



## The Wallaces



Bess Wallace (left), Emma Southern (May Wallace's mother), and May Wallace. *Truman Library*

Frank Wallace Home at 601 W. Truman Road. *NPS Photo*

### A Family Affair

Harry Truman gained more than just a wife when he married Bess Wallace in 1919. With the marriage, he acquired an extended family. A tight-knit group for many years, they often drew upon each other for help and support.

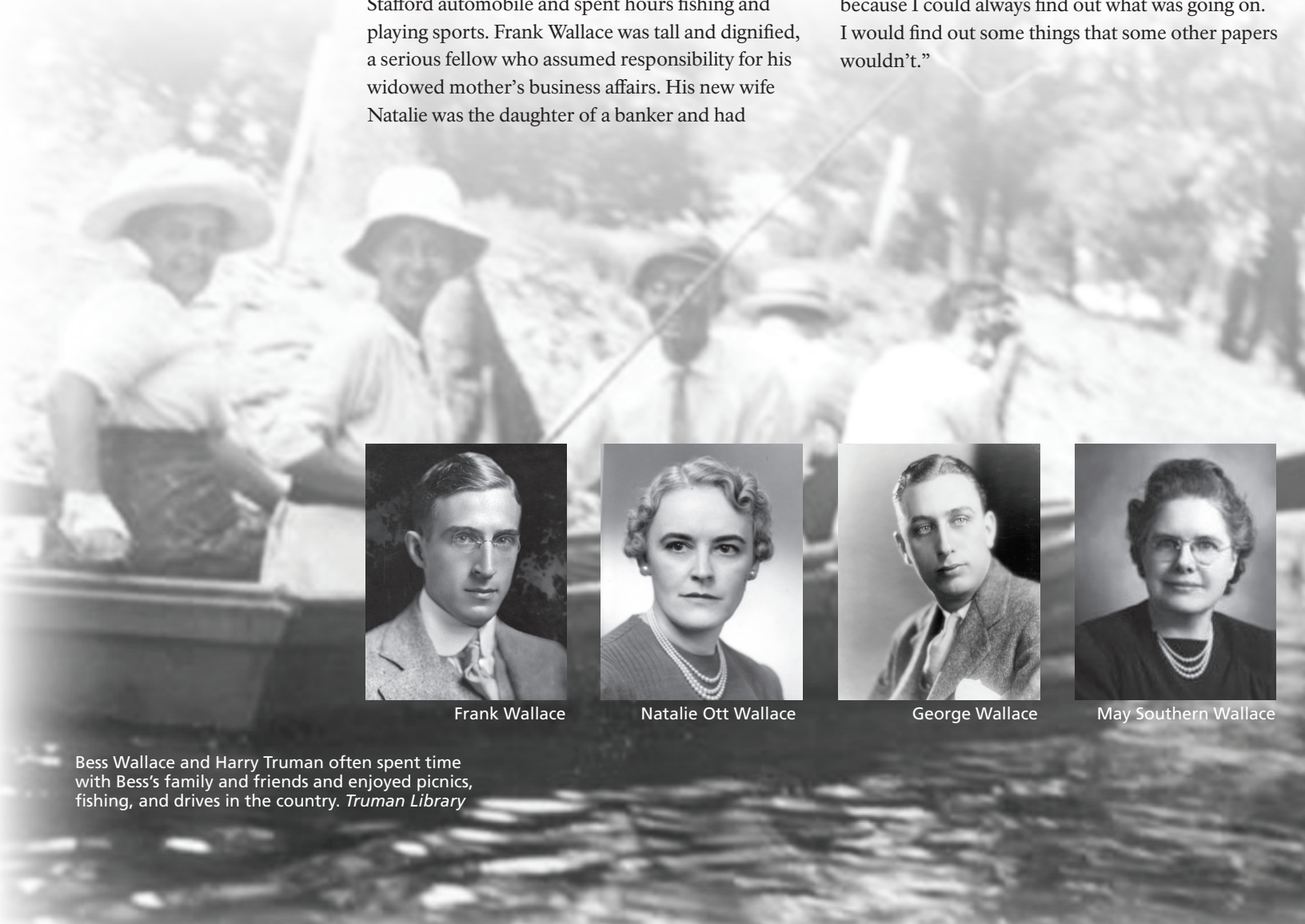
### Old Friends

In the early 1900s, George Wallace and May Southern, Frank Wallace and Natalie Ott, and Bess Wallace and Harry Truman were three couples, all in their 20s, all in love, and all close friends. None of them knew it at the time, but they were destined to spend the rest of their lives together. Frank, George, and Bess were siblings, and after the three couples were married, all six were related to each other.

The group often rode around town in Harry's Stafford automobile and spent hours fishing and playing sports. Frank Wallace was tall and dignified, a serious fellow who assumed responsibility for his widowed mother's business affairs. His new wife Natalie was the daughter of a banker and had

traveled widely, including a nine-month trip to Europe—something rare for Independence residents.

George Wallace was the handyman; if something needed fixing, the family took it to George. His wife, May, eventually found herself the family spokesperson after her brother-in-law Harry became President of the United States. One local reporter remembered, "She was wonderful, because I could always find out what was going on. I would find out some things that some other papers wouldn't."



Frank Wallace



Natalie Ott Wallace



George Wallace



May Southern Wallace

Bess Wallace and Harry Truman often spent time with Bess's family and friends and enjoyed picnics, fishing, and drives in the country. *Truman Library*

## The Family Compound

When Frank Wallace married Natalie Ott, and George Wallace married May Southern, they received a special wedding gift from their grandfather, George Porterfield Gates. Each newlywed couple received a 50-foot lot at the rear of the Gates property, behind the Truman Home today.

Two simple bungalows were constructed on these lots between 1915-1916. The Wallace homes provided a familiar, relaxing atmosphere that often

served as a refuge for Harry and Bess during their Washington years.

Opening the big house was a chore for short trips home, so the Trumans often found themselves as overnight guests of their Wallace relatives. When the Trumans came home for longer visits, George and May helped by opening and airing out the big house and closing it up after the Trumans departed.



Frank and Natalie Wallace (left) and George and May Wallace (right) were part of the Truman's inner circle. Their well-preserved homes illustrate the strong bonds of a close-knit family. *Truman Library*

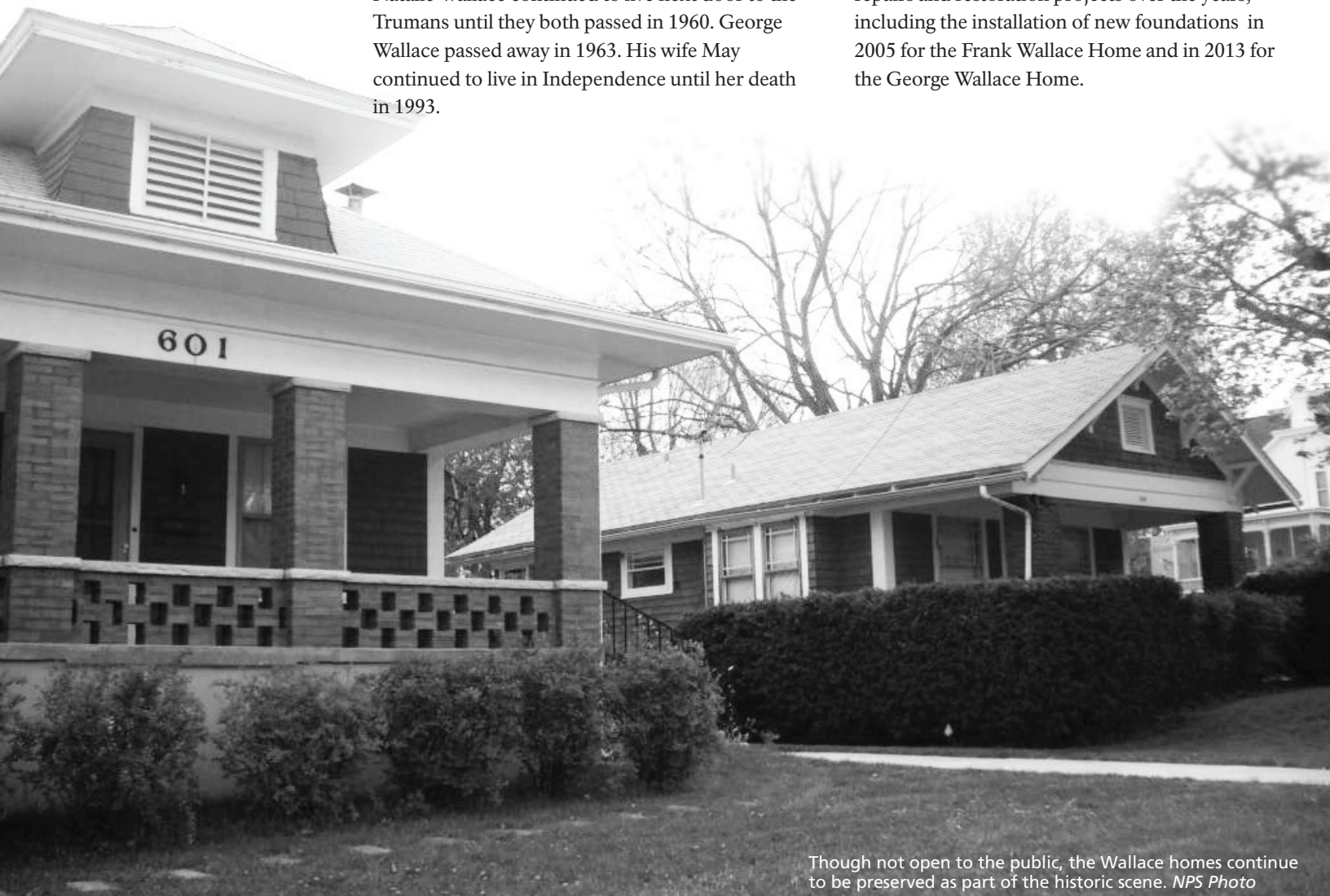
## Wallace Homes Today

The Wallaces were more than relatives, friends, or neighbors; they were part of a tightly-knit support group for the President. They provided him with domestic calm and balance in the midst of a storm of politics, government, and celebrity.

The Wallaces were valued people in Truman's inner circle and caretakers of his private life. Frank and Natalie Wallace continued to live next door to the Trumans until they both passed in 1960. George Wallace passed away in 1963. His wife May continued to live in Independence until her death in 1993.

The Frank and George Wallace homes represent President Truman's close, lifelong relationships and his commitment to home, family, and community. For this reason and others, the homes became part of Harry S Truman National Historic Site in 1991.

Today the homes are used as offices and park housing for staff. Both structures have undergone repairs and restoration projects over the years, including the installation of new foundations in 2005 for the Frank Wallace Home and in 2013 for the George Wallace Home.



Though not open to the public, the Wallace homes continue to be preserved as part of the historic scene. *NPS Photo*