill health apparently took her back to the hospital again in early 1952. Only a few days after coming home, Nellie had a bad fall that took her back to the hospital.<sup>76</sup> By March 21, 1952, Nellie seemed to be on the road to recovery from her fall.<sup>77</sup> However, about two months later, Nellie still wasn't well.<sup>78</sup> In July, Nellie was back in the hospital.<sup>79</sup>

By August 1952, Nellie was home again, but her recovery was slow and discouraging. "You tell her," Harry wrote to Ethel, "she'd better write to her cousin and may be (sic) he can cheer her up. As you know, that has been my role since we were eighteen."<sup>80</sup> A month later, Harry wrote to cousin Nellie expressing great pleasure that she would be walking again soon.<sup>81</sup> Nellie, apparently, continued to have physical ailments through 1953, but by December that year, Harry Truman commented: "it looked to me as if you were just about back to normal."<sup>82</sup> Despite Truman's comment, Nellie Noland probably never regained excellent health after her series of ailments between 1951 and 1953. Her struggle with illness apparently continued for the next five years. In July 1958, Nellie became critically ill. A few days later, on August 8, 1958, Nellie Noland died at the old Noland home at 216 North Delaware Street just after her seventy-seventh birthday.<sup>83</sup>

**Ethel Noland and Harry Truman.** Ethel Noland continued teaching seventh grade at Northeast Junior High School until 1954 when she retired, at age seventy, after fifty-four years of teaching.<sup>84</sup> In retirement, Ethel pursued her interest in local and family history. After the opening of the Truman Library in 1957, she worked closely with the library staff to answer questions about the Truman family. She prepared a genealogical record of Truman ancestors and connecting families for the Truman Library files. In 1965, Theta Sigma Phi recognized Ethel

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<sup>73</sup> Miss Nellie Noland, Retired Teacher Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 8 August 1958.

<sup>74</sup> Harry S Truman to Nellie Noland, 11 July 1951, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>75</sup> Harry S Truman to Vivian Truman, 12 July 1951, Family Correspondence file, President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>76</sup> Truman to Ethel Noland, 13 March 1952, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>77</sup> Truman to Ethel Noland, 21 March 1952, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>78</sup> Truman to Ethel Noland, 4 June 1952, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>79</sup> Truman to Ethel Noland, 11 July 1952, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>80</sup> Truman to Ethel Noland, 21 August 1952, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>81</sup> Truman to Nellie Noland, 26 September 1952, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>82</sup> Harry S Truman to Nellie Noland, 19 December 1953, Family Correspondence, Post Presidential Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>83</sup> "Miss Nellie Noland, Retired Teacher Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 8 August 1958.

<sup>84</sup> "Miss Mary Ethel Noland, Truman Cousin Dies," *Kansas City Star*, 11 August 1971.

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Noland for her historical and genealogical work at the Truman Library in Independence; she was honored at that organization's annual dinner.<sup>85</sup> In March 1968, at age eighty-four, the Davenport, Iowa, *Times-Democrat* reported that the "perky octogenarian, and avid club goer, spends a lot of time at the Truman Library." According to Ethel, "Harry's secretary really loads me up with things concerning Truman history."<sup>86</sup>

Ethel Noland and Harry Truman continued their relationship as close friends and confidants after Truman returned to Independence in early 1953 as a private citizen. Even though they were neighbors once again, however, they visited each other far less than they had in the 1890s when the Truman family lived near the Nolands and Harry had spent many hours with Nellie and Ethel poring over his high school tales of Caesar and Cicero in Latin. As a former president, Truman (and his relatives) could never again be a "normal" citizen(s) and cross the street to visit each other without the likelihood of a crowd forming. Truman also found himself exceedingly busy when he arrived back in Independence, working on plans for the Truman Library, his autobiography, and numerous other projects and speaking engagements. And by the 1960s, both Ethel Noland and Harry Truman, then in their upper seventies, found it increasingly difficult, due to failing health and inclement weather, to walk across the street for visits.

Often, instead of making frequent visits, Harry Truman and Ethel Noland continued their habit of writing letters to each other. Harry and Ethel wrote about twice a month through the 1950s; their correspondence diminished in the 1960s. Family genealogy was the subject of many letters, especially in the 1950s, when both Harry and Ethel were involved in helping gather and organize material for the staff at the new Truman Library, completed in 1957. Harry and Ethel sometimes made light of their letter writing when they lived only a few paces apart. "Things have come to a pretty pass when neighbors and relatives who live within a hundred yards of each other have to write letters to have a conversation," Harry wrote to Ethel in September 1954. A year later, he quipped: "I think we are setting a record—next door neighbors, first cousins, and have to write when we talk."<sup>87</sup> By the mid-1960s, letters had taken the place of most all visits. In a letter to Harry in August 1965, Ethel noted: "Just heard on the news at 6:00 that you had come home. I'm glad that you are home again as I always am, though I seldom see you."<sup>88</sup>

Their letter-writing habit continued but slowed considerably by the late 1960s. In March 1968, eighty-four year-old Ethel laughed: "Harry and I exchange letters. Had a letter from him just last week. And we talk by phone. Harry jokes about it, too, but we both have trouble walking, and letter writing just seems easier. I've got filing case after filing case of correspondence from him."<sup>89</sup> By 1970, letters between the first cousins dropped off as both Harry and Ethel passed their eighty-fifth birthdays.

Ethel Noland began having health problems in the late 1950s. In early 1957, Ethel experienced dizzy spells. Attending to Nellie's health needs at that time probably prevented her from seeing a doctor until June 1959. In a letter to cousin Harry, Ethel noted that she was beginning a series of daily treatments aimed at remedying her two- and one-half year-old problem

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<sup>85</sup> "Club Section Dedicated to Mary Ethel Noland," *Independence Examiner*, 19 September 1971; "Miss Mary Ethel Noland, Truman Cousin, Dies," *Kansas City Times*, 11 August 1971.

<sup>86</sup> Shirley Davis, "Trumans Stopped By to Welcome Them," Davenport, Iowa, *Times-Democrat*, 19 March 1968.

<sup>87</sup> Harry S Truman to Ethel Noland, 22 September 1954 and 21 July 1955, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>88</sup> Ethel Noland to Harry S Truman, 23 August 1965, Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>89</sup> Quoted in: Davis, "Trumans Stopped by to Welcome Them," *Times-Democrat*, 10 March 1968.



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of dizziness.<sup>90</sup> In response to a letter from Truman, Ethel's doctor explained that Ethel's problem had been caused by a small blood clot in the inner ear and that his prescribed treatments should dissolve the clot and cure the dizzy spells. However, he added that he was "seriously concerned about her general health. Her blood pressure, especially the diastolic is much too high and she is about 20 pounds overweight. Another clot might form in the same or some other area of the body."<sup>91</sup>

Despite the doctor's concerns, Ethel Noland remained a curious learner and avid educator throughout most of her eighties. She continued to work on family history at the Truman Library. She also continued to hold the meetings of the Browning Society in her home at 216 North Delaware Street up until the year of her death, at which time the group disbanded. Mary Ethel Noland died on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1971, in the Independence Hospital, at age eighty-eight.<sup>92</sup>

### Ardis Haukenberry Comes Home to 216 North Delaware Street, 1973-1986

In November 1973, seventy-four year-old Ardis Ragland Haukenberry, Nellie and Ethel Noland's niece, moved "'back home' in a house on North Delaware Street, in which she had spent many happy childhood days," according to Sue Gentry writing for the *Independence Examiner*. "All the Noland family [are] gone now, the last daughter, Miss Ethel Noland, having died in 1971. A widow now herself," Gentry explained, Ardis Haukenberry "decided to move back into the house, which became hers in the settlement of the estate."<sup>93</sup> Haukenberry soon settled comfortably into her childhood home, decorated with many Truman family pieces of furniture and pictures. Ardis, actively involved in the Jackson County Historical Society and deeply interested in family genealogy, an interest she had inherited from Ethel Noland, immensely enjoyed being the second cousin of Harry Truman, who had died in 1972, as well as her close proximity to the Truman house across the street, where Bess Truman continued to live.<sup>94</sup>

With Ethel Noland gone, Ardis Haukenberry became the conveyer of local and family history and folklore on numerous occasions. In the mid-1970s, she provided James Ryan, who conducted an in-depth inventory of historic houses in Independence, information about the Noland house and family. She often shared information about local history with *Independence Examiner* journalists as well. She recorded her own personal history for *Examiner* journalist Sue Gentry. In May 1980, Haukenberry opened up her house to the public as part of the Truman Heritage Tour that year, sponsored by the Junior Service League for the benefit of the Waggoner Mansion renovation project in Independence.<sup>95</sup>

Ardis Haukenberry remained interested in education and history, even as her health began to fail in her eighty-sixth year. In February 1986, she left 216 Delaware Street for the last time to

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<sup>90</sup> Ethel Noland to Harry S Truman, 7 June 1959, Family Correspondence, Post Presidential Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>91</sup> Sam E. Roberts, M.D. to Harry and Bess Truman, 1 July 1959, Family Correspondence, Post Presidential Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>92</sup> "First Cousin of Truman Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 10 August 1971.

<sup>93</sup> Sue Gentry, "She Returns to Live in Home of Childhood," *Independence Examiner*, 15 December 1973.

<sup>94</sup> Haukenberry, autobiographical sketch, handwritten history of Ragland-Haukenberry families, Gentry Collection Collection; Sue Gentry, "Truman Cousin's Home Open to Guests," *Independence Examiner*, 8 May 1980.

<sup>95</sup> Gentry, "Truman Cousin's Home Open"; "Noland House, January 23, 10:00 am," conversation with Mrs. H. H. Haukenberry, Shirley Holder, Barbara Parrino, Pat Burrus, Virginia Miller, and Mary Sue Luff present, typescript, no year, Historian's Files, Truman National Historic Site, National Park Service.

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live with her nephew, John Southern and his wife Jane in Sunrise Beach, Missouri. Nine months later, on November 2, 1986, Ardis Haukenberry died in a nursing home in Versailles, Missouri, at age eighty-seven.<sup>96</sup>

Renting the Noland House, 1986-1991

After Ardis Haukenberry moved out of the Noland house, it sat vacant between February and July 1986, when it was rented. The renting couple separated during the next year; the wife moved out of the house in July 1987. The house was rented again shortly afterward for about \$400 to \$450 a month. By that time, Ardis had died and her nephew and his wife, John and Dawna Southern, had inherited the property.<sup>97</sup>

At the end of July 1987, a man in his forties with two teenage sons and a daughter moved into the Noland house. The family had recently moved from Texas to Independence. The renter was probably Michael L. Nissen, according to the Polk city directory for Independence in 1988. Frank Fry rented and occupied the house for approximately two years, 1989-1990.<sup>98</sup> John and Dawna Southern sold the Noland house to the National Park Service in September 1991. The Noland house keys were turned over to the Park Service on September 17<sup>th</sup>.

**The Frank and Natalie and the George and May Wallace Families and Houses**  
(601 West Truman Road and 605 West Truman Road)

Introduction

Frank and George Wallace were the grandsons of George P. and Elizabeth Gates, a prominent flour milling family in Independence, and the sons of David and Madge Gates Wallace. Frank and George Wallace were two of Bess Wallace Truman's three younger brothers. Frank and George, born in Independence in 1887 and 1892, respectively, lived their entire lives in Independence, except for one year spent in Colorado Springs, Colorado, immediately after their father's suicide in June 1903. Frank and George lived all of their adult lives on land that was originally part of the 219 North Delaware Street property and that was later split off and adjoined it on the east. In 1915 and in 1916, George P. Gates gave Frank and then George half of one tax lot as a wedding gift. This land had been previously used as a garden and grazing area behind the elder Gates's house. The Frank and Natalie Wallace house at 601 West Truman Road was completed in the fall of 1915. The George and May Wallace house at 605 West Truman Road was built in the fall of 1916. Both Wallace couples lived their entire married lives in their modest Bungalow-style houses on land adjoining the Gates-Truman house at 219 North Delaware Street.

The association between the two Wallace brothers and their wives and Harry Truman began when all three young men were courting their future wives. Soon after Truman's marriage to Bess Wallace in 1919, he moved into the Gates house at 219 North Delaware, thus bringing

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<sup>96</sup> Sue Gentry, "Ardis Haukenberry, Truman's Cousin, Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 4 November 1986; "Mrs. Ardis R. Haukenberry," *Kansas City Times*, 4 November 1986.

<sup>97</sup> Michael Shaver, memorandum to superintendent, 29 November 1987, Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*; *Polk's Independence City Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: R. L. Polk and Company, 1988, 1989, and 1990).

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him into close regular contact with the two Wallace couples. Throughout their lives, the three couples shared a mutually supportive environment in what became known as the "Wallace compound," which included all three of their homes. During the Trumans residence in Washington, D.C., between 1935 and 1953 and particularly during the Truman presidency, the two Wallace couples supported the Truman family in numerous ways. The Wallace compound became a greatly valued place of retreat and refuge for the Truman family when they spent time at the "Summer White House" at 219 North Delaware Street.

### David and Madge Gates Wallace

Madge Gates was not yet twenty-one years old when she married tall, handsome, popular, twenty-three year-old David Willock Wallace on June 13, 1883. Although George P. Gates took a dim view of the match because he feared that David Wallace might be unable to support his wife's expensive tastes, he consented to the marriage when the couple threatened to elope. The wedding ceremony took place in the Presbyterian Church in Independence. The Gates held a reception for the newlyweds at their home on North Delaware Street.<sup>99</sup>

Following the marriage, David Wallace continued working as the deputy recorder of marriage licenses in Independence. The young couple took up residence at 117 West Ruby Street, off of Chrysler Street and southwest of the courthouse square, about two miles from the Gates house. Their first child, Elizabeth Virginia (Bess) Wallace, was born February 13, 1885. Two years later, on March 4, 1887, Madge Wallace gave birth to her first son, Frank Gates Wallace.<sup>100</sup>

By that time, there were already ominous signs of financial strain in the Wallace marriage. In the first year of marriage, David Wallace mortgaged the Ruby Street house to secure a \$700 loan. In 1885, the year of Bess Wallace's birth, David Wallace wrote to President Grover Cleveland, addressing him as "dear sir and friend," and asked him for a job in the customs house in Kansas City, which presumably paid a higher wage. Cleveland's secretary declined his request. Financial problems continued. The young Wallace family moved into George and Elizabeth Gates's recently enlarged house at the corner of North Delaware and Blue Avenue, around the time of Frank Wallace's birth.<sup>101</sup> In 1887, David Wallace sold the Ruby Street house for a profit. In the late 1880s, David Wallace's financial situation may have improved slightly. In 1888 and again in 1890, he ran for Jackson County deputy treasurer and won both times. Perhaps somewhat encouraged by his political success and growing popularity, around 1890, David Wallace bought a large house at 608 (later renumbered 610) North Delaware Street, two blocks from the Gates house, in the town's most fashionable neighborhood. Financial problems besieged the Wallaces again in 1892 when David Wallace's second term as Jackson County treasurer expired, and the factionalized Democrats did not offer him another position. The Wallace's third child, George Porterfield Wallace, was born on May 1, 1892, just a few months before David Wallace became unemployed for nearly a year.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Margaret Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 3; Ron Cockrell, "The Summer White House," *Jackson County Historical Society* 26: 2 (Fall 1984), 11-12.

<sup>100</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 3.

<sup>101</sup> *Independence City Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: R. S. Dillon and Company, 1888).

<sup>102</sup> Jeff Wade, "The President's Mother-in-Law: An 'Impossible Old Woman?'," *Newsletter from Harry S Truman National Historic Site*, 14 (Winter 1998), 1; Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 3-4, 6-7.

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Finally, in late 1893, David Wallace managed to secure an appointment as a U.S. deputy surveyor of customs for the port of Kansas City, and left elective politics forever. His salary of \$1,200 in 1894 was a respectable sum, but not enough to support three children and a wife with expensive tastes and little apparent awareness of her husband's financial straits. Added to continuing money problems were conflicted feelings of joy, increased financial burden, and grief when Madge Wallace gave birth to two more children between the mid-1890s and 1898, both of whom died in infancy. According to Margaret Truman Daniel, granddaughter of Madge Wallace, a daughter Madeline was born to Madge and David Wallace in the mid-1890s. She died when about three years old.<sup>103</sup> Another daughter was born in early May 1898, but lived only a day, according to the *Jackson Examiner*. "The infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. D. W. Wallace, born Monday, died Tuesday night."<sup>104</sup> For David Wallace, who played with and adored his own children, as well as for his wife, the loss of two children within a year must have been a devastating tragedy.

Through this time of anxiety and grief, David Wallace's personal problems continued. Around 1900, when the Wallace's sixth and last child, David Frederick, was born, David Wallace attempted to start an importing business in Kansas City, a logical adjunct to his customs job. His efforts went nowhere and probably put him deeper in debt.<sup>105</sup>

As David Wallace's debts increased, so too did his drinking and his struggle to remain optimistic about the future. When not at his customs job, he spent time on the Independence square, not in the courthouse, but in a saloon patronized by local politicians. Young Bess, Frank, and George Wallace must have known about their father's drinking; often David Wallace's friends carried him home and deposited him on his front porch. Known by everyone to have a sweet and cheerful disposition, David Wallace was uncharacteristically gloomy about his finances in a letter to his father-in-law, written in the early 1900s, when the Gateses were away from Independence. "To be frank with you," he confided in George P. Gates, "I get pretty *blue* [his emphasis] over matters. I do the very best that I can but it seems that little good results. I try to look on the bright side of things, but even then it is dark."<sup>106</sup>

An end to all of David Wallace's seemingly insurmountable problems finally came on June 17, 1903, four days after his twentieth wedding anniversary and two days after his forty-third birthday. Early that morning, he arose, opened the drawer of a writing desk in the bedroom, and reached for a revolver. He walked into the bathroom, placed the muzzle just behind his left ear, and pulled the trigger. "The ball passed through his head and out the right temple."<sup>107</sup> The explosion of the discharging gun broke the morning silence and awakened the household. Sixteen-year-old Frank Wallace ran down the hall to the bathroom. "Papa! Papa's shot himself," Frank cried out in stunned disbelief and anguish.<sup>108</sup>

More than eighty years later, family members gave differing accounts of who found David Wallace after the shooting. Margaret Truman Daniel, who was twenty when she first learned from her Aunt Natalie about her grandfather's suicide, wrote in 1986 that Frank Wallace, Natalie's

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<sup>103</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 7; Christine Wallace and David F. Wallace, Jr., interview by Jim Williams, 26 August 1991, transcription of tape-recorded interview, 49, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>104</sup> *Jackson Examiner*, 7 May 1898.

<sup>105</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 11-15.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>107</sup> "D. W. Wallace Dead," *Jackson Examiner*, 19 June 1903.

<sup>108</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Wallace*, 17.

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husband, had "found" his father.<sup>109</sup> In 1984, May Southern Wallace, George Wallace's wife, reported that her husband, then eleven years old, found his slain father.<sup>110</sup> There is probably some truth in both recollections. According to the local newspaper, which printed a front-page story about the incident two days after it took place, David Wallace "fell unconscious to the floor and died within thirty minutes."<sup>111</sup> While help was being summoned and David Wallace lay motionless both Frank and George, as well as others in the family, may all have witnessed his demise.

Regardless of who was present immediately after the shooting, David Wallace's suicide unquestionably had a profound affect on everyone in the family. Each responded to the tragedy in a different way. Bess Wallace never in her lifetime talked with her daughter, Margaret, about David Wallace's suicide.<sup>112</sup> May Wallace assessed the impact of the tragedy on George Wallace this way: "I think it [his father's suicide] affected his nervous system the rest of his life, it was such a shock."<sup>113</sup> Natalie Wallace may have no difficulty believing that her husband was the first one at the scene of the shooting, since she too understood what a devastating impact David Wallace's suicide had on her husband. Madge Wallace forever after remained extremely protective of all her children, encouraging Frank and George Wallace to build their homes in the Gates's backyard (perhaps even insisting that they do so) and always keeping a watchful eye on their and their wives' every action.

Shattered, stunned, and even shamed and disgraced by her husband's suicide, Madge Wallace and her four children, who were instantly "flung from the top of Independence's social hierarchy to the bottom," took refuge in her parents' house at 219 North Delaware Street. The grief-stricken family, however, could not be comforted for long by retreating into George and Elizabeth Gates's house. Instead, the family decided to retreat from Independence. Within days, Madge and her children, Bess, Frank, George, and David Frederick, boarded the Missouri Pacific's *Santa Fe*. The next day they got off the train at Colorado Springs. For nearly a year, the Wallace family stayed with Gates family relatives in Colorado. Madge Wallace and her four children returned to Independence one year later, in mid-1904, and moved into the home of George and Elizabeth Gates at 219 North Delaware Street—permanently.<sup>114</sup>

Frank Wallace—Birth and Childhood

Frank Wallace, the second child of Madge Gates and David Wallace, was born in Independence on March 4, 1887. As a child, Frank had gone to the Presbyterian Church with his parents and grandparents. However, in 1901, his mother disagreed with the congregation's decision to let go of a long-time minister, whose new wife was a divorcee. Madge indignantly left the church. Frank became interested in a vibrant young minister at the Trinity Episcopal Church, and started attending services there. Eventually Madge Wallace, as well as George

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 17; May Wallace, interview by Ron Cockrell, 2 March 1984, transcript of taped interview, 44, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>111</sup> "D. W. Wallace Dead," 19 June 1903.

<sup>112</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 235.

<sup>113</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 44.

<sup>114</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Wallace*, 19; May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 44.

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Wallace, began attending services there.<sup>115</sup> Frank and Bess were confirmed in the Episcopal Church in 1903.<sup>116</sup>

Frank Wallace attended the Ott School as a youngster. He then went to the old Independence high school and enjoyed playing on the football and tennis teams. His strong interest in sports in his youth continued throughout his life. He played golf and followed baseball closely in the news.<sup>117</sup>

Frank never finished high school. His father's suicide, the family's move to Colorado just before his last year of high school, and the debts left by David Wallace may have smashed any plans he might have had for his education. As the oldest son in the Wallace family, he may have felt the need to begin his working career as soon as possible after his father's death.<sup>118</sup> Not long after the Wallace family returned to Independence from Colorado, Grandfather George P. Gates may have helped Frank get a job at the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company. In 1905, at age eighteen, Frank worked as a clerk for the company. In September 1911, after apparently considering other employment or investment opportunities in Mexico, Kansas City, and Memphis, Tennessee, he landed a new job in the Independence-Kansas City area, most likely as a clerk. By 1914, he was listed as a bookkeeper in the Independence city directory. Frank worked as a clerk/bookkeeper when he began courting Natalie Ott, probably sometime after she returned from her extended trip to Europe in early 1912. By the time Frank and Natalie met, Frank was taking on the characteristics of sobriety and dignity that would characterize his demeanor as an adult.<sup>119</sup>

Natalie Ott—Birth and Childhood

Natalie Ott was born to Albert M. and Julia Rogers Ott at the family home at 804 North Main Street in Independence on June 25, 1891.<sup>120</sup> Natalie's mother died when she was six years old. She and her younger sister Julia acquired a stepmother when Natalie was fifteen years old.

Natalie Ott graduated from high school in 1908. As the child of a well-to-do lawyer and banker, Natalie benefited from travel opportunities not available to many Independence residents. In the spring of 1911, she and a traveling companion, "Miss Rose" (probably Rose Ott, Natalie's father's sister), traveled through Europe for nine months. Their itinerary included visits to England, Scotland, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Belgium, and France. Upon their return to North America, they traveled from Quebec City to Philadelphia, where they spent about three months in Philadelphia with Dr. Lambert Ott, Natalie's uncle. They arrived back in Independence in early February 1912.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>115</sup> May Wallace, interview by Lisa Bosso and Steve Harrison, 20 December 1985, transcript of taped interview, 61. Harry S. Truman National Historic Site; Mary Paxton Keeley, interview by James Fuchs, 12 July 1966, transcript of taped interview, 48-49, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>116</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 55; Ron Cockrell, *The Trumans of Independence: Historic Resource Study* (Omaha, Neb.: National Park Service, 1985), 61.

<sup>117</sup> "Services for Frank Wallace to Be Monday," *Independence Examiner*, 13 August 1960.

<sup>118</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1984, p. 24. One of Frank Wallace obituaries notes that he was a graduate of the old Independence High School, however, this is the only place Frank's graduation is mentioned.

<sup>119</sup> *Hoye's Kansas City Directory, Including Kansas City, Missouri, Kansas City, Kansas, Independence, Missouri, Argentine, Kansas, Rosedale, Kansas* (Kansas City: Hoye's Directory Company, 1905; Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 34, 39, 47; *Independence City Directory, Vol. XLI, 1911* (Kansas City, Mo.: Gate City Directory Company, 1911); Sue Gentry, interview by Jim Williams, 18 June 1991, transcript of taped interview, 31, Harry S. Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>120</sup> "Mrs. Frank Wallace Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 26 May 1960.

<sup>121</sup> *Independence Examiner*, 5 February 1912.

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Frank Wallace and Natalie Ott: Courtship and Marriage

Natalie Ott, four years younger than Frank Wallace, probably met her future husband not in school but through mutual friends or family members. At a young age, Frank began volunteering his time to work for the Jackson County Democratic Party, with which Natalie's father had played a leadership role in the early 1900s. Both Natalie and Frank, who enjoyed playing tennis as young people, may have met at the tennis court on Park Avenue built and owned by the Southern family in Independence, a favorite neighborhood-gathering place. Lean six-foot-one-and-one-half-inch Frank probably began dating Natalie Ott, known for her diminutive stature, after she returned from her extended trip to Europe.<sup>122</sup>

Natalie Ott and Frank Wallace became well acquainted with Harry Truman during his nine-year courtship of Bess Wallace. Before Harry bought his car, which allowed him to stay the night in Independence when visiting Bess on weekends, he sometimes spent the night sleeping in Frank Wallace's room at 219 North Delaware Street. Harry and Bess often invited Frank and Natalie (as well as George and May Wallace) on picnics, fishing expeditions, and other recreational outings around Independence. In 1914, Harry's acquisition of a 1911 Stafford automobile opened up new possibilities for sharing adventures around the countryside with the Wallace-Ott couple and other family members and friends. The three young couples, sometimes joined by other friends and family, ventured on summertime picnics along River Road, Cave Spring, the Little Blue River, and the near Sugar Creek at the waterworks.<sup>123</sup> Frank Wallace and Natalie Ott were married in the First Presbyterian Church in Independence on April 6, 1915.

George Wallace—Birth and Childhood

George Porterfield Wallace, the third child of David and Madge Wallace, was born on May 1, 1892. He was probably born at 608 North Delaware Street, where the Wallace family lived for several years in the 1890s. George attended elementary school in Independence. He graduated from the old Independence High School (later William Chrisman High School) in 1912 at age twenty. The traumatic death of his father when George was only eleven years old, and his family's subsequent move to Colorado for a year, may have slowed his progress in school. Despite this tragic incident (or perhaps because of it), as a young man George early on developed a reputation for his friendly, smiling public face.<sup>124</sup>

During high school, George developed an interest in working with wood. He took a "manual training" class in high school, May Wallace recounted. Sometime before he graduated in 1912, George made his sister Bess "a set of furniture," that included a double bed, in which she slept until she married Harry Truman in 1919. "It was just very straight, . . . very plain," May Wallace remembered. "He was quite a carpenter."<sup>125</sup>

George Wallace's working life began soon after he graduated from high school. By 1914, he was employed as an ordering clerk, probably at Hutig Mill Works Company, which

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<sup>122</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 19.

<sup>123</sup> Alfred Eisenstaedt, photographer, "Harry Truman's Missouri: It's a Country Rich in Border History," *Life*, 25 June 1945.

<sup>124</sup> "George Wallace Dies," *Kansas City Times*, 25 May 1963; Sue Gentry interview, 18 June 1991, 27, 31.

<sup>125</sup> May Wallace, interview by Lisa Bosso and Steve Harrison, 20 December 1985, transcript of taped interview, 13, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

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manufactured sashes and doors at a plant in Fairmount, between Independence and Kansas City. He was working at Hutig Mill when he and Mary Frances Southern married in 1916. He continued working at this lumber mill until the late 1920s.<sup>126</sup>

### Mary Frances (May) Southern—Birth and Childhood

Mary Frances Southern, better known as May Southern, was born in the home of her maternal grandparents, Alexander and Caroline Procter, on Lexington Street in Independence, on July 9, 1894. In 1904, at age ten, May Southern became a member of the First Christian Church in Independence. May Wallace attended the old Ott School on North Liberty Street in Independence. She graduated from the old Independence high school in 1911. She spent a year at the University of Missouri in Columbia. She and her older sister, Caroline, joined Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority. May remained a member of this sorority for more than fifty years.<sup>127</sup>

After she returned to Independence in 1912, May Southern very much wanted to work in the composing room as a linotype operator at her father's newspaper office. William Southern, however, insisted that that type of work wasn't suitable for a woman. May's father believed that library work or teaching was much more fitting for a woman. Prevented from going into newspaper work, May turned to other pursuits. She continued her informal education relating to the literary arts and culture, with the encouragement of her mother. On October 4, 1913, Emma Southern organized the Saturday Club for the purpose of broadening her daughters' and other interested women's cultural education. The group took its name from the famous Saturday Club in Boston, Massachusetts. May became a charter member of the group. An Independence High School English teacher, Matilda Brown, led the class for many years.<sup>128</sup>

### George Wallace and May Southern: Courtship and Marriage

May Southern, two years younger than George Wallace but one year his senior in high school, probably met her future husband in high school. They graduated only one year apart—May Southern in 1911 and George in 1912. May and George were probably dating by early 1911, when Harry Truman mentioned Miss Southern's name in a letter to Bess Truman. May probably became even better acquainted with the jovial, six-foot-tall George Wallace at the tennis court that May's parents built in the spring or summer of 1911, just one year after they built their own home at 639 South Park Avenue. Located on Park Avenue, just south of the Southern home, William and Emma Southern had given May and her sister Caroline the tennis court as a high school graduation present. "Frank and George were good tennis players and so was Bess," May recalled nearly seventy years later.<sup>129</sup> The court became a center of neighborhood activity. "We all played tennis down there," May later reminisced about her family and George, Frank, and Bess

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<sup>126</sup> *Independence City Directory*, Vol. XLIX (Kansas City, Mo.: Gate City Directory Company, 1914, 1920, 1924); *Polk's Independence City Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: Gate City Directory Company, 1926, 1928); May Wallace, interview by Niel M. Johnson, 17 and 23 February 1988, transcript of taped interview, 46, 94, Harry S. Truman Library; "George Wallace Dies," *Kansas City Times*, 25 May 1963.

<sup>127</sup> May Wallace interview, 20 July 1983, 25; Wallace, May Wallace, "May Wallace—Her Story," handwritten, Sue Gentry Collection, Jackson County Historical Society.

<sup>128</sup> John Taylor, "George and May Wallace House," no date, typed page, Historian's Files: Wallace Homes, Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>129</sup> "George Wallace Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 25 May 1963; Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 22; May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 15; May Wallace, "Dear Friends Cherish Memories of Bess Truman," *Independence Examiner*, 18 October 1982.



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Wallace, "and went on picnics and just had a good time."<sup>130</sup> Occasionally, Madge Wallace invited a group of young people to her house for dinner. "I was terribly shy about that," May recalled. "And she turned out to be my mother-in-law, and she was a lovely lady."<sup>131</sup>

Harry Truman never played tennis, but joined George and May, along with Frank and Natalie, on picnics, after he began spending time with Bess Wallace in 1910. The possibilities and the range of their picnic and other outdoor outings expanded greatly after Harry Truman bought his Stafford automobile in 1914. Harry's Stafford became the center of photographic attention; often the young couples would pose for pictures in the car with Harry at the wheel. Harry was always good company, May Wallace later reported.<sup>132</sup> George Wallace and May Southern had been "sweethearts for a long time," according to May Wallace, when they married on October 24, 1916. The Southern-Wallace wedding received front-page coverage in the *Independence Examiner*, edited by May's father.<sup>133</sup>

### Transfer of Land and the Construction of Two Wallace Houses

On March 15, 1915, just three weeks before Frank and Natalie Wallace married, George P. and Elizabeth Gates sold the couple the eastern 50 feet of lot 1 in Moore's Addition for \$1.<sup>134</sup> On August 22, 1916, George P. and Elizabeth Gates sold the west 50 feet of the east 100 feet of lot 1 in Moore's Addition to George P. Wallace for \$1 "and other valuable considerations." This deed gave George and May Wallace the right to maintain and use the sewer line to the Gates house, which ran across their new property. In 1926, George and May Wallace bought, for \$1, the western-most fourteen feet of lot 1 from Madge Wallace, who acquired the property after both of her parents died.<sup>135</sup> Margaret Truman Daniel contended, years later, that Madge Wallace persuaded her father to make this virtual gift of land to Frank and George in order to keep them close to home and under her direct observation.<sup>136</sup>

Both Wallace houses were constructed on land once used for a small pasture and a garden. In the early 1910s, the Gates family owned a single cow, called "Susie Dam" by George Wallace, who begrudged his daily chore of milking her. Many years later, May Southern Wallace recalled that a fence enclosed an area behind (east of) the Truman house in which the cow grazed. A garden occupied a plot along Truman Road, where the two Wallace houses were later built.<sup>137</sup> (After the George and May Wallace house was built, asparagus continued to grow in the front yard until May pulled it up in 1917.)

The two Wallace houses were probably not designed by an architect. Throughout Independence and across the country, Bungalow-style dwellings were built in great profusion in the 1910s and 1920s, at a time when their design characteristics reflected people's belief in the healthful qualities of nature and the desire to make the outside natural world more a part of interior spaces. Books that presented dozens of Bungalow-style house patterns, which could be

<sup>130</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 41.

<sup>131</sup> May Wallace interview, 20 July 1983, 25.

<sup>132</sup> McCullough, *Truman*, 93.

<sup>133</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 41.

<sup>134</sup> General Warranty Deed, No. 100759, Jackson County Courthouse.

<sup>135</sup> "General Warranty Deed," No. 109271, and also "Warranty Deed," No. 219645, both in Vertical Files: "Gates Family," Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>136</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 55-56.

<sup>137</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 7.

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easily adapted by local builders to their level of skill and available materials, made this house style exceedingly popular and affordable. A local Independence builder named Shaupe (who probably built the George and May Wallace house) may have also constructed Frank and Natalie Wallace's house. Frank and Natalie Wallace's house wasn't built until the summer of 1915; Frank and Natalie rented an apartment for a few months after their marriage until their new house was completed.<sup>138</sup> The young Wallace couple probably moved into their brown one-story Bungalow-style home at 601 West Truman Road in the late summer or early fall 1915.

The George and May Wallace house was completed a year later. Work began in late August or early September. George Wallace, always interested in lumber and woodworking, supervised its construction. The second Wallace house was also built in the Bungalow style. Upon completion, the exterior siding was stained a deep pine green. The George and May Wallace house was slightly smaller than the neighboring Frank and Natalie Wallace house. It had only four rooms—a combined living and dining room, a bedroom (now the present dining room), a kitchen, and a small sleeping porch. Inside, the Wallace house consisted of four rooms. The new house was wired with electricity when the newlyweds moved into the house in the fall of 1916. A coal furnace initially provided heat for the Wallace house. The new house was connected to city water.<sup>139</sup>

### Daily Life with Frank and Natalie Wallace

Frank Wallace continued to work as a bookkeeper after his marriage to Natalie Ott. When the United States entered the First World War, neither thirty-year-old Frank nor George enlisted in the service, possibly because Madge Gates would not permit the departure of her eldest son from the family fold. Frank continued his daily ritual of stopping by 219 North Delaware and spending half an hour with his mother on his way home from work.<sup>140</sup>

By the late 1910s, Frank Wallace was employed by the Simons-Shields Lonsdale Grain Company. He held this job until around 1925, when he began working as a bookkeeper for the Independence Ice and Creamery Company, operated by Natalie's father, Albert Ott, and her uncle, Henry Ott. Over the next eight years, Frank worked his way up in the administration of the company. In the late 1920s, he was the assistant manager of that company, and by early 1933, had become its president.<sup>141</sup>

In the spring of 1933, fifty years after its founding by William H. Waggoner and George P. Gates, Frank and George Wallace's grandfather, the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company suffered greatly from the reduced grain supplies and slumping market prices of the Great Depression. It was struggling for its corporate existence when a fight erupted among the financially hard-pressed heirs to the estate of George P. Gates, who had inherited shares in the company. While the majority of the fourteen Gates-Wallace and Waggoner shareholders favored liquidation of the company, then valued at \$670,000, one heir and shareholder, Madge Wallace, adamantly opposed

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<sup>138</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 42; May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 4.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 8, 14, 29.

<sup>140</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, quote from 66; 60-61, 65..

<sup>141</sup> *Independence City Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: Gate City Directory Company, 1920 and 1924); *Polk's Independence City Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: Gate City Directory Company, 1926 and 1928, 1930, 1932, and 1934); May Wallace interview, 20 December 1985, 12, 28; "Old Waggoner-Gates Flour Mill Threatened After 50 Years' Life," c. May 1933 Vertical File: Waggoner-Gates Mill, Harry S. Truman Library.

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liquidation. Frank Wallace, her son, was the only company trustee (and also an heir and shareholder) who voted to re-charter the company. The stormy battle over the future of the Waggoner-Gates Company, which pitted Gates-Wallace family members against each other, raged for weeks.<sup>142</sup> In the end, the company remained in existence for another twenty-five years as a Waggoner-Gates family-owned corporation, although struggling financially at times to do so.

Around the time of the company dispute and possibly because of it, Frank Wallace rejoined the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company. Nearly thirty years after clerking for the company, he returned as its vice-president around 1933. Frank Wallace held this position until the early 1940s, when he became secretary of the company. When he retired from the company around 1957, Frank Wallace was chairman of the board of the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company. In 1958, the company passed out of Waggoner-Gates family ownership. At that time, the company was one of the oldest continuously operated businesses in Jackson County. In addition to his work-related duties, Frank Wallace was also responsible for taking care of his mother's and the Wallace family's business affairs. He kept a watchful eye on and managed Madge Wallace's investments. Upon the death of his mother in December 1952, Frank Wallace became the administrator of her estate.<sup>143</sup>

Frank Wallace found pleasure in a few cultural and political activities unrelated to work and managing family finances. After Frank married Natalie, he remained a member of the Episcopalian Church, but sometimes went with her to services at the Presbyterian Church.<sup>144</sup> Politically, Frank was a staunch Democrat. He was a ward leader of the Democratic Party in Independence in the late 1910s and early 1920s. For many years, Frank served as the secretary of the Jackson County Board of Election Commissioners. Throughout his life, Frank Wallace was an avid sports enthusiast. Although his frail constitution and declining health in later years prevented him from participating in exhausting sports, Frank did play golf and avidly followed professional baseball on the radio. In the summer, Frank enjoyed sunbathing or sitting in a canvas-sling lounge chair, enjoying the privacy of the Wallace backyard. Frank and Natalie occasionally traveled to other cities, such as Santa Fe, either alone or with Harry and Bess Truman or George and May Wallace.<sup>145</sup>

Natalie Ott Wallace occupied her time with a variety of activities. She was known as a very industrious person and an immaculate housekeeper. She probably bought groceries weekly, which, for many years, were delivered by markets to their customers throughout Independence. Natalie took care of other shopping needs by walking roughly four blocks to the commercial district, which encircled the courthouse square. She probably patronized Bundschu's, Independence's prominent general merchandise store that was owned by Natalie's uncle, Anton J. Bundschu. Numerous Independence families, including the Wallace family, did their department store shopping at Bundschu's. Natalie never learned to drive a car; she either walked or she rode

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<sup>142</sup> "Old Waggoner-Gates Flour Mill Threatened After 50 Years' Life," c. May 1933.

<sup>143</sup> *Polk's Independence City Directory*, 1934, 1938, 1940, 1942, 1946, 1950, and 1954; "Family Dynasty Ends With Waggoner's Death," *Independence Examiner*, 8 November 1976; "Wallace Estate Total," *Kansas City Times*, 10 March 1953, Newspaper Clippings, Mary Ethel Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>144</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 55.

<sup>145</sup> "Services for Frank Wallace to Be Monday," *Independence Examiner*, 13 August 1960; Rufus B. Burrus, interview by Niel M. Johnson, 22 November 1985, transcript of taped interview, 18, Harry S. Truman Library; Christine Wallace and David Wallace interview, 76-77; Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 378.

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with others bound for the same destination.<sup>146</sup> Many years later, Natalie's next-door neighbor, May Wallace, reported that the two sisters-in-law were good neighbors. "I helped her and she helped me. We lived here in peace and got along fine."<sup>147</sup>

Natalie Wallace also pursued a number of cultural and social activities. She was very active member of the First Presbyterian Church. Natalie Wallace opened her house to Bible Study classes on occasion.<sup>148</sup> In 1939, Natalie organized and led the World Friendship Guild in the church, a missionary society of young matrons and business and professional women that provided financial support for a student attending the Presbyterian's Menaul mission school in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and also cared for the church's communion glasses. Natalie also served as president of the church Women's Association. Upon the death of her and her husband in 1960, Natalie bequeathed \$3,000 to the Women's Association of the First Presbyterian Church, which was spent on mission work.<sup>149</sup>

Natalie Wallace was an avid bridge player as well. She participated in the Tuesday Bridge Club, a bridge group of about ten women, sometimes hosted by Bess Truman. Each club member took her turn having the club meet in her home for the Tuesday bridge game, which met about every two weeks.<sup>150</sup> Natalie continued to participate in the Tuesday Bridge Club gatherings after Bess and Harry Truman returned to Independence in 1953. Both Bess Truman and Natalie periodically hosted the club meetings at their homes.

Daily Life with George and May Wallace

After his marriage to May Southern, George continued to work as a clerk at the Hutig Mill Works Company, manufacturer of doors and sashes. Well known in the family for his ability to work with wood and also to fix nearly anything that needed it, George seemed well suited to work in an environment with wood and machines. For years, he rode the streetcar everyday to the mill in Fairmount.<sup>151</sup> George Wallace's job with Hutig Works Company came to an abrupt end around 1928 when the company closed down. "Hutig went broke and we went broke with them," May Wallace reported many years later.<sup>152</sup> This "enforced vacation between jobs," as May Wallace described it, probably lasted for several weeks.<sup>153</sup> By 1930, George Wallace was working as a salesman. However, like so many people during the Great Depression of the 1930s, it appears that he struggled to stay employed and started new jobs frequently in the early 1930s. In 1934, George Wallace worked as an assistant manager. By the end of 1934, before Harry Truman left his position as judge of eastern Jackson County, Truman helped George Wallace get a job with the Jackson County Highway Department. For the next twenty-seven years, Wallace worked as first,

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<sup>146</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 42; Christine Wallace and David Wallace interview, 11, 18, 25.

<sup>147</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 42.

<sup>148</sup> *Independence Examiner*, 19 June 1916.

<sup>149</sup> Bill and Mary Ellen Carnes, interview by Gail Evans, 2 June 2000, transcript of taped interview, Harry S Truman National Historic Site; Ehrlich, *Ask Now of the Days That Are Past*, 62, 80.

<sup>150</sup> May Wallace, 2 March 1984.

<sup>151</sup> *Independence City Directory*, Vol. XLIX (Kansas City, Mo.: Gate City Directory Company, 1914, 1920, 1924); *Polk's Independence City Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: Gate City Directory Company, 1926, 1928); May Wallace interview 17 and 23 February 1988, 46.

<sup>152</sup> May Wallace interview, 23 February 1988, 94.

<sup>153</sup> May Wallace interview, 20 July 1983, 24; *Polk's Independence City Directory*, 1928.

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an engineer and then, maintenance superintendent for the Jackson County Highway Department. He retired from this position in 1961.<sup>154</sup>

When he was not employed, George often busied himself fixing things at home and for his extended family. "He loved woodwork," May Wallace commented many years later.<sup>155</sup> Over the years, George Wallace built up a well-equipped workshop in the basement of the Wallace house at 605 West Truman Road. His reputation as a skilled handyman grew over time. Those who knew him admired him and often commented on his ability as a "fixer."<sup>156</sup>

In addition to working at his job and fixing things around the Wallace family compound, George Wallace worked for many years in eastern Jackson County Democratic Party politics. In 1922, both George and Frank Wallace helped Harry Truman with his election campaign for judge of eastern Jackson County. For many years, George served as an election judge for eastern Jackson County.<sup>157</sup>

For relaxation, both George and May Wallace enjoyed playing golf during their younger and middle-aged years. George and May belonged to a golf club (no longer extant, south of Independence on Chrysler), where they played frequently. George also occasionally played bridge with May and some of her friends.<sup>158</sup> Once in a while, according to May Wallace, he went downtown to a "gaiety picture or something like that" with a good man friend.<sup>159</sup>

After marrying George Wallace, May, known for her sociability and friendly, energetic nature, continued her active participation in cultural organizations and social groups. The Saturday Club took a prominent place in self-education in the literary arts. Throughout her life, May served in various offices of the Saturday Club. Following the death of Matilda Brown, who had led the club for many years, May eventually was chosen to direct the class. May also later joined the Mary Paxton Study Class, which, like the Saturday Club, encouraged the broad exploration of the literary arts through reading and group discussion. May Wallace and her sister Caroline Carnes also continued their association, as alumni, with the Kappa Kappa Gamma (KKG) sorority, which they had joined when attending the University of Missouri. In 1962, May and Caroline both received fifty-year membership pins from KKG.<sup>160</sup>

Playing bridge with the Tuesday Bridge Club was one of May's life-long delights. The group of ten women generally met twice a month on Tuesdays in different members' homes. Each club member, including Bess Truman and Natalie Wallace, took their turn hosting the games. When May Wallace invited the bridge club to her home, she entertained them in her living room. The group played two or three different kinds of bridge. May, known as a shrewd bridge player,

<sup>154</sup> Polk's *Independence City Directory*, 1930, 1932, 1934, 1938, 1940, 1942, 1946, 1950, 1954, 1857; "George Wallace Dies," 25 May 1963.

<sup>155</sup> May Wallace interview, 23 February 1988, 94.

<sup>156</sup> Sue Gentry interview, 18 June 1991, 27.

<sup>157</sup> "George Wallace Dies," 25 May 1963; McCullough, *Truman*, 163.

<sup>158</sup> Sue Gentry, "Wallace Was Historic Woman," *Independence Examiner*, 21 May 1990; May Wallace interview, 17 and 23 February 1988, 48, 94.

<sup>159</sup> May Wallace interview, 20 December 1980, 9

<sup>160</sup> John Taylor, "George and May Wallace House," no date, typed page, Historian's Files: Wallace Homes." Truman National Historic Site; Wallace, "May Wallace—Her Story, February 1984; Sue Gentry interview, 18 June 1991, 20.."

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continued to participate in the Tuesday Bridge Club gatherings after Bess and Harry Truman returned to Independence in 1953.<sup>161</sup>

May Wallace continued her life-long involvement in the Christian Church. Having joined the church at age ten, she remained a member throughout her life. May also never hesitated to become involved in worthwhile and charitable causes. During World War I, May, along with Bess Wallace and dozens of other women in Independence, rolled bandages for the American Red Cross. She volunteered her time to the Red Cross again during World War II. She also crocheted needed clothing for American soldiers during the Second World War.<sup>162</sup>

May Wallace, like her sister-in-law Natalie, spent considerable time taking care of the Wallace home and close family members. She prepared meals, cleaned clothes and her house, and did some crocheting, embroidery, and other handicrafts. May most likely ordered groceries and had them delivered once a week, a common custom before World War II.<sup>163</sup> Unlike Natalie Wallace who never learned to drive, May had a far greater array of choices for shopping and taking care of household business, since she drove a car. No doubt, May drove to Kansas City on occasion to take care of her household responsibilities. May Wallace often stopped by her father's *Independence Examiner* office on her outings.<sup>164</sup> May probably invited Natalie Wallace, as well as her mother, Emma Southern, to join her on shopping excursions in her car.

George as well as May Wallace drove a car. May acquired her first car, an Essex, in the early 1920s. May's parents bought the Essex for her mother, Emma Southern. When she didn't "take to driving at all," the Southern gave the car to May Wallace. "I had a car with all expenses paid," May recalled many years later. May Wallace became her family's chauffeur and drove her mother as well as her father, Col. William Southern, wherever they wanted to go. Around 1922, the Wallaces built a small garage for May's car, in the rear, southwest corner of their yard.<sup>165</sup> Later, she drove a Packard, about a 1932 model, according to Bill Carnes, May's nephew.<sup>166</sup> By the 1940s, May Wallace drove a Hudson. George probably didn't drive regularly until after he started working for the Jackson County Highway Department in 1934, which provided him a county car. He usually parked it under a large tree in the side yard.<sup>167</sup>

The Wallace Couples' Association with Harry and Bess Truman

**1919-1935.** Harry Truman's close association with George and May Wallace became more intimate after Harry married Bess Wallace in the summer of 1919 and became officially part of the Wallace family. Soon after the Trumans returned from their honeymoon, Harry Truman became physically closer to the Wallaces when he and Bess moved into the Gates house at 219 North Delaware, just a few feet west of the two Wallace brothers' homes. When Harry Truman and Eddie Jacobson opened their haberdashery in Kansas City, Frank Wallace loaned them

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<sup>161</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 46-47 and Sue Gentry interview, 18 June 1991, 22-23; Bill and Mary Ellen Carnes interview, 2 June 2000, 13; May Wallace interview, 17 and 23 February 1988, 48-50.

<sup>162</sup> "May Wallace Dies at 98," *Independence Examiner*, 18 May 1993; "Wallace Was Historic Woman," *Independence Examiner*, 21 May 1993; May Wallace interview, 17 and 23 February 1988, 66.

<sup>163</sup> Christine Wallace and David Wallace interview by Jim Williams and Carol Dage, 26 August 1991, transcript of taped interview, 25, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>164</sup> Sue Gentry interview, 18 June 1991, 19.

<sup>165</sup> "Independence" (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1916 and 1926).

<sup>166</sup> Bill and Mary Ellen Carnes interview, 2 June 2000, 14.

<sup>167</sup> May Wallace interview, 14 June 1983, 5; Christine Wallace and David Wallace interview, 26 August 1991, 18, 17.

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money to launch this business venture.<sup>168</sup> When Harry decided to enter politics by running for the eastern judgeship of Jackson County in the fall of 1921, both Frank and George Wallace lent a hand with Truman's campaign. Frank, a staunch Democrat and, at that time, the leader of the Fourth Ward of Independence, began taking Harry around the ward and introducing him to people. In 1922, he introduced Harry to Rufus Burrus, an Independence attorney (1921-1980s) and assistant county counselor (1927-1941), who became Harry and Bess Truman's long-time friend and legal counselor.<sup>169</sup>

The Truman family's practice of sharing meals with Frank and Natalie and May and George Wallace in one of the Wallace or Truman houses or outside, probably began not long after the two Wallace houses were completed in the mid-1910s. Customarily George and May Wallace would have Sunday dinner, promptly at 1:00 p.m., every other week with the Trumans in the big house.<sup>170</sup> Summertime picnics were a favorite activity of both Wallace couples and the Truman family. Frank and Natalie Wallace's backyard most often was the site of these gatherings. "We always had picnics down in Mrs. Frank Wallace's yard," recalled May Wallace. "She had a flat place over there where we always had family picnics."<sup>171</sup> Frank and Natalie's backyard, enclosed by thick shrubbery, provided privacy for outdoor picnics that was always appreciated, especially after Truman became president in 1945.

The birth of Margaret Truman to Harry and Bess, in 1924, added a new dimension to the Truman's association with the two Wallace couples. Since the Wallaces had no children of their own and lived on property adjoining the Truman house, Natalie and Frank and May and George treated Margaret like a surrogate daughter. They enjoyed constant contact with Margaret as she grew from an infant to a young adult. When Margaret was about four or five, she began paying visits first, to Natalie, and then, to May Wallace, in the late afternoon, asking for sweets at both aunts' houses. These little forays, unfortunately for Margaret, did not continue for long. Bess Truman, suspicious of her daughter's loss of appetite at dinner, soon learned about her sweet treats at the homes of both Aunt Natalie and Aunt May (or Aunt "Beufie" as Margaret called her), and asked her two sisters-in-law to refrain from giving Margaret any food on her late afternoon visits. Shoes were another matter. Many, many times, Margaret, who loved shoes, was allowed to play shoe store when she came to visit May Wallace.<sup>172</sup>

George and May Wallace also enjoyed Margaret's dependency on George Wallace to fix anything that needed repairing in her life. When Margaret was a small child and fell on the gravel walk behind the Truman house and skinned both of her knees, she tearfully went to George and pleaded: "Da Fix." ("Da" became Margaret's shortened pronounceable version of "George" when she was a child.) "She thought he could fix anything," May recalled.<sup>173</sup> A break in the close relationship between Margaret and both Wallace couples came in 1934, when Truman became a Missouri senator and Margaret was eleven years old.<sup>174</sup> "I can see Margaret now," May Wallace

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<sup>168</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 85; Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 480.

<sup>169</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 86-87; Rufus B. Burrus interview, 22 November 1985, 18.

<sup>170</sup> Steve Harrison, Report of conservation with May Wallace on her ninety-first birthday, 9 July 1985, Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>171</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 50.

<sup>172</sup> Wallace, "May Wallace—Her Story."

<sup>173</sup> May Wallace interview, 20 December 1985, 2

<sup>174</sup> Wallace, "May Wallace—Her Story."

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reminisced, "sitting in the back seat of the car, holding Raggedy Ann in her arms as they drove out of their yard on the first lap of their journey to Washington, D.C."<sup>175</sup> Her Aunt Beufie had recently sewed a new dress and some hair for well-used battered Raggedy Ann.<sup>176</sup> Even after Margaret Truman lived in Washington with her parents, Frank and Natalie and George and May Wallace continued their close and playful relationship with Margaret.

**1935-1953.** During the vice-presidential and presidential years from 1944 to 1953, Frank and Natalie and George and May Wallace became more than close family members and neighbors; increasingly they supported the life and activities of the Trumans when they came home to Independence. When the Trumans returned for visits, the two Wallace couples often greeted the Trumans in Kansas City at the airport or at the Independence railroad station and accompanied them home. The Wallace couples also attended political functions in or near Independence held for Truman, such as the public meeting held for Truman in Independence after he announced he would run for another term as president. On June 27, 1947, Frank and Natalie and George and May Wallace joined Noland and Truman family members on the front platform when Harry Truman spoke to a crowd of 10,000 assembled in the Mormon Auditorium.<sup>177</sup> When the Trumans came home to Independence from Washington for the last time in early 1953, the two Wallace couples were in the "mob of well-wishers"<sup>178</sup> that greeted them "when they got off the train in Independence to begin another phase of their interesting lives."

The ritual of sharing meals with the Wallaces continued through Harry Truman's years in public office. Following the 1944 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, where Senator Harry Truman accepted his party's nomination as Franklin Roosevelt's running mate, the Truman family drove home to Independence. May and George Wallace welcomed the weary couple and served them dinner in their small house. They then relaxed with the Wallaces in their back yard.<sup>179</sup> In early June 1945, the *Kansas City Times* disclosed that the Trumans had enjoyed a family picnic in Frank and Natalie's backyard. Later in the month and just hours before Harry Truman returned to Washington, D.C., he and his family again had supper in Frank and Natalie's backyard.<sup>180</sup> In August 1946, the *Kansas City Times* reported that "President Truman, who since his county court days always has kept his home a place apart from politics and public life, last night held true to his tradition and relaxed with his family at a Missouri back yard picnic."<sup>181</sup> When the Trumans came to Independence for one- or two-day visits, they usually ate meals in the Wallaces' homes. In April 1947, Harry and Margaret Truman drove from Kansas City, where they were staying overnight at the Muehlebach Hotel, to share a country ham dinner with Natalie and Frank Wallace.<sup>182</sup> In March 1950, the press reported that the Trumans dined with Frank and Natalie Wallace in their home when they came home to hear Margaret sing in a concert in Kansas City and before the two Wallace couples and the Trumans went to Margaret's concert.<sup>183</sup>

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 134.

<sup>177</sup> "To a Familiar Crowd," *Kansas City Times*, 298 June 1948.

<sup>178</sup> Wallace, "May Wallace—Her Story."

<sup>179</sup> "Big Cheer for Truman," *Kansas City Star*, 22 July 1944; "Truman of Missouri: A Vice-Presidential Candidate Comes Home to His Relatives and Friends in Independence," *Life* (August 21, 1944), 75.

<sup>180</sup> "The Trumans Are Home," *Kansas City Times*, 4 June 1945; "Into Peace Role," *Kansas City Times*, 1 July 1945.

<sup>181</sup> "Truman at Ease," *Kansas City Times*, 4 August 1946.

<sup>182</sup> "Truman Is Home," *Kansas City Star*, 12 April 1947.

<sup>183</sup> May Wallace interview, 2 March 1984, 47.



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After Harry Truman became the focus of public attention, the press also reported Wallace-Truman family gatherings that took place on the back porch of the Truman house and sometimes on the front porches of the two Wallace homes. The Wallace brothers often visited with Truman on the back porch at 219 North Delaware Street in the summertime. This was also the gathering place for Bess Truman's bridge club meetings, which included Natalie and May Wallace.

If the Trumans planned a one-or two-day visit, the presidential family often stayed at Frank and Natalie Wallace's house, which was slightly larger than neighboring May and George Wallace's house. The Trumans felt it was impractical to open up their own large house at 219 North Delaware during short visits. Frank and Natalie Wallace opened their home to the Trumans for overnight accommodations on numerous occasions after Truman became president. In early June 1945, when Bess, Margaret, and Madge returned to Independence for a visit, Margaret stayed with Frank and Natalie Wallace on their first night home. In late March 1946, on their return from visiting relatives in Denver, Bess and Madge Wallace stayed one night with Frank and Natalie Wallace before continuing on to Washington the next day.<sup>184</sup> In November 1946, Madge Wallace stayed with Frank and Natalie Wallace in their home, after Harry and Bess Truman left Independence, where they had voted in the mid-term congressional election.<sup>185</sup> In February 1947, when the Trumans came home to visit Harry's ailing mother in Grandview, Margaret again stayed overnight with Natalie and Frank Wallace in their extra bedroom. Bess Truman stayed with her brother and sister-in-law in March 1950 when she came home briefly to hear Margaret sing in a concert at the Music Hall in Kansas City.<sup>186</sup>

When the Trumans came home for longer visits, George and May often took primary responsibility for preparing the "big house" at 219 North Delaware for the Trumans' arrival. They opened and aired the house out, sometimes brought in a few groceries, and closed up the house after the Trumans departed. George Wallace, the family "fixer," took care of draining all the water pipes in the big house in the fall when the Truman family was away in Washington, D.C.

After Harry Truman became president, May Wallace became a liaison between the Wallace family and the press. Although Truman depended on Ethel Noland to answer all questions relating to the Truman family genealogy, May became the principal Wallace family member to report on the Trumans' activities.<sup>187</sup> "After Mr. Truman became president, she was wonderful, because I could always find out what was going on," chuckled Sue Gentry, reporter for the *Independence Examiner*. "She was loyal to the *Examiner*, and I would find out some things that some other papers wouldn't."<sup>188</sup>

Holidays, especially Christmas, became even more festive for the Wallace couple after Truman became president. Frank and Natalie and May and George Wallace nearly always spent part of Christmas Eve and Christmas day with the Trumans during the presidential years, either in Independence or in the White House. One Christmas Margaret Truman announced that she wanted a Christmas tree that was nine feet tall and would touch the ceiling in the Truman house. "We got a tree that touched the ceiling," May recalled, "and it left a spot on the ceiling, which Bess wasn't too happy about." It was placed in the bay window of the parlor, and on Christmas Eve

<sup>184</sup> "A Visit By Mrs. Truman." *Kansas City Times*, 26 March 1946.

<sup>185</sup> "Lights on Again This Week at Home of Nation's First Family," *Independence Examiner*, 16 December 1946.

<sup>186</sup> "Mrs. Truman Arrives for Concert Tonight," *Independence Examiner*, 21 March 1950.

<sup>187</sup> "May Wallace Dies at 98," *Independence Examiner*, 18 May 1993.

<sup>188</sup> Sue Gentry interview, 18 June 1991, 20.

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everyone gathered around to help with the decorating.<sup>189</sup> On Christmas day, the two Wallace couples usually gathered around the stately Christmas tree in the morning and then the dining room table for a mid-day meal in the Truman home. "We all went up there [to the Truman house] and put our things around, and we had quite a commotion at one time," May Wallace reminisced many decades later.<sup>190</sup> Frank and Natalie and May and George Wallace also traveled to Washington to celebrate at least two Christmases with the Trumans in the White House.<sup>191</sup> In 1947, Truman invited the Wallace and Truman family to spend Christmas in the White House.

Harry Truman's interest, concern, and devotion to the Wallace family were clearly expressed in numerous ways over the years. In late May and early June 1946, a year after Truman became president, Harry and Bess Truman held their first family reunion in the White House. The president's *Sacred Cow* airplane flew Mary Jane Truman and all three Wallace brothers and their wives, and Fred and Christine Wallace's family to Washington.<sup>192</sup> Also, in the spring of 1946, not long after Harry and Bess Truman had moved into the White House, Bess invited the Tuesday Bridge Club members to come to Washington for a four-day weekend. Natalie and May Wallace joined the other club members for the trip to the capital city for sightseeing and bridge games in the White House. In early 1949, the Trumans invited May and George Wallace, as well as Frank and Natalie Wallace, Mary Jane Truman, Vivian Truman and his daughter Martha Ann, and Nellie and Ethel Noland, to Harry Truman's inauguration. The two Wallace couples spent several days in Washington, D.C. attending the inaugural ball and other inaugural festivities with the Trumans, and sightseeing in the capital city.<sup>193</sup> Frank and Natalie and George and May Wallace visited the Trumans in Washington, D.C. on other occasions during their eight-year residence in the White House and the Blair House (when the White House was undergoing renovation during Truman's second term).

When the Trumans were away from Independence, communication by letters and telephone calls between the president and the Wallaces was friendly and frequent. Frank Wallace and Truman communicated regularly by letter regarding milling matters and the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company's effort to survive in the 1930s and 1940s. Sometimes, Truman even attempted to assist the couple when difficulties arose, such as when Frank's health declined noticeably in the early 1950s; Truman secured a job for Frank with a General Service's Administration office in Kansas City in an effort to relieve him of the constant strain of working at Waggoner-Gates.

May Wallace, more than George, wrote letters to Harry Truman in Washington. Probably the best-known exchange between May and Truman took place in April 1945. On April 9<sup>th</sup>, May mailed a chatty letter to Harry asking if he could do a small favor of sending his autographed photograph to the young son of a long-time friend. She went on to mention news of the household—listening to Harry's recent speech in Buffalo on the radio, George's anticipated heavier work load at his job for the Jackson County Highway Department, and the fattening of their dog Spot. Harry dictated and sent a letter to May four days later on April 12<sup>th</sup>. "I imagine Spott [sic] is

<sup>189</sup> Laura Rollins Hockaday and Henri Rix, "Warm Memories of Christmases Past," *Independence Examiner*, 21 December 1986.

<sup>190</sup> May Wallace, interview with Niel Johnson, 17 and 23 February 1988, transcript of taped interview, 59, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>191</sup> Bill and Mary Ellen Carnes interview, 2 June 2000, 22.

<sup>192</sup> "Home in White House," *Kansas City Times*, 29 May 1946.

<sup>193</sup> McCullough, *Truman*, 733.

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getting fatter and fatter. I have gained nine pounds myself. . . . So Spot and I will be in the same class," Truman mused. Truman closed this typed letter with well wishes to all the Wallaces. In stark contrast to the light tone of this typed letter was Harry Truman's scrawled handwriting at the bottom of the page, communicating the sudden gravity of his situation after learning just hours before that President Roosevelt had died. "This was dictated before the world fell in on me." Harry wrote. "But I've talked to you since and you know what a blow it was. But—I must meet it."<sup>194</sup>

The Death of Frank and Natalie Wallace

Frank Wallace's health began to decline around 1950. His problem was mostly related to heart and, possibly, blood pressure problems, aggravated by heavy smoking. Family members, including Harry S Truman, expressed concern and tried to help. In the fall of 1950, Truman encouraged the new regional director of the General Services Administration (GSA) in Kansas City to hire Frank when that new GSA office opened. "I'm afraid he'll [Frank will] go back to the 'Mill' and kill himself with worry," Truman wrote in September 1950.<sup>195</sup> Shortly afterward, Frank Wallace began working for the GSA. But within weeks he resigned due to poor health.<sup>196</sup> By the summer of 1951, Frank's health had not improved. At Truman's insistence, Major General Wallace Graham the White House physician, conducted tests and prescribed medications for Frank Wallace, aimed at addressing his heart problems and persistent coughing.<sup>197</sup>

Natalie Wallace, her husband's primary caretaker, probably suffered physically from the strain of his care for a number of years. She herself became ill in the spring of 1960, and was taken to the Independence Hospital on May 6<sup>th</sup>. After about a week of observation, she underwent major surgery. Her recovery was progressing normally when in the late morning of May 26<sup>th</sup> she died unexpectedly at age sixty-eight.<sup>198</sup> Frank's demise came less than three months later. Frank Gates Wallace died in the Independence Hospital on August 12, 1960. He was seventy-three. Over 200 Truman and Wallace family and friends attended his funeral service.<sup>199</sup>

Frank Gates Wallace's last will and testament specified that undivided interests in the Wallace house property at 601 North Delaware should go to four nieces and nephews: Margaret Truman Daniel, Marion Wallace Brasher, David Wallace, and the guardian of Charlotte Margaret (Margo) Wallace. Since the four relatives lived several hundred miles from Independence, they all chose to sell their quarter interest in the property. In early 1962, Harry and Bess Truman and George and May Wallace each bought an undivided one-half of the four separate interests, valued

<sup>194</sup> May Wallace to Harry Truman, April 9, 1945 and Harry Truman to May Wallace, April 12, 1945, both in Senatorial Papers, Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1944-45, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>195</sup> Harry S Truman to "Don S. D.," 9 September 1950, Family Correspondence, President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>196</sup> Jess Larson to Frank Wallace, 5 December 1950, Family Correspondence, President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>197</sup> Wallace H. Graham to Natalie Wallace, 10 August 1951, Family Correspondence, President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Library.

<sup>198</sup> "Mrs. Wallace in Hospital," *Independence Examiner*, 6 May 1960; "Mrs. Frank Wallace Dies," *Independence Examiner*, 26 May 1960.

<sup>199</sup> "Services for Frank Wallace to be Monday," *Independence Examiner*, 13 August 1960; "Frank Gates Wallace," *Kansas City Times*, 13 August 1960.

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at \$2,875 a piece. Thus, the Trumans and the Wallaces each paid a total of \$5,750 to keep the Natalie and Frank Wallace property a part of the family compound.<sup>200</sup>

The Death of George and May Wallace

After George Wallace retired in 1961 at age sixty-nine as maintenance superintendent at the Jackson County Highway Department, he and May enjoyed relaxing and visiting friends. In December 1962, George became seriously ill. Over the next five months, he was hospitalized several times. In early April 1963, he entered the hospital for the last time. On May 24, 1963, George Wallace died at the Independence Hospital at age seventy-one

Following George's death, May Wallace continued many of her past activities. She remained a loyal member of the Christian Church, which her grandfather had ministered from 1860 to 1900. She remained a member throughout her life. By 1990, May had been a member of the church for over eighty-five years and was the church's oldest member at the time of her death in 1993. May also continued her active participation in several literary arts clubs, including the Saturday Club and the Mary Paxton Study Class. In 1984, on the centennial of Harry Truman's year of birth, the American Association of University Women honored May Wallace for her contribution to home-making and cultural interests. She also continued her avid pursuit of bridge and her participation in the Tuesday Bridge Club. By the late 1980s, she was the last original member of the Tuesday Bridge Club still living.<sup>201</sup> After the death of Truman family historian Ethel Noland in 1971 and the death of Harry Truman in 1972, May Wallace increasingly took on the role of family historian. She obliged research historians associated with the Truman Library, the National Park Service, and other institutions, and well as independent scholars and journalists.<sup>202</sup>

After Harry Truman died in 1972, May Wallace also provided an important supportive role for Bess Truman, who continued to live in the big house next door. In 1986, Margaret Truman Daniel wrote of the two women's increasingly close and meaningful relationship as members of their family died and they both aged. "One of the happiest things about Mother's last years was the presence of her sister-in-law, May Wallace, who lived only a few dozen feet away in her house. . . . She visited Mother frequently and was a cheerful, attentive link to the past. On Mother's ninety-sixth birthday, in 1981, May was the spirit behind a festive party."<sup>203</sup> Bess lived another year and a half; May Wallace carried on alone for another decade.

May continued living at 605 West Truman Road for nearly eight more years. When she was in her early nineties, May Wallace showed clear signs of aging. Her nephew, William Carnes, began attentively looking after her needs. Then in November 1989, at age ninety-five, May Wallace left her house for the last time, when she was hospitalized after a fall in her home. In the hospital she suffered a series of small strokes. Her family decided that it was no longer wise for

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<sup>200</sup> "Last Will and Testament of Frank G. Wallace"; "Final Settlement Approved," Probate Court of Jackson County; and Warranty deeds for the sale of property from Margaret Truman and Clifton Daniel, David F. Wallace, Marion Wallace and Richard J. Brasher, and Charlotte Margaret Wallace's guardian (Harry F. Murphy) to Harry and Bess Truman and to George and May Wallace.

<sup>201</sup> "Wallace Was Historic Woman," *Independence Examiner*, 21 May 1993; "May Southern Wallace (Mrs. George P. Wallace), Historian's Files: Wallace Homes, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>202</sup> Sue Gentry, "Wallace Was Historic Woman," *Independence Examiner*, 21 May 1993.

<sup>203</sup> Truman, *Bess W. Truman*, 431.

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her to live at home alone. Not long afterward she was moved to a nursing home. On May 18, 1993, May Wallace died at the Independence Regional Health Center at age ninety-eight.<sup>204</sup>

### Disposition of the Two Wallace Houses

Following the death of Natalie and Frank Wallace in 1960, Bess Truman and May Wallace rented the house out. Doris A. Beebe, a nurse, became the first renter, who lived in the Wallace house from late 1960 to mid-1963. James Stone, a Missouri Pacific Railroad employee, and his wife Clare Stone, a teacher, rented the house from mid-1963 to late 1967 or early 1968. For about one year beginning in early 1968, a young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Taylor, rented the Wallace house for about \$100 a month. In 1969, John M. Stone, a claims examiner working for the Social Security Administration, and his wife Virginia moved into the Wallace house at 601 West Truman Road. The Stone couple remained there into 1972.<sup>205</sup>

Probably in the summer of 1972, when Harry Truman was hospitalized, first after a fall and then for gastrointestinal problems, a medical corpsmen stayed in the Wallace house. It provided immediate access to the Truman house in case medical help was needed. Following Truman's death in December 1972, Bess Truman and May Wallace put Frank and Natalie's house up for sale. Doris P. Hecker wanted to buy the house, and was disappointed when the families decided not to sell the property. Hecker then received a call from a Secret Service agent who asked if she might be interested in renting the house.<sup>206</sup>

In February 1973, Doris P. Hecker began renting the Frank and Natalie Wallace house. During Hecker's long tenure there, Bess Truman died (in 1983), leaving Margaret Truman Daniel as half owner of the property, along with May Wallace, who continued to own the other half. May Wallace, in April 1989, signed a quit claim deed transferring her share of the Frank and Natalie Wallace house to Hecker for \$1.<sup>207</sup> Doris Hecker, however, never realized her long-term desire to own the Frank and Natalie Wallace property. In early 1990, while hospitalized for pneumonia, she experienced a severe heart attack. Heart bypass surgery failed to remedy her failing heart condition and, on January 12, 1990, Doris Hecker died.<sup>208</sup> The National Park Service acquired the property in February 1991. The National Park Service has converted the Frank and Natalie Wallace house to government-furnished quarters for the park's law enforcement ranger.

After May Wallace was hospitalized in November 1989 and soon afterward moved to a nursing home, the Wallace and Daniel families, determined that May would never be able to return to her home. They then initiated discussions with the National Park Service about selling the Wallace house. The National Park Service acquired the property in 1991, and were given the keys to the house in September that year. In 2000, the May and George Wallace house is being used as interpretive staff offices and work areas.

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<sup>204</sup> "May Wallace Dies at 98"; "May Wallace Recalled as Helpful Source for Decades," *Kansas City Star*, 29 May 1993; "Acquisition of Wallace/Haukenberry Properties," c. 1990, Historian's Files, Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>205</sup> *Polk's Independence City Directory* for 1968 lists a "John Taylor" at 601 Truman Road (*Polk's Independence City Directory*, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972).

<sup>206</sup> Ron Cockrell communication with Doris Hecker, memorandum of telephone conversation, 13 December 1986, Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>207</sup> "Quit Claim Deed," April 1, 1989, No. I1902P 779, both in Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

<sup>208</sup> *Polk's Independence City Directory*, 1973, 1974, 1976, 1980, 1985, 1986-87, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1993. "Acquisition of Wallace/Haukenberry Properties," no date, Historian's Files, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

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**Repositories and Collections**

City of Independence/Independence Heritage Commission

Jackson County Historical Society, Independence

Jackson County, Independence

Kansas City Public Library, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City

Mid-Continent Library, North Branch, Genealogical Section, Independence

Harry S. Truman Library, Independence

Harry S Truman National Historic Site, National Park Service, Independence

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### **Acreage of Property:**

The total area of all three parcels is 0.63 acres, which includes of 0.19 acres (the Noland house), 0.22 acres (the Frank and Natalie Wallace house), and 0.22 acres (the George and May Wallace house).

### **Verbal Boundary Description**

This amendment pertains to two discontinuous parcels. One parcel is comprised of two tax lots adjacent to each other, and sharing a boundary with the Truman house property. The second parcel consists of a single tax lot that is immediately west of the Truman house, separated only by a small, two-lane, residential street. The contiguous parcel (comprised of two tax lots) is occupied by the Frank and Natalie Wallace house, at 601 Truman Road, and the George and May Wallace house, at 605 Truman Road. The second, discontinuous, parcel is occupied by the Noland-Haulkenberry house at 216 North Delaware Street.

The Noland parcel at 216 North Delaware Street encompasses part of lots 4 and 5 in Moore's Addition to the City of Independence. It is located in section 3 of township 49 north, range 32 west of the 5<sup>th</sup> principal meridian in the City of Independence, County of Jackson, State of Missouri. The legal description of this parcel is presented in metes and bounds. That legal description is presented below, under "Legal Descriptions."

The Frank and Natalie Wallace property at 601 Truman Road adjoins the George and May Wallace parcel. The Frank and Natalie parcel encompasses the east 57.09 feet of lot 1 in Moore's Addition. The George and May Wallace parcel at 605 Truman Road encompasses the west 50 feet of the east 100 feet of lot 1, less the east 7.09 feet, in Moore's Addition, plus the west 14.18 feet of lot 1 in Moore's Addition. The overall dimensions of the two Wallace properties are 116.99 feet by 165 feet. Both of these parcels are located in section 3 of township 49 north, range 32 west of the 5<sup>th</sup> principal meridian in the City of Independence, County of Jackson, State of Missouri. This two-tax-lot parcel shares a boundary with the Truman house property. The west boundary of this parcel is the east boundary of the Truman property. The legal descriptions of these two tax lots are presented below, under "Legal Descriptions."

### **Boundary Justification**

The two parcels described in this National Register amendment to the Truman National Historic Site encompass three tax lots (described above), whose residents were related to and associated with Harry S and Bess Truman during the properties' period of significance (1900 to 1972). One parcel is directly across North Delaware Street from the Truman house. It has one house, which was occupied by the Noland family, Harry Truman's aunt and three cousins, from 1900 to 1971, when the last Noland cousin died. The other parcel containing two tax lots and two houses and a garage, were owned and occupied by the brothers-in-law and their wives of Harry S Truman (the Frank and Natalie and the George and May Wallace houses). Their period of significance extends from 1915/1916 to the death of Harry S Truman in December 1972. This parcel adjoins the Truman property along its eastern boundary.

The boundaries of the two parcels included in this amendment, taken together with the existing boundaries of the Truman house property, create a single, spatially unified area

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interrupted only by a small, two-lane, residential street. The boundaries suggested by this amendment include buildings that have retained integrity of place, setting, architecture, and landscape features that are either as they were during the period of significance, or could be easily restored. Fee simple title for both parcels (all three tax lots) are vested in the National Park Service, and that agency has been diligently dedicated to a regimen of maintenance and repair designed to guarantee architectural and landscaping integrity.

### Legal Descriptions<sup>1</sup>

#### The Noland House, 216 North Delaware Street:

A part of Lots 4 and 5 in James F. Moore's Addition to the Town of Independence, a subdivision in Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, described by metes and bounds as follows: Beginning at a point where the West line of Delaware Street intersects the North line of the alley running East and West through said Moore's Addition as now located, said point being the Southeast corner of said Lot 4, thence North on the East line of said Lot 4, 50 feet, thence West to a point 15 feet East of the West line of said Lot 5, thence South 50 feet to the North line of said alley, thence East to the place of beginning. Except that tract described as follows: The East 25 feet of the West 40 feet of the South 50 feet of Lot 5, James F. Moore's Addition to the Town of Independence, in Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, and further except that tract described as follows: All that part of Lot 5, James F. Moore's Addition to the Town of Independence, a subdivision in Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, described as follows: Beginning at a point 63.36 feet East and 117.22 feet South of the Northwest corner of said Lot 5; thence West 23.36 feet; thence South 50 feet to the North line of a 16.5 foot alley; thence East along the North line of said alley to a point due South of point of beginning; thence North to a point of beginning. Said tract contains 0.19 of an acre, more or less.

#### The Frank and Natalie Wallace property, 601 West Truman Road

East 57.09 feet of Lot 1, James F. Moore's Addition, a subdivision in Independence, Jackson County, Missouri according to the recorded plat thereof. Subject to easements, reservations, and restrictions of record.

#### The George and May Wallace parcel, 605 West Truman Road

All of the west 50 feet of the east 100 feet of Lot 1, except the east 7.09 feet thereof, in James F. Moore's Addition to the City of Independence, Missouri, as per the recorded plat thereof. Also: a tract of land situated in Section 3, Township 49 North, Range 32 West, 5<sup>th</sup> Principal Meridian, City of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, described as follows: The west 14.18 feet of Lot 1 of James F. Moore's Addition to the City of Independence, Missouri.

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<sup>1</sup> The legal descriptions presented here are quoted from deeds conveying the properties. Capitalization, and punctuation are presented here as they appear in the deeds.

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### **Additional Documentation: Photographs**

**Noland-Haukenberry House, Truman National Historic Site**

(216 North Delaware Avenue)

Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR

June 2000

Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Looking west, main facade.

No. 1 of 17

**Noland-Haukenberry House, Truman National Historic Site**

Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR

June 2000

Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Looking northwest; main facade and south side.

No. 2 of 17

**Noland-Haukenberry House, Truman National Historic Site**

Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR

June 2000

Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Looking northwest; main facade and south side.

No. 3 of 17

**Noland-Haukenberry House, Truman National Historic Site**

Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR

June 2000

Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Looking southwest; main facade and north side.

No. 4 of 17

**Noland-Haukenberry House, Truman National Historic Site**

Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR

June 2000

Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Looking east; rear and south sides.

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**Noland-Haukenberry House, Truman National Historic Site**

Jackson County, Missouri  
Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR  
June 2000  
Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site  
Looking east; rear and north sides.  
No. 6 of 17

**Frank and Natalie Wallace House, Truman National Historic Site**

(601 Truman Road)  
Jackson County, Missouri  
Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR  
June 2000  
Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site  
Looking southeast; main façade and east side.  
No. 7 of 17

**Frank and Natalie Wallace House, Truman National Historic Site**

(601 Truman Road)  
Jackson County, Missouri  
Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR  
June 2000  
Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site  
Looking southwest; main façade and west side.  
No. 8 of 17

**Frank and Natalie Wallace House, Truman National Historic Site**

(601 Truman Road)  
Jackson County, Missouri  
Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR  
June 2000  
Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site  
Looking northeast; west and south rear sides.  
No. 9 of 17

**Frank and Natalie Wallace House, Truman National Historic Site**

(601 Truman Road)  
Jackson County, Missouri  
Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR  
November 2000  
Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site  
Looking north; rear and east sides.  
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**Frank & May Wallace and George & May Wallace House, Truman National Historic Site**

(601 Truman Road, right, and 605 Truman Road, left)  
Jackson County, Missouri  
Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR  
November 2000  
Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site  
Looking northwest; rear sides and yards of both houses.  
No. 11 of 17

**George and May Wallace House, Truman National Historic Site**

(605 Truman Road)  
Jackson County, Missouri  
Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR  
June 2000  
Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site  
Looking southwest; main façade and east side.  
No. 12 of 17

**George and May Wallace House, Truman National Historic Site**

(605 Truman Road)  
Jackson County, Missouri  
Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR  
June 2000  
Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site  
Looking southeast; main façade, east side, and rear addition.  
No. 13 of 17

**George and May Wallace House, Truman National Historic Site**

(605 Truman Road)  
Jackson County, Missouri  
Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR  
June 2000  
Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site  
Looking north; rear south side and east side.  
No. 14 of 17

**George and May Wallace House, Truman National Historic Site**

(605 Truman Road)  
Jackson County, Missouri  
Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR  
June 2000  
Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site  
Looking east; west side.  
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**George and May Wallace House, Truman National Historic Site**

(605 Truman Road)

Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR

June 2000

Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Looking north; south (rear) and west sides of rear addition.

No. **16** of 17

**May Wallace Garage, Truman National Historic Site**

(605 Truman Road)

Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR

June 2000

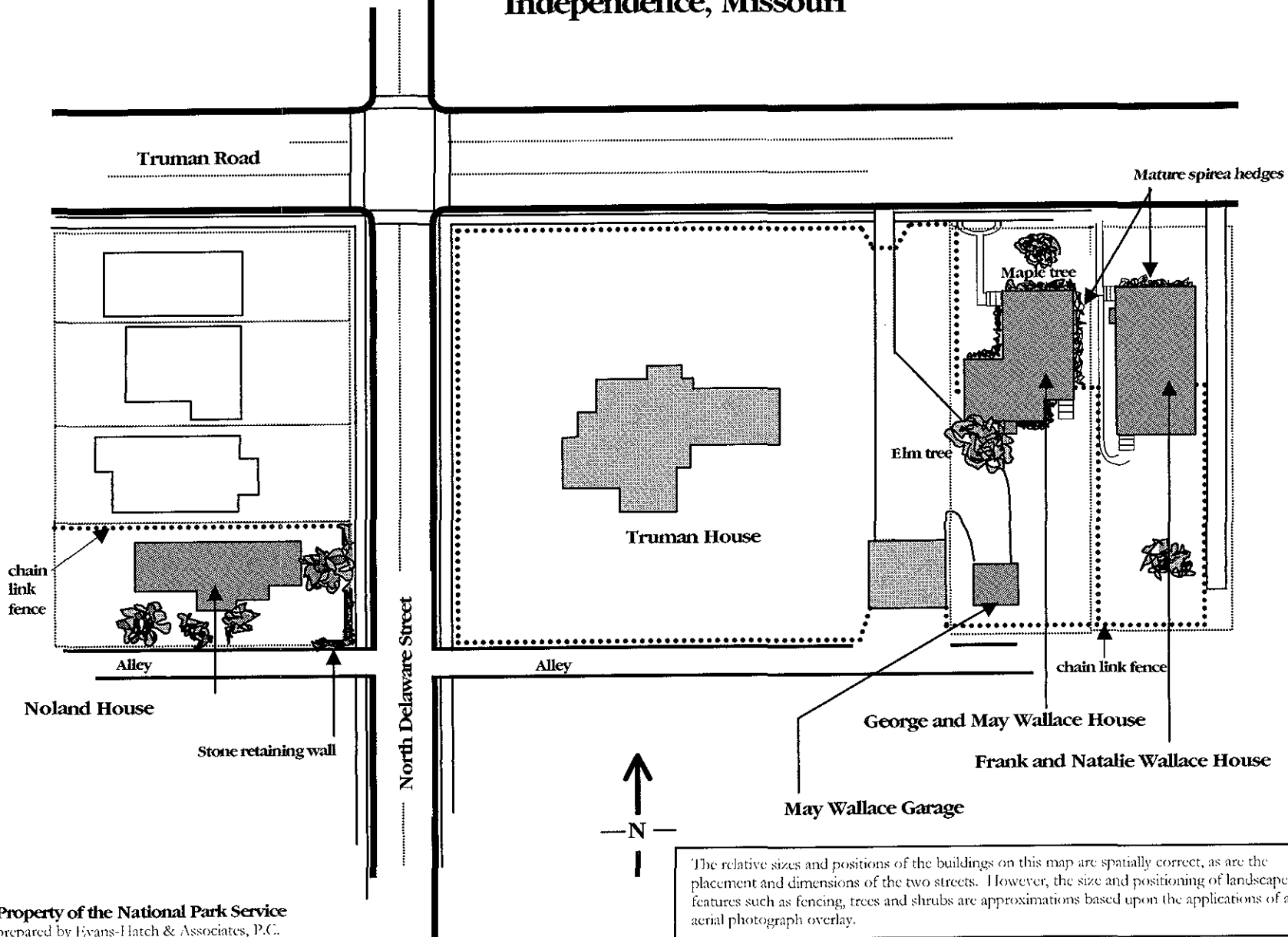
Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Looking south, main façade and west side of garage.

No. **17** of 17



# Harry S Truman National Historic Site Independence, Missouri



Property of the National Park Service  
prepared by Evans-Hatch & Associates, P.C.

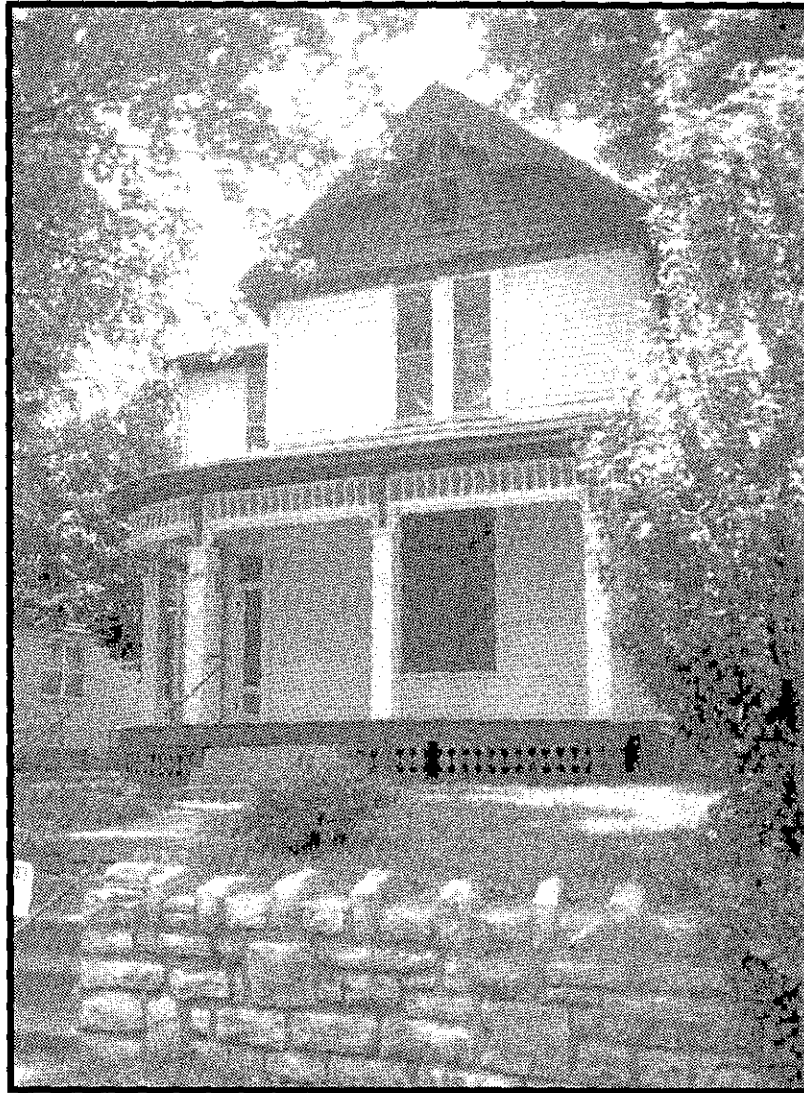
The relative sizes and positions of the buildings on this map are spatially correct, as are the placement and dimensions of the two streets. However, the size and positioning of landscape features such as fencing, trees and shrubs are approximations based upon the applications of an aerial photograph overlay.

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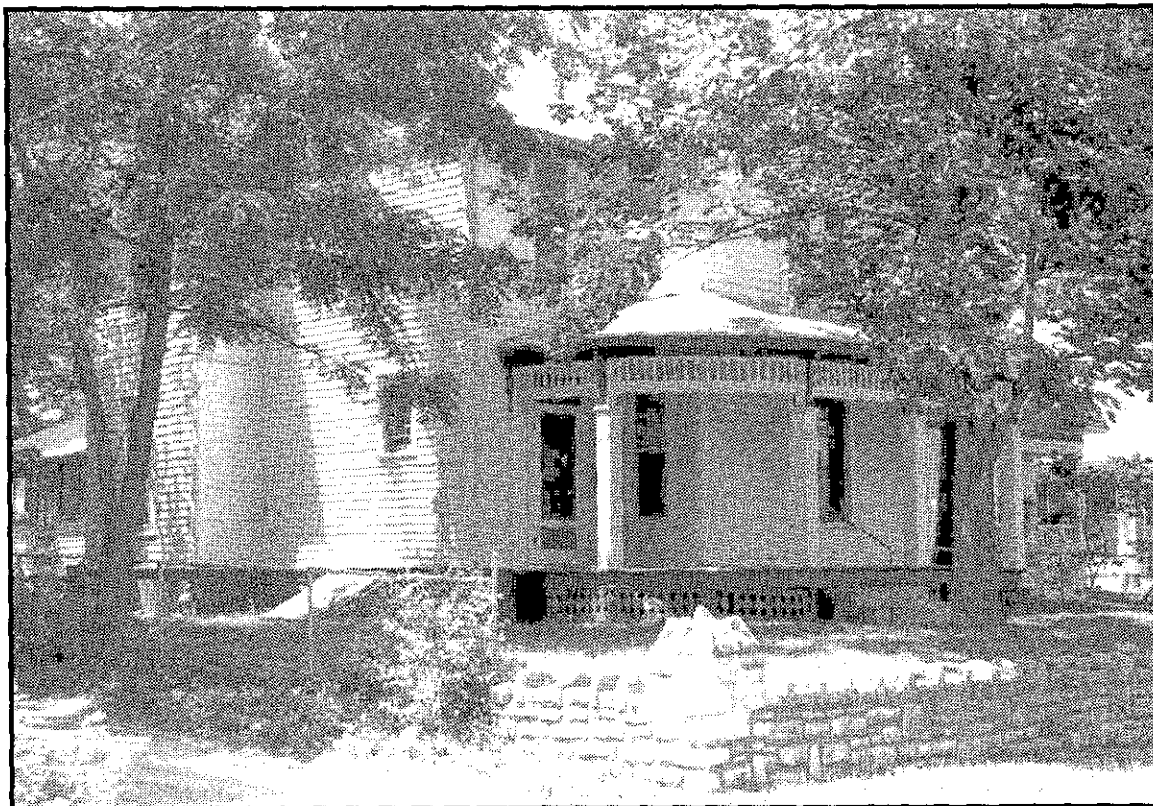
**Noland House, Truman National Historic Site**  
(216 North Delaware Street)  
Jackson County, Missouri  
Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR  
June 2000  
Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site  
Looking west, main facade  
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**Noland House, Truman National Historic Site**

(216 North Delaware Street)

Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR

June 2000

Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Looking northwest; main façade and south side

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**Noland House, Truman National Historic Site**  
(216 North Delaware Street)  
Jackson County, Missouri  
Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR  
June 2000  
Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site  
Looking northwest; main façade and south side  
No. 3 of 17

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**Noland House, Truman National Historic Site**

(216 North Delaware Street)

Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR  
June 2000

Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Looking southwest; main façade and north side

No. 4 of 17

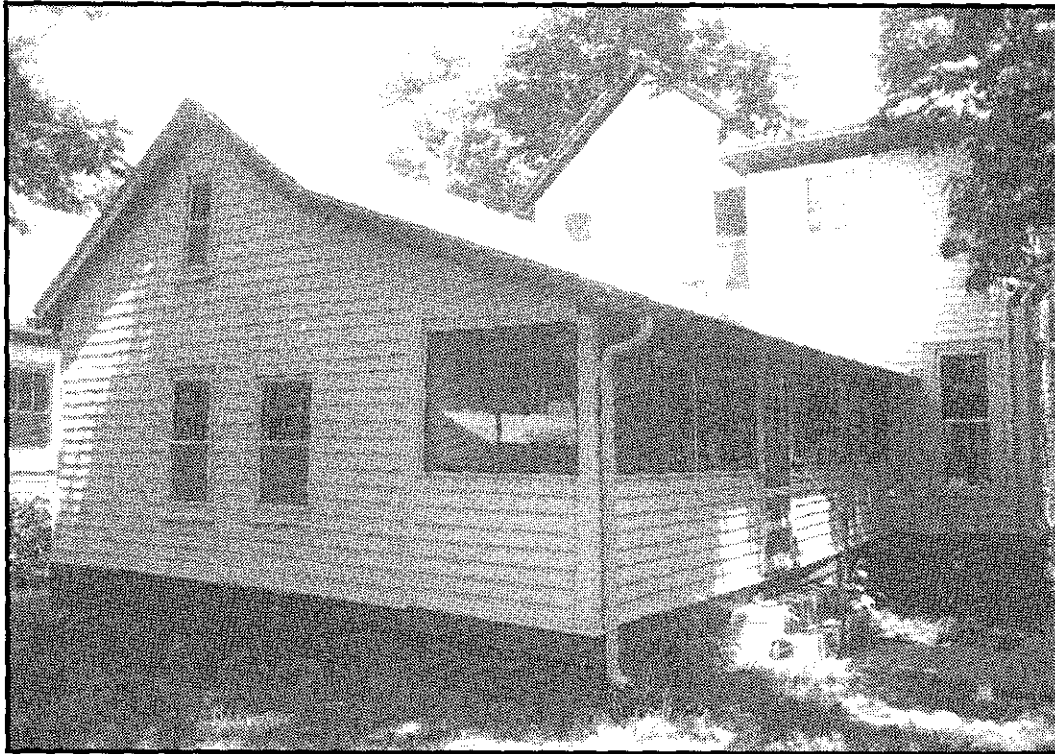
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**Noland House, Truman National Historic Site**  
(216 North Delaware Street)  
Jackson County, Missouri  
Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR  
June 2000  
Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site  
Looking east; rear and south sides  
No. 5 of 17

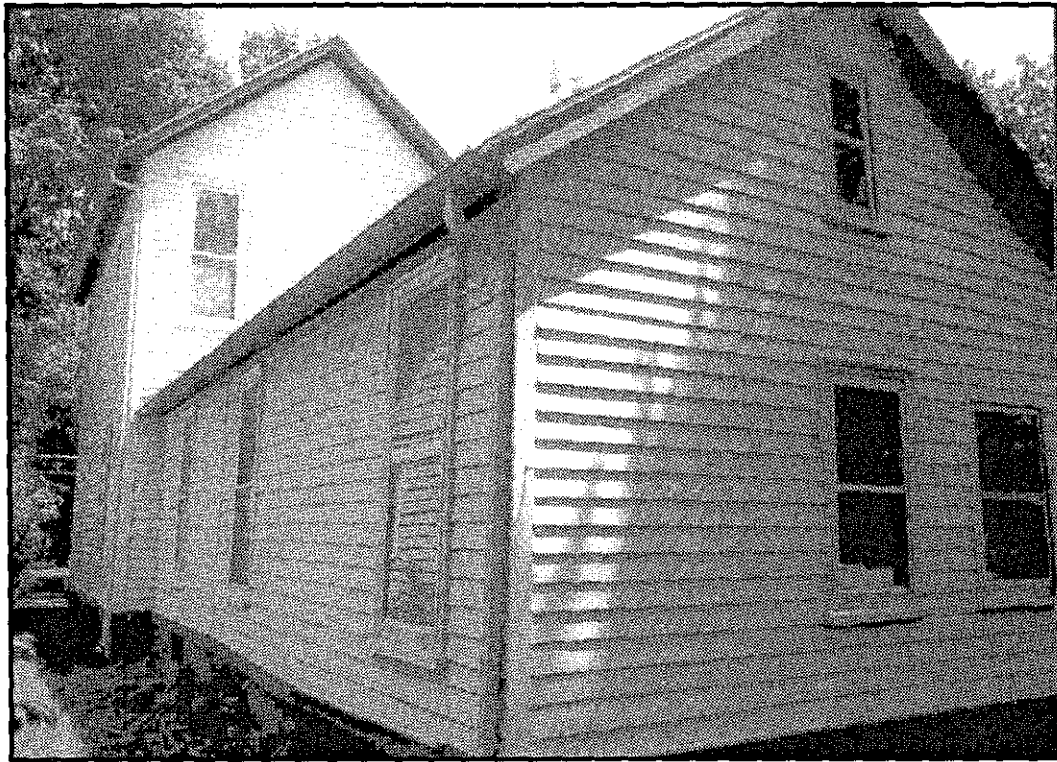
United States Department of the Interior  
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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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**Noland House, Truman National Historic Site**

(216 North Delaware Street)

Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR

June 2000

Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Looking east; rear and north sides

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**Frank and Natalie Wallace House, Truman National Historic Site**

(601 West Truman Road)

Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR

June 2000

Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Looking southeast; main façade and west side

No. 7 of 17

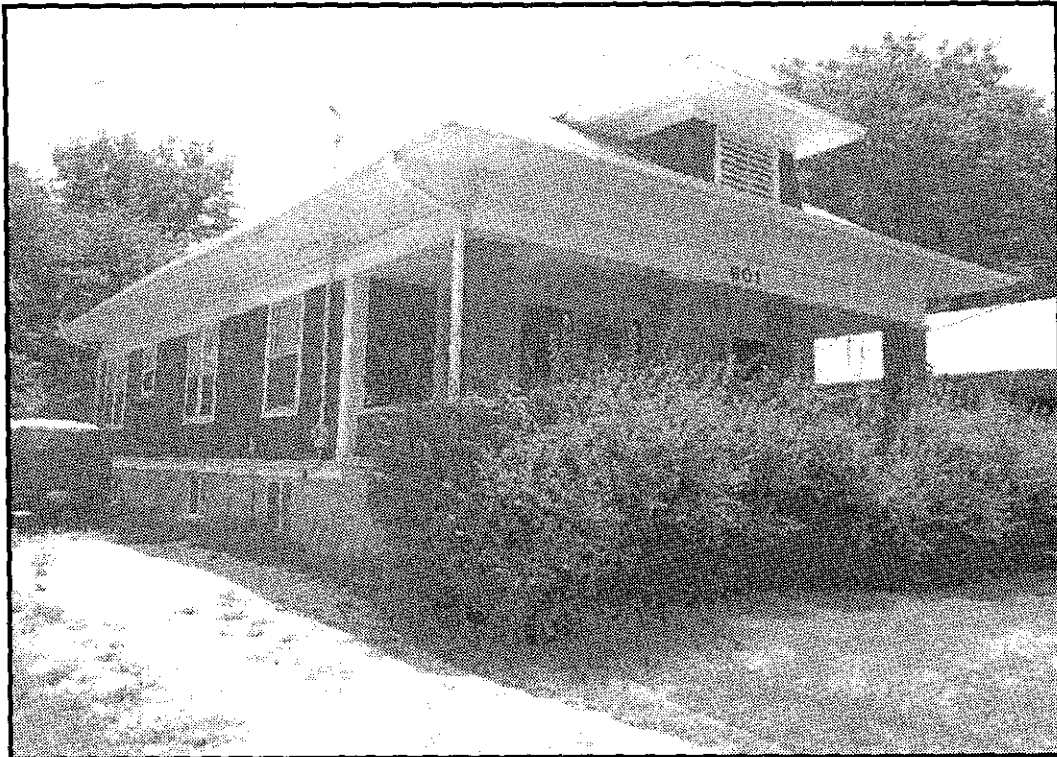


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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
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**Frank and Natalie Wallace House, Truman National Historic Site**

(601 West Truman Road)

Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR

June 2000

Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Looking southwest; main façade and east side

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**Frank and Natalie Wallace House, Truman National Historic Site**

(601 West Truman Road)

Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR

June 2000

Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Looking northeast; west side and south rear sides

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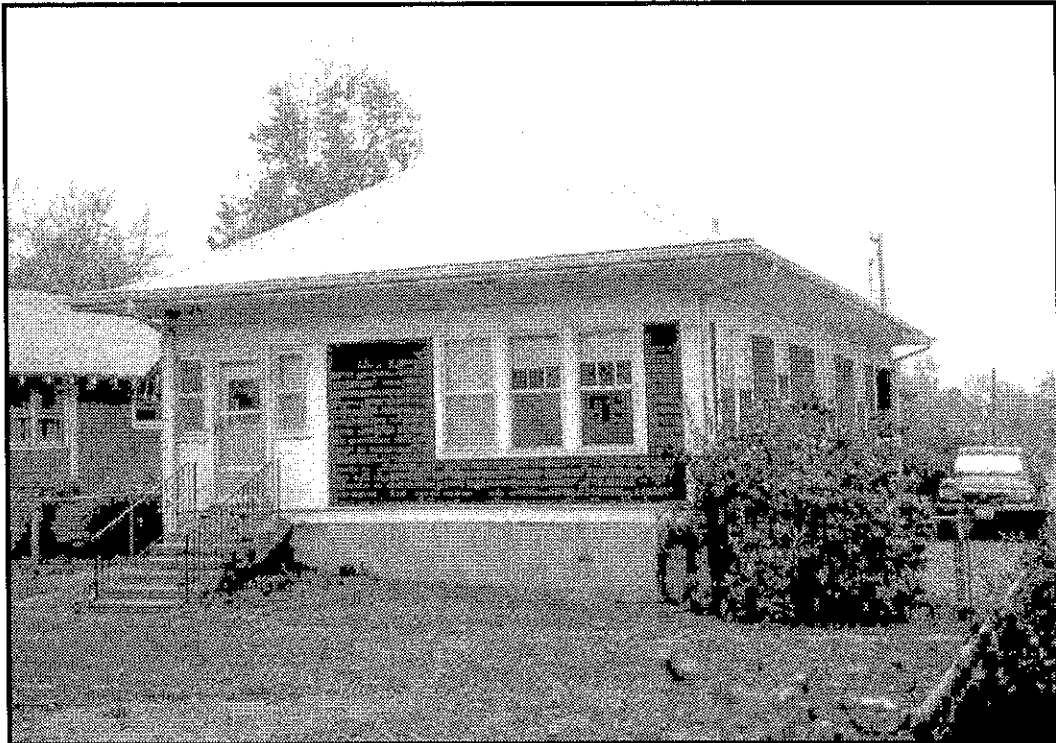
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**Frank and Natalie Wallace House, Truman National Historic Site**

(601 Truman Road)

Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR

November 2000

Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Looking north; rear and east sides.

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**Frank & May Wallace and George & May Wallace Houses,  
Truman National Historic Site**

(601 Truman Road, right, and 605 Truman Road, left)  
Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR  
November 2000

Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site  
Looking northwest; rear sides and yards of both houses.  
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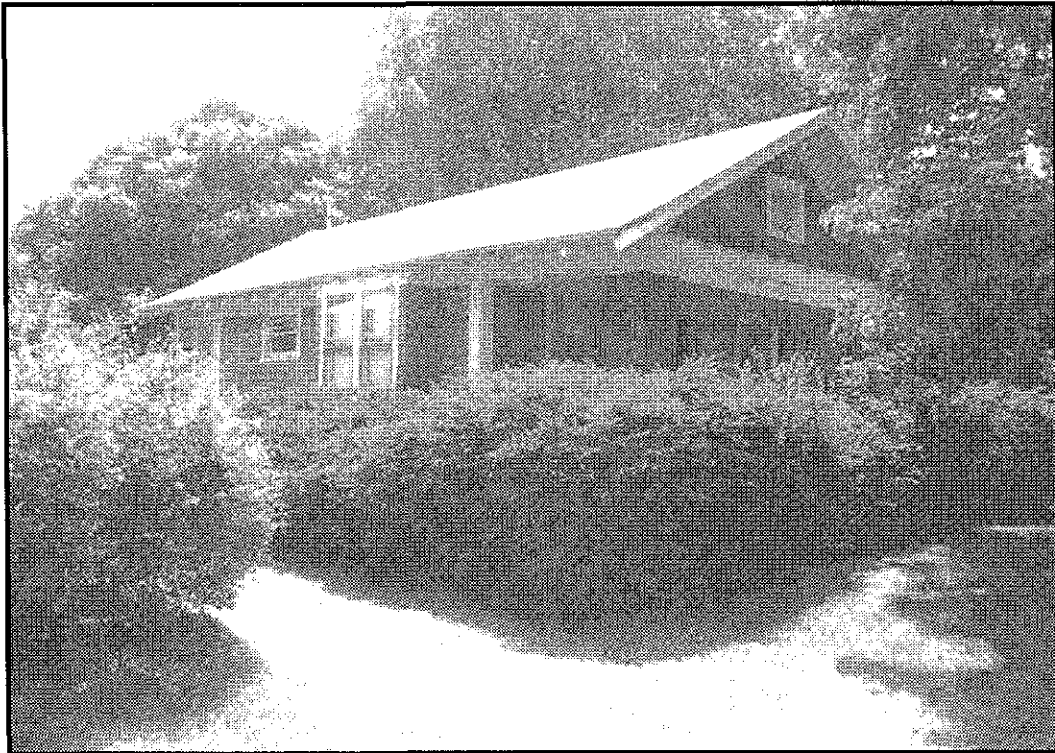
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National Park Service

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**George and May Wallace House, Truman National Historic Site**

(605 West Truman Road)

Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR

June 2000

Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Looking southwest; main façade and east side

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**George and May Wallace House, Truman National Historic Site**

(605 West Truman Road)

Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR

June 2000

Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Looking southeast; main façade, east side, and rear addition

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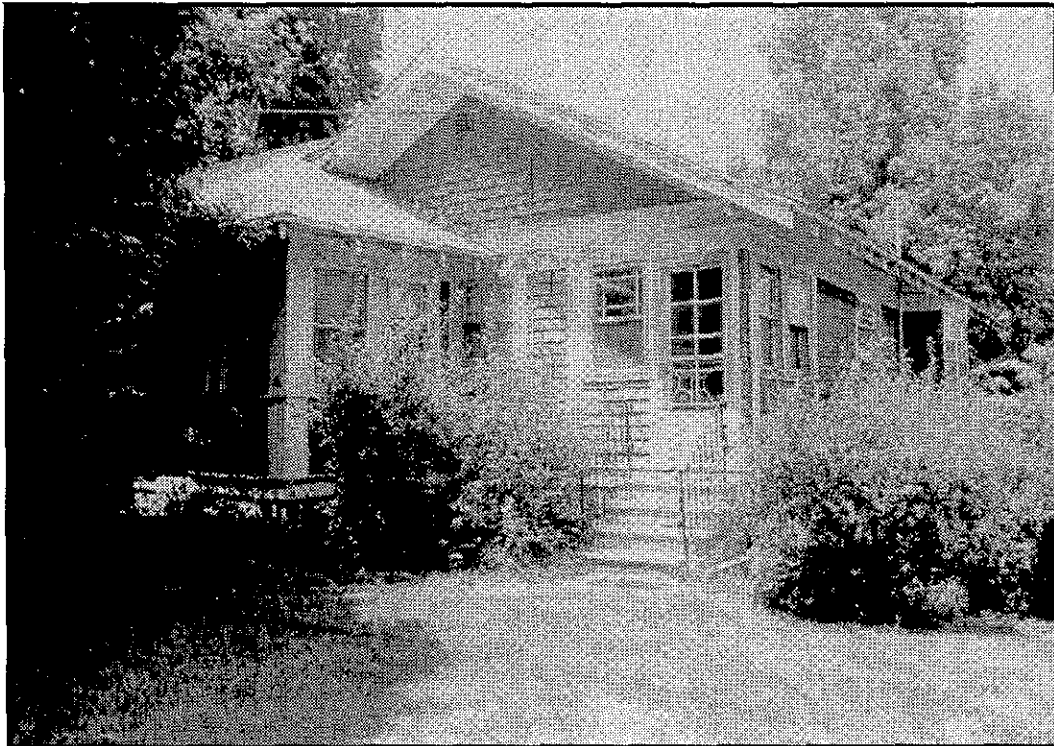
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National Park Service

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**George and May Wallace House, Truman National Historic Site**

(605 West Truman Road)

Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR

June 2000

Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Looking north; rear south side and east side

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**George and May Wallace House, Truman National Historic Site**

(605 West Truman Road)

Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR

June 2000

Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Looking east; west side

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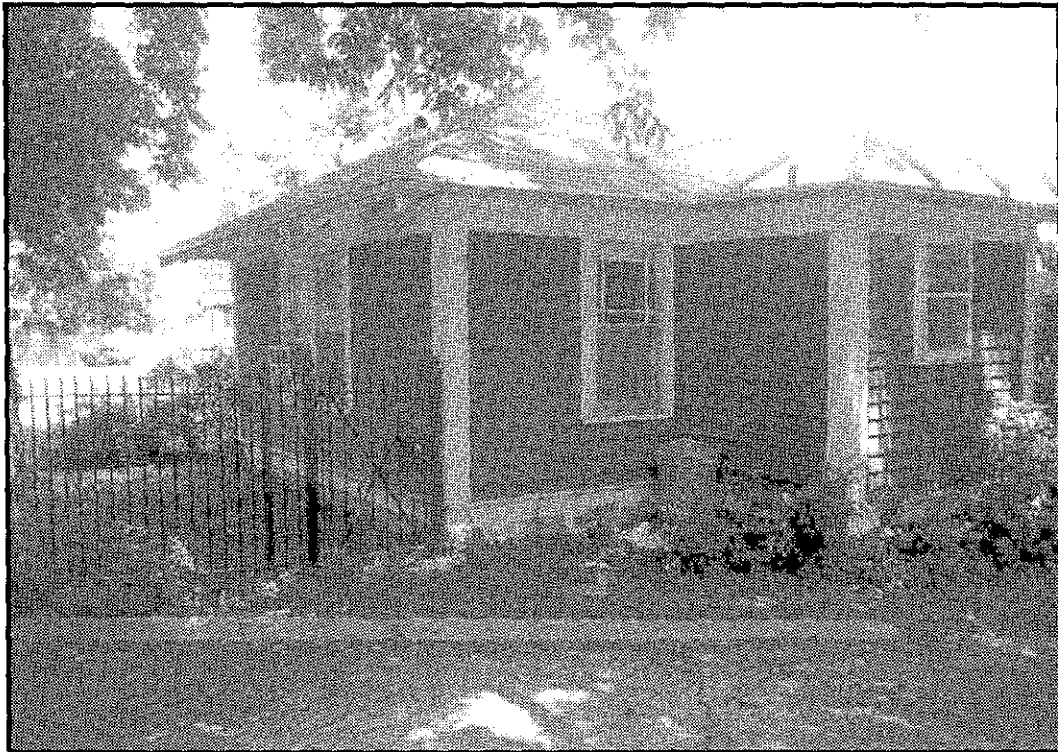
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**George and May Wallace House, Truman National Historic Site**

(605 West Truman Road)

Jackson County, Missouri

Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR

June 2000

Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Looking northeast at the rear, south and west sides

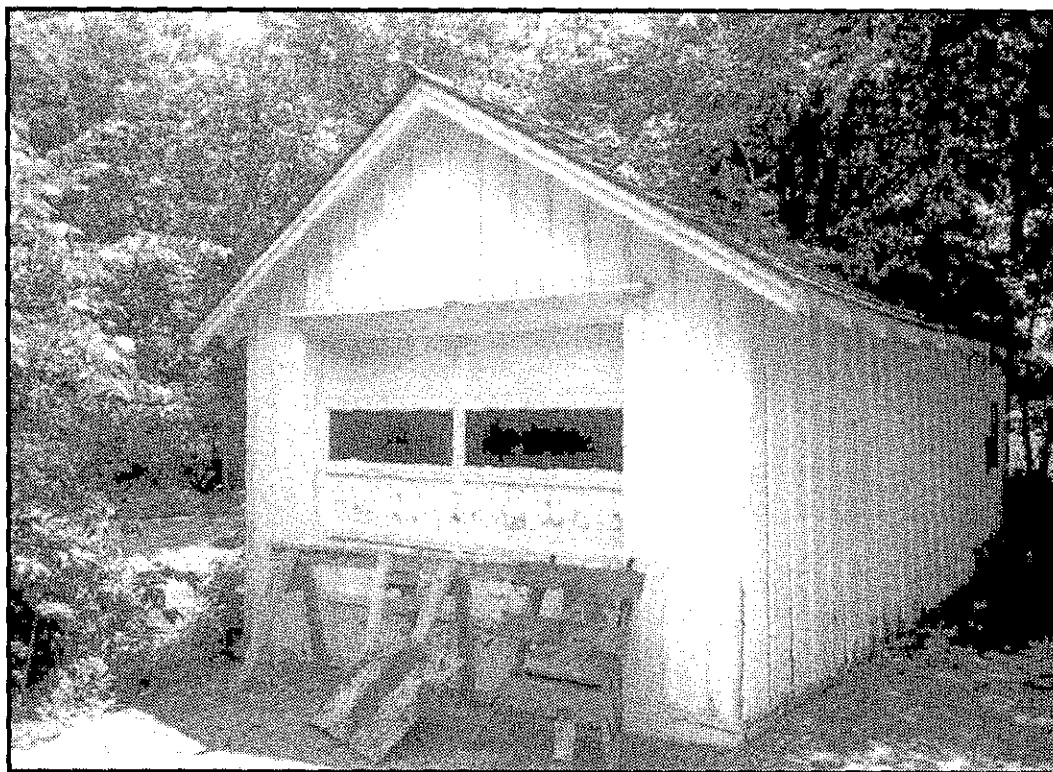
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**May Wallace Garage, Truman National Historic Site**  
(605 West Truman Road)  
Jackson County, Missouri  
Photographer: Evans-Hatch & Associates, Silverton, OR  
June 2000  
Neg. at Harry S Truman National Historic Site  
Looking south, main façade and west side  
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