



Foundation Document Overview

Harry S Truman National Historic Site

Missouri



Contact Information

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Purpose



The purpose of HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE is to preserve and protect President Truman's home and related properties in Independence, and the Truman Farm in Grandview, Missouri, including all related artifacts, in order to interpret Mr. Truman's life in both communities, as well as his legacy.



Significance

Significance statements express why Harry S Truman National Historic Site resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The park provides a physical context of Harry S Truman's rise from ambitious young farmer through military commander, failed businessman, and elected official to president of the United States, as well as of his attempt to resume a private life, providing an outstanding example of the fulfillment of the American ideal that anyone can grow up to be president.
- Harry S Truman was president of the United States from 1945 to 1953, a time of great change in world history. The many momentous actions he took and events that occurred during his administration include dropping two atomic bombs that ended World War II in the Pacific theater, the advent of the Cold War, the entry of the United States into the Korean War, the diplomatic recognition of the State of Israel, and the executive order abolishing segregation in the U.S. armed forces and ordering full integration of all the services.



Significance

- The character traits Harry S Truman exhibited before, during, and after his time as president (e.g., decisiveness, forthrightness, sense of fairness, political skill, and common sense), were grounded in, and influenced by, his relationships with family, friends, and community members who lived and worked in and around what now make up Harry S Truman National Historic Site. Despite this power, he remained a modest, humble man.
- Harry S Truman National Historic Site's structures, landscapes, Independence neighborhood, and museum collections have a high degree of integrity and are an unusually complete record of a president's life and experiences from youth until his death.
- After his retirement from the White House, Harry S Truman chose to return to his home in Independence where he was valued as an important elder statesman and inclusive leader whom others sought out for counsel and advice. Truman took seriously his role in preserving a record of his administration and the legacy of his presidency. His decision to build his presidential library less than a mile from his Independence home allowed him to be intimately involved in every detail of its creation and operation. Truman's library would serve as an exemplar for presidential libraries to come.



Resources, Values, and Interpretive Themes

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Truman Home, Including the Carriage House and Cultural Landscape**
- **Frank Wallace and George Wallace Homes, Cultural Landscapes, and the George Wallace Garage**
- **Noland Home and Cultural Landscape**
- **Truman Farm Home, Associated Historic Structures, and Cultural Landscape**
- **Museum Collections**

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- **Character and Leadership.** The current popularity of Harry S Truman and his decisions as president are partially attributed to his positive and optimistic character traits and leadership skills that were grounded in his Missouri upbringing and shaped by family, community, relationships, military training, and experiences.
- **Retirement in Independence.** After rising to the highest office in the land, President Harry S Truman and his wife, Bess, returned in retirement to the family home in Independence, Missouri, and sought to assume a lifestyle that was relatively unchanged by the power and fame of the White House, while still fulfilling their responsibilities as former president and first lady.
- **Political and Social Legacy and Memorialization.** Harry S Truman was a modest man of ambition who, as president, led the United States from isolationism into the age of international involvement and, in retirement, resisted memorialization, while still working to shape his legacy as president by writing his memoirs, opening his library, and supporting the establishment of the national historic landmark district. To help preserve President Truman's life and legacy, Mrs. Truman left the Truman Home, its contents, and grounds to the American people upon her death in 1982.

Description

Harry S Truman National Historic Site, located in Independence and Grandview, Missouri, preserves homes and sites significant in the life of the 33rd president of the United States. Harry S Truman National Historic Site was authorized by Congress on May 23, 1983.

The site has two units: the Independence unit (1.41 acres), which includes the home of Bess (Wallace) Truman's grandparents that later became the Truman family home at 219 North Delaware Street; the Noland Home at 216 North Delaware Street where Truman's aunt, uncle, and cousins lived during his courtship of Bess Truman; and 601 and 605 West Truman Road, where Mrs. Truman's brothers George and Frank and their wives lived. The Grandview unit (11.18 acres), approximately 20 miles south of Independence, preserves the Farm Home and a small acreage where Truman lived from ages 22 to 33 (1906-1917).

Built during the Victorian Era, the Truman's house in Independence is elegant, yet understated. The Truman Home was built by Bess Truman's grandfather and completed in 1885. Harry and Bess made this their home for most of their adult lives—before, during, and after their time in the White House. When Mrs. Truman died in 1982, she willed the house and its contents to the United States, allowing the National Park Service to preserve both the original furnishings and their arrangement, thereby providing visitors with the opportunity to experience an authentic look into the private life of a United States president. Upon their return to Independence in 1953 after the presidency, the Trumans claimed they “modernized” their old home. Yet even as recently as the time of Mrs. Truman's death in 1982, the house retained a distinct Victorian flavor. It is obvious the Trumans made few changes to their home during their retirement years. In addition, the Truman, Noland, and two Wallace Homes are within the Harry S Truman Historic District National Historic Landmark. While this neighborhood changed over the course of his life, it has changed little since the president's death in 1972, and forms an important backdrop for the Truman story in Independence.

Located in Grandview, Missouri, the Truman Farm is a nationally significant site associated with former U.S. President Harry S Truman. The Truman Farm is the last surviving remnant of the family farming operation that influenced the character and work ethic of Harry S Truman.

The Truman Farm occupies just over 10 acres, which is a small portion of the original land purchased and cultivated by President Truman's maternal grandfather, Solomon Young, beginning in 1867.

An initial 5.25 acres were added to the Harry S Truman National Historic Site on December 14, 1993, when the U.S. Congress authorized its acquisition, by donation, from Jackson County, Missouri. An additional 5 acres were added in 2011 by Public Law 108-396.

The property is a small agrarian complex, set among a growing commercial and residential area, defined by a series of vernacular structures and the Truman Farm Home. In addition to the Farm Home, the grounds include a poultry house and garage where Truman stored his Stafford automobile, all of which are original features of the farm. Numerous archeological remains are related to nonextant agricultural structures and uses, including barn foundations.

Overall, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, taken in conjunction with Harry S Truman Historic District National Historic Landmark, allows visitors to explore the personal landscape where Harry S Truman spent the majority of his life. The park's tangible resources represent an unparalleled look at the growth and development of the 33rd president.

