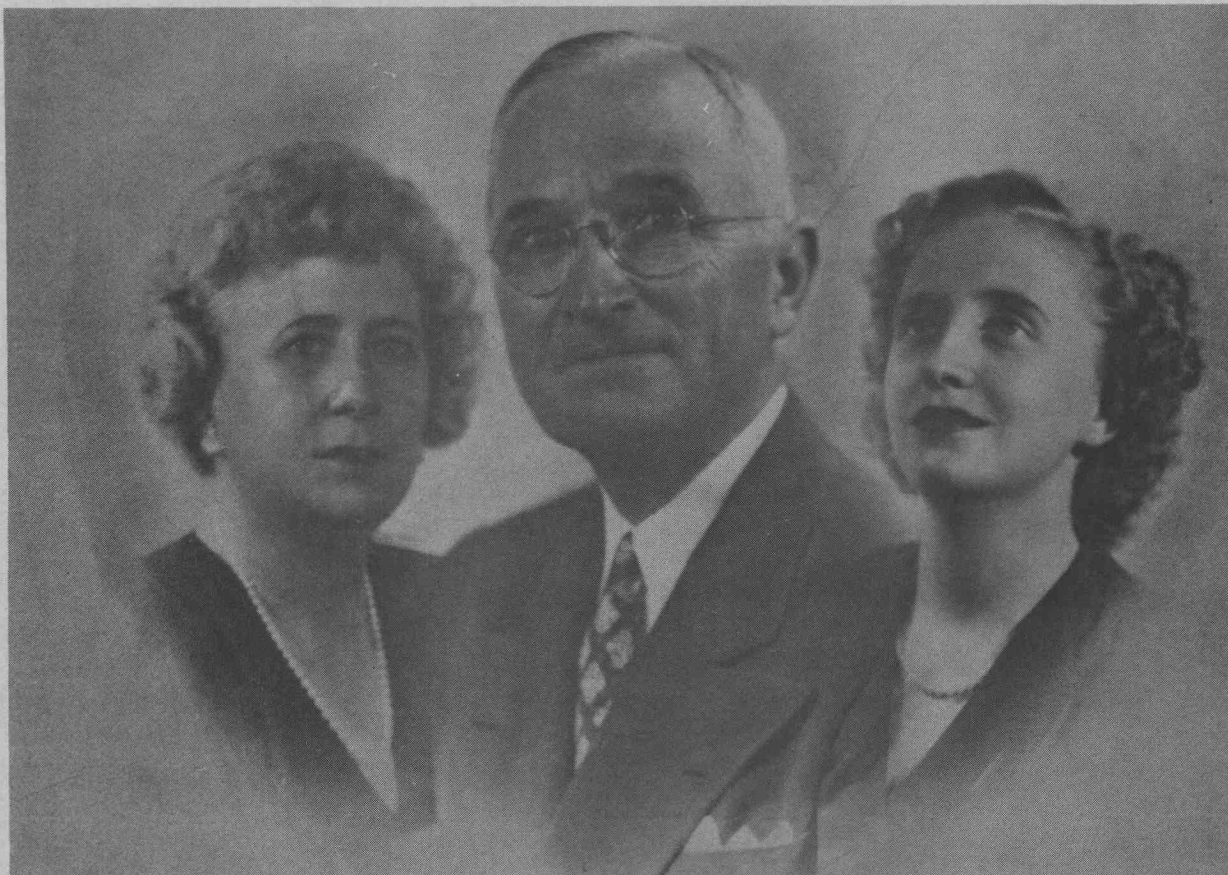


# **THE TRUMANS OF INDEPENDENCE**

## **HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY**



**HARRY S TRUMAN  
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI**

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
MIDWEST REGIONAL OFFICE**

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THE TRUMANS OF INDEPENDENCE:  
HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY  
HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

by

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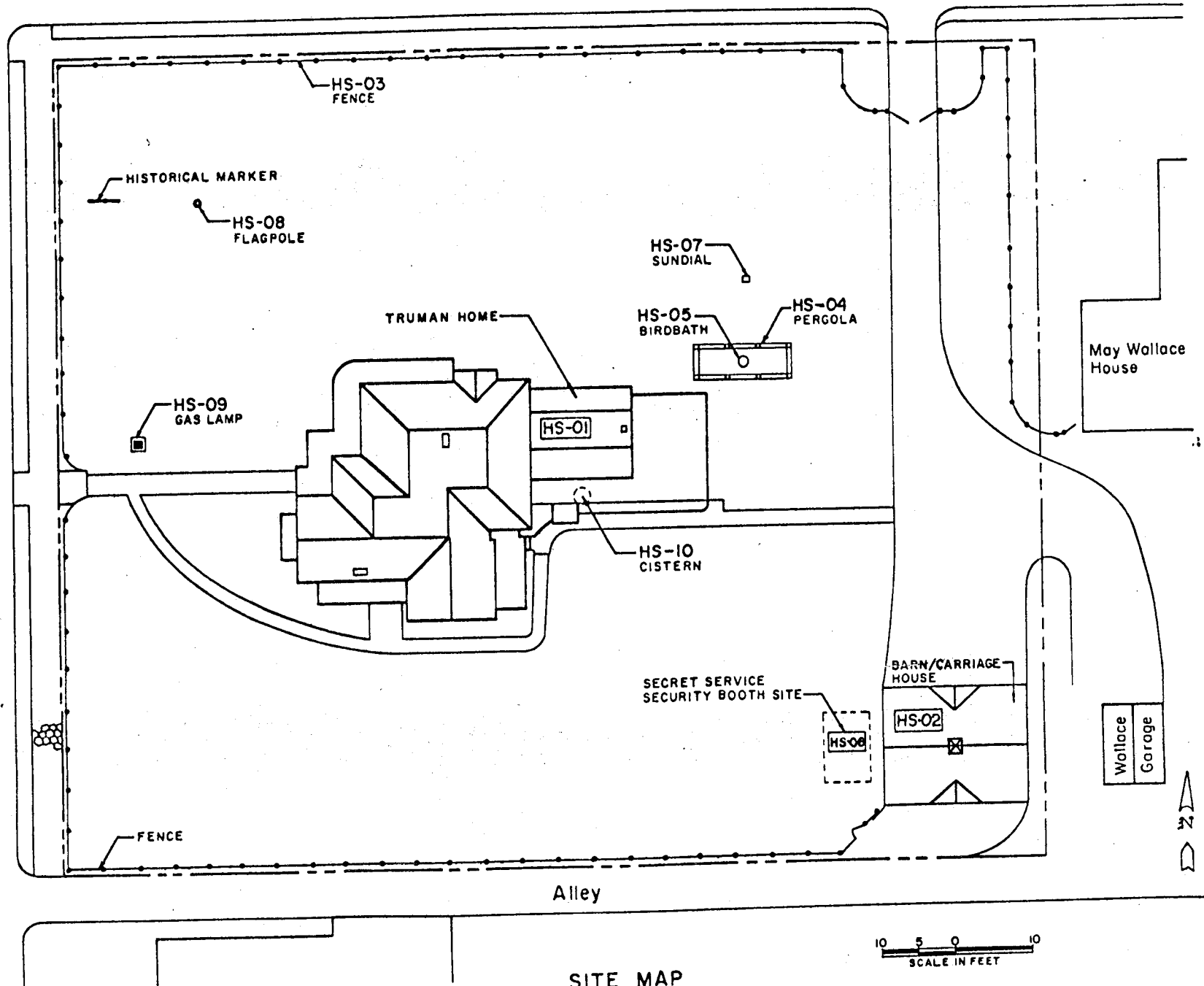
*1/17/85*

Date



North Delaware Street

Truman Road



SITE MAP  
HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

D E D I C A T I O N

To my grandparents:

Vella Virginia (Hawkins) and Lee Alfred Cockrell, Sr.

Elizabeth Frances (Stevens) and Timothy Edmond Carey

And to "The Trumans of Independence":

Harry S Truman

Bess Wallace Truman

Margaret Truman Daniel

## F O R W O R D

Just as my Historic Structures Report, History and Significance, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri (HSR, 1984), was unique in revealing the structural history of 219 North Delaware Street, so, too, does this Historic Resource Study (HRS) represent the first in-depth, comprehensive history of the Truman family in their home town.

It is a true challenge for any researcher to explore new frontiers, and this project posed many obstacles and perils.

The Gates/Wallace/Truman house never existed in a vacuum, although the outside world was seldom invited inside the comfortable, Victorian interior. The home was the private domain of this Independence family, a place, unlike the White House, where a so-called "public life" did not exist. It is for this reason, therefore, that I chose to portray 219 North Delaware in the context not only of the extended Truman family, but in the broader sense of their neighborhood, community, and Jackson County.

The Trumans of Independence should be considered the "definitive text" on any subject or issue which differs from the 1984 HSR. The HRS has the benefit of considerable additional research which corrects some information contained in the HSR, i.e. Gates/Wallace family history and structural chronology (a summer 1984 National Park Service physical investigation of the Truman home conclusively revealed that the east "kitchen" wing is pre-Civil War vintage. In defense of the HSR, I must add that the document did suggest the possibility of an 1848-50 structure!).

There are many people who gave me assistance on this project. The individuals and organizations are listed in the bibliography. To all of them go my deepest thanks for helping to make this work a reality.

Like Harry Truman, I am proud to claim Independence, Missouri, as my home town. By the time I entered the world on February 28, 1958, that "town" had become a "city." Born at Independence Hospital and Sanitarium (people always ask which section I was in) a mile due west of 219 North Delaware Street, I lived nine miles away from the Gates/Wallace/Truman house. Although I never met Harry or Bess Truman, I feel as if they are close, personal friends. The Trumans of Independence are just that kind of people.

Ron Cockrell  
Research Historian  
National Park Service

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## I N T R O D U C T I O N

The Harry S Truman National Historic Site, authorized for inclusion in the National Park System by P. L. 98-32 (97 Stat. 193) on May 23, 1983, is at 219 North Delaware Street, Independence, Jackson County, Missouri. It is 15 miles east of downtown Kansas City and less than one mile west of Independence Square. The national historic site, representing only the .77-acre Truman property itself, is on the southeast corner of North Delaware Street and Truman Road. The National Park Service operates the property as a historic house museum and interprets it to the public with guided tours.

Many appellations have been assigned to the national historic site: the Gates house or mansion, the Gates/Wallace house, the Gates/Wallace/Truman house, and the Truman home. During the Truman presidency, it was called the "Summer White House"—even in the dead of winter. Harry Truman often referred to it by address, 219 North Delaware, and so, too, does the famous address predominate in this Historic Resource Study.

The Truman home, together with its historic support structures, remained in Gates/Wallace/Truman family control from 1867 to 1982. Under the terms of Bess Wallace Truman's will, the property and its contents were bequeathed to the Federal Government. On December 8, 1972, Secretary of the Interior James G. Watt declared the "Harry S Truman National Historic Site." The National Park Service took actual possession of 219 North Delaware Street on December 12, 1982.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE EARLY HISTORY OF INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

## THE EARLY HISTORY OF INDEPENDENCE

Jackson County was established by the Missouri General Assembly on December 15, 1826, five years after the admission of the state into the Union. Three commissioners were sent to select a site for the new county seat. They chose a 160-acre tract three miles south of the Missouri River in north-central Jackson County which they called "Independence." The newly-organized Jackson County Court endorsed the site in the spring of 1827, and the sale of town lots commenced on July 9 of that year.

Settlers began to trickle into this new frontier town, principally from Kentucky and Tennessee. As the county seat, Independence grew into an important economic center for western Missouri. Its proximity to the Missouri River allowed the town to receive supplies from the river boats via wagon trains. Overland commerce from St. Louis passed through Independence as well and continued on to the west and southwest. The small Missouri town was a natural commercial center for the growing trade with Mexico. As early as 1827, Independence was the westernmost outfitting settlement for the beginning of the Santa Fe Trail.

In the winter of 1830-31, five elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints arrived in Independence. Their duty as missionaries was to convert the Indians living to the immediate west of Missouri. Church founder Joseph Smith, Jr., came to Independence



in the summer of 1831. He revealed to his followers that Jackson County was truly the "Promised Land" hence the new headquarters for the faith. He declared Independence the "City of Zion." Smith's followers, commonly referred to as Mormons, poured into Independence determined to establish their own religious community.

The Mormon migration alarmed many of the townspeople. A massive influx of the religious zealots was perceived as a threat to their own interests. The Mormon belief that Jackson County represented a promised land given by God was especially distressing. In November 1833, local residents drove the Mormons out of Independence and Jackson County. The anti-Mormon crusade was brutally effective. Every means at hand was used to expurgate the Mormon community from the region.

During this time of social upheaval, Independence merchants were reaping the benefits of being the center of the outfitting business for fur traders and mule- and ox-drawn wagon trains bound for Santa Fe. In the 1840s, the town outfitted emigrant groups bound for Oregon. A wide array of basic supplies and luxury goods flowed into Independence. In May 1846, Historian Francis Parkman observed:

Being at leisure one day I rode over to Independence. The Town was crowded. A multitude of shops had sprung up to furnish the emigrants and Santa Fe traders with necessities for their journey; and there was an incessant hammering and banging from a dozen blacksmith's sheds, where the heavy wagons were being repaired, and the horses and oxen shod. The streets were thronged with men, horses, and mules.<sup>1</sup>

Independence and Jackson County were economically dependent on the westward migration. By 1848, most of the 12,000 settlers living in Oregon had begun their journey in Independence. Upon discovering gold in California, many of the prospectors of the 1849 gold rush also swept through Independence. The small town was the starting place of the three principal trails of the 19th century American westward movement--Santa Fe, Oregon, and California.

On March 8, 1849, the Missouri General Assembly granted Independence a home-rule charter. Four months later William McCoy was elected the first mayor. Even before Mayor McCoy took the oath of office, however, the economic decline of his community loomed. Other Jackson County settlements, like Westport Landing (which was later incorporated into Kansas City), ended Independence's trade monopoly.

The issue of slavery and the Civil War combined to decimate Independence. Culturally and politically, the town was Southern. Missouri's admission to the Union as a slave-holding state caused many counties in the central section of the state to split into North-South factions. Jackson County was no exception. The 1854 passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act upset the national political balance between slave and non-slave states and broke the peace in Jackson County.

The "Border War" erupted between Missouri and the Kansas territory in 1855. In a prelude to the Civil War, Kansas Jayhawkers (pro-Union) and pro-South Missouri guerrillas led by William Clarke Quantrill and others engaged in repeated raids across the state line. Referred to as "Bleeding Kansas," the conflict found many western Missouri counties bleeding, too. Border War marauding kept Jackson County in a constant state of terror and the instability caused the Independence outfitting trade irreparable harm. It all but collapsed as the Civil War began in 1861.

Although sympathetic, Missouri did not follow her fellow slave states and secede from the Union. In Jackson County, Kansas City was confidently pro-Union while Independence and eastern Jackson County served as a haven for Quantrill's guerrillas and other rebels. To maintain Jackson County under Union control, Independence was made a Federal post and occupied by Union troops on June 7, 1862. On August 11, 1862, in the first Battle of Independence, Confederate soldiers and guerrillas invaded the town and temporarily drove the Federal occupiers out. With the region in open revolt, Union military strategists realized that Jackson County was the key to keeping western Missouri, if not the entire state, for the North. A bold initiative was needed to smash pro-Confederate public sentiment.

Confederate resistance in western Missouri was crippled when punishment for Southern sympathizers came on August 25, 1863. U.S.

Brigadier General Thomas A. Ewing issued infamous Order Number 11, a military directive which punished innocent and guilty alike. Order Number 11 was issued following the burning of Lawrence, Kansas, by Quantrill's raiders. It decreed that all rural inhabitants of Jackson and three other Missouri counties leave their homes within 15 days. Those residents willing to swear allegiance to the United States were settled in Federal areas of control. Those who refused were driven out. Federal troops then burned the abandoned properties and crops which could have aided the guerrillas. When rural Jackson Countians were allowed to return to their homes, most found only charred remains. The area around pro-Confederate Independence was so barren that it was commonly called "the Burnt District."<sup>2</sup>

Life in occupied Independence was difficult. Abandoned homes were appropriated and vandalized by soldiers. A December 22, 1863, letter from former Mayor W. L. Bone (1858) describes the situation in an area which could possibly have been Moore's Addition, the neighborhood of the Gates-Wallace-Truman home:

Dear Friend:

Your letter of 29th October was received a few days ago, and I now send you a reply. Your house still stands--not burnt--not many houses have been burnt in the city, but all more or less [are] injured by rough treatment. An Irishman is now in your house--treats it tollerably well--pay [sic] no rent.

The Stegall Brick house [Note: Richard W. Stegall bought Moore's Addition Lots 13 and 14 in 1847], near ours, is now occupied by an old man who cut up some 10 to 15 hogs in the parlor room last Sunday. That is a fair sample of how



dwelling houses are treated in town.

A number of good business houses on the square are now occupied as horse-stables by the Kansas 11th. You ask me if you could not recover damages for the damage done your property? I doubt it. If property is used by a command as a necessity [sic] and it is damaged, then the government will pay for it, I believe; but when it is torn to pieces by private soldiers without orders, I do not think the government will pay for it.

W. L. Bone<sup>3</sup>

Mrs. Benjamin F. (Virginia Willock) Wallace was one of a group of women who defended the Maple Avenue Methodist Church (later called the Watson Memorial Methodist Church) on the northwest corner of Maple Avenue and North Delaware Street. Mrs. Wallace was the paternal grandmother of Bess Wallace Truman. According to the local newspaper:

During the war there was an effort to take the property of the Maple Avenue Methodist church in Independence. It was such a movement as the men were powerless to prevent, most of them being away serving in the Confederate army. 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. Wallace was one of these.<sup>4</sup>

The second Battle of Independence in October 1864 caused further destruction. The town was ravaged for two days. The defeat of Confederate forces in the Battle of Westport (October 23, 1864) not only crushed Southern hopes in Jackson County and western Missouri, but effectively ended the Civil War in the trans-Mississippi west region.

The emotional scars of the Civil War took generations to heal. Economically and politically, Independence never fully recovered. The pre-war boom was gone forever. It was Kansas City that emerged as the county's new crossroads where the railroads and new industries located. Although real political power and control shifted to Kansas City, Independence remained the de jure county seat. The post-Civil War period marked the dawn of a new chapter in Independence history. In this tranquil, small-town environment in the waning decades of the century, a future President of the United States spent his childhood, was educated, and matured into a man.

#### The Early History of Independence

<sup>1</sup>Bernd Foerster, Independence, Missouri (Independence, Mo.: Independence Press, 1978), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>The majority of this section was taken in passim from the above-cited source.

<sup>3</sup>Personal Files of Pauline S. Fowler, copied from a letter in the Jackson County Historical Society Archives.

<sup>4</sup>"Death From A Fall," The Jackson Examiner (May 29, 1908), p. 3, Jim Williams Research, 1984 Internship, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, (hereinafter cited as Williams Research, HSTR).

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE GATES COME TO INDEPENDENCE

- \* History of Lots 2 and 3 of James F. Moore's Addition
- \* George Porterfield Gates
- \* The Waggoner-Gates Milling Company
- \* George P. Gates Builds A Mansion, 1885

### HISTORY OF LOTS 2 AND 3 OF JAMES F. MOORE'S ADDITION

Jones H. Flournoy purchased an 80-acre tract of land adjacent to the town of Independence in January 1832, and immediately began selling off parcels.<sup>1</sup> On July 12, 1836, Flournoy sold 42.18 acres, including the property which is now the Truman home, to Cornelius Davy for \$2,000.<sup>2</sup> Three years later, on August 3, 1839, Davy sold this property, roughly 40 acres and a portion of Town Lot 38, to Independence merchant James F. Moore for \$5,000.<sup>3</sup>

What caused James F. Moore to leave Independence and return to his native Shelby County, Kentucky, is not known. Moore, like many other businessmen, left Independence during this period of economic uncertainty. The 1837 recession hit Jackson County hard as the panic saw many businesses fail. Many settlers decided to return to more stable regions like Kentucky and Tennessee.<sup>4</sup> On March 27, 1840, Moore granted power of attorney to Benjamin F. Hickman to go to Jackson County and either sell or lease his 135 acres adjacent to Independence as well as his property in town.<sup>5</sup> Hickman was unsuccessful in selling the property. Six years elapsed when, on August 15, 1846, Moore again authorized Hickman to sell all his property in Jackson County.<sup>6</sup> With the incorporation of Independence slated for the end of the decade, Hickman guaranteed his client increased profits by arranging the platting of a large segment of Moore's property. On September 29, 1847, "James F. Moore's Addition" was

platted and entered in the Jackson County Recorder's Office.<sup>7</sup> Soon after the 1849 town incorporation, Moore's Addition was included in Independence.

Hickman's plan for platting Moore's property and selling it off lot by lot worked. The land was attractive to buyers because it was within easy walking distance from Independence Square and because it was adjacent to one of the earliest roads built in the county. (This road is in the approximate location of what is known today as "Truman Road."<sup>8</sup>) On August 28, 1848, Lots 2 through 6, 8, and 16 through 18 of Moore's Addition was sold to William B. Hay (The Truman home was later built on 2 and 3). The price of the nine lots was \$800, or a little more than \$88 per lot.<sup>9</sup>

William B. Hay, 38, was born in Virginia and came to Missouri via Arkansas. He, too, was a merchant,<sup>10</sup> but one who was constantly in debt. Hay owed his creditors nearly \$9,000. With his indebtedness worsening, Hay became desperate. On July 11, 1849, he granted full power of attorney to the law firm of Samuel H. Woodson, William Chrisman, and Abraham Comingo to do everything possible to erase his debts, including liquidating his property.<sup>11</sup> Hay's selection of the law firm of Woodson, Chrisman, and Comingo was a dubious choice. Samuel H. Woodson had acquired local renown for his special skill: clearing up titles to properties expropriated from the Latter Day Saints, people whom he especially detested.<sup>12</sup>

In 1849 or 1850, Hay's business failed. The 1850 United States Census of Jackson County reveals that Hay, his wife Emma, and two sons had lost their home. The Hay family was living in the home of lawyer Richard Reese.<sup>13</sup>

On August 19, 1850, a writ of fieri facias was issued against Hay to compensate his creditors. The writ authorized Sheriff George W. Buchanan to advertise Hay's property in a local newspaper 20 days in advance of selling it at public auction on the steps of the county courthouse. On September 11, 1850, Lots 2 and 3 of Moore's Addition were sold to the highest bidder, Independence Mayor Jonathan R. Palmer, at \$120 and \$100 respectively. Because it was sold to the highest bidder, the bids the sheriff received were most likely low and unrepresentative of the property's true value. Palmer also purchased Lots 4 and 5, at \$120 and \$122 respectively.<sup>14</sup>

The price variation between Lots 2 (\$120) and 3 (\$100) is revealing. That Hay lost his home and property in Moore's Addition is also significant. Although the location of the Hay house is not known, it is possible that a house was built on Lot 2 and 3 which accounts for the increased value of the lot. Hay purchased the property in August 1848, for \$88 per lot. Despite the low sheriff's sale price, the increase in only two years from \$88 to \$100 and \$120 is striking and suggests that the property was indeed improved. That

a house could have been built there is probable because the land adjoined a major east-west road (known as Tanyard, now Truman, Road) which was in use as early as 1831. Its close proximity to Independence Square made it especially appealing for home-building. Because sawmills were present in the area, it was probably constructed from cut lumber. In relationship to the road, the roof line of the house probably had an east-west orientation.<sup>15</sup>

The existence of a 1848-50 structure, if not justified by the above information, is clearly evident by a July 1984, physical investigation of the Gates/Wallace/Truman home. Conducted by the National Park Service, the structural investigation revealed that the home was built in three distinct phases and periods. The oldest, or original structure, is the easternmost section, or "kitchen wing." Considering that historical evidence supports the 1867 and 1885 additions, structural configuration and composition suggest that this earlier addition pre-dates the Civil War. It is, therefore, evident that this original structure is the remnant of William B. Hay's house of 1848-50.<sup>16</sup>

Jonathan R. Palmer, the new owner of the property in 1850, was a lawyer and the incumbent mayor of the town.<sup>17\*</sup> Palmer, like Hay, was also afflicted by debts. Three weeks after he purchased it, Palmer

---

\*Palmer was mayor from June to December 1850.

mortgaged all his property to John B. Slaughter on October 2, 1850. The \$6,000 bond was payable on January 2, 1851.<sup>18</sup> Slaughter, a merchant and Palmer's successor as mayor,<sup>19\*</sup> received legal title to Lots 2 through 5 of Moore's Addition when Palmer defaulted on the bond.

As this discussion of Lots 2 and 3 of Moore's Addition reveals, Jackson County land transactions in the 1840s and 1850s were numerous and recurrent. By 1857, Lots 2 and 3, the site of the Truman home, had changed hands seven times. Most of the previous owners lost the property because of indebtedness or sold it and hurriedly moved away from the troubled area. On February 2, 1857, John B. and Margretta Slaughter, who fled to St. Louis to escape the Border War, sold their four lots to James T. Thornton and Francis P. Hord. The men paid \$500, an average of \$125 per lot.<sup>20</sup>

In 1858, North Delaware was extended south from McCauley's Addition into James F. Moore's Addition. James T. Thornton of "Turner and Thornton Bankers" signed a quitclaim deed to the City of Independence relinquishing 24.75 feet from Lot 3 for the street extension.<sup>21</sup> The move situated Lots 2 and 3 at the southeast corner of North Delaware and Tanyard Road.

---

\*Slaughter served only one month as mayor, January 1851.



Turner and Thornton Bankers, like other financially-strapped Independence businesses in this chaotic era, failed. Before the Thorntons returned to their native Kentucky, they sold Lots 2 and 3 on November 29, 1859. The property was sold to Peter Gastel for \$350, an average of \$175 per lot.<sup>22</sup>

The property changed hands again one year later. Peter and Sally Gastel were indebted to George D. English and Company of St. Louis for four promissory notes totalling \$2,069.35. Unable to satisfy their debts by the November 20, 1860, deadline, the Gastels entered into a three-party trustee's deed. Independence lawyer William Chrisman acted as the middle-man between the Gastels and George D. English and Company. Chrisman paid the Gastels one dollar for Lots 2 and 3 to hold in trust for one year, until November 20, 1861. If the debt went unpaid, Chrisman was entitled to sell the property at public auction.<sup>23</sup> The Civil War and the Federal occupation intervened, halting the execution of the 1860 Gastel trustee's deed for five years.

The hardships suffered because of the war left a deep resentment among Independence residents which intensified with the influx of "carpetbaggers." Jackson County residents also enjoyed the postwar spirit of the opportunists. Many lawyers, the real estate agents of this era, made their fortunes in questionable land transactions. Independence barristers were not left off the bandwagon.<sup>24</sup>

In mid-1866, William Chrisman invoked the 1860 Gastel trustee's deed and proceeded with the public sale. Lots 2 and 3 were advertised in the Independence Sentinel 20 days before the sale. The property was auctioned on the courthouse steps on August 25, 1866. The highest bidder was James G. English who paid \$425 for the two lots, an average of \$212.50 per lot.<sup>25</sup> No mention was made of any of the sale proceeds going to George D. English and Company of St. Louis, the holder of the Gastels' 1860 promissory notes.

The September 26, 1866, warranty deed mysteriously omits James D. English's county of residence. Even more curious is a power of attorney granted by James G. and Mary E. English on September 15, 1866, from New Haven County, Connecticut. Dated 11 days before the warranty deed granting them possession of Lots 2 and 3 was filed in Jackson County, the power of attorney authorized William Chrisman to sell the property. The warranty deed was recorded by Chrisman's friend and one-time law partner, Abraham Comingo, on January 26, 1867. The English's power of attorney to William Chrisman was recorded by Abraham Comingo on June 21, 1867.<sup>26</sup>

On the same day, June 21, 1867, Comingo recorded another land transaction for his friend William Chrisman. The previous day, Chrisman sold Lots 2 and 3 to George P. Gates of Jackson County. A recent settler from Illinois, Gates paid Chrisman \$700, or an average

of \$350 per lot.<sup>27</sup> This steep price in the lean post-war years suggests the possibility of a house or other structures on the property.<sup>28</sup>

As the eleventh owner of the property at North Delaware and Tanyard Road, George P. Gates sensed or was told that something about his deed was not right. On July 1, 1867, Gates paid Preston Roberts one dollar to sign a quitclaim deed to Lots 2 and 3.<sup>29</sup> Gates's act was the move of a shrewd businessman. Preston Roberts was a prominent citizen who lived at the southern terminus of Delaware Street on the south side of Rock Street (now Maple Avenue). Roberts was a banker and a former U.S. Mail contractor. Gates reasoned that any potential challenge to his title would be discouraged by Preston Roberts's solid reputation.<sup>30</sup>

#### GEORGE PORTERFIELD GATES

Stephen Gates was the founder of the Gates lineage in the New World which led to the Gates/Wallace/Truman home in Independence, Missouri. He first came to America from England in 1638, and settled in Massachusetts. There he helped found two colonial towns, Hingham and Lancaster. Stephen Gates's great-grandson, Silas Gates, still lived in the colony when he was called to serve in the Revolutionary War.<sup>31</sup>

Silas and his wife, Lavina, had nine children. Their second son, Samuel, was born in Marlborough, Massachusetts, on August 16, 1760. Like his father, 15-year-old Samuel also took up arms against the British in 1776, fighting in the battles of White Plains (1776), Saratoga (1777), and Monmouth (1778). He was with General George Washington at Valley Forge during the bleak winter of 1777-78. After three years in the military, Samuel Gates was discharged and he returned to Massachusetts where he married Lucretia Williams in 1781. In 1783, the same year their son, Samuel Jr., was born, the couple moved to the Vermont wilderness with four other families and founded the town of Lunenburg. The Gates settled on a 100 acre lot where they built a log house. In 1792, Gates built the first frame house in Lunenburg which served as the first meeting place of the county court as well as the local church. Samuel Gates, Sr., died in 1854 at age 94.<sup>32</sup>

Samuel Gates, Jr., and his wife, Jerusha Clark Gates, had a son, George W.,<sup>33</sup> born on March 5, 1807.<sup>34</sup> George W. Gates served as a United States Marshal in Vermont during the administration of President Martin Van Buren (1837-41). He married Sarah D. Todd of Portland, Maine, a schoolmate of American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.<sup>35</sup> The couple had seven children: George Porterfield (born April 2, 1835); Frederick S.; Walter G. (born 1839); Edward Payson (born March 5, 1845); Margaret C. (born 1841); Eliza; and Charles Carroll.<sup>36</sup>

George Porterfield Gates, the maternal grandfather of Bess Wallace Truman, was 15 when his family moved from Lunenburg, Vermont, to Port Byron, Illinois, in 1850.<sup>37</sup> There he engaged in the lumber business. George P. Gates married Elizabeth Emery in 1860. [See Figures 1 and 2]. Elizabeth Emery Gates, born in 1841 in Rounds, North Hampshire, England, emigrated to the United States at age seven. Entrusted to the care of the ship's captain, the young girl was sent away to America by her family, most of whom perished because of an epidemic.<sup>38</sup> In the Port Byron/Moline area, George P. and Elizabeth Gates had three daughters: Margaret ("Madge", born 1862), Maud (1864), and Myra (1866). [See Figure 3].

Life in Illinois for the family was relatively peaceful during the Civil War. For unknown reasons, lawyer George W. and Sarah Gates moved to Independence, Missouri, following the conclusion of the war in 1865. Records at the First Presbyterian Church of Independence indicate that the couple joined the first week of January 1866.<sup>39</sup> George P. and Elizabeth Gates and their three daughters followed them to Independence in 1866;<sup>40</sup> they joined the same church on June 9, 1867.<sup>41\*</sup> Among their possessions was a valuable heirloom, a grand-

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\*George P. Gates subsequently became a deacon, elder, choir director (resigned in 1887), and superintendent of the music department. The church still has a Gates education endowment fund. (See Elizabeth Safly notes of telephone call, March 1, 1983, with Nancy Ehrlich, former Archivist of the JCHS Archives, folder-Gates, George P., Vertical File, HSTL.



FIGURE 1



FIGURE 2

FIGURE 1: George Porterfield Gates.  
Date Unknown  
Truman Library Photo No. 82-79.

FIGURE 2: Mrs. George Porterfield (Elizabeth Emery) Gates.  
Date Unknown  
Truman Library Photo No. 82-144.



FIGURE 3

FIGURE 3: Children of George and Elizabeth Gates  
Left to Right: Maud, Madge (Margaret), and Myra.  
Date: Circa 1870  
Truman Library Photo No. 82-87

father clock (still extant in the Truman home) made in England in 1732.

George W. and Sarah Gates probably settled first on a 77-acre farm 3.5 miles southwest of Independence Square. They later bought a sizeable tract in the present day vicinity of College and Noland Road which became the Gates Park Addition to the City of Independence in 1887. (The G. W. Gates house is still extant).<sup>42</sup> Ownership of the farm and his successful business interests elevated George W. Gates to the ranks of respected community leaders. As early as 1867, the newcomer was appointed to a one-year term as one of three judges on the Jackson County Court. It was the same position his great-granddaughter's husband, Harry S Truman, would hold 55 years later.<sup>43</sup> In 1871-72, George W. Gates represented Jackson County in the Missouri Legislature. Subsequently he returned to Independence and was elected to several terms on the county court.<sup>44</sup>

His eldest son was an experienced lumberman. George P. Gates joined a mill which was prospering from the post-war building boom in Jackson County. Among Gates's earliest projects was sawing lumber for the Hannibal Bridge in Kansas City. Completed in 1869, it was the first railroad bridge to span the Missouri River.<sup>45</sup> By the 1870s, G. P. Gates was in partnership with A. F. Anderson in a lumber mill.<sup>46</sup> The firm, "Gates & Anderson," was at the northwest corner of Maple and Liberty Street ("7 West Maple). Anderson's home was at "65



West Maple," to the immediate west of today's Palmer Junior High School on the same block as the Gates/Wallace/Truman home.<sup>47</sup>

Family tradition holds that George P. Gates built the first house on Lots 2 and 3 after he purchased the property in June 1867. However, as previously discussed, Gates added on to a pre-Civil War structure. The 1867 addition, which was built onto the west end of the two-story "kitchen wing," includes the present day dining room, library, central hall, and parlor/music room and their second floor counterparts. An 1868 "Bird's Eye View of Independence" depicts the 1848-50/1867 Gates house. [See Figure 4]

At least one or more fires are known to have changed the configuration of the Gates house. A family tale about an early fire does not include a date, cause, or extent of damage, but some details have survived. To save her most treasured possessions, young Myra Gates (born in 1866) put on her theatre hat and coat and escaped the burning home. Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace recalled:

Now the back of this house was burned at one time. Auntie Myra was trying to save her opera hat and coat, and she went out with them on! ...they [the Gates'] said there was a fire and it burned off part of the old house. There's places in the attic where you can see where the fire was.<sup>48</sup>

George and Elizabeth Gates and their three daughters lived in the 1848-50/1867 house at the corner of North Delaware and Blue Avenue, formerly Tanyard Road. The home's initial address designation

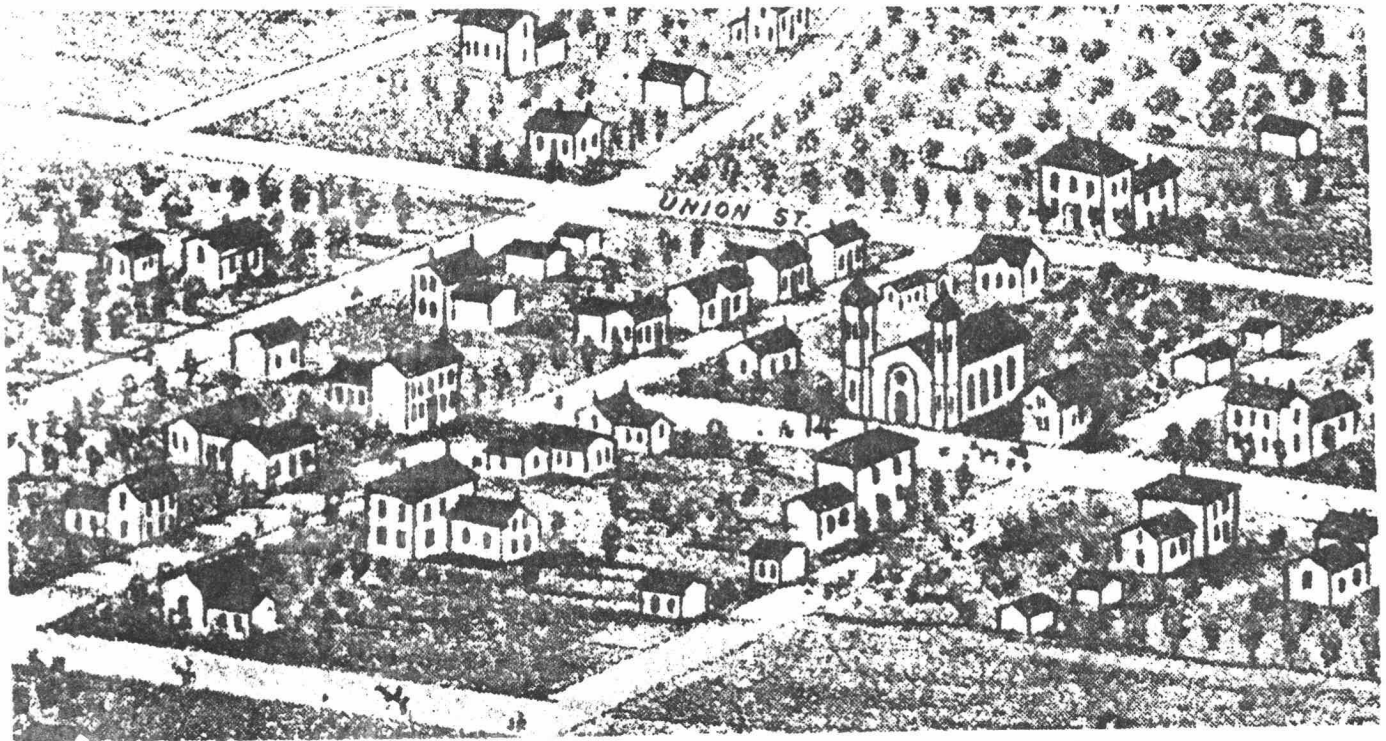


FIGURE 4

FIGURE 4: "Bird's Eye View Map of Independence, Missouri," 1868. Enlargement of the North Delaware Street Neighborhood.

The Gates house is across the street from the Methodist Church which is numbered "14."  
Jackson County Historical Society

was 11 Delaware Street, but was changed to the familiar 219 North Delaware in the 1890s.<sup>49</sup> Two sons, G. Walter Gates (1868) and Frank E. Gates (1871), were probably both born in the house as were two daughters who died in their infancy. Tillie Gates died May 27, 1877, at the age of 3 years, 2 months, and 8 days. Elizabeth "Bessie" Gates, apparently named after her mother, died October 8, 1884, aged 11 months, 10 days.<sup>50</sup> (born November 29, 1883; still extant in the Truman home is a silver cup engraved to "Baby Bessie").

Gates purchased two other lots in Moore's Addition. On November 2, 1868, Gates bought Lots 1 and 12 from Frederick F. Yeager for \$800. Yeager retained a vendors lien against the property until the debt was paid in 1870.<sup>51</sup> The new property was used as a garden and grazing area. Lot 1 joins Lot 2 on the east while Lot 12 is immediately south of Lot 1. The four lots form a giant "L".

Edward Payson Gates followed his family to Independence in 1868. Graduated with highest honors from Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, in mid-year, E. P. Gates joined his parents in Missouri. He began an internship with the law firm of Comingo and Slover and was admitted to the bar in 1868. In 1877, E. P. Gates entered a partnership with William H. Wallace (no relation to the D. W. Wallace family of Bess Truman). Their firm, Gates & Wallace, thrived for 20 years and was one of the leading law firms in the county. Lawyers John A. Sea and T. B. (Theodoric Boulware) Wallace (husband of Myra Gates

Wallace), subsequently joined the partnership. Gates was elected to the newly-established position of Counselor of Jackson County in 1886, and was re-elected in 1888. In 1896, Gates was elected Circuit Judge for the Sixteenth Judicial District of Missouri (Jackson County).<sup>52</sup> Judge E. P. Gates's home on North Spring is still extant.

Sarah D. Todd Gates, 82, died August 19, 1889. The George P. Gates family returned from a vacation in Colorado Springs, Colorado, to attend the funeral at the First Presbyterian Church.<sup>53</sup>

Judge George W. Gates died July 5, 1890, from injuries he received when his horse, terrified by boys firing off firecrackers, bolted and ran away. The funeral also took place at the First Presbyterian Church. At the time of his death, G. W. Gates left five children: G. P. and E. P. Gates, and Margaret Gates Moulton, all of Independence; Fred S. Gates of Milner, Arkansas; and Walter Gates of Phoenix, Arizona.<sup>54\*</sup>

#### THE WAGGONER-GATES MILLING COMPANY

In the late 1840s, John A. Overfelt built a mill at a spring

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\*The two deceased children were Eliza Gates Vincent and Charles Carroll Gates (sometimes spelled Gaytes). Both had but one child; the first, Flora Vincent Nichols of West Liberty, Iowa, the second, Herbert Gates/Gaytes of Chicago. (Last Will and Testament, G. W. Gates).

near the present site of Pacific and Pleasant streets in Independence. Overfelt fell victim to the antebellum economic hardships and was forced into a trusteeship. In 1859, lawyer William Chrisman advertised the Overfelt mill and equipment to be sold to satisfy creditors. He received no acceptable bids and the Civil War postponed a subsequent auction. In 1866, the mill was finally sold. Peter Waggoner, a recent settler from Pennsylvania, incorporated his new business in 1867 as the "Independence City Mill, Peter Waggoner & Son." He installed a new steam-powered grinder to replace the former water- or oxen-powered system.

The Waggoner mill thrived. Peter Waggoner and son, William H. Waggoner, began an ambitious expansion program in 1874. Their hard work reaped financial rewards: In 1879, the family purchased the prestigious Lewis-Bingham estate immediately south of the mill. In the early 1880s, the Waggoners further enlarged and modernized the mill. Construction was completed by 1883 when successful lumberman George Porterfield Gates was welcomed as a business partner with the title of secretary-treasurer. The business was incorporated under the title "Waggoner-Gates Milling Company" with a 50-year charter.

The Waggoner-Gates Milling Company became the town's leading industry in the late 19th century. The brick roller mill, less than a mile south of the Square, dominated the town with its 12-story elevator. It was famous for its "Queen of the Pantry" flour.<sup>55</sup> The soft,

wheat flour was popular with housewives for use in biscuits, bread, and other baking goods.

Throughout the company's history on all Waggoner-Gates flour sacks appeared a young woman in a bustle holding a fan and standing before a beaded curtain. Tradition dictates the young woman was either a composite of George P. Gates's three daughters or was actually the oldest and loveliest daughter, Madge.<sup>56</sup>

A clever advertising campaign enhanced "Queen of the Pantry's" appeal and Waggoner-Gates profits. A poster depicts a wife returning unexpectedly from shopping, startled to see flour marks on her husband's jacket, the tell-tale evidence of the pantry maid's embrace. While the maid sports a pleased smile, the husband is consumed with smelling a prickly cactus [See Figure 5]. An omniscient inscription on the calendar hanging on the pantry wall reads:

#### WEATHER FORECASTS

VIOLENT LOCAL  
DISTURBANCES,  
CYCLONIC STORM.  
CENTRE RAPIDLY  
APPROACHING,  
THUNDER AND  
LIGHTNING  
TERRIFIC GUSTS,  
TORRENTS OF  
SCALDING WATER,  
UNPARALLELED  
METEOROLOGICAL  
PHENOMENON

RAINY BLANKET<sup>57</sup>





An odd coincidence tying the Gates and Truman families together involved the mill of E. A. Hickman at Hickman's Mill (now Hickman Mills) in southern Jackson County. Built in 1868, the mill was sold in the 1880s. The flour milling equipment was sold to the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company while the wood timbers were acquired by Solomon Young, the maternal grandfather of Harry S Truman, who used them to build a barn on his Grandview farm.<sup>58</sup>

#### GEORGE P. GATES BUILDS A MANSION, 1885

George P. Gates became one of Independence's wealthiest citizens because of the success of the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company. Gates helped organize and served on the board of directors of the Bank of Independence. A devout Christian, Gates was an elder at the First Presbyterian Church.<sup>59</sup>

Two years after forming his partnership with the Waggoners, George P. Gates decided to construct a sizeable addition to his home on 219 North Delaware. The 1848-50/1867 home, a two-story structure with an east-west roof orientation facing Blue Avenue, was cramped, but adequate for his large family. By 1885, his youngest son, Frank, was 14 and his oldest daughter, Madge, was married. As one of Independence's leading businessmen, he needed a residence to reflect his prominent standing in the community and serve as a comfortable re-



tirement home for himself and his wife Elizabeth.

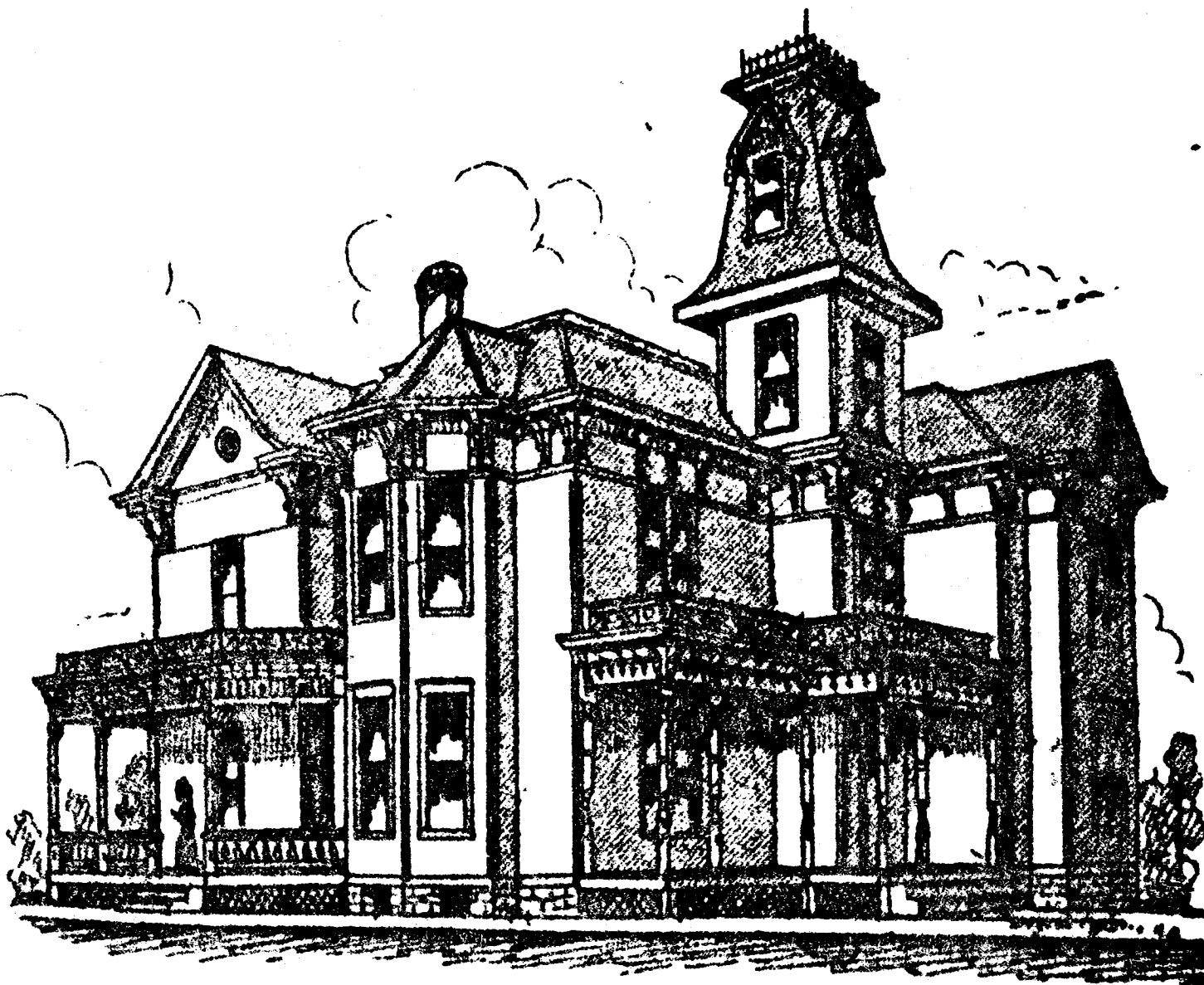
Gates commissioned a noted builder and architect, James W. Adams, who lived at 141 North Main.<sup>60</sup> Adams, who was born in 1828 in Fauquier County, Virginia,<sup>61</sup> built a two and one-half story mansion fronting on North Delaware, a street rapidly becoming Independence's most prestigious neighborhood. According to the Independence Senti-  
nel, the Victorian-style mansion was comprised of "Fourteen rooms, water and gas" systems and was the town's most expensive residence built in 1885 at \$8,000. The 1885 addition was built onto the west and north ends of the 1867 structure. Finishing touches such as fancy porches, windows, doors, mantels, lights, and a slate roof were in place by mid-1886.<sup>62</sup> Adams's completed effort produced a home with a unified architectural style. [See Figure 6].

Across North Delaware on Lots 4 and 5, Adams built another mansion. The two-and-a-half story mansion with 10 rooms, water and gas systems, was constructed for \$7,200 for A. T. Slack [See Figure 7]. Slack, his wife, and seven children had lived in a small cottage which is now a part of 216 North Delaware, the Noland-Haukenberry house. After moving into the mansion in 1886 or 1887, their original house was given its present Queen Anne facade and used as rental property. A. T. Slack first purchased the lots on December 23, 1865. He operated a successful hardware store and then a grocery at 211-213 West Lexington. Slack retired in 1893 and died on February 19, 1915.



RESIDENCE OF GEO. P. GATES.

FIGURE 6



RESIDENCE OF A. T. BLACK, ESQ.

The Slack mansion was sold in 1924, and it was torn down shortly thereafter to make room for several small homes.<sup>63</sup>

#### HISTORY OF LOTS 2 AND 3 OF JAMES F. MOORE'S ADDITION

<sup>1</sup>Copy of Patent, State of Missouri, to Jones H. Flourney, May 29, 1833, Deed Book (microfilm) 264, Page 526, No. 52543, Certificate No. 82. All land title transactions from 1833 to 1867 regarding Lots 2 and 3 were researched by Mrs. Pauline S. Fowler, an Independence historian and retired archivist for the Jackson County Historical Society. Mrs. Fowler donated her time to the National Park Service to conduct an exhaustive land title search of Jackson County's original records. (Hereinafter cited as Fowler Research).

<sup>2</sup>Warranty Deed, Flourney to Davy, July 12, 1836, Land Deed Book D, Page 446, Fowler Research.

<sup>3</sup>Warranty Deed, Davy to Moore, August 3, 1839, Land Deed Book F, Page 464, Fowler Research.

<sup>4</sup>Mrs. Pauline Fowler, conversation, February 9, 1984.

<sup>5</sup>Power of Attorney, Moore to Hickman, March 27, 1840, Land Deed Book G, Page 573, Fowler Research.

<sup>6</sup>Power of Attorney, Moore to Hickman, August 15, 1846, Land Deed Book L, Page 422, Fowler Research.

<sup>7</sup>"James F. Moore's Addition," November 30, 1847, Plat Book 1, Recorder's Office, Jackson County Courthouse, Independence.

<sup>8</sup>Mrs. Pauline Fowler, conversation, February 9, 1984.

<sup>9</sup>Warranty Deed, Moore by Attorney to Hay, August 28, 1848, Land Deed Book N, Page 337, Fowler Research.

<sup>10</sup>United States Census, Jackson County, Missouri, 1850, Fowler Research.

<sup>11</sup>Power of Attorney, Hay to Woodson, Chrisman, and Comingo, July 11, 1849, Land Deed Book O, Page 296, Fowler Research.

<sup>12</sup>Mrs. Pauline Fowler, conversation, February 9, 1984.

<sup>13</sup>United States Census, Jackson County, Missouri, 1850, Fowler Research.

<sup>14</sup>Sheriff's Warranty Deed, September 17, 1850, Land Deed Book R, Pages 17-22, Fowler Research.

<sup>15</sup>Mrs. Pauline Fowler, conversation, February 9, 1984.

<sup>16</sup>"Physical Investigation Report, Truman Home (HS-01), Harry S Truman National Historic Site, July 24-26, 1984," by Michael Lee, Restoration Specialist, and Alan O'Bright, Historical Architect, Division of Cultural Resources Management, Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, Omaha, Nebraska.

<sup>17</sup>Mrs. Pauline Fowler, conversation, February 9, 1984.

<sup>18</sup>Bond, Jonathan R. Palmer, October 2, 1850, Land Deed Book P, Page 557, Fowler Research.

<sup>19</sup>United States Census, Jackson County, Missouri, 1850; and Mrs. Pauline Fowler, conversation, February 9, 1984.

<sup>20</sup>Warranty Deed, Slaughter to Thornton and Hord, February 2, 1857, Land Deed Book Z, Page 527, Jackson County Courthouse.

<sup>21</sup>Quitclaim Deed, Thornton to City of Independence, May 14, 1858, Land Deed Book 29, Page 316, Jackson County Courthouse.

<sup>22</sup>Warranty Deed, Thornton to Gastel, November 29, 1859, Land Deed Book 33, Page 470, Jackson County Courthouse.

<sup>23</sup>Trustee's Deed, Gastel, Chrisman, and English and Company, November 24, 1860, Land Deed Book 36, Page 229, Jackson County Courthouse.

<sup>24</sup>Mrs. Pauline Fowler, conversation, February 9, 1984.

<sup>25</sup>Trustee's Warranty Deed, Chrisman to English, September 26, 1866, Land Deed Book 51, Page 25, Jackson County Courthouse.

<sup>26</sup>Power of Attorney, English to Sawyer and Chrisman, September 15, 1866, Land Deed Book 52, Page 209, Jackson County Courthouse.

<sup>27</sup>Warranty Deed, English by Attorney to Gates, June 20, 1867, Land Deed Book 52, Page 210, Jackson County Courthouse.

<sup>28</sup>For a more complete history of the chain of title for Lots 2 and 3, see Cockrell, Ron. Historic Structures Report: History and Significance, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri. National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, 1984. [Hereinafter cited as "Cockrell, Historic Structures Report, HSTR"].

<sup>29</sup>Quitclaim Deed, Roberts to Gates, July 1, 1867, Land Deed

Book 52, Page 273, Jackson County Courthouse.

<sup>30</sup>Mrs. Pauline Fowler, conversation, February 9, 1984; and United States Census, Jackson County, Missouri, 1860. The 1886 Atlas of the Environs of Kansas City in Jackson County, Missouri reveals that P. Roberts owned three houses on Lots 6, 17, and 18 of Moore's addition.

GEORGE PORTERFIELD GATES

<sup>31</sup>Howard L. Conard, editor, "Edward P. Gates," Encyclopedia of the History of Missouri: A Compendium of History and Biography for Ready Reference, Vol. III (New York: The Southern History Company, 1901), p. 8, JCHS.

<sup>32</sup>Abbey M. Hemenway, editor, Vermont Historical Magazine/Gazetteer, Vol. 1 (1863), pp. 1021-2, folder-Gates/Wallace Genealogy, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>33</sup>Gary Boyd Roberts to Mrs. Margaret Truman Daniel, letter, January 30, 1979, folder-Gates/Wallace Genealogy, Vertical File, HSTL; Memorandum of Telephone Call, Jim Williams, National Park Service to Vital Records Department, Vermont State House, Montpelier, Vt., July 20, 1984.

<sup>34</sup>Drawing of Family Cemetery Plot, George W. Gates, Sarah D. Gates, Walter Gates, and Margaret C. Moulton, Block 39, Lot 5, Woodlawn Cemetery, Independence, prepared by Jim Williams, National Park Service, July 26, 1984.

<sup>35</sup>Encyclopedia of the History of Missouri, p. 8.

<sup>36</sup>Last Will and Testament of George W. Gates and Affidavit, Edward P. Gates, December 4, 1915, Abstract of Title, Lot 23 of Gates Park, folder-49-32-2, Gates Park Addition, JCHS.

<sup>37</sup>Encyclopedia of the History of Missouri, p. 8.

<sup>38</sup>Mrs. George P. Wallace, Interview, Independence, June 14, 1983.

<sup>39</sup>Obituary, Mrs. George W. (Sarah D.) Gates, Kansas City Journal (August 20, 1889), p. 5, Williams Research, HSTR; Encyclopedia of the History of Missouri, p. 8, JCHS; and Congregational Records of the First Presbyterian Church of Independence, Missouri, Gates Family, Williams Research, HSTR.

<sup>40</sup>"Closed A Useful Life," Examiner (June 26, 1918), p. 1, folder-Gates, George P., Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>41</sup>Congregational Records of the First Presbyterian Church of Independence, Missouri, Gates Family, Williams Research, HSTR.

<sup>42</sup>Affidavit of Real Estate Appraiser, November 18, 1918, R. R. Chopin, No. 4177, Estate of G. P. Gates, Office of the Probate Court of Jackson County, Independence, Missouri; Assessor's Book of Real Estate, Independence, Missouri, for Year 1894, City of Independence, Limestone Storage Facility, 16400 W. Truman Road; and Abstract of Title, Lot 23 of Gates Park, folder-49-32-2, Gates Park Addition, JCHS.

<sup>43</sup>History of Jackson County, Missouri. Containing A History of the County, Its Cities, Towns, Etc., Indexed Edition, 1881. Reprinted by Cape Girardeau, Mo.: Ramfre Press, 1966, p. 485, JCHS.

<sup>44</sup>"Judge G. W. Gates Dead," Kansas City Times (July 6, 1890), p. 7, Williams Research, HSTR; and Encyclopedia of the History of Missouri, p. 8, JCHS.

<sup>45</sup>"Closed A Useful Life," Examiner (June 26, 1918), p. 1, folder-Gates, George P., Research Room Vertical File, Harry S. Truman Library (hereafter cited as HSTL).

<sup>46</sup>Receipts/Invoices, "Gates & Anderson," (September 23-October 2, 1874) and February 22, 1876), JCHS; and (September 11, 1874), Papers of Mary Shaw Branton, HSTR.

<sup>47</sup>Directory of Independence Including Lee's Summit and Blue Springs For 1888-89 (Kansas City: R. S. Dillon and Company, 1888), see: Anderson, A. F.

<sup>48</sup>Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 14, 1983.

<sup>49</sup>Directory of Independence, 1888-1889 (Kansas City: R. S. Dillon and Company, 1888).

<sup>50</sup>Family Genealogical Chart, Family of George P. Gates, JCHS.

<sup>51</sup>Warranty Deed, Frederick F. Yeager to George P. Gates, November 2, 1868 (recorded November 7, 1868), Land Deed Book 74, Page 454, Office of Deeds, Jackson County Courthouse, Independence, Mo.

<sup>52</sup>Encyclopedia of the History of Missouri, pp. 8-9.

<sup>53</sup>Kansas City Journal (August 20, 1889), p. 5, Williams Research, HSTR.

<sup>54</sup>"Judge G. W. Gates Dead," Kansas City Times (July 6, 1890),

p. 7, Williams Research, HSTR.

THE WAGGONER-GATES MILLING COMPANY

<sup>55</sup>"Sifting Through History at Mill," Kansas City Star (August 14, 1967); Examiner (November 23, 1974); and "Vintage Mill Busier Than Ever," Kansas City Star (January 7, 1965), Kansas City Star Library (hereinafter cited as KCSL).

<sup>56</sup>Lilian Rixey, "Bess Truman and Her Town," Life (July 11, 1949), p. 95; and Dear Bess: The Letters From Harry to Bess Truman, 1910-1959, Robert Ferrell, ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1983), p. 5.

<sup>57</sup>Taken from a Waggoner-Gates Milling Company poster found in the Truman home in 1984, and James Kindall, "...Compliments of... Waggoner-Gates Milling Co. Independence, Mo.," Kansas City Star (November 18, 1976), KSCL.

<sup>58</sup>Kansas City Times (November 7, 1966), folder-Grandview, Truman Farm House, Vertical File, HSTL.

GEORGE P. GATES BUILDS A MANSION, 1885

<sup>59</sup>"Closed A Useful Life," Examiner (June 26, 1918), p. 1, folder-Gates, George P., Research Room Vertical File, HSTL; and Congregational Records of the First Presbyterian Church of Independence, Missouri, Williams Research, HSTR.

<sup>60</sup>Directory of Independence, 1888-1889, JCHS.

<sup>61</sup>"James W. Adams," The History of Jackson County, Missouri, Containing A History of the County, Its Cities, Towns, Etc., Indexed Edition 1881 (reprinted Cape Girardeau, Mo.: Ramfre Press, 1966).

<sup>62</sup>Cockrell, Historic Structures Report, HSTR, see Chapter 3.

<sup>63</sup>Noland/Haukenberry Residence, Preliminary Survey Form, Independence Historic Survey (Kansas City: Solomon and Claubaugh, 1975).



## CHAPTER THREE

### GROWING UP IN INDEPENDENCE

- \* The David Willock Wallace Family
- \* The John Anderson Truman Family
- \* School Years In Independence, 1890-1901
- \* Adulthood: Tragedy And Idealism, 1901-1910

Harry S Truman

Bessie Virginia Wallace

### THE DAVID WILLOCK WALLACE FAMILY

George Porterfield Gates's oldest daughter, Margaret Elizabeth ("Madge"), gained the reputation as the "queenliest woman Independence ever produced." She prided herself on her clothing and erect posture. To many, it seemed inevitable that she would fall in love and marry the "handsomest man in town," David Willock Wallace.<sup>1</sup> [See Figures 8 and 9]

David W. Wallace was born June 15, 1860, in Independence to Benjamin F. and Virginia Willock Wallace. In 1833, B. F. Wallace was one of the earliest settlers of Jackson County, and served as mayor of Independence in 1869. At the time of his death in 1877, the elder Wallace represented his county for the First District in the Missouri Legislature. Young David W. Wallace proved to be as ambitious as his father. Through his father's connections in Jefferson City, he became the Assistant Docket Clerk of the Missouri Senate at age 14, and then Assistant Engrossing Clerk the year his father died. Moving back to Independence with his mother, he was appointed Jackson County Deputy Recorder of Marriage Licenses on April 13, 1878.<sup>2</sup>

David Wallace, 23, and Madge Gates, 21, did indeed fall in love and planned to be married. The wedding took place the evening of June 13, 1883, at the First Presbyterian Church. The Kansas City Journal remarked that "The event, in importance and elegance, was one



FIGURE 8

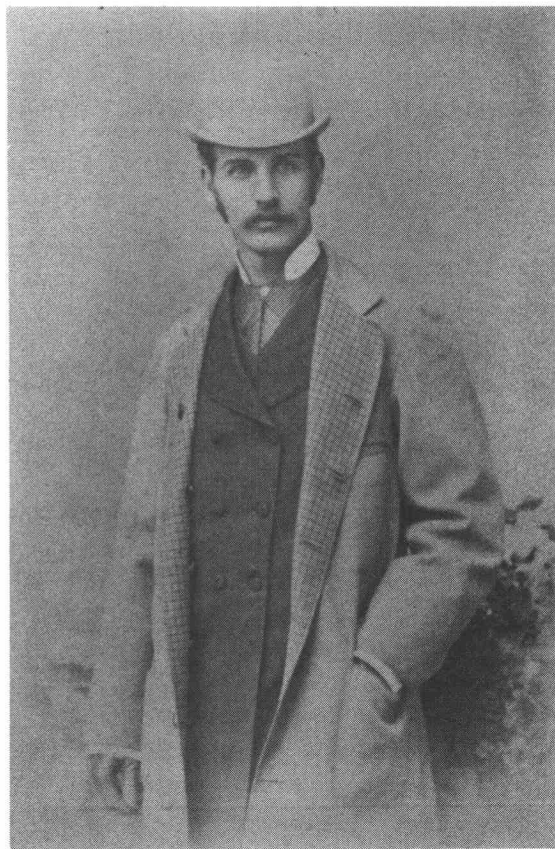


FIGURE 9

FIGURE 8: Margaret "Madge" Gates  
Date: Circa marriage to David W. Wallace, 1881  
Truman Library Photo No. 82-86.

FIGURE 9: David Willock Wallace  
Date: Unknown  
Truman Library Photo No. 82-82.

which Independence society rarely celebrates." The article continued,

The bride is a daughter of Mr. George P. Gates, of the firm of Waggoner & Gates, millers, of this city. She is one of the most refined and accomplished as well as one of the prettiest brunettes in the city. The groom, Mr. D. W. Wallace... is very popular, and possibly no young man in the county has as extended an acquaintance and as many personal friends as he.<sup>3</sup>

At 8:00 p.m., the church was filled to capacity. Forty minutes later, Madge Gates was escorted to the altar by G. P. Gates. A reception followed the ceremony at 219 North Delaware. The Journal reported:

After the ceremony the bridal party repaired to the elegant residence of Mr. Geo. P. Gates on Delaware street, where the reception was held. The house was brilliantly lighted. In the parlor under a canopy of flowers the newly married couple received the congratulations of their relatives and intimate friends, of whom about fifty couples were in attendance. The beautiful lawn surrounding the house was lighted with Chinese lantern, though the moon, which has so long been obscured by the clouds, has scarcely ever shone more brightly, and the night seemed to have been modeled for such an occasion as was the event of the wedding. Tables were set about on the lawn, on which a most delicious repast was served. Mrs. Gates, as hostess, rendered the repast all the more delicious by her endeavors to contribute to the enjoyment of all the guests.<sup>4</sup>

Wedding gifts were displayed in the parlor. One which may still be seen in the Gates/Wallace/Truman dining room is the epergne. The "elegant silver epergne, very massive" was given to the couple by the groomsmen, O. H. Gentry, J. P. Scholl, J. A. McCoy, J. R. Cunningham, R. G. Wilson, Jr., and L. O. Schuler.<sup>5\*</sup>

The Wallaces lived two miles away from the Gates house at 117 West Ruby Street (the home is extant). David Wallace purchased the property on July 28, 1882.<sup>6</sup> It was in this house that the couple's first child, Elizabeth ("Bess/Bessie") Virginia, was born on February 13, 1885. The birth came four months after the death of George and Elizabeth Gates's 11-month-old daughter, Bessie. Madge Gates Wallace's first child became a namesake of both Madge's mother and ill-fated sister.

As Deputy Recorder, David Wallace's meager county paycheck put him in chronic debt. Beginning a family further aggravated his financial position. On November 14, 1885, nine months after the birth of his first child, Wallace conveyed the Ruby Street property in trust to John A. Sea and Sarah E. Pugsley to secure a \$700 note. Wallace had one year to repay the loan at 10% annual interest.

David Wallace failed to meet the November 1886, deadline, but did satisfy the trustee's agreement six months later on May 14, 1887.<sup>7</sup> Wallace had sold his property the month before, on April 11,

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\*Other notable wedding presents were: "Tea, desert and sugar silver spoons and five pound note on bank of England, mother of bride" [Elizabeth Gates]; "square, seven hundred dollar piano, father of bride [G. P. Gates]; "brocaded silk plush parlor set, mother of the groom [Virginia W. Wallace]; "elegant family Bible, grand parents of the bride" [G. W. and Sarah Gates]; and "after dinner coffee in silver and china, 17 pieces, E. P. Gates, esq."

1887, to M. L. Hull.<sup>8</sup> He took Madge, two-year-old Bessie, and five-week-old Frank Gates Wallace (born March 4, 1887) and moved into the Gates house at 219 North Delaware. For an unknown reason or length of time, the Wallace family lived in the Gates house. The 1889-90 city directory lists this residence as their address.<sup>9</sup>

The Wallaces subsequently moved to 608 North Delaware, two blocks north of the Gates mansion. The two-story Victorian structure featured a large bay window topped by a cupola. While it had no basement, there were five out-buildings: a carriage house, stable, washhouse, woodhouse, and a privy decorated with a trellis.<sup>10</sup> An imposing oak tree stood in the front yard where neighborhood children, including little Bessie, liked to climb out on its branches (the tree is extant at 610 North Delaware). [See Figure 10].

An active Democrat, David Wallace improved his financial standing by winning the 1889 election for county treasurer. In early 1890, he began serving the first of two two-year terms.<sup>11</sup> Like his father-in-law, David Wallace was a Presbyterian determined that his children attend services and Sunday Bible school regularly. The result was the December 1890, meeting of Bessie Wallace and Harry S Truman at the First Presbyterian Church.



FIGURE 10

FIGURE 10: David Willock Wallace House  
608 North Delaware Street  
Independence, Missouri  
Date: Circa 1900  
Truman Library Photo No. 82-150

### THE JOHN ANDERSON TRUMAN FAMILY

John Anderson Truman was born December 5, 1851, on a farm near Holmes Park in Jackson County. His parents, Anderson Shipp and Mary Jane Holmes Truman, came from Kentucky in 1846. At age 31, John Anderson Truman proposed marriage to Martha Ellen Young, the daughter of Solomon Young, a neighboring farmer and stockdealer.

From 1844 until the late 1860s, Solomon Young periodically worked as a freighter over the Western trails leaving his wife, Harriet Louisa Young, to run the farm. In 1863, he was absent when Union soldiers raided the Young farm. Coupled with Order Number 11, a deep mistrust of "Yankees" was instilled in Martha Ellen Young which endured until her death in 1947.

John Anderson and Martha Ellen Truman were married on December 28, 1881, near their family farms in Grand View (Grandview), a village southwest of Independence. The couple moved to Lamar in Barton County, Missouri, about 120 miles south of their native Jackson County.<sup>12</sup> There John Truman engaged in horse and mule trading in a lot across the street from his small white frame home.

It was in this simple house that Martha Ellen Truman gave birth to a son in the late afternoon of May 8, 1884. The proud father paid the doctor \$15 and nailed a horseshoe above the front door. The



future President of the United States was named Harry after Martha Ellen's brother, Harrison Young. For a middle name, the couple wanted to honor both of their fathers. So as not to slight either man, the common letter "S" was chosen to represent both grandfathers, Solomon Young or Anderson Shipp Truman.<sup>13</sup> The middle name (not an initial), however, stood for itself and each grandfather was secretly satisfied that it favored him. [See Figures 11 and 12].

In 1885, the Trumans moved to a farm south of Harrisonville in Cass County, 30 miles south of Independence. Another son, John Vivian, was born there on April 25, 1886. Unable to stay in any one place for long, they moved again to a farm southeast of Belton in the same county, only a few miles from Grandview. In 1887, the Trumans moved to the Young farm near Grandview where Mary Jane Truman was born (August 12, 1889).

It was on the Young farm that young Harry Truman spent three of the happiest years of his life. His mother taught him how to read before he was five. When she discovered her son was having difficulty reading newspaper print, she hitched up a team to a wagon and drove him into Kansas City to an oculist who diagnosed "flat eye-balls" (near sightedness) and prescribed glasses.

The thick-lensed spectacles opened a new world to Harry and forever closed another. While he developed an insatiable appetite



FIGURE 11

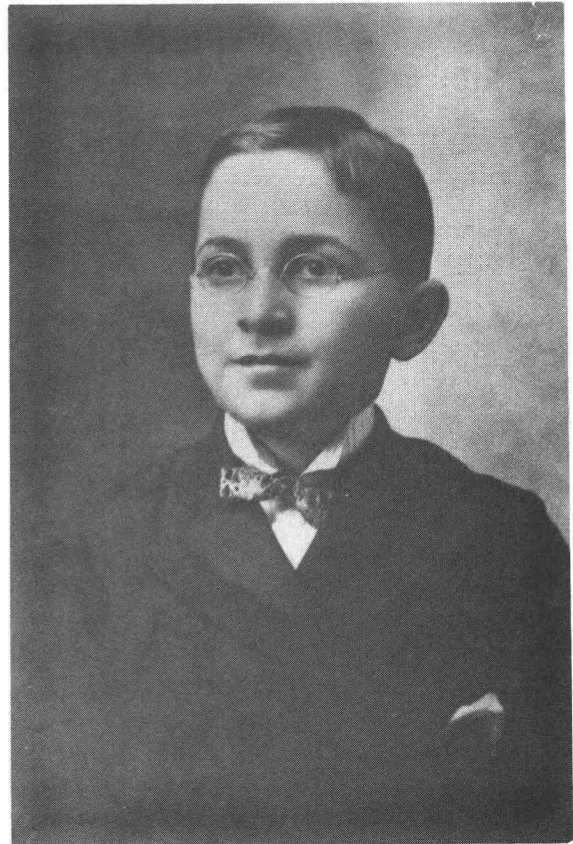


FIGURE 12

FIGURE 11: Mrs. Martha Ellen Young Truman and  
Mr. John Anderson Truman  
Wedding Portrait, Grandview, Missouri.  
Date: 1882  
Truman Library Photo No. 62-96

FIGURE 12: Harry S Truman, age 15  
School picture, Hare Studios  
Date: 1899  
Truman Library Photo No. 79-26

for reading, rough boyhood sports were off-limits to him for fear of breaking the delicate instrument. Sensing her oldest son's bright promise and determined that her children receive a credible education, Martha Ellen Truman decided the family would move yet again to a town with good schools. It was in late 1890 that the Trumans moved to Independence and Harry first saw Bessie Wallace.

#### SCHOOL YEARS IN INDEPENDENCE, 1890-1901

Harry Truman was six years old when he and his family moved to Independence. John Anderson Truman purchased a house and four lots at 619 South Chrysler on December 12, 1890. (Lots 4, 5, 6, and 7 of Ott and Roberts Resurvey of Munn's Addition) and two more lots in 1892. There John Truman conducted his profession of trading mules, horses, cows, hogs, sheep and goats to farmers, townspeople, and the Kansas City stockyards. The Chrysler Street location was a good one because it was on a main north-south route. The roomy, two-story frame house (still extant) featured fancy millwork and several colored glass windows, a prevalent style in Independence. Living only a few blocks from the railroad tracks, the Truman children took turns riding to see the steam-powered leviathans in a green wagon hitched to a pair of angora goats.<sup>14</sup>

Although a Baptist, Mrs. Truman immediately arranged to have Harry and Vivian attend Sunday school at the First Presbyterian

Church at Lexington and Pleasant streets. The church had the only available Protestant Sunday school and the Truman children regularly attended it as long as they lived in Independence. It was in the building's basement that Harry Truman first saw and fell in love with a blond-haired, blue-eyed five-year-old named Bessie Wallace.<sup>15</sup> [See Figure 13].

Harry and Bessie were not close friends during their childhood. The two did not have much in common. Bessie was a tomboy who excelled in sports; Harry was a bookworm and enjoyed his piano lessons. The Wallaces were at the top of the socio-economic-political ladder while the Trumans, farmers and mule traders, were in the middle. Perhaps the biggest hindrance for any close childhood association was religious background. Since the expulsion of the Mormons in 1833, religion dictated status in the town's hierarchy. Open to varying interpretation, the order follows: The Gates and Wallaces, Presbyterians, were at the top, followed by Campbellites (Christian Church), Methodists, Baptists (the Trumans), Lutherans, Catholics, and Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints (RLDS).<sup>\*</sup> Blacks fell to the very bottom of the order. Those at the top of the order did not normally mix with those toward the middle or the bottom.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>\*</sup>The population of Independence in 1890 was 6,000. Approximately 1,000 were RLDS members who slowly trickled back to the town to fulfill Joseph Smith's vision, ignoring those who followed Brigham Young to Salt Lake City.



FIGURE 13

FIGURE 13: Bessie Virginia Wallace  
Portrait at age 4 and a half.  
Date: August 18, 1889  
D. P. Thompson, photographer, Kansas City.  
Truman Library Photo No. 64-538

A subject which united most Independence residents, however, was politics. Most were descendant from Andrew Jackson's partisans and bitter toward Abraham Lincoln's party; the town was heavily Democratic. When Harry started first grade in 1892 at age eight, he wore a white hat with Grover Cleveland and Adlai Stevenson written on it. Republican-supporting boys took it and tore it up.<sup>17</sup> Cleveland was John Truman's idol and he was proud to be a member of the delegation welcoming Cleveland to Kansas City.<sup>18</sup> Cleveland's election victory saw John Truman (and possibly David Wallace) amid the crowd carrying torches and marching up and down the streets in a midnight celebration.<sup>19</sup>

Harry enrolled at the Noland School. In 1894, the second-grader contracted diphtheria and nearly died. With his legs, arms, and throat paralyzed, Martha Ellen had to wheel her son around in a baby carriage for several months. After a lengthy recovery, Harry attended summer school at the new Columbian School to catch up. He did so well he skipped a grade and went into fourth grade. His achievement placed him in the same class as Bessie Wallace and they attended sixth grade through high school together. Seated alphabetically, Bessie sat immediately behind Harry during those years.

In 1896, the Trumans moved again. John A. Truman purchased property on the southeast corner of West Waldo Avenue and North River Boulevard. The move was significant for it not only placed Harry a

few blocks away from Bessie Wallace's house, but it permitted them to attend the same school. The Victorian house at 909 West Waldo was a spacious two-story structure with front and side porches and a one-story kitchen in the rear. The property was large enough to accommodate the family business, the horse-mule trade, and all the neighborhood children. The Truman home was the "headquarters for all the boys and girls around," loosely grouped together as the "Waldo Avenue gang," among whom were Bessie, Frank and George Wallace.<sup>20</sup> Harry was generally busy doing chores like milking the cows, taking them to pasture a mile away every day, and herding the calves and goats to the public spring at Blue Avenue and River Boulevard two blocks to the south. He later recalled:

There was a wonderful barn with stalls for horses and cows, a corncrib and a hayloft in which all the kids met and cooked up plans for all sorts of adventures, such as trips to Idlewild, a sort of wilderness two blocks north, and pigtail baseball games which I umpired because I couldn't see well enough to bat.<sup>21</sup>

While Bessie Wallace was one of the best athletes in Independence, excelling in tennis, track and field events, baseball, and ice-skating,<sup>22</sup> Harry Truman was the opposite. His favorite activity after school and during his spare time was sitting in the public library reading. He devoured all the volumes in the library, including the encyclopedias.<sup>23</sup> Piano lessons saw Harry practicing two hours every morning and riding the streetcar into Kansas City once a week to study with Mrs. E. C. White. If Mark Twain, Chopin,

and his chores were not enough to keep Harry occupied, his part-time job at Jim Clinton's Drugstore filled out his schedule. Entrusted with opening the business at 6:30 every morning, Harry mopped the floors, swept the sidewalks, wiped all the bottles, and dusted the shelves. The \$3 a week paycheck was attractive, but the demands of high school studies forced Harry to quit the job.<sup>24</sup>

Harry took his schoolwork very seriously. Shortly after resigning his drugstore job, he began studying algebra and Latin at the West Waldo home of his cousins, Ethel and Nellie Noland. The Noland sisters were the youngest of the three daughters of Joseph Tilford and Margaret Ellen (Truman) Noland. "Aunt Ella," Harry's favorite aunt, enjoyed coaching her own children, Harry, and another eager student, Bessie Wallace, two evenings per week.

Everyone connected with the study group knew that Harry Truman was taken with Bessie Wallace. A striking example involved Harry's first piano composition and Bessie's whistle. Following dinner in the summertime, Bessie would come out onto the porch and whistle for her friends, an invitation to them to come over for some ice cream. The special whistle was answered by a certain melodic reply. One day a proud Harry Truman played his first composition for the Noland family who immediately recognized the refrain--Bessie Wallace's whistle and her friends's reply. During these years, Harry vowed to his cousins, "Some day I'm going to marry Bess Wallace."<sup>25</sup>



ADULTHOOD: TRAGEDY AND IDEALISM, 1901-1910

HARRY S TRUMAN

Graduation ceremonies for Independence High School Class of 1901 came on May 30, three weeks after Harry's seventeenth birthday. Thirty girls and 11 boys, including Harry S Truman, Bessie Wallace, and Charles Griffith Ross (President Truman's press secretary) received diplomas.<sup>26</sup> [See Figure 14].

Harry Truman spent part of his summer on the Young farm in Grandview and took a one-month trip to Murphysboro, Illinois, to visit relatives. It was also in 1901 that financial disaster struck. John Truman's speculation in grain futures at the Kansas City Board of Trade flopped. A farm Martha Ellen had inherited was lost along with years of savings. The family home on West Waldo was sold and the Trumans lived at 903 North Liberty a few months before moving to 2108 Park Avenue in Kansas City.

Harry felt obligated to go to work to help his parents and keep Vivian and Mary Jane in school. Any idea of Harry attending college was forgotten as he went to work as a timekeeper for a contractor with the Santa Fe Railroad in the fall of 1901. Paid \$35 a month plus board, Truman lived in railroad camps along the Missouri River paying off the hobo workers in saloons in Sheffield or Independence. The position lasted until late spring of 1902. Harry's next job was



FIGURE 14

FIGURE 14: Independence High School Class of 1901  
Harry S Truman is fourth row, fourth from left;  
Bessie Wallace is last on second row, right.  
Date: May 1901  
Grinter Photo; Donor: Mrs. W. Jefferson  
Truman Library Photo No. 71-2401

in the mailroom of the Kansas City Star wrapping newspapers at \$7 a week. During this time Truman spent several weeks taking accounting and typing courses at Spalding's Commercial College. This post-secondary education qualified Harry for a teller's job working in the "cage" at the National Bank of Commerce in late 1902. He worked alongside his brother until Vivian was hired at another bank. Harry was soon promoted to the personal filing clerk for the president and head cashier at the National Bank of Commerce for \$40 a month.

Meanwhile, John Truman quit his grain elevator job and traded his house at 2108 Park Avenue for 80 acres of farmland in Henry County near Clinton. The Trumans moved to Clinton, except for Harry and Vivian who remained in Kansas City. Harry changed jobs again around this time and worked at the Union National Bank. While his parents farmed in Clinton, Harry lived in a boarding house in Kansas City.<sup>27</sup>

Truman enjoyed all the cultural pleasures the city had to offer, including Shakespeare at the downtown Auditorium, performances of the Metropolitan Opera featuring renowned pianists, and variety shows. On Saturday afternoons, Truman ushered at the Grand Theatre and saw roving vaudeville acts for free.

In 1905, Battery B of the Missouri National Guard was organized in Kansas City and Harry Truman signed up. He made the mistake of

wearing his uniform to the Grandview farm to show it off to Grandmother Young. The sight of the blue uniform brought back memories of the Yankee raiders in the Civil War. The old woman informed her grandson that it was the first time since 1863 that a blue uniform had been in her house and told him never to wear it there again.<sup>28</sup>

In the spring of 1906, a devastating flood claimed John and Martha Ellen's corn crop in Clinton. The disaster had a silver lining, however; Uncle Harrison Young asked the couple to return to the Grandview farm and help him manage it. The responsibility of operating the large farm and contiguous rented cropland required additional manpower. Harry and Vivian left the city for Grandview. As a result, Harry Truman lived on the farm from 1906 to 1917.<sup>29</sup>

In 1910, 26-year-old Harry Truman visited his Aunt Ella, Uncle Joseph, and cousins Nellie and Ethel Noland. The Nolands had always lived in Independence, where Joseph Tilford Noland operated a real estate business on the Square. The Nolands usually lived in rented homes. They had rented their residence at 216 North Delaware from A. T. Slack for several years until they purchased it from him in July 1908.<sup>30</sup> The Nolands recalled Harry's school-day fondness for Bessie Wallace who now lived with her family in her grandparent's house across the street at 219 North Delaware. They contrived to arrange a reunion by announcing that a china dish on which Madge Wallace had

sent over a homemade butter cake with chocolate icing needed to be returned. Eagerly falling for the ploy, Harry took the plate and hurried across the street to the Gates/Wallace house. Harry was gone for two hours. When he walked back into the Noland home, his eyes sparkled as he announced, "Well, I saw her."<sup>31</sup>

#### BESSIE VIRGINIA WALLACE

Since high school graduation, Bessie Wallace stayed at home and helped her mother run the family home at 608 North Delaware. In 1900, Madge Wallace gave birth to her third son, David Frederick. Madge had never been blessed with good health and she depended heavily on her daughter's assistance with the house, baby "Fred," 14-year-old Frank, and 9-year-old George.

Bessie had plenty of "beaus" courting her. Her blonde hair, blue eyes, and prominent social position made her an attractive prospect, but none of her suitors were taken very seriously. She spent a lot of time with her grandparents whom she called "Nana and Mama" Gates.<sup>32</sup> Mary Ethel Noland recalled:

part of the Wallace family lived in the house on Delaware beyond Waldo and part of the time they lived here with the Gateses, because the Gateses were getting older and the house was large and they liked to have Mrs. Wallace live there with them. And so, they were at the Gates place a very great deal, and Bess was over here a good deal.<sup>33</sup>

Bessie and her friends often played bridge at the Gates house and

later the activities of the St. Agnes Guild were headquartered there. Centered around the Gates's barn, for several summers the girls staged children's plays written by Mary Paxton with dances arranged by her sister, Elizabeth. Bessie was the business manager who made sure the proceeds went to charity.<sup>34</sup> [See Figure 15].

Grandfather Gates, or "Nana" as the Wallace children fondly called him, continued as Secretary-Treasurer of the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company. Grandson Frank Wallace worked as a clerk at the mill.<sup>35</sup> Bessie was unfamiliar with her grandfather's business because "young ladies were not encouraged to visit there."<sup>36</sup>

A division in the First Presbyterian Church caused a similar rift within the Gates/Wallace family. In 1901, the congregation split over the issue of the pastor's new wife, a divorcee. Bessie and Frank Wallace started attending Trinity Episcopal Church where a dynamic preacher (Rev. R. R. Diggs) enjoyed being with young people and took them for long walks and picnics. Ties with the old church were severed. Bessie and Frank Wallace were confirmed on May 8, 1903.<sup>37</sup> Madge Wallace withdrew her membership from the First Presbyterian Church on May 6, 1906, to join the new congregation.<sup>38</sup> George and Elizabeth Gates, however, remained loyal to their church.

Bessie's father, David Willock Wallace, was a well-liked and

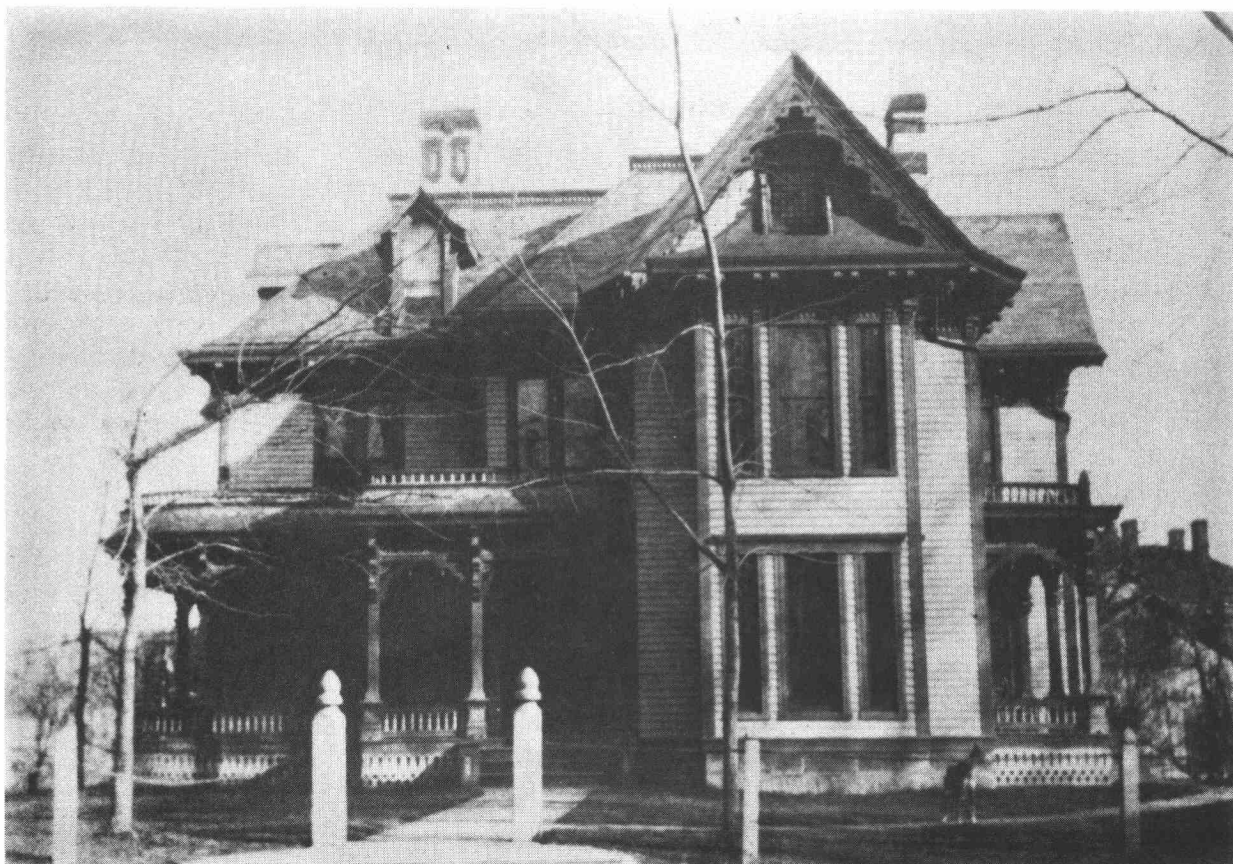


FIGURE 15

FIGURE 15: George Porterfield Gates House  
219 North Delaware Street  
Independence, Missouri  
Date: Circa 1900  
Truman Library Photo No. 82-212-2

respected community leader. Many saw him as "the most popular man in the county."<sup>39</sup> Wallace was a frequent marshal of town parades, a handsome figure riding a black stallion. He was very popular with the neighborhood children, especially on the Fourth of July. The children would sit on the porch and stairs of 608 North Delaware as Mr. Wallace set off a magnificent display of fireworks.<sup>40</sup> After serving as Jackson County Treasurer, Wallace worked as Deputy United States Surveyor of Customs under Port Surveyor J. Scott Harrison in downtown Kansas City. An active Mason, the Knights Templar elected him as Missouri's presiding official, the youngest man to hold the position.<sup>41</sup>

Mary Paxton, Bessie's close friend, always remembered the kindness of David Wallace when her mother died from tuberculosis in the spring of 1903. The funeral took place in the Paxton home and next door neighbor David Wallace was there early to help arrange the seating. Two months later, on June 17, 1903, Mary was awakened by her father who said, "Go over right away and see Bess. Mr. Wallace has killed himself." Mary recalled:

... Bess was walking up and down back of the house with clenched hands, I remember. She wasn't crying. There wasn't anything I could say, but I just walked up and down with her.<sup>42</sup>

The suicide took place only two days after David Willock Wallace's forty-third birthday. The Jackson Examiner reported:



David W. Wallace, former county treasurer and for nine years United States Deputy Surveyor, one of the best known men in Missouri committed suicide Wednesday morning by shooting himself through the head. He left no message in any way to explain his act.

Tuesday night with his son, Frank, he spent the evening with his uncle by marriage Judge E. P. Gates. Returning home he played with the children and there was nothing in his manner to indicate an unusual stress of worry upon his mind. Wednesday morning about five o'clock he arose without disturbing his wife, dressed fully, took a revolver from a drawer in the room walked to the bath room where standing in the middle of the floor he placed the muzzle of the pistol just back of the left ear and fired. The ball passed through his head and out at the right temple and fell into the bath tub. Mr. Wallace fell unconscious to the floor and died within thirty minutes. The report of the pistol roused the family.<sup>43</sup>

Despite outward appearances, David Wallace was a troubled man. Employment with the county and Federal government resulted in a woefully inadequate income. By age 43, David Wallace was afflicted with alcoholism and mounting debts. His despondency and suicide profoundly shocked his family.<sup>44</sup> Madge Wallace and her children never discussed the tragedy. As the years passed and it faded from memory, it became a family secret. The suicide came to light only decades later--not during the presidential years, but in a book published in the early 1960s.

After her husband's burial in the Wallace family plot in Woodlawn Cemetery (not the Gates plot where she would be buried in 1952), Madge Gates Wallace took her four children to Colorado Springs, Colorado, where her uncle, Frank E. Gates, lived. David Wallace's suicide caused his widow such grief and humiliation that she and her

children remained in Colorado for a year.<sup>45</sup> When the Wallaces returned to Missouri in 1904, they were welcomed into the spacious Gates mansion at 219 North Delaware. Their old home at 608 North Delaware was sold. Later it burned and the foundation was demolished. [See Figures 15, 16 and 17].

David Wallace's death placed a heavy responsibility on 18-year-old Bessie. With Madge Wallace plagued by painful sciatica and general poor health, the burden of looking after her two younger brothers, and raising Fred, Bessie became the head of the Wallace household.<sup>46</sup> In addition to the advanced age and failing health of her grandparents, Bessie became, in effect, the mistress of 219 North Delaware. She held this unofficial position until her mother's death five decades later when legal title to the property passed to Harry S and Bess Wallace Truman.

In 1905, Fred was five and Madge's health was stable. Bessie enrolled in post secondary classes at Barstow School for Girls. Every day she commuted on the green streetcars for an hour into Kansas City to study her favorite subjects, French and German. She also excelled in athletics, playing on the basketball and tennis teams and winning the shot put championship in 1906.<sup>47</sup>

As a member of a prominent family, Bessie Wallace enjoyed Independence social life. On occasion, she rented tables and chairs



FIGURE 15: Bessie Wallace and Mary Paxton  
Independence, Missouri  
Date: 1901  
From Mary Paxton Keeley  
Truman Library Photo No. 67-2303

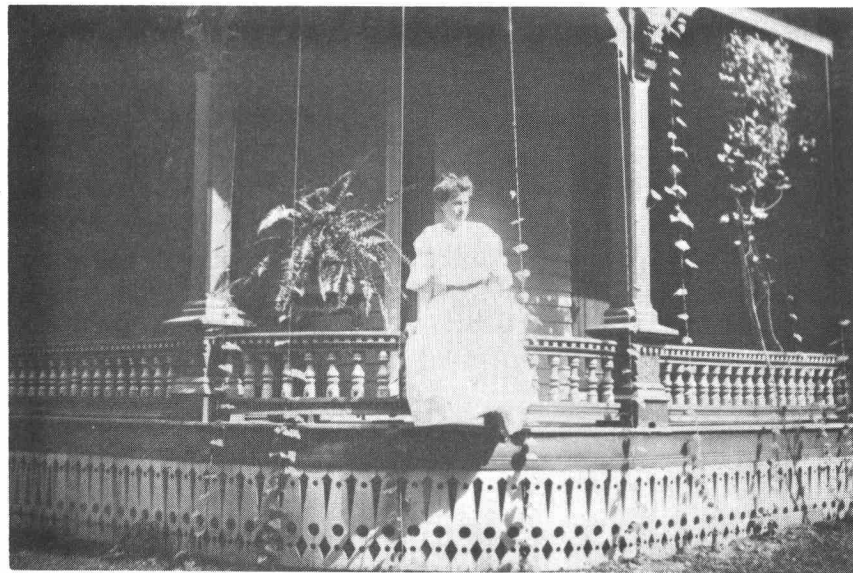


FIGURE 16: Bessie Wallace, age 20  
Sitting on front porch of Gates House.  
Date: Circa 1905  
Truman Library Photo No. 82-59-75



FIGURE 17

FIGURE 17: Madge Gates Wallace, George P. Wallace, Bessie Wallace, Frank Gates Wallace, and an unknown man sit in the northwest corner of the parlor/music room.

Date: circa 1905

Truman Library Photo No. 82-107

for afternoon parties at her home.<sup>48</sup> In 1906, she attended a reception and dance at the Swope home on Pleasant Street. The social event of the year, it honored Frances Swope who had recently married a young doctor, Bennett Clark Hyde. Bessie Wallace was a good friend of a younger sister, Lucy Lee Swope, and was said to be fond of her older brother, Chrisman Swope. In 1909, disaster struck. Three members of the Swope family, including Chrisman Swope, mysteriously died. The attending physician was Dr. Bennett Clark Hyde. An investigation revealed that Dr. Hyde possessed enough cyanide and typhoid culture to kill all the inhabitants of Independence. Prosecutors established his motive as trying to gain the Swope family fortune, but a series of three trials resulted in acquittal.<sup>49</sup>

The Swope-Hyde murder case was still the talk of the town when, one day in 1910, Bessie Wallace walked through the vestibule of the Gates/Wallace house to answer a knock at the door. There stood Harry Truman holding a cakeplate.

#### THE DAVID WILLOCK WALLACE FAMILY

<sup>1</sup>Lilian Rixey, "Bess Truman and Her Town," Life (July 11, 1949), p. 95.

<sup>2</sup>The History of Jackson County, Missouri, Containing A History of the County, Its Cities, Towns, Etc., Indexed Edition, 1881 (reprinted by Ramfre Press, Cape Girardeau, Mo., 1966), p. 881, JCHS.

<sup>3</sup>"Gates-Wallace," Kansas City Journal (June 15, 1883), p. 5, Williams Research, HSTR.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Warranty Deed, Isaac N. and Natalie A. Rogers to David W. Wallace, July 28, 1882, Land Deed Book 130, Page 53, Historic Preservation Office, City of Independence.

<sup>7</sup>Deed of Trust, D. W. and M. G. Wallace to John A. Sea and Sarah E. Pugsley, November 14, 1885, Land Deed Book 144, Page 45. Deed of Trust acknowledged satisfaction of note on May 14, 1887, by G. M. Nichol, "Assignee and holder of note."

<sup>8</sup>Warranty Deed, David W. and Madge G. Wallace to M. L. Hall, April 11, 1887, Land Deed Book 158, Page 98.

<sup>9</sup>Directory of Independence for 1889-90 (Independence: Don L. Walters), p. 73, JCHS.

<sup>10</sup>Mary Paxton Keeley, Oral History Interview, Columbia, Mo., July 22, 1966, by J. R. Fuchs, HSTL, p. 22.

<sup>11</sup>O. W. Price, The Federal Government in Greater Kansas City, Part I (Kansas City: Greater Kansas City Federal Business Association, 1939), p. 36, and, Missouri: Mother of the West, Vol. IV (Chicago: American Historical Society, Inc., 1930), p. 343.

#### THE JOHN ANDERSON TRUMAN FAMILY

<sup>12</sup>Bela Kornitzer, "Told For the First Time... The Story of Truman," [unmarked article], file-HST Biography, Early Days, KCSL.

<sup>13</sup>Robert Ferrell, Truman: A Centenary Remembrance (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), p. 29.

#### SCHOOL YEARS IN INDEPENDENCE, 1890-1901

<sup>14</sup>Sue Gentry, "His Cousins Didn't Know They Were Witnessing a President in the Making," Examiner (January 19, 1984), p. 15; and Dear Bess, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup>Harry S. Truman, Memoirs: Year of Decisions (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1955), p. 116.

<sup>16</sup>Dear Bess, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>18</sup>Bela Kornitzer, "For the First Time... The Story of Truman," [unmarked article], file-HST Biography, Early Days, KCSL.

<sup>19</sup>Elizabeth Paxton Forsling, "Remembering Delaware Street," Jackson County Historical Society Journal, Vol. III, No. 8 (May 1962), pp. 7-12, appendix to Sue Gentry, Oral History Interview, HSTL.

<sup>20</sup>Harry S. Truman, Year of Decision, pp. 116-7.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>22</sup>"Smithsonian World," Transcript of Margaret Truman's Tour of the Truman Home in Independence, Missouri, and interview with David McCullough on November 19, 1983, p. 56.

<sup>23</sup>Oral History Interview with Mrs. W. L. C. Palmer, Independence, Missouri, January 18, 1962, by J. R. Fuchs, HSTL.

<sup>24</sup>Harry S. Truman, Year of Decisions, pp. 121-2.

<sup>25</sup>Lilian Rixey, "Bess Truman and Her Town," Life (July 11, 1949), pp. 96; 98.

ADULTHOOD: TRAGEDY AND IDEALISM, 1901-1910  
HARRY S TRUMAN

<sup>26</sup>"I. H. S. Class of '01: Forty-one Boys and Girls Receive High School Diplomas--Commencement Exercises," Examiner (May 31, 1901), p. 3.

<sup>27</sup>Harry S. Truman, Year of Decisions, p. 123-4; and Dear Bess, pp. 10-1.

<sup>28</sup>Dear Bess, p. 11, and Ferrell, Truman: A Centenary Remembrance, pp. 40-1.

<sup>29</sup>Harry S. Truman, Year of Decisions, p. 125.

<sup>30</sup>Warranty Deed, Anthony T. and Maria M. Slack to Margaret Ellen Noland, July 20, 1908, Land Deed Book 281, Page 416, Jackson County Courthouse and Independence Historic Preservation Office.

<sup>31</sup>Lilian Rixey, "Bess Truman and Her Town," Life (July 11, 1949).

BESSIE VIRGINIA WALLACE

<sup>32</sup>Ron Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman

Daniel at the Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri, November 17, 1983" (Omaha: Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, 1983), p. 10. (Hereinafter cited as Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman.")

<sup>33</sup>Oral History Interview with Mary Ethel Noland, Independence, Mo., August 23, and September 9 and 16, 1965, by J. R. Fuchs, HSTL.

<sup>34</sup>Elizabeth Paxton Forsling, "Remembering Delaware Street," Jackson County Historical Society Journal, Vol. IV, No. 12 (November 1963), appendix to Oral History Interview with Sue Gentry, HSTL.

<sup>35</sup>Hoye's Independence, Mo., Directory for 1905-06 (Kansas City: Hoye Directory Company, 1905), Jackson County Historical Society.

<sup>36</sup>"A Century of Light Bread," Kansas City Times (May 30, 1967), KCSL.

<sup>37</sup>Sue Gentry, "Phase V: Living Alone; Pastor Pays Special Attention to Spiritual Needs," Examiner (October 18, 1982), p. 6B.

<sup>38</sup>Lilian Rixey, "Bess Truman and Her Town," Life (July 11, 1949), p. 98; and Congregational Records of the First Presbyterian Church of Independence, Missouri, Williams Research, HSTR.

<sup>39</sup>Henry P. Chiles, Oral History Interview, Independence, Mo., November 1, 1961, and August 14, 1962, by J. R. Fuchs, HSTL, pp. 20; 22.

<sup>40</sup>Elizabeth Paxton Forsling, "Remembering Delaware Street," Jackson County Historical Society Journal, Vol. III, No. 8 (May 1962), p. 8, appendix to Oral History Interview with Sue Gentry, HSTL.

<sup>41</sup>O. W. Price, The Federal Government in Greater Kansas City, Part I (Kansas City: Greater Kansas City Federal Business Association, 1939), p. 36, and Missouri: Mother of the West, Vol. IV (Chicago: American Historical Society, Inc., 1930), p. 343.

<sup>42</sup>Oral History Interview with Mary Paxton Keeley, Columbia, Missouri, July 12, 1966, by J. R. Fuchs, HSTL, p. 41.

<sup>43</sup>"D. W. Wallace Dead," The Jackson Examiner (June 19, 1903), p. 1, Williams Research, HSTR.

<sup>44</sup>Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview, Independence, March 2, 1984.

<sup>45</sup>Oral History Interview with Mary Paxton Keeley, Columbia,



Mo., July 12, 1966, by J. R. Fuchs, HSTL.

<sup>46</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 58.

<sup>47</sup>Lillian Rixey, "Bess Truman and Her Town," Life (July 11, 1949), p. 98.

<sup>48</sup>The Jackson Examiner (September 8, 1905, and July 31, 1908); and, "Gates/Wallace Entries from the Ott-Mitchell Furniture Ledgers," Williams Research, HSTR.

<sup>49</sup>Lillian Rixey, "Bess Truman and Her Town," p. 101; and Patricia Ewing Pace, "Haunting Questions Surround Victims of Murder Most Foul," Kansas City Star (October 31, 1980), file-Swope, Thomas Col., KCSL.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### COURTSHIP, WAR, AND MARRIAGE, 1910-1924

- \* Wooing Bessie Wallace
- \* Harry Goes To War
- \* A Wedding In Independence, June 28, 1919
- \* Mary Margaret Truman Is Born, February 17, 1924

### WOONG BESSIE WALLACE

In the six years Bessie Wallace and her family lived at 219 North Delaware, major changes took place at the Gates mansion. When George P. and Elizabeth Gates could no longer negotiate the stairway and/or desired more privacy, they abandoned the entire second floor to the Wallaces and moved to the first floor bedroom which was supplemented with a bathroom (circa 1907-1910). These rooms and the front living room were considered the grandparents' quarters along with the south side porch where the couple sat during the evening hours. The Wallace furniture was also moved into the house and incorporated into the existing decor. Madge Wallace transformed the room above the kitchen into a sitting and sewing room for her own family. The Wallaces and their friends gathered there at night without disturbing the elderly Gates who usually retired early. They entered and exited the house through one of the kitchen entrances and walked up the rear stairway without bothering the grandparents.<sup>1</sup>

The 1910 cakeplate incident marked the beginning of a nine-year courtship. Harry S Truman was a constant weekend visitor to Madge Wallace's second floor sitting room. Harry frequently stayed overnight with his relatives, sleeping on a daybed in the parlor of the Noland house after spending the day and evening with Bessie.<sup>2</sup> Getting to 219 North Delaware from the Grandview farm, however, was not simple. There were two approaches Truman used. He could take the

horse and buggy to a friend's house in Dodson (just north of Grandview) and ride the streetcar into Kansas City and another to Independence. A second alternative was to take the train from Grandview to the Sheffield junction, and then catch a streetcar or another train to Independence.<sup>3</sup>

When Harry was not with Bessie in Independence, he kept in constant touch through a barrage of letters and an occasional phone call. The first extant letter was written on the last day of 1910. Harry's letters to Bessie revealed his deepest thoughts, concerns, and desires. He was not afraid to tell his sweetheart exactly what was on his mind. Truman was genuinely fond of the small town and endured long, hard weeks on the farm by thinking of Bessie and Independence. In a prophetic March 19, 1911, letter, he wrote: "I like Independence and if I ever get rich enough to retire (be a retired farmer[,] ah[!]) I think I'll land in Independence."<sup>4</sup>

In November 1911, J. Vivian Truman was married, but his brother opted to go to Independence rather than participate in Vivian's "charivari" (chivaree).<sup>5</sup> Harry's weekend trips conflicted with his father's wish that he spend more time attending to the farm, a partnership known as "J. A. Truman & Son." In April 1912, he related that "Papa says he's going to adopt a boy if I don't stay home on Sundays. I told him to go ahead."<sup>6</sup> In August, Harry discussed his father again stating, "Politics is all he ever advises me to neglect

the farm for. I have other ideas. For instance, if I only owned a car, there'd probably be some very serious neglect."<sup>7</sup>

Harry dreamed of owning an automobile because he grew tired of missing train and streetcar connections and the time it took to cover the 20 miles. He timed his visits to the last possible second. On rare occasions, he left early. On April 12, 1912, he wrote,

Do you know I left on Friday fifteen minutes too soon? When I got to Union and Delaware the car was coming and I hopped on. It was the 10:25 car. I looked at my watch after getting on. I was leaving by your clock. It was 10:30 by it when we went out on the porch. When I heard the car go uptown I just supposed it was the 10:37.<sup>8</sup>

Harry's desire for a car reached a peak in 1914. In a January, he wrote Bess that he would rather see her than sleep:

You may be sure that I would never want to waste an evening in sleep that could be spent at 219 Delaware Street. That's one reason I want an auto so badly. I could do a day's work and still arrive in your town at a reasonable hour. I suppose if I didn't have one, I'd learn to do my sleeping between stops.<sup>9</sup>

In mid-April 1914, Harry borrowed money from his mother and paid \$600 for a 1911 Stafford. Years of dreaming were over.

Part of the money for the Stafford came from the settlement of the family lawsuit from which lawyers' fees were bleeding J. A. Truman & Son dry. In 1909, Grandmother Harriet Louisa Young died

leaving her estate to son Harrison and daughter Martha Ellen. The remaining heirs were left a paltry \$5 apiece.<sup>10</sup> While winning title to the farm, the bitter lawsuit left the Trumans in abysmal financial straits. The situation sometimes found Harry despairing of ever winning his sweetheart's hand.

In a June 22, 1911, letter, Harry proposed:

Speaking of diamonds, would you wear a solitaire on your left hand should I get it? Now that is a rather personal or pointed question provided you take it for all it means. You know, were I an Italian or a poet I would commence and use all the luscious language of two continents. I am not either but only a kind of good-for-nothing American farmer. I've always had a sneakin' notion that some day maybe I'd amount to something. I doubt it now though like everything. It is a family failing of ours to be poor financiers. I am blest that way. Still that doesn't keep me from having always thought that you were all that a girl could be possibly and impossibly. You may not have guessed it but I've been crazy about you ever since we went to Sunday school together. But I never had the nerve to think you'd even look at me. I don't think so now but I can't keep from telling you what I think of you.<sup>11</sup>

Considering Bess's family obligations, the inevitable rejection of his proposal was answered on July 12:

You know that you turned me down so easy that I am almost happy anyway. I never was fool enough to think that a girl like you could ever care for a fellow like me but I couldn't help telling you how I felt. I have always wanted you to have some fine, rich, good-looking man, but I knew if ever I got the chance I'd tell you how I felt even if I didn't even get to say another word to you. What makes me feel real good is that you were good enough to answer me seriously and not make fun of me anyway....

You may think I'll get over it as all boys do. I guess I am something of a freak myself. I really never had any desire to make love to a girl just for the fun of it and you have

always been the reason. I have never met a girl in my life that you were the first to be compared with her, to see wherein she was lacking and she always was....

As I said before I am more than glad to be your good friend for that is more than I expected. So when I come down there Saturday (which I'll do if I don't hear from you) I'll not put on any hangdog airs but will try to be the same old Harry.<sup>12</sup>

Bess ("Bessie" was abandoned in Harry's letters beginning in March 1912) was sometimes embarrassed by Harry's openness about his feelings. Writing about an awkward moment on a date in Kansas City, he wrote, "You shouldn't have been afraid of my getting slushy or proposing until I can urge you to come to as good a home as you have already. I don't think any man should expect a girl to go to a less comfortable home than she's used to."<sup>13</sup>

In June 1912, Bess suddenly informed Harry that he was atop her list of beaux. As their courtship became more intimate, Harry wrote,

Your last letter was a most excellent one (they all are), but it was very injurious to my head. A thirty-two-inch belt would hardly buckle around it after what you said about my eligibility. I don't care what the balance think if you'll only think so yourself.<sup>14</sup>

By November 1913, Bess confessed she was in love with Harry. In a letter, he wrote jubilantly,

Your letter has made a confirmed optimist out of me sure enough. I know now that everything is good and grand and this footstool is a fine place to be. I have been all up in the air, clear above earth ever since it came. I guess you thought

I didn't have much sense Sunday, but I just couldn't say anything--only just sit and look. It doesn't seem real that you should care for me. I have always hoped you would but some way feared very much you wouldn't. You know, I've always thought that the best man in the world is hardly good enough for any woman. But when it comes to the best girl in all the universe caring for an ordinary gink like me--well, you'll have to let me get used to it.

Do you want to be a farmer? or shall I do some other business. When Mamma wins her suit and we get all the lawyers and things out of the way I will then have a chance for myself.... Let's get engaged anyway to see how it feels. No one need know it but you and me until we get ready to tell it anyway. If you see a man you think more of in the meantime, engagements are easy enough broken. I've always said I'd have you or no one and that's what I mean to do.... This letter seems to be more erratic and incoherent than the last, but you shouldn't blame me very much because I'm all puffed up and hilarious and happy and anything else that happens to a fellow when he finds his lady love thinks more of him than the rest of the beasts.<sup>15</sup>

Courting at 219 North Delaware involved not only trying to win Bess's hand, but the approval of Madge Wallace as well. Harry curried her favor early in the courtship by playing Madge's piano in the parlor/music room.<sup>16</sup> On Easter Sunday, April 16, 1911, Harry Truman apparently ate his first meal in the Gates/Wallace house after hearing Bess sing in the choir at Trinity Episcopal Church. He wrote:

I certainly did enjoy myself yesterday. I liked that church service very much. It is the first time I ever saw one on Easter. I am afraid I thanked your mother too much and you not enough for the pleasure of the day; but you know I appreciated the invitation from you both. I shall remember that dinner for a mighty long time.<sup>17</sup>

Harry did not always stay with the Nolands. In January 1913, Bess (probably with Madge's approval) asked him to stay over. Truman



refused, much to his regret:

I was all kinds of a fool for not accepting your invitation to stay.... I didn't get cold but it was not the most agreeable walk in the world from Grandview. Besides instead of being thanked for getting home to milk I got nothing but jibes. Papa had the impudence to ask me if your mother kicked me out.<sup>18</sup>

Two weeks later he accepted Bess's offer and spent the night sleeping in Frank Wallace's room.<sup>19</sup>

Bess came to Grandview only infrequently. Her first trip came in late September 1911, but only after Harry lured her there by building a tennis court at the farm.<sup>20</sup> On one trip to Grandview, Madge Wallace became worried about the long absence of her daughter and was frantic when she could not contact the farm by phone. Harry worried if "she'll ever let you come again?"<sup>21</sup>

Aside from sitting on the back porch or in the upstairs sitting room, the couple enjoyed getting away from the house and Madge's critical eyes. They took long walks around Independence, particularly the popular Square area,<sup>22</sup> or hitched the Wallace's white horse to a fringe-topped surrey and went for a ride.<sup>23</sup> Picnics and fishing trips to the Blue and Missouri rivers were other pasttimes.<sup>24</sup> When Truman purchased his car, picnics all over Jackson County were common. [See Figure 18]. As the courtship became more serious with Harry as Bess's number one suitor, he revealed a big worry to her in November 1913: "Do you suppose your mother'll care for me well

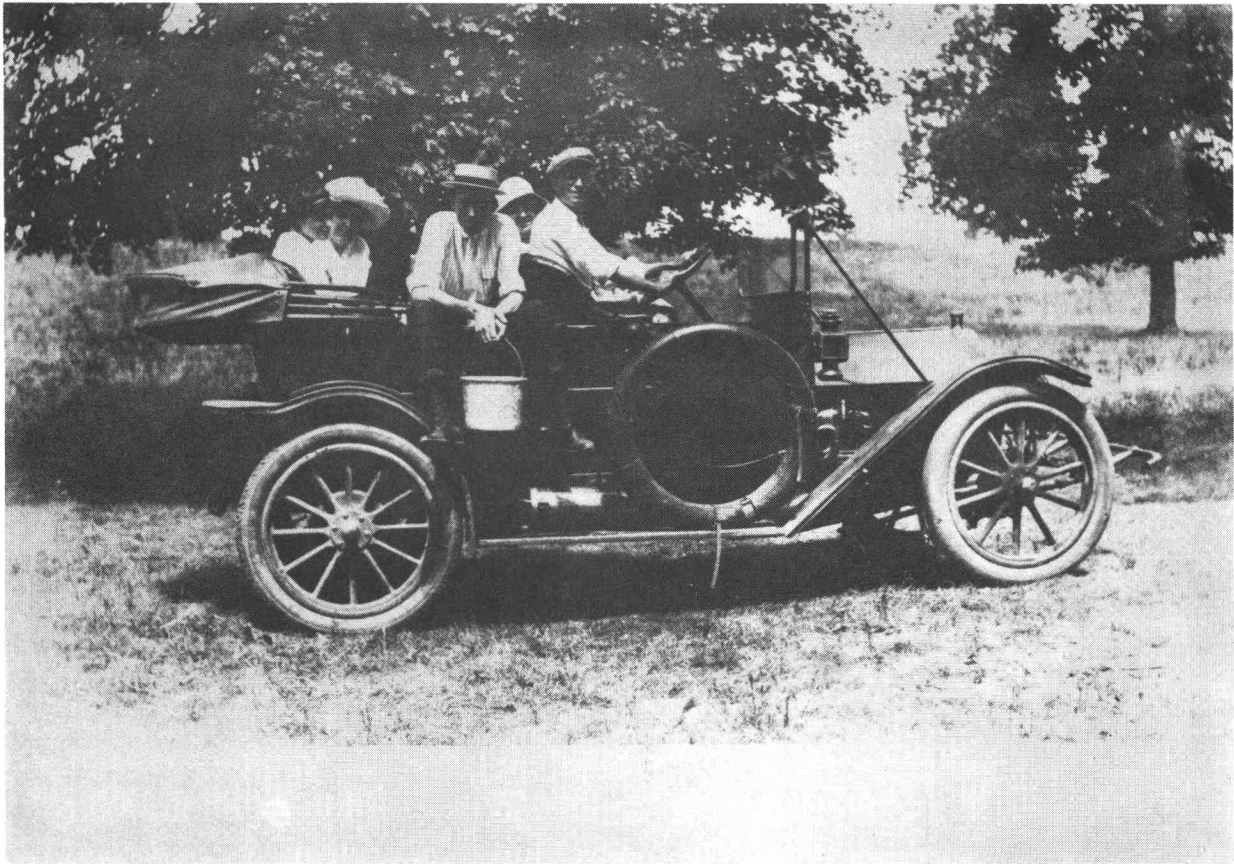


FIGURE 18

FIGURE 18: Harry S Truman's 1911 Stafford  
Left to Right: Natalie Ott Wallace, Mrs. William  
Southern, Frank Gates Wallace, Bess Wallace, and  
Harry S Truman--at a picnic area near the Little  
Blue River, rural Jackson County.  
Date: Circa 1915  
Truman Library Photo No. 79-20

enough to have me in her family?"<sup>25</sup>

In the summer of 1914, John Anderson Truman strained himself lifting a boulder while operating as the road overseer in Washington Township, the area around Grandview. An operation proved ineffective and the mule trader/farmer slowly wasted away. The long weeks of illness kept Harry away from Independence.

After John Truman's death on November 2, 1914, the flowers the Wallaces sent to the funeral were gratefully acknowledged.<sup>26</sup> The burden of operating the Grandview farm was placed on Harry and Martha Ellen Trumans' shoulders. Harry inherited his father's road overseership position. On March 14, 1914, Harry took the civil service examination with an eye toward applying for the postmastership at Grandview. With the backing of Missouri Congressman William P. Borland, he was appointed to the position in late 1914. Harry held the title of postmaster but did not perform the duties; rather he appointed a local widow to serve in the job which paid \$503 per year. Truman resigned the post on April 27, 1915.<sup>27\*</sup>

In the two years preceding the United States' entrance as a belligerent in World War I, George and Elizabeth Gates gave away two parcels of land upon which their grandsons could build their own

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\*The only other U.S. President to hold the title of local postmaster was Abraham Lincoln at New Salem, Illinois, in 1835.

homes. The Gates garden, the principal section of Lot 1 immediately east of 219 North Delaware, was divided and presented as wedding presents to the brothers of Bess Wallace. Frank Gates Wallace, who married Natalie Ott, was given the east 50 feet on March 15, 1915. George Porterfield Wallace, who married Mary Frances (May) Southern, was given the west 50 feet of the east 100 feet on August 22, 1916. The Wallace bungalows, which were built in 1915 and 1916 respectively, are of similar design. At 605 and 601 West Van Horn [now Truman Road], the homes are where both Wallace families spent their married lives. Mrs. George P. [May] Wallace currently resides at 605 West Truman Road.<sup>28</sup>

While life continued as usual for the Wallace/Gates family, it was a time of great turmoil for Harry Truman. Determined to make a better livelihood for himself than farming and thereby marry Bess, Harry invested in a lead and zinc mine near Commerce, Oklahoma. As Secretary-Treasurer of the T.C.H. Mining Company (Truman-Culbertson-Hughes), Harry was away from Jackson County for long periods in 1916. In a July letter, he told Bess they would be married immediately if the mine was a success:

There isn't any telling when I'll be home. I'm going to make this thing go or bust it one. If I make it go I'll come home in a new car and we'll beat May [Southern] and George [Wallace] to it [marriage] yet. If I don't make [it] I'm not thinking of how I'll come home. Wish heavy for me to win.<sup>29</sup>

By late 1916, the mine had failed. Harry's hopes rose again

as he invested in Morgan and Company, Oil Investments. In a downtown Kansas City office, Harry sold stock for the company which drilled on leases in southeastern Kansas. In early 1917, with finances stretched to the limit, the oil partners were forced to sell their leases.<sup>30</sup> The liquidation coincided with America's entrance into World War I.

#### HARRY GOES TO WAR

Harry Truman was discouraged. His dream of being a success in both the mining and oil businesses and then marrying Bess Wallace had failed. Several weeks after President Woodrow Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war in April 1917, Harry Truman enlisted. As a former member of the Missouri National Guard, Harry volunteered to recruit men for the expansion of Kansas City's Battery B and Independence's Battery C into a new regiment. In August 1917, Jackson County's National Guard batteries were called into Federal service and became the 129th Field Artillery, 35th Division. Harry Truman was elected First Lieutenant of Battery F.<sup>31</sup> During the summer of 1917, Harry and Bess were engaged and discussed marriage. In a July 14 letter, Harry declared:

Bess, I'm dead crazy to ask you to marry me before I leave, but I'm not going to because I don't think it would be right for me to ask you to tie yourself to a prospective cripple—or a sentiment. You, I know, would love me just as much, perhaps more, with one hand as with two, but I don't think I should cause you to do it. Besides, if the war ends happily and I can steal the Russian or German crown jewels, just think what a grand military wedding you can have, get a major general maybe.

If you don't marry me before I go, you may be sure that I'll be just as loyal to you as if you were my wife. I'll not try to exact any promises from you either if you want to go with any other guy, why all right, but I'll be as jealous as the mischief although not begrudging you the good time.<sup>32</sup>

In September, the 129th Artillery went to Camp Doniphan, at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, for training. There Harry was appointed regimental canteen officer. With the assistance of Eddie Jacobson, the canteen became the best and most profitable at Fort Sill. By May 1918, the troops were on the move to the east coast and from there, to the Western Front. As the troop train passed through the Rosedale district of Kansas City, Kansas, Harry called Bess at 4 a.m. May 21, 1918. It was the last direct contact the two would have for the next year.<sup>33</sup> [See Figure 19].

While Harry was fighting in France, Bess helped organize the Women's Auxiliary of the 129th Field Artillery. Bess's close friends, many of them members of her Tuesday Bridge Club, also had husbands and fiances in France. The group called themselves the Independence War Widows, or I.W.W.s. Bess was a solicitor for U.S. Liberty bonds. Harry's sister, Mary Jane Truman, served as treasurer of the Women's Auxiliary.<sup>34</sup>

In the spring of 1918, illness struck both Madge Wallace and her father, George P. Gates. On July 14, 1918, Harry wrote:



FIGURE 19

FIGURE 19: Bess Wallace  
Portrait photograph was carried by Harry  
Truman to France during World War I; the  
original is on President Truman's desk in  
the Truman Library.  
Date: Circa 1917  
Truman Library Photo No. 82-56

You've no idea how sorry I am to hear of your mother's illness and I most sincerely hope you have succeeded in making her well again.... I hope your grandfather is much better now, and that by the time you read this letter you won't have a thing to worry about but how quickly I'll be home to march down the aisle with you.<sup>35</sup>

By the time Bess received the letter, her grandfather had been dead nearly a month. After a lengthy illness, George P. Gates died on June 25 at his home. The funeral took place at the Gates mansion two days later, and the body was taken to Woodlawn Cemetery for interment in the family plot.<sup>36</sup>

Under the dictates of the June 19, 1916, will, Gates's business partners George Walter Gates (son), and William Strother Wells and T. B. Wallace (sons-in-law), received his property "both real and personal and mixed and wherever situated to be by them held, managed and disposed of as trustees." Gates provided that his family share equally in his estate. The document made no provision for the property at 219 North Delaware. The three trustees, however, were empowered "to sell any or all of my real estate" or

...to sell any of the personal estate.... Upon termination of the trust, the trustees shall have the power to sell any or all property necessary to make final distribution among the beneficiaries.<sup>37</sup>

As the trustees were family members, it is certain that all three agreed to permit Elizabeth Gates and Madge Wallace's family to continue living in the house.



The deadly worldwide influenza which took nearly 500,000 American lives in late 1918 and early 1919 not only left Bess Wallace sick the entire winter, but permanently deaf in one ear. She contracted the flu after returning from Thanksgiving dinner with relatives in Platte City, Missouri. George Wallace and Mary Jane Truman were afflicted less severely.<sup>38</sup>

A WEDDING IN INDEPENDENCE, JUNE 28, 1919

On July 11, 1918, Harry Truman was commissioned to take command of Battery D of the 129th Field Artillery. "Captain Harry," as his men affectionately called him, was eager to return to Independence following the November 11 armistice. Bess rejected the suggestion she come to New York to get married as soon as Harry disembarked. He responded, "... if you'd rather be married in Trinity Church at Independence, Missouri, I am perfectly willing... but don't make any delay."<sup>39</sup>

Captain Harry arrived in New York on April 20, 1919, and was discharged from Camp Funston, Kansas, on May 6.<sup>40</sup> Seven weeks later, the long-awaited ceremony took place on June 28 at Trinity Episcopal Church. The Independence Examiner reported:

A wedding of unusual beauty and interest was that of Miss Bess Wallace and Capt. Harry Truman at 4 o'clock today at the

Trinity Episcopal Church.

Miss Wallace has lived in Independence all her life and has a large circle of friends. Independence also claims Capt. Truman although he has spent much time away. It was in this setting of love and devoted friendship that the marriage was solemnized.

The church was beautifully decorated with garden flowers in pastel shades. The altar was a mass of daisies, pink hollyhock and pale blue larkspur against a soft green background lighted with tall cathedral candles.

The service was read by the Rev. John V. Plunkett, rector of Trinity. The wedding music was by Mrs. Joseph C. Story, organist, who used the Lohengrin and Mendelssohn wedding marches, "Serenade" by Gounod, and "Traumerei" by Schumann.

Miss Wallace was given in marriage by her brother, Frank Gates Wallace, and attended by her cousins, Miss Helen Wallace and Miss Louise Wells.

Capt. Truman had Capt. Theodore Marks as best man. George P. Wallace, the bride's brother, and Alden Millard were the ushers.

The bride wore a lovely gown of white georgette with hat of white faille and carried Aaron Ward roses....

Capt. and Mrs. Truman left immediately after the ceremony [sic] for an extended trip north.

Out-of-town guests were Mr. and Mrs. W. S. Wells, Mr. and Mrs. Gates Wells, Oscar Wells and W. S. Wells Jr., all of Platte City, and Mrs. J. A. Truman, Miss Mary J. Truman and Mr. and Mrs. Vivian Truman of Grandview.<sup>41</sup>

Contrary to the newspaper assertion, a wedding reception was held at 219 North Delaware<sup>42</sup> where photographs were taken. [See Figure 20]. Following a honeymoon to Chicago, Illinois, and Detroit and Port Huron, Michigan, Harry and Bess Truman returned to the Gates/Wallace house to begin married life. Madge Wallace's delicate health worsened that summer, compounded by chronic sciatica, a neuritis of the hip. With Bess unwilling to resign her responsibility to care for her mother, grandmother, and the family home, the Trumans decided to live there. From a financial standpoint, until Harry established himself in a profession, the arrangement seemed

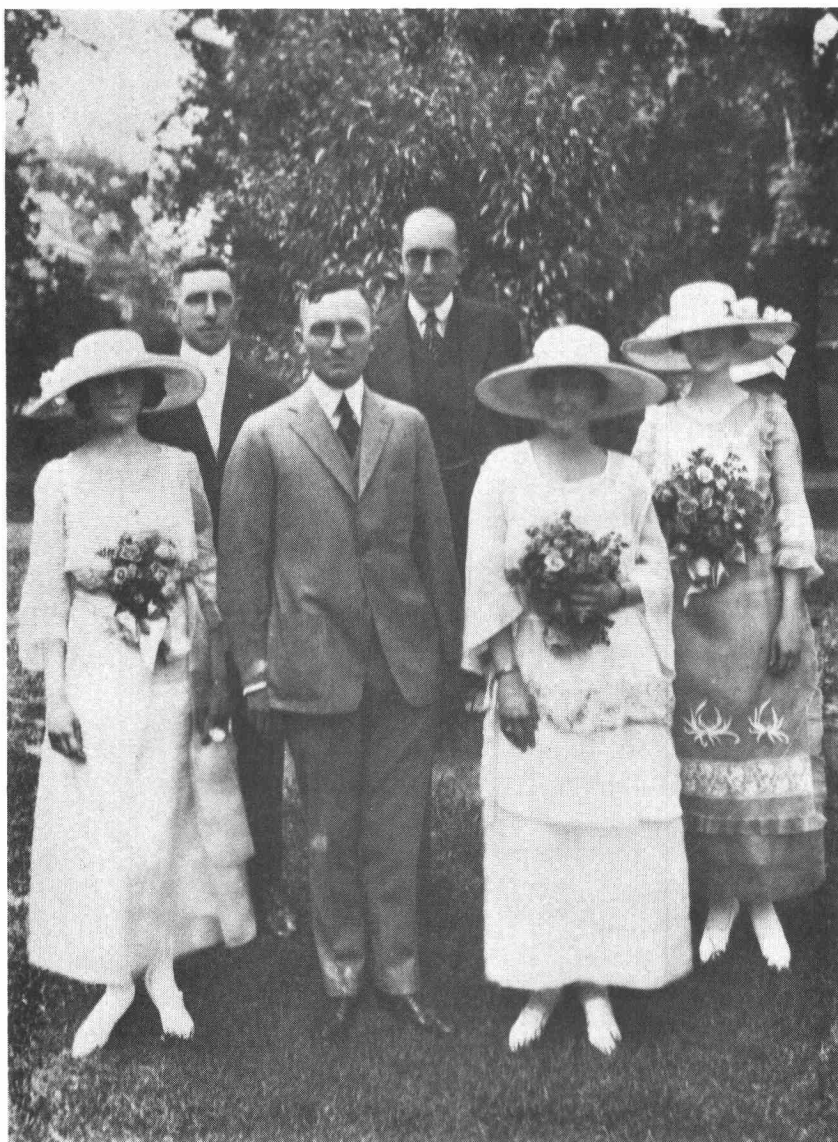


FIGURE 20

FIGURE 20: Truman Wedding Party, June 28, 1919  
Back yard of 219 North Delaware  
Left to Right, Front Row: Helen Wallace, Harry S  
Truman, Bess Truman, and Louise Wells (Mrs. Lee  
Hull); Back Row: Ted Marks and Frank Wallace.  
Truman Library Photo No. 73-1667

ideal.<sup>43</sup> Living with Madge Wallace, however, was not easy for Harry. His mother-in-law's strongly-held opinions and her belief that Bess should have married a more promising mate was a constant source of conflict.\* The couple's daughter remembered:

My father, however, was not quite as tolerant of his opinionated mother-in-law. Perhaps he and Grandmother Wallace were never destined to get along under the same roof because she was from a town family and he from a country one. For whatever reason, while they never argued in public, there was much they disagreed upon in private.<sup>44</sup>

In partnership with war buddy Eddie Jacobson, Truman turned from farming to merchandising to support his new wife. With their experience running a canteen in wartime, the two decided to open a men's furnishings store, or haberdashery, in downtown Kansas City. Opposite the prestigious Muehlebach Hotel, "Truman & Jacobson" opened at 104 West 12th Street, in November 1919, with Eddie the buyer and Harry the salesman. [See Figure 21]. The store was open six days a week and more than 12 hours a day with both men working until late at night. Truman was in charge of bookkeeping and he often took work home where Bess would help him.<sup>45</sup>

The haberdashery thrived its first year grossing more than

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\*Merle Miller also contributed to the "nagging mother-in-law" scenario: "[Mrs. Wallace] seldom failed to make it clear that Harry Truman was not what she had in mind as a son-in-law. Or as a President. As late as 1948 she was often heard to remark that she could not for the life of her understand why Harry was running against that nice man, Thomas E. Dewey." (See Plain Speaking, p. 106).



FIGURE 21

FIGURE 21: Harry S Truman's (foreground) haberdashery  
"Truman & Jacobson," Kansas City  
Date Circa 1919-21  
Montgomery Photo V-5326  
Truman Library Photo No. 62-130

\$70,000 in sales. Truman savored his success by participating in the once-closed Independence social circles. The Examiner reported in April 1920:

Through the courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Truman, the Good Samaritan Class of The First Christian Church entertained their friends with a musical tea on Tuesday afternoon and evening in a very delightful way. The rooms of the beautiful home were dressed in spring flowers and made a charming setting for the entertainments. The afternoon hours were from three until five in the evening from eight until ten. Splendid musical programs were given both times, Miss Cammie Johnston presiding.<sup>46</sup>

Bess served as Vice-President of the Community Welfare League<sup>47</sup> and continued to entertain her bridge club with luncheons.<sup>48</sup> As for Harry's close business partner, Eddie and Bluma Jacobson were never invited inside 219 North Delaware. According to Bluma Jacobson:

Eddie and I were never at the Truman house. We went maybe two or three times on picnics and on the Fourth of July, but the Trumans never had us at their home. The Wallaces were aristocracy in these parts, and under the circumstances the Trumans couldn't afford to have Jews at their house.<sup>49</sup>

The economic policies of Republican President Warren G. Harding precipitated an egregious postwar price deflation. In 1922, the haberdashery was forced to liquidate to satisfy creditors. Truman refused to declare bankruptcy, struggling for over a decade to repay his debts.<sup>50</sup>

### TRUMAN ENTERS JACKSON COUNTY POLITICS

The haberdashery failure, although bitter, was cushioned by Harry's resourcefulness and an invitation to enter the political arena. In late 1921, Rufus Burrus, a young lawyer, was walking on the Square when he recognized Frank Wallace, Democratic ward leader for the Pendergast faction, walking with an unfamiliar man. Wallace introduced his companion, brother-in-law Harry S Truman, saying, "He will be the next Eastern Jackson County Judge." The meeting initiated a lifelong association between Burrus and Truman.<sup>51</sup>

It was in late 1921 when Jim Pendergast, a friend and former lieutenant in the 129th Field Artillery, suggested that Harry consider seeking the nomination for judge of the county court in the Eastern District. In 1922, as the store began to flounder, Jim's father, Mike Pendergast, who was the brother of Jackson County Boss Tom Pendergast, encouraged Truman to run.<sup>52</sup> On April 20, the Independence Examiner reported that Harry S Truman was a Democratic candidate for Eastern District Judge in the August 1 primary.<sup>53</sup>

During the campaign, Mrs. W. L. C. Palmer and Mrs. John Paxton, both close friends, went door-to-door seeking to bring out the new women voters.<sup>54</sup> Truman later wrote:

I had an old roadster which was a very rough rider. I kept two bags of cement in the back of it so it would not throw me through the windshield while driving on our terrible



county roads. I went into every township--there were seven of them--and into every precinct in the county in the Eastern District. Luckily I had relatives all over the county, and through my wife I was related to many more.<sup>55</sup>

Harry, who won by a plurality of 500 votes, credited his victory by being honest with the people: "Most people were broke, and they sympathized with a man in politics who admitted his financial condition."<sup>56</sup>

Election to office in November was a formality because Jackson County, particularly the Eastern District, was staunchly Democratic. The new political title presented Judge Truman with new problems in his personal life. Although the practice was frowned on by the female residents, Judge Truman could not turn away those who came to 219 North Delaware looking for a county job. The job-seekers were usually received in the first floor study.<sup>57</sup> A county judgeship is not judicial, as Truman himself later explained:

The judges of these Missouri county courts are not judges in the usual sense, since the court is an administrative, not a judicial body. It levies taxes. Expenditures for roads, for homes for the aged, and for schools for delinquent children are supported by orders of this court on the county treasurer, and the court also orders such payments as are necessary to state institutions for the support of the insane. The only real judicial act the court performs is to make a finding of insanity when that has been recommended by two reputable physicians.<sup>58</sup>

MARY MARGARET TRUMAN IS BORN, FEBRUARY 17, 1924

Next to his marriage, the most important event in Harry Truman's



life was the birth of his daughter, Mary Margaret. Bess, 39, refused to go to a hospital, preferring instead to deliver her baby in the comfort and privacy of her family home. In the four years of her marriage, Bess had miscarried twice. During a bitter snowstorm on February 17, 1924, a 7-pound daughter was born to Harry and Bess in their second floor east bedroom. The proud parents had no furnishings for their daughter because of Bess' superstition and previous child-bearing disappointments. Little Margaret, dubbed "Margie," spent the first days of her life sleeping on two pillows in the opened drawer of a bureau.<sup>59</sup> The birth was reported the next day in the Kansas City Times which said that the Monday morning court session in Kansas City would be delayed.<sup>60</sup>

Margie's birth was the highlight of 1924 [See Figures 22 and 23], while the remainder of the year saw sorrow and defeat. Elizabeth Gates, 83, died five months after her great-granddaughter's birth, on June 19, 1924. On June 13, Mrs. Gates had left Independence for Colorado Springs, Colorado, where she usually spent the summer to visit and care for her invalid son, Frank.<sup>61</sup> Six days later, she died. Funeral services, conducted by the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, were held at the Gates/Wallace/Truman house at 2 p.m., Sunday, June 22.<sup>62</sup> The bulk of her estate went to her only surviving son, Frank (G. Walter Gates died in 1923).<sup>63</sup> Madge Gates Wallace purchased the family home on October 4, 1924, from the trustees of her father's estate. The home, Lots 2 and 3,



FIGURE 22



FIGURE 23

FIGURE 22: Bess holds baby Margaret on the front steps of 219 North Delaware.  
Date: Summer 1924  
Truman Library Photo No. 83-10

FIGURE 23: Harry holds baby Margaret near back porch of 219 North Delaware.  
Date: Fall 1924  
Truman Library Photo No. 82-315-6

and the west 14.18 feet of Lot 1, sold for \$10,000.<sup>64</sup>

Truman lost his bid for re-election in the November 4 election. A split in the Democratic Party between "Goats" (Pendergast faction) and "Rabbits" (Shannon faction) saw the Rabbits actively supporting Truman's opponent who became only the second Republican judge in Jackson County since the Civil War.<sup>65</sup>

#### WOONG BESSIE WALLACE

<sup>1</sup>Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview, Independence, June 14, 1983.

<sup>2</sup>"216 North Delaware, Truman Historic District, Noland/Haukenberry Residence," Preliminary Survey Form, Independence Historical Survey (Kansas City: M. A. Solomon and R. J. Claybaugh, Architects, Inc., and Bernd Foerster, A.I.A., 1975), Independence Historic Preservation Office.

<sup>3</sup>Ferrell, Dear Bess, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., March 19, 1911, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., November 1, 1911, p. 57.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., April 1, 1912, p. 80.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., August 6, 1912, p. 92.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., August 12, 1912, p. 94.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., January 26, 1914, p. 157.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 64; 164, and Ferrell, Truman: A Centenary Remembrance, p. 47.

<sup>11</sup>Dear Bess, June 22, 1911, p. 39.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 40-1.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., January 25, 1912, p. 69.

- <sup>14</sup>Ibid., June 18, 1912, p. 86.
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid., November 4, 1913, pp. 141-2.
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., February 7, 1911, p. 23.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., April 1 and 17, 1911, pp. 27-8.
- <sup>18</sup>Ibid., January 6, 1913, p. 110.
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., January 21, 1913, p. 112.
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., September 26, 1911, p. 48.
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid., July 7, 1913, p. 129.
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid., October 6, 1913, pp. 138-9.
- <sup>23</sup>Frank Baldus, "Big House Active Place," Examiner (January 19, 1984), p. 14. From 1909 to 1919, Baldus' family lived at 610 W. Van Horn, across the street from the Gates/Wallace house. He said the surrey was kept in the barn (carriage house), and the horse in the stable in the pasture. "A black man often drove the surrey when the family went for a ride."
- <sup>24</sup>Dear Bess, August 5, 1913, p. 133.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid., November 19, 1913, p. 146.
- <sup>26</sup>Ibid., August 31, 1914, pp. 173; 178.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., August 31, 1914, p. 173, and Duke Shoop, "Washington on Review," Kansas City Star (June 26, 1949), file-Truman, Postmaster at Grandview, KCSL.
- <sup>28</sup>General Warranty Deeds: George P. and Elizabeth E. Gates to Frank G. Wallace (March 15, 1915; Land Deed Book 334, Page 354) and George P. Wallace (August 22, 1916; Land Deed Book 339, Page 360), Office of Deeds, Jackson County Courthouse; and, Oral History Interview, Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, June 14, 1983, and March 2, 1984, Independence, Mo.
- <sup>29</sup>Dear Bess, July 28, 1916, pp. 205-6.
- <sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 188; 214-5.

#### HARRY GOES TO WAR

- <sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 219; and Harry S. Truman, Year of Decisions,

p. 127-8.

<sup>32</sup>Dear Bess, July 14, 1917, p. 225.

<sup>33</sup>Harry S. Truman, Year of Decisions, pp. 128-9.

<sup>34</sup>Dear Bess, November 2, 1918, p. 278; and Lilian Rixey, "Bess Truman and Her Town," Life (July 11, 1949), p. 101.

<sup>35</sup>Dear Bess, July 14, 1918, p. 265.

<sup>36</sup>"Closed A Useful Life," Examiner (June 26, 1918), p. 1, folder-Gates, George P., Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>37</sup>Last Will and Testament of George Porterfield Gates, June 19, 1916, No. 4177, Estate of G. P. Gates, Office of the Probate Court of Jackson County, Independence, Mo.

<sup>38</sup>Oral History Interview, Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, July 20, 1983 at the Harry S Truman NHS; and Dear Bess, January 12, 1919, p. 292.

#### A WEDDING IN INDEPENDENCE, JUNE 28, 1919

<sup>39</sup>Dear Bess, January 26, 1919, p. 294.

<sup>40</sup>Harry S Truman, Year of Decisions, p. 132.

<sup>41</sup>"Wallace-Truman," Examiner (June 28, 1919), p. 1.

<sup>42</sup>"Trumans to Observe 50th Quietly," Kansas City Times (June 28, 1969), p. 2A, folder-Truman, Harry S 1969, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>43</sup>"Transcript of Margaret Truman's Tour of the Truman Home in Independence, Missouri, and Interview with David McCullough on November 19, 1983," Smithsonian World, p. 34.

<sup>44</sup>Margaret Truman, Letters From Father: The Truman Family's Correspondence (New York: Arbor House, 1981), p. 220.

<sup>45</sup>Merle Miller, Plain Speaking: An Oral Biography of Harry S. Truman (New York: Berkley Publishing Corporation, 1973), p. 109, and Alfred Steinberg, The Man From Missouri: The Life and Times of Harry S. Truman (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1962), p. 55.

<sup>46</sup>Untitled article, Examiner (April 7, 1920), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S 1920, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>47</sup>"Truman, Bess," 1920 Independence, Missouri, City Directory

(Kansas City: Gate City Directory Company, 1920), JCHS.

<sup>48</sup>Untitled article, Examiner (January 22, 1921), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S 1921, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>49</sup>Miller, Plain Speaking, p. 104.

<sup>50</sup>Harry S. Truman, Year of Decisions, pp. 133-5.

#### TRUMAN ENTERS JACKSON COUNTY POLITICS

<sup>51</sup>Oral History Interview with Rufus Burrus, Independence, February 28, 1984.

<sup>52</sup>Harry S. Truman, Year of Decisions, p. 136.

<sup>53</sup>"Political Announcements," Examiner (April 20, 1922), folder-Truman, Harry S 1922, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>54</sup>Oral History Interview with Mrs. W. L. C. Palmer, Independence, Mo., January 18, 1962, by J. R. Fuchs, HSTL.

<sup>55</sup>Harry S. Truman, Year of Decisions, p. 136.

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

<sup>57</sup>Sue Gentry, Interview, Independence, June 22, 1983.

<sup>58</sup>Harry S. Truman, Year of Decisions, pp. 136-7.

#### MARY MARGARET TRUMAN IS BORN, FEBRUARY 17, 1924

<sup>59</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," pp. 1-2.

<sup>60</sup>"Judge Truman A Father," Kansas City Times (February 18, 1924), folder-Truman, Harry S 1924, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>61</sup>"Mrs. George P. Gates Dead," Examiner (June 20, 1924), folder-A172 Woodson-McCoy Scrapbook, Circa 1875-1925, newspaper clippings, JCHS.

<sup>62</sup>"Funeral of Mrs. Gates," Examiner (June 21, 1924), p. 1, Williams Research, HSTR.

<sup>63</sup>Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth Gates, October 31, 1917, Office of the Probate Court, Jackson County Courthouse, Independence; and, Genealogy chart, Family Group of George Porterfield

Gates and Elizabeth Emery, by Annette W. Curtis, JCHS.

<sup>64</sup>General Warranty Deed, Frank E. Gates and T. B. Wallace, as Trustees under the will of George P. Gates, and Madge Gates Wallace, October 4, 1924, Land Deed Book 459, Page 342, Office of Deeds, Jackson County Courthouse, Independence.

<sup>65</sup>"Truman Is Defeated," Examiner (November 5, 1924), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S 1924, Vertical File, HSTL.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### POLITICS AND LIFE

IN THE WALLACE/TRUMAN HOUSE, 1926 to 1934

- \* The Interim Years, 1925-1926
- \* Margaret Truman's Childhood
- \* Operating Jackson County



### THE INTERIM YEARS, 1925-1926

Two months after his defeat for re-election, Harry Truman began selling memberships for the Automobile Club of Kansas City. This he did for nearly 18 months at a "substantial income."<sup>1</sup> He also joined Rufus Burrus in a savings and loan venture Burrus organized. Called the "Community Savings and Loan Association" in Room 470 of the Board of Trade Building, Harry served as general manager.<sup>2</sup> By February 1926, he was Vice-President of Citizens Security Bank of Englewood. By April, however, the bank was under new management, but the ex-judge remained on the board of directors.<sup>3</sup>

On July 23, 1926, Truman was elected President of the National Old Trails Association (NOTA) at its convention at the Hotel Muehlebach in Kansas City. Founded to maintain the identity of America's historic trail systems, to correct the haphazard numbering of the nations' highways, and to promote paving major routes west of Missouri, the NOTA elected Truman president of the 14-year-old organization.<sup>4</sup> The responsibility and extensive travel gave Harry an outlook that transcended his county and state.

During the years he was out of county politics, Mike Pendergast prompted Harry to run for county treasurer. The two men went to see Mike's brother, Boss Tom, who said he already had a candidate selected for the position, but that Harry would make a good presiding

judge. It marked the first meeting between Truman and Boss Tom Pendergast. The endorsement, combined with the reconciliation of the Democratic Party factions, resulted in a fall 1926 landslide victory of 16,000 votes.<sup>5</sup>

#### MARGARET TRUMAN'S CHILDHOOD

Margaret Truman's first recollections were of her home in the spring of 1926. She later wrote:

The first thing I remember about life was the hot-air register in the hallway of my Grandmother Wallace's house in Independence, Missouri, where I was born and grew up. I must have been a little past two at the time. It was in the spring of the year--that season of domestic chaos when the ladies of my immediate ancestry tore the house limb from limb, scrubbed, waxed, polished, painted, varnished, and enameled it and called it spring housecleaning. I had been noticing this register for some time. It had open grillwork, into which you could stick your fingers, and it obviously went somewhere that didn't meet the eye.... I wanted to know what lay behind the register.<sup>6</sup>

The family's black handyman, "old Frank," removed the registers one day to take them outside to burnish them with stove blacking. As soon as he left the room, little Margaret went over to the open air duct, stuck her head down into the darkness to investigate, and plunged into the hole. The only sign for the little girl's rescuers were her screams and legs thrashing about from the duct.<sup>7</sup>

Another early remembrance came in the late 1920s when the home was burglarized. After the two Wallace brothers' homes twice pre-

viously had been ransacked, the main house became a target. While Madge Wallace was sleeping in her first floor bedroom, the robber broke the lock on the door to the south side porch, crept inside, and stole Madge's jewelry. When the man came back the second time for more loot, his movements caused someone in the house to awaken and call the police. When Independence police officers arrived, the burglar hid in the spirea bushes at the corner of the south side porch where the police were afraid to go in after him. George Wallace bravely pointed his own gun at the bushes and growled, "If you don't come out, I'm shooting!"

The experience caused a flurry of activity as the lights came on all over the house and the Wallaces, Trumans, and police went from room to room looking for accomplices. The commotion awakened Margie who was told by her mother, "Now, you go back to sleep. Everything's all right. You go back to sleep." Unaware of what had taken place, Margie was up early the next morning, came down the main stairs, and saw a policeman sitting in the music room looking at her and smiling. Rushing into the kitchen, she found her mother and asked, "Who's that?" to which Bess replied, "That's a policeman because we were robbed last night." The officer stayed in Judge Truman's house during the night until the broken lock was repaired.<sup>8</sup>

Five people occupied the Wallace/Truman house in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Madge Wallace lived in the second floor west front

bedroom until her sciatica forced her to move to downstairs. Her youngest son, Fred, who studied architecture at the University of Missouri at Columbia, had the northwest corner room. In 1926, when Margaret was old enough to have a room by herself, Harry and Bess ordered a portion of their sleeping porch taken to construct a passageway connecting their bedroom with Margie's. They thereby avoided having to circumvent the central landing during the night.<sup>9</sup>

It was on the sleeping porch where Margie took naps during warm weather. Across the treetops from this vantage point was the sleeping porch of the Ogden house, across the alley to the south. Betty and Sue Ogden were playmates who were also required to take afternoon naps. An elaborate system of communication was soon established between the two houses via a "network of strings and wires" which was used to exchange messages and small objects. The system was not without flaw, however, as the items got stuck or tangled in the branches and/or fell down into the alley. This catastrophe required stealth to exit the house, retrieve the item or note, and get back upstairs without being detected.<sup>10</sup>

Margie's wild imagination was constantly getting her into trouble. Bess blamed her daughter's "wild ideas" and all her woes in dealing with the challenge on Cousin Carrie Wallace. A librarian at the Independence Public Library, Carrie Wallace allowed Margie to go into any stack and select any book she wanted to read, many of which

were far beyond her age level. An example of her vivid imagination involved the cold winter nights lying in bed listening to a creature descending the attic stairs:

...I thought there was a little man dressed in black who lived in the attic.... When the house would cool off at night, the steps would one by one creak coming down and stop right in front of my door. And I said to my mother, "I want a lock on my door." I said, "There's a little man up there and he comes down every night and he stops in front of my door." And she said, "Oh, don't be ridiculous!" I remember my father saying, "It doesn't cost anything. Put a bolt on the door." So they put a bolt on the door.<sup>11</sup>

The Wallace/Truman back yard served as the neighborhood playground for nearly a dozen girls who lived in the immediate area. Margie had many one- to four-wheeled conveyances which were used on the gravel driveway. The gravel was manipulated to create a network of roads and intersections. Dust whipped up by this frenetic activity during the summer drought months drifted into the house causing frequent cleaning. Because of the heat, the adults often sat on the back porch listening to the cacophony of squeals and screams.

In addition to the bikes, wagons, and tricycles, the yard was stocked with swings, a teeter-totter, a trapeze, and a slide. The children loved to put the garden hose at the top of the wooden slide, ride the board down, and splash into the mud puddle at the bottom.<sup>12</sup> At Halloween, the slide was placed on the steps leading into the basement-turned-haunted house. Participants slid into a tub of water and then bobbed for apples or explored the candle-lit back reaches of

the cellar where "ghosts" would jump out to yell "Boo!" Margie coordinated the haunted house as well as the plays staged in the back yard. Proceeds to the events went to Kansas City's "Penny Ice Fund" which helped the poor buy ice to keep food and milk cold.<sup>13</sup>

The gang of girls used an abandoned chicken coop in the Ogden's back yard as a clubhouse. They called themselves the "Henhouse Hicks."\* One year the club put on a murder mystery play written by Betty Ogden. Because Margie was the only one who had a Mexican costume, she was given the role of the villain, a Mexican bandit. The Henhouse Hicks also published a weekly newspaper. One edition, which featured Frank Wallace splitting the seat of his pants while weeding the garden, sold out because Margie's embarrassed uncle purchased all the copies.<sup>14</sup>

During inclement weather, Margie was allowed to ride her tri-cycle inside the house on the hardwood floors.<sup>15</sup> Another indoor activity was called "Murder," a game similar to hide-and-go-seek. One girl hid and the other children went to find her. When "found," the others had to hide in the same place until the last girl was left, automatically becoming "It" to hide in the next round of the game. Four girls were playing "Murder" one day; two girls found Margie

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\*Members of the Henhouse Hicks were Margaret Truman; Betty and Sue Ogden; Jane Berridge; Marie, Harriet, Mona, and Barbara Allen; Dory Lou Compton; and Mary Shaw.

hiding between the old-fashioned bathtub and the wall in the second floor bathroom. The last remaining girl, who became frustrated when a thorough search did not produce her friends, sought Bess Truman's help.

"Mrs. Truman," the girl said, "I can't find them anywhere, and you made us promise we wouldn't go up in the attic. I don't know where they can be."

Bess, who had heard the girls giggling, suggested the girl go upstairs and search the bathroom. The three girls were discovered there, cramped and stuck between the tub and the wall. It took awhile to extricate the three girls from the spot which was never chosen for a hiding place again.<sup>16</sup>

Margie received an allowance of 50 cents a week with which she bought candy, sodas, trinkets, and movie tickets. The money came from her father who, along with her aunts and uncles, could always be relied upon to advance her additional coins. When the Great Depression caused county salaries to be cut in half, Bess Truman decreed that Margie's allowance would likewise be halved, much to her daughter's distress. Chores that were to be performed in order to earn the allowance included emptying the spill pail beneath the icebox in the kitchen. The large pan had to be emptied every night to keep it from overflowing onto the floor. The simple chore was

designed to save the black cook, Vietta Garr, from having to bother with it. Weary of the child frequently forgetting and then cleaning up the mess herself, Vietta declared, "I don't want to clean that puddle up anymore. I'll empty it!"

Vietta and Margie were best of friends. Vietta, who Margie called "Pete" or "Petey," helped raise her and joined family members in spoiling her. Vietta knew that if anything was amiss, Margie was probably behind it. This was the case when Margie took the ice order card and marked it for double the usual 50 pounds of ice. The iceman saw the unusually marked card placed in a clear pane in the front bay window and walked around to the kitchen entrance with a block of ice slung over his shoulder by a leather strap:

"Vi, that card out front reads a 100 pounds. How come?"  
"What do you mean, 100 pounds? You know we can't get 100 pounds into the icebox! Well, I know who did that. You just get the 50 and bring it in here!"

The mischievous Margie did not get back to the window in time to alter the card before her grandmother removed it, saw the markings, and confronted Vietta. Not telling on Margie, Vietta later scolded her saying, "Don't you do that again!"<sup>17</sup>

Madge Wallace, although strict, enjoyed spoiling her granddaughter. Whenever Margie tore any of her clothing she took it immediately to Grandmother Wallace to sew. A master at needlework, Madge could sew a garment so that it was impossible to detect the



tear. Her skill often spared the youngster from the sting of Bess's hairbrush.<sup>18</sup> While Harry never spanked his daughter, Bess did not hesitate to use corporal punishment:

[My father] could do more with a look. If I did something that he really disapproved of he would... look at me like how could you do that, how could you do a thing like that. And it would do more than all of mother's spankings with a hairbrush.... She spanked quite a lot.<sup>19</sup>

Being an only child was an asset, not a detriment for Margaret Truman. The extended Wallace/Truman family delighted in spoiling her. While dinner at the main house was served promptly at six o'clock, at 5:30 Margie was at Aunt Natalie and Uncle Frank Wallace's just as they were eating desert. Margie was usually invited to have some. The next stop was at Aunt May ("Beufie") and Uncle George ("Da") Wallace's where Beufie always had ice cream in her refrigerator. By six o'clock, Margie's appetite for dinner was almost nil, causing her mother to wonder why she was sitting at the table picking at her plate. It was a long time, however, before Bess confronted her sisters-in-law and ended the pre-dinnertime ritual.<sup>20</sup>

The evening meal at Madge Wallace's dining room table was the highlight of the day when the family all gathered together to eat. Mrs. Wallace sat at the head of the table (nearest the kitchen) while Harry Truman sat opposite her at the foot. Bess sat on one side while across from her was Fred Wallace. Margie sat in a high chair, and later a regular chair, between her mother and grandmother.<sup>21</sup>

There were never any scenes or tears at the table:

There wasn't even a scene if I had knocked over something when I was little. I was reprimanded gently and... later I was told that if that happened again there was going to be trouble. [This equanimity was because of] my grandmother. Everything was very calm and quiet and proper at her dinner table.<sup>22</sup>

[Madge Wallace] was a very prim and proper lady with sort of dark grey hair. It was never completely white. And she wore it in a top knot. All my life I remember the top knot. In the morning when she got up it was in the back. But when she got dressed for dinner it went up on top. Her hair was fixed differently for dinner. And she dressed differently for dinner.<sup>23</sup>

Conversation usually centered around "the politics of the day" with Harry and Fred discussing county matters, especially the remodeling of the courthouse of which Fred Wallace was the chief architect. Bess often joined in, but her mother remained silent. A registered Democrat, Madge "didn't care for politicians or politics." Margie was expected to sit still and keep quiet while her father led the conversation. Vietta Garr carved the meat in the kitchen and either served it herself or presented the platter to Judge Truman. At Thanksgiving, Frank Wallace was asked to carve the turkey because Harry Truman found the task impossible.<sup>24</sup>

"Mama Truman" and Aunt Mary came from the farm at Grandview to eat at 219 North Delaware on a regular basis. Harry, Bess, and Margie drove to Grandview every Sunday to eat a big noontime meal at the farm. The contrast between the matriarchs was like night and day:

...Grandmother Truman was also very much of a lady but Grandmother Wallace was a spoiled lady in many ways, she had been all of her life. And she had been taken care of, and she had always been a member of the first family of the town. And my Grandmother Truman was a farm lady. She was a business woman. She ran her own farm and she had many hundreds of acres to run, and she did it. ...She was a lot tougher than my Grandmother [Wallace] was.<sup>25</sup>

Although Madge Wallace was a vegetarian, meals often featured beef and chicken. Harry, "a very picky eater," only ate small portions of meat and enjoyed vegetables, especially salads. His favorite desserts consisted of fruit.<sup>26</sup>

After dinner, the family retired to the living room to read or listen to the radio. Madge's Atwater Kent radio stood in one corner of the room. On the floor in front of the radio sat Margie doing her homework and occasionally asking her parents for assistance.<sup>27</sup>

With the peculiar dealings of the Pendergast machine and disgruntled constituents, the small daughter of a high county official was not left untouched. While Margaret was attending elementary school, a kidnap scheme was attempted. A man came to the school saying that Mrs. Truman had sent him to pick up "Miss Mary." The teacher, a family friend who lived on North Delaware and knew the Trumans did not call their daughter by her proper first name, alerted the police. The man vanished before the officers arrived. For nearly a year, Margie was escorted to and from school. The sanctuary of the back yard playground gave Bess the assurance of knowing where

her daughter was.<sup>28</sup>

Madge's upright piano was replaced in 1932 when the baby grand piano was purchased for Margie by her proud father. The Christmas present was not then appreciated by the eight-year-old girl who was crestfallen that she had not received the electric train she desired. This is the same piano which, while in the White House, nearly fell through the floor.<sup>29</sup>

Margaret Truman's childhood was characterized by persistent colds and infections. A neighbor, Mrs. W. L. C. Palmer, recalled that during the first 12 years of Margaret's life, the child must have spent at least 8 years in bed. The Palmers frequently took large Ponderosa tomatoes over to the Wallace/Truman house for her.<sup>30</sup> A complicated tonsillectomy resulted in one tonsil growing back. During the winter of 1932-33, a case of influenza turned into pneumonia and then rheumatic fever. In order for his daughter to regain her health, Harry sent Bess and Margie to stay with friends in Biloxi, Mississippi, during the early spring of 1933.<sup>31</sup> It was hoped that the warm Gulf weather and a change in diet would restore her to good health.

During his family's exile, Judge Truman spent the weekends staying at the Grandview farm.<sup>32</sup> In late April 1933, he checked into a hotel to avoid county workers. Because of cutbacks he had been

forced to discharge 200 employees, and he warned his family not to eat anything that came in the mail: "Someone sent me a cake the other day and I threw it away. With these discharges coming off you can't tell what they'll do."<sup>33</sup> In late May he went to Biloxi where he found Margie's health had improved allowing the family to return to Independence by mid-June.<sup>34</sup>

#### OPERATING JACKSON COUNTY

Harry Truman began serving as Presiding Judge of Jackson County in January 1927, at an annual salary of \$3,250. He saw great needs in the county, in particular building paved roads, constructing a new courthouse in downtown Kansas City while remodeling the one on the Square, and building a hospital for the indigent aged. All these measures were accomplished through a series of tax funds and bond issues totalling more than \$60 million, all without a hint of waste or corruption.

Although a member of the Pendergast machine, Judge Truman stayed apart from its inner operations and concentrated on operating the county in a fair, fiscally responsible manner. With legal advice from Rufus Burrus who served as county assistant counselor, the judge divorced the public works program from politics by appointing two bipartisan engineers and assuring that all projects were awarded to the lowest bidders.<sup>35</sup> The most visible result of the Truman strategy

was that on Thanksgiving Day 1930, 224 miles of paved roads opened to the county's 100,000 cars.<sup>36</sup>

Judge Truman's honesty and fairness resulted in his re-election to another 4-year term in 1930. [See Figure 24]. With a majority of more than 58,000 votes, the Odessa Democrat suggested he run for governor in 1932.<sup>37</sup> Harry Truman's political horizons were rapidly expanding. As President of the National Old Trails Association, he drove all over the nation, including addressing the annual national convention of the Daughters of the American Revolution in Washington, D.C. in April 1928<sup>38</sup>—perhaps the first time the future President had ever seen the nation's capital. In 1929, he organized and served as President of the Greater Kansas City Regional Planning Association, designed to encourage development of an orderly highway network in the six-county area.<sup>39</sup> On June 25, 1930, Truman was elected a director of the National Conference on City Planning, to represent the Midwest District for three years.<sup>40</sup>

Politics intruded directly at 219 North Delaware only rarely. One instance that county administrative matters were brought to the house came on September 3, 1932. A form signed by Governor Henry S. Caulfield authorizing Kansas City's application for \$300,000 in unemployment relief from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation arrived for Truman's signature. Truman was not at home at the time, but did sign it later, thereby making the funds available to the needy.<sup>41</sup>



FIGURE 24

FIGURE 24: Harry S Truman, Presiding Jackson County Judge, takes the oath of office. Left to Right: Edward Becker (County Clerk); Eugene Purcell (Eastern District Judge); Harry S Truman; Judge Beeman (Western District Judge).  
Date: January 6, 1931  
Edwin Saxton, photographer  
Truman Library Photo No. 59-929

On October 23, 1933, the Roosevelt administration appointed Harry S Truman Federal Re-employment Director of Missouri. While not having to resign the county court, the position required Judge Truman be in Jefferson City frequently to confer with state officials.<sup>42</sup> The Pendergast machine and the Missouri Democratic Party began looking to the popular Jackson County Presiding Judge to seek a higher office.

Higher office was just what Harry intended to pursue. In 1934, he planned to announce his candidacy for the U.S. House of Representatives. According to Truman:

In 1934, when I had been presiding judge of Jackson County for eight years, I expected to run for Congress. Two years earlier new congressional districts had been set up for the state of Missouri, with the Fourth District in Eastern Jackson County, with two or three eastern wards of Kansas City added. This was the district I hoped to represent in Congress, and if I had been permitted to run, I feel confident that I could have been its representative. I was maneuvered out of this and finally ended up by running for the U.S. Senate.<sup>43</sup>

The 1934 Senate campaign found Truman vying against Congressmen John J. Cochran of St. Louis and Jacob L. Milligan of Richmond. [See Figures 25 and 26]. Harry visited 60 of the state's 114 counties delivering 6 to 16 speeches each day. He presented himself as an FDR and New Deal supporter. He won the primary by a plurality of 44,000 votes, and the November election by more than 250,000 votes.<sup>44</sup>





FIGURE 25

FIGURE 25: Judge Harry S Truman and family in their living  
room at 219 North Delaware.  
Date: August 9, 1934  
Kansas City Star photograph  
Truman Library Photo No. 62-376-1



FIGURE 26

FIGURE 26: Judge Harry S Truman on the front walkway of 219  
North Delaware.  
Date: November 18, 1934  
Kansas City Star photograph  
Truman Library Photo No. 62-397

The family stayed up all night listening to the returns on Madge Wallace's radio. The victory was tempered by the reality that the family would have to leave 219 North Delaware and live part of each year in Washington, D.C. In a rare November 7, 1934, interview, Bess Truman related her feelings:

Mrs. Harry S. Truman has a tinge of regret at leaving Independence for residence in Washington as the wife of a United States senator....

"Of course, I'm thrilled to be going to Washington," Mrs. Truman said, her gray eyes sparkling, "but I have spent all my life here on Delaware street and it certainly will be a change."

"I was born on Delaware [sic] street," Mrs. Truman continued, "and was married to Harry here sixteen years ago when he came back from the World War. We never have had or desired another home. But now that the change has come it will be wonderful to meet it."

"Yesterday at bridge," Mrs. Truman confided, "I was asked why I took it all without excitement as the votes kept piling up for Harry. We could hear the returns over the radio. I told them that's what twelve or fourteen years of political campaigns will do for a wife. We have had election days before, but never as much at stake until now."

[Several neighbors knocked at the front door]. "Congratulations, Bess!" echoed through the vestibule of the 74-year-old [sic] Jackson County home. "We certainly will miss you, and Delaware street won't seem the same in the years you are at Washington."

"We are going to try to find an apartment.... You see, we have been spoiled by too much room and I'm afraid it would feel rather crowded to make our start in a hotel."<sup>45</sup>

Independence citizens gave the Trumans a farewell dinner in December 1934. Sponsored by three county Democratic clubs, 400 people gathered at the First Christian Church where Examiner editor and family friend Col. William Southern was the master of ceremonies.<sup>46</sup> The Senator-elect, Bess, and Margaret left for Washington shortly

after noon on December 28, 1934. Before they drove away, Aunt May "Beufie" Wallace fixed Margie's bedraggled Raggedy Ann doll sewing in some more hair with a needle and yarn. The car pulled onto Van Horn with the little girl clutching the doll.<sup>47</sup> The family drove to St. Louis and boarded a train for the remainder of the trip while their two automobiles loaded with personal possessions were driven east.<sup>48</sup>

#### THE INTERIM YEARS, 1925-1926

<sup>1</sup>Harry S. Truman, Year of Decisions, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup>Rufus Burrus, Interview, Independence, February 28, 1984; and, Kansas City, Missouri, Directory, 1926, p. 568, folder-Truman, Harry S 1926, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>3</sup>Examiner (February 1 and April 23, 1926), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S 1926, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>4</sup>"Judge Truman Honored: Elected President of the Old Trails Association Friday," Examiner (July 24, 1926), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S 1926, Vertical File, HSTL; and, "Truman Old Trails Head," Kansas City Times (July 26, 1926), file-HST Judge 1922-9, KCSL.

<sup>5</sup>Harry S. Truman, Year of Decisions, p. 139.

#### MARGARET TRUMAN'S CHILDHOOD

<sup>6</sup>Margaret Truman, Souvenir: Margaret Truman's Own Story (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1956), p. 11.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 11-2.

<sup>8</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," pp. 5-6.

<sup>9</sup>Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interviews, June 14 and July 20, 1983, Independence.

<sup>10</sup>Margaret Truman, Souvenir, p. 30.

<sup>11</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 20.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>14</sup>Mrs. Margaret Truman Daniel (remarks upon the presentation of the Harry S Truman Public Service Award in Independence, Missouri, May 11, 1984), submitted by the Hon. Ike Skelton in the House of Representatives, June 11, 1984, Congressional Record, Extensions of Remarks (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, June 11, 1984), p. E2719.

<sup>15</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 14.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>19</sup>"Smithsonian World" transcript, pp. 8-9.

<sup>20</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," pp. 48-9.

<sup>21</sup>Margaret Truman, Smithsonian World transcript, p. 20.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 21-2.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 2; 9.

<sup>28</sup>Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview, Independence, March 2, 1984.

<sup>29</sup>Margaret Truman, Souvenir, pp. 27-8.

<sup>30</sup>"Oral History Interview with Mrs. W. L. C. Palmer, Independence, January 18, 1962," by J. R. Fuchs, Truman Library, p. 53.

<sup>31</sup>Margaret Truman, Souvenir, pp. 27-8.

<sup>32</sup>Ferrell, Dear Bess, p. 347.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 350.

<sup>34</sup>"County Court Session Short," Examiner (May 16 and 25, 1933), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S 1933, Vertical File, HSTL.

#### OPERATING JACKSON COUNTY

<sup>35</sup>Rufus Burrus, Interview, Independence, February 28, 1984.

<sup>36</sup>"County's Road Day," Kansas City Star (September 14, 1930), file-HST Judge 1930, KCSL.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., "A Boom For Judge Truman," Kansas City Times (November 15, 1930).

<sup>38</sup>"Judge H. S. Truman Returns," Kansas City Star (April 29, 1928), file-HST Judge 1922-9, KCSL.

<sup>39</sup>"Regional Group Elects," Kansas City Star (January 31, 1930), file-HST Judge 1930, KCSL.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., "Elect Judge H. S. Truman," Kansas City Times (June 26, 1930).

<sup>41</sup>"Relief Form to Truman," Kansas City Star (September 3, 1932), file-HST Judge 1932, KCSL.

<sup>42</sup>"Truman In As Job Director," Kansas City Star (October 23, 1933), file-HST Judge 1933, KCSL.

<sup>43</sup>Harry S Truman, Year of Decisions, p. 141.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>"Regret With Her Thrills: Family Home In Independence Has a Pull for Mrs. Truman," Kansas City Star (November 7, 1934), file-HST Judge 1934, KCSL.

<sup>46</sup>John McDonald, "Truman Did Homework Before Going," Examiner (January 19, 1984), p. 24.

<sup>47</sup>Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview, Independence, March 2, 1984.

<sup>48</sup>"Trumans Leave For Washington," Examiner (December 28, 1934), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S 1934, Vertical File, HSTL.

## CHAPTER SIX

### FROM INDEPENDENCE TO THE POTOMAC

- \* The Junior Senator From Missouri, 1935-1944
- \* Leading the Senate: The Vice-presidential Experience

The Junior Senator From Missouri, 1935-1944

Fred Wallace, the youngest son of Madge Wallace, continued to live with his mother after he was graduated from the University of Missouri at Columbia. He was married on July 27, 1930, and brought his new wife, Christine Meyer, to live in the Wallace/Truman house. Their son, David, was born in 1934. Madge Wallace's former second floor bedroom with the front colored glass bay window became a nursery for David Wallace. In 1937, he shared his large room with a new sister, Marian. [See Figure 27]. The Fred Wallace family lived at 219 North Delaware until 1942.<sup>1</sup> An architect and engineer, Fred Wallace moved his family to Denver where he became the regional manager of the War Production Board in April 1945.<sup>2</sup>

With Bess in Washington half the year, Madge Wallace had three sons and daughters-in-law to look after her. While the Gates fortune was only a memory, Madge lived comfortably off of the dividends of her Waggoner-Gates Milling Company stocks. Her financial stability was threatened in 1933 when the charter of the milling company expired. Unable to vote her company stock to seek another 50-year charter extension, her attorney, Rufus Burrus, filed suit and won his client the right to vote the stocks independently. With the extension successful, Madge appointed Frank Wallace as her representative at the mill.<sup>3</sup> [See Figure 28]





FIGURE 27

FIGURE 27: David and Marian Wallace in central hallway of  
219 North Delaware.  
Date: December 1938  
Truman Library Photo No. 82-133-1



FIGURE 28

FIGURE 28: Waggoner-Gates Milling Company  
Independence, Missouri  
Date: Circa 1920s  
Truman Library Photo No. 66-2981

On January 3, 1935, with Bess, Margaret, Mary Jane Truman, and Jim Pendergast watching from the Senate gallery, Senator Truman took the oath of office from Vice-President John Nance Garner.<sup>4</sup> The Trumans did not return to Independence again until June 7. While Bess and Margaret stayed six months, Harry went back to Washington before the end of the week. In a June 9 interview, with Margaret outside playing follow-the-leader with friends, Bess told a reporter that living in the capital "was different from my life in Independence."<sup>5</sup> Harry confessed to another reporter his doubts about ever becoming accustomed to life in the capital, "The Washington atmosphere is not that of the country as a whole. It gives a man the wrong slant if he permits it."<sup>6</sup>

For the next decade (1935-1945), the Trumans lived in a series of apartments in the District of Columbia. Madge Wallace came to visit often, remaining for long periods of time. Bess and Margaret did not spend as much time in Washington as Harry. They preferred to spend the summers away from the capital, traveling by train back to Independence. Both stayed at 219 North Delaware through the summer and fall while young Margaret went to public schools--Bryant School, Independence Junior High School, and William Chrisman High School. From January through May, she attended Gunston Hall, a private girls school in the District of Columbia.<sup>7</sup> Harry came home often, particularly during holidays and Senate recesses. His sojourns to Indepen-

dence were always balanced with trips around the state visiting with political leaders and delivering speeches.

At Christmastime, the extended family felt it was important for everyone to be reunited at the Independence home. This attitude remained solid from the early 1920s until 1947. Typically Christmas was important to the children and Margaret, the eldest of the cousins, took center stage. Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace recalled:

One of my fondest memories of the "Big House"... is the way the big living room looked on Christmas morning. Margaret always insisted that the Christmas tree be tall enough to reach the ceiling--a nine foot one at that! It was Uncle George's job to fix the tree support for the tree and wire it to the big old air shaft in the west end of the room--where between bay windows it could be seen on Delaware Street. The tree trimming took place on Christmas Eve when all gathered to help. Actually, my husband, George, and Margaret did the real trimming with much comment from the sidelines. We each had a chair on which were placed the gifts from other members of the family. Vieta Garr, the faithful family cook, came to join us bringing the usual gift for Marg, a bag of "chocolate kisses." Soon the room was a mass of tissue paper and ribbons, and cries of "thank you so much" and "just what I wanted" filled the air.<sup>8</sup>

Following his first visit home since becoming a senator, letters to Bess began soon after Harry arrived in the capital. A constant concern was finances. The family had to exist on a senator's salary of \$10,000 a year. In a June 18 letter, he asked Bess if he should pay off their outstanding bills or put them off. He also sent a check for expenses stating, "I hope it will cover things, if not tell me about it. Do you think you can make out with it and three hundred after the first until August?"<sup>9</sup>

Homesickness was a constant theme in Harry's letters to Bess. Back in the capital after a brief trip home in August 1935, Harry wrote, "I was so devilishly homesick—I could see you standing out there in the yard watching me drive away and I don't think you kissed me goodbye...."<sup>10</sup> In January 1936, he was disappointed when colds kept Bess and Margie from returning to Washington on schedule:

...I haven't been so disappointed since I lost the 1924 election. I don't believe I will be again for a long time. I wanted you to come so badly in the morning. I'd made up my mind that you were in St. Louis this morning and then here came that telegram. I honestly believe that house is infected with cold germs or something.<sup>11</sup>

In mid-October 1936, Missouri's junior senator escorted President Roosevelt to Kansas City's Municipal Auditorium where FDR made the dedication speech.<sup>12</sup> Being a "100 per cent Roosevelt supporter" was Harry's main plank in his political platform. At home with his family the last week of February in 1937 (for unknown reasons, Bess stayed home during the spring session), he used the time to evaluate his support of the administration in "packing" the Supreme Court and thereby make it more amenable to the New Deal. [See Figure 29]. With his constituents 20 to 1 against it, he did not modify his support,<sup>13</sup> and told an overflow crowd at Kansas City's Music Hall that the issue was a political, not a constitutional, issue.<sup>14</sup>

A death threat received in April 1937, resulted in police guards



FIGURE 29

FIGURE 29: The Truman family leaves 219 North Delaware  
for Washington, D.C.  
Date: Winter, early 1937  
Truman Library Photo No. 82-183-1

stationed at the Wallace/Truman house, as well as in his Washington office and the Capitol, including the Senate chamber. The threat, a letter postmarked Independence, indicated that Truman would be killed upon his return from Independence on April 22. The security guards annoyed Truman who said that if he had seen the letter he would have "thrown it away" like any other piece of crank mail a public official typically received.<sup>15</sup>

Aside from visiting with family, friends, and constituents, one annual activity which drew Harry Truman home every summer was attending an Army reserve training camp. Participating with fellow reservists in army drills and tactical maneuvers, Truman faithfully attended the two-week camp which was usually held at nearby Fort Riley, near Junction City, Kansas. Visits at 219 North Delaware preceded and followed the training camp.<sup>16</sup>

A tragedy for the Truman family unfolded in the waning years of the 1930s and culminated in 1940. On April 5, 1938, the Jackson County Court, which normally extended loans from the school fund to citizens purchasing real estate, extended a \$35,000 loan to refinance a mortgage on 295 acres of farm land owned by Martha Ellen Truman. The principal note stipulated the school fund would be reimbursed by December 31, 1938, at a six percent interest rate.<sup>17</sup> When the note became delinquent on January 1, 1939, several extensions were granted. Because of droughts and Depression-era hardships, Martha



Ellen Truman was unable to payoff the loan. Harry made a short visit to Jackson County in June 1939, to see his mother and negotiate with county officials.<sup>18</sup> On July 7, however, the Republican-controlled Jackson County Court ordered the assistant county counselor to "collect the money" from Mrs. Truman as the family began looking for a buyer.<sup>19</sup> It was not until June 14, 1940, however, that the court ordered an immediate foreclosure, citing the debt, which had grown to \$41,500, had not been paid.<sup>20</sup>

Martha Ellen and Mary Jane Truman were forced to abandon the farm and move into a bungalow in Grandview. The loss of the farm, which had been in the family for nearly a century, was a "bitter pill" for Harry to swallow. In an August 1940, letter to Bess, he compared the loss of the Grandview farm to Madge Wallace losing her family home. "Imagine your mother being forced out of 219 North Delaware," he lamented.<sup>21</sup>

On February 3, 1940, Truman filed a declaration of candidacy with the Missouri Democratic Party for re-election.<sup>22</sup> With "Boss Tom" Pendergast in prison for income tax fraud and the political machine in disarray, Trumans' chances in the August 6 primary were almost nil. In the summer of 1940, following the third session of the 76th Congress, Harry returned to Missouri and, from his headquarters in Sedalia, barnstormed from one corner of the state to another. Going directly to the people and appealing to farmers and



laborers in the name of the New Deal, Harry visited 75 counties and made speeches day and night. In a narrow victory with a plurality of 8,300 votes, he defeated challengers Maurice Milligan and Governor Lloyd Stark. [See Figure 30]. In the November 5 election, Truman triumphed over Republican Manuel Davis, 930,775 to 886,376.<sup>23</sup> The campaign captured national attention; Harry Truman, "The Man From Pendergast," won without the support of any city political machine or newspaper.

On January 3, 1941, as the Senate stood in ovation, Harry Truman entered the chamber to be sworn in for the second time as Senator from Missouri. On February 10, he submitted a resolution calling for an investigation of the national defense effort, to correct alleged widespread corruption and waste. On March 8, Truman was appointed Chairman of the Senate Special Committee Investigating the National Defense Program. Fellow committee Democrats were Tom Connally (Texas); Carl Hayden (Arizona); James Mead (New York); and M. C. Walgren (Washington); while Republican members were Ralph Brewster (Maine) and Joseph Ball (Minnesota).<sup>24</sup>

The Truman Committee, as it soon came to be called, shocked the nation as its hearings uncovered the extent of defense industry corruption and the "freezing out" of small industrialists by large corporations using monopolistic practices. By August 3, 1944, when Senator Truman resigned the chairmanship, the committee had saved the



FIGURE 30

FIGURE 30: Trumans read congratulatory telegrams at their dining room table following Harry's Missouri Senatorial primary victory.  
Date: August 7, 1940  
Acme Photo  
Truman Library Photo No. 64-1528

taxpayers \$15 million.<sup>25</sup>

In 1941, as turmoil enveloped Europe and the Far East, the U.S. Congress voted to remain in session until the world crisis abated. In early September 1941, the Trumans became full-time residents of Washington, D.C., returning to their home on North Delaware in Independence only during summertime, vacations, and holidays. Margaret, a senior at William Chrisman High School, enrolled for her final year at Gunston Hall in Washington.<sup>26</sup> Four months later, the bombing of Pearl Harbor found Harry in Columbia, Missouri.<sup>27</sup> He rushed back to the capital in time to hear the historic "Day of Infamy" speech and to vote for war.

When the Fred Wallace family moved to Denver in 1942, Madge Wallace was left alone in her large house. Physically unable to care for the home herself, she closed up 219 North Delaware and moved into a small apartment on nearby Maple Avenue. She spent one winter there, came back to the home with the Trumans in the summer, then moved to Washington with them in the fall. For the next decade, the house stood closed and empty for extended periods of time, open only during the summer months and holidays.<sup>28</sup>

Following Margaret's high school graduation in 1942, she entered George Washington University (G.W.U.) to study history. Harry encouraged her to earn a college degree with the promise to support her

in any career decision she made. Her special love was music and she was determined to pursue a career as a singer. Although Bess was "reserved" about it, Madge Wallace was openly critical, declaring that singing on the stage was no life for a lady. While the Wallaces were negative, the Trumans, especially "Mama Truman," were openly enthusiastic.<sup>29</sup>

Margaret's first public performance came in the summer of 1943 as a chorus member in a Denver opera troupe. Words of wisdom came from a proud, but lonely, father:

I'm very, very lonely without you and your mother. The apartment is a dreary place when there's no one to run the radio and put to bed.

Don't worry about your singing just get up there and do it like you were in the parlor at home and no one listening.<sup>30</sup>

Harry arrived in Kansas City on July 19 for two days before going on to Denver for a week to visit Bess, Margaret, and the Fred Wallace family. Following the Denver vacation, the Trumans returned to Independence to stay until September 1, when Margaret's sophomore year at G.W.U. began.<sup>31</sup>

#### LEADING THE SENATE: THE VICE-PRESIDENTIAL EXPERIENCE

The presidential election year of 1944 was a turning point for the Truman family. As the primary campaign began and rumors of the

administration dumping Vice-President Henry Wallace from the ticket persisted, political friends urged Truman to declare his candidacy. As the party convention approached, the pressure became more pronounced. Harry wrote:

I had never entertained such an idea, and whenever the suggestion was made I brushed it aside. I was doing the job I wanted to do; it was the one that I liked, and I had no desire to interrupt my career in the Senate.<sup>32</sup>

Shortly before the Trumans left for the long drive from Independence to Chicago to attend the Democratic National Convention, Harry was resting at home when he received a call from James Byrnes. Byrnes told Truman that FDR wanted Byrnes as his vice-president and would Truman nominate him at the convention? Harry gave Byrnes his promise to do so. A subsequent call from Senate Majority Leader Alben Barkley asking Truman to nominate Barkley at the convention was declined because of Truman's prior commitment. It was only at the convention that Truman learned Byrnes' request had been a trick, that FDR had requested Truman, not Byrnes, as his running mate.<sup>33</sup>

Harry's reticence to acknowledge any vice-presidential draft centered around his not wanting "to drag a lot of skeletons out of the closet." As he told a friend:

"Well, the worst thing is that I've had the boss," meaning Mrs. Truman, "on the payroll in my Senate office and I'm not going to have her name drug over the front pages of the paper and over the radio."

"There isn't any way you can get by... as a United States

Senator unless you do have your wife on the payroll, because it's expensive to live and maintain your, so to speak, two homes."<sup>34</sup>

Harry Truman's reluctance crumbled when he realized the movement to dump Henry Wallace in favor of himself came from the White House. On July 22, Truman accepted his party's nomination. [Figures 31 and 32]. Jubilation reigned in Independence. American flags and signs appeared throughout the city. Hundreds of people gathered on the Square to celebrate and county employees organized a demonstration complete with bands and 10-foot signs on the courthouse lawn proclaiming "Congratulations Senator Harry S. Truman."<sup>35</sup>

Packed and ready to leave for Independence, Harry revealed his exchange of telegrams with the President:

I send you my heartiest congratulations on your victory [nomination].... I am, of course, very happy to have you run with me. Let me know your plans. I shall see you very soon.  
Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Thank you, Mr. President. I am happy to be your running mate. Will be in Missouri until August 1, our primary day. I am at your command and want to see you soon.  
Harry S. Truman<sup>36</sup>

The Truman's tan 1941 Chrysler coupe arrived at the home of George and May Wallace at 7:15 p.m., July 23, without fanfare. The weary family, after requesting that celebrations be postponed until they had rested, ate dinner at the small house and then sat with the Wallaces in the back yard. On the quiet Sunday evening, few realized the Trumans were home. May Wallace had opened the family home the



FIGURE 31: Truman relatives in Grandview listen to results of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Left to Right: Mrs. J. Vivian Truman; Gilbert T. Truman; John Ross Truman; Mary Jane Truman; Martha Ann Truman; and Mrs. Martha Ellen Truman.  
Date: July 20, 1944  
Acme Photo, Truman Wing Collection  
Truman Library Photo No. 77-72

FIGURE 32: Well-wishers gather around the Truman's box as balloting for the vice-presidential nomination begins.  
Date: July 22, 1944  
Acme Photo  
Truman Library Photo No. 66-2702

previous morning "to let it air out," but the family spent their first night in Independence following the convention at the Frank Wallace house (601 West Van Horn).<sup>37</sup>

On the evening of July 24 in an event sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, the Trumans greeted 3,000 friends, citizens, and well-wishers in their back yard. [See Figures 33 and 34]. Harry knew most of the people by their first names. The local paper reported, "It was all in a small-town, homey atmosphere, the Trumans standing under a rose arbor on the north side of the house to meet their friends." The line, which numbered more than 200 at times, stretched from the pergola west to North Delaware, and south along the sidewalk in front of the house. A public address system announced each large group as it arrived. As dusk approached and the line continued after two hours, a light was turned on over the pergola. At the conclusion, Harry made a short speech:

I'm overwhelmed by your thoughtfulness and the way the town has turned out to greet us. It has often been said that a prophet is without honor in his home town. Now I can say to the world that I have been honored in my home town. Thank you for coming; I am overwhelmed.<sup>38</sup>

An interview with Bess revealed that she was having problems obtaining sufficient domestic help to operate the Wallace/Truman house. She admitted she had had no time to go grocery shopping:



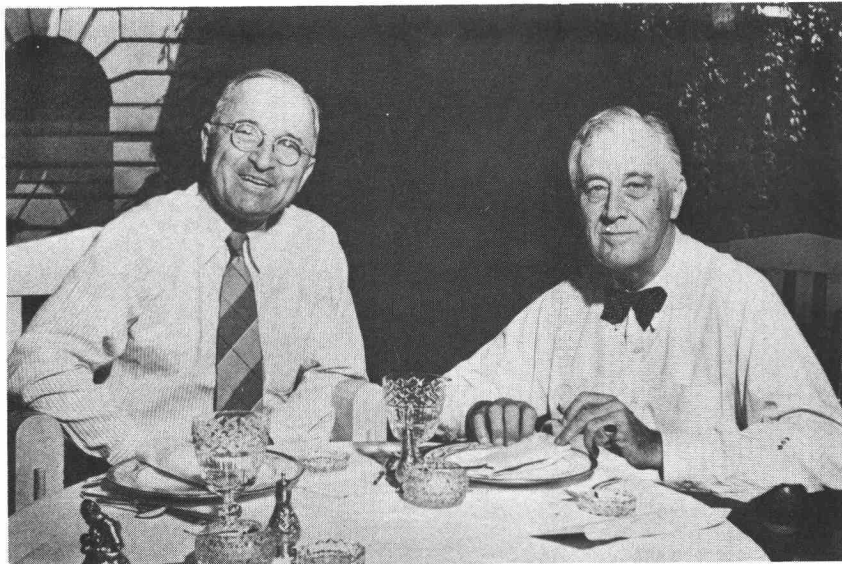
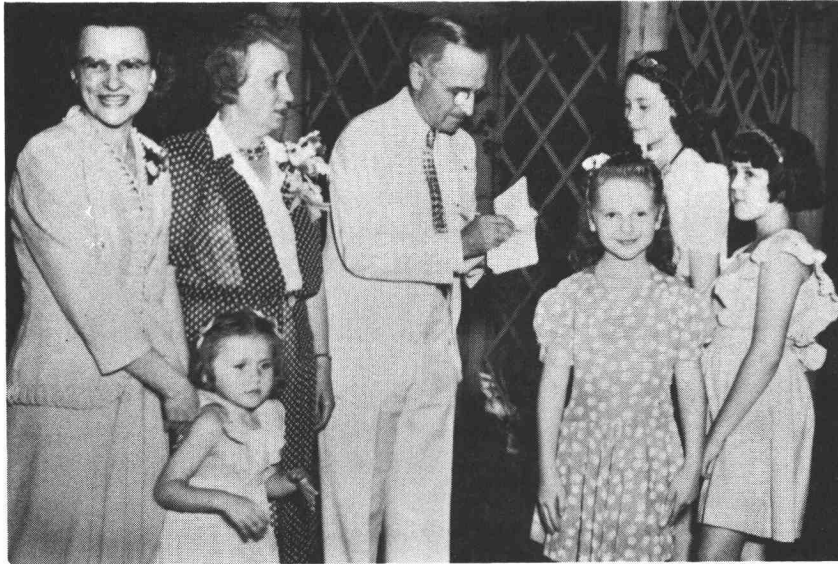


FIGURE 33: Harry and Bess Truman greet their neighbors beside the pergola in the back yard of 219 North Delaware. The event commemorates Truman's acceptance of the vice-presidential nomination.  
Date: July 27, 1944  
Acme Photo, Truman Wing Collection  
Truman Library Photo No. 77-78

FIGURE 34: Truman and FDR have lunch at the White House to plan their campaign strategy.  
Date: August 18, 1944  
Life Magazine  
Truman Library Photo No. 63-1499-3A

We did real well today.... This morning we managed to have breakfast with the Wallaces; this noon, Harry's cousins, the Nolands across the street, brought us a lovely salad for lunch, and tonight we had a family picnic in the back yards of Frank and George Wallace. I hope tomorrow we have time to get out and buy some food.<sup>39</sup>

An announcement about Bess on the Senate payroll as an "adviser and personal secretary" at \$4,500 a year came on July 26. Harry declared, "She's a clerk in my office and does much of my clerical work. I need her there and that's the reason I've got her there. I never make a report or deliver a speech without her editing it. There's nothing secret about it."<sup>40</sup>

A feature story, replete with photographs, on the vice-presidential nominee was featured in the August 21, 1944, edition of Life magazine. The article marked the first of many which highlighted the Truman home. Calling the interior "gloomy Victorian," a caption to a photograph of the Trumans standing on the front lawn of 219 North Delaware read:

The Truman home is old-fashioned Middle Western house with gingerbread gables, set in a maple grove. Built by Mrs. Truman's grandfather 80 years ago, it needs a coat of paint.<sup>41</sup>

Formal notification of his vice-presidential candidacy came in special ceremonies on August 31 in Truman's birthplace of Lamar, Missouri. The occasion was the first time Bess and Margaret had ever seen the town.<sup>42</sup> After the notification address by Senator Tom

Connally, Harry addressed a crowd of 12,000 people on the lawn of the Barton County Courthouse. In a 19-minute speech, he called on Americans to re-elect FDR for a fourth term on the basis of "tried and experienced leadership" to "win the war and the peace."<sup>43</sup>

While President Roosevelt confined himself to directing the war effort, Harry Truman ran the administration's campaign from two rail-cars (the "Bobtail Special") by making speeches at selected whistle-stops. The final campaign tour began on October 12 in New Orleans and circled the nation from west to east. Bess and Margaret joined the train in Washington and made the trip home to Missouri.<sup>44</sup> The train arrived at Kansas City's Union Station at 9 p.m., November 3. The Trumans were met by family members and driven directly to the Hotel Muehlebach.<sup>45</sup> The family decided to stay at the hotel "rather than open their home in Independence."<sup>46</sup> On November 4, Harry Truman perched on the rear seat of an open car in a parade through Independence. That evening President Roosevelt's nationwide address was broadcast to the R.L.D.S. Auditorium where Truman also made his final speech of the campaign.<sup>47</sup>

On election day, November 7, Harry and Bess drove to Independence to vote at 9:35 a.m. in the Memorial Building. Harry told newsmen, "I am sure the President and I will have the support of the nation," and then drove to Grandview to take his mother and sister to the polls.<sup>48</sup> As the Truman family spent election night at the

Muehlebach listening to election returns, Bess told a reporter:

If I can just move around, I can wear off a little of this tense energy. I've weathered politics now for twenty years, and although this is the most important night I've had to experience so far, I keep trying to think of it as just another election, and not get too excited. Anyway, my daughter is excited enough for the women in Harry's family.<sup>49</sup>

The more than 3,500,000 vote plurality won Harry a new title, Vice-President-Elect. He became the first Vice-President in memory without business or other investments, dependent on his government salary. Perquisites included a \$5,000 raise and a chauffeured limousine. Harry announced that he and his family "intend to live as we always have, always simply and quietly and within my income," and would retain their 5-room Washington apartment.<sup>50</sup>

Harry, Bess, and Margaret returned to 219 North Delaware on December 22. The Examiner noted that "the old Wallace family house... has been closed most of the time in recent years."<sup>51</sup> The home was reopened and decorated with wreaths and a "large cluster of silver bells hanging on red ribbons on the front door."<sup>52</sup> According to tradition, Christmas Day was spent opening gifts before a large tree in the living room and eating a large dinner. The family then drove to Kansas City to visit Martha Ellen Truman at the home of Maj.-Gen. Ralph T. Truman (Harry's cousin). On December 30, the Trumans left for Washington aboard the Missouri Pacific Railroad.<sup>53</sup>

Private citizen Harry S Truman became Vice-President of the United States on January 20, 1945. Truman, who resigned his Senate seat on January 18, was administered the oath of office by predecessor Henry A. Wallace on the South Portico of the White House.<sup>54</sup> A delegation of Independence citizens attended the inauguration festivities and heard Harry promise that his first trip out of Washington as Vice-President would be back to Independence.<sup>55</sup>

The same week the promise was made, Tom Pendergast died. At dawn on January 29, the Vice-President boarded an Army bomber bound for Kansas City. Ignoring public criticism, he was determined to attend the 10 a.m. funeral of his friend and political mentor, and to console the family. Harry left Kansas City 30 minutes after the service for Philadelphia to make a speech.<sup>56</sup> The Vice-President did not go to his home in Independence or visit his mother in Grandview.

For three months following the inauguration, Harry was busy learning the ropes of his new job. Shortly before 5 p.m. on April 12, the Senate adjourned and Vice-President Truman wound his way through the Capitol's halls to House Speaker Sam Rayburn's office. As he entered the room, Rayburn told Truman that Press Secretary Steve Early called wanting to speak to the Vice-President. A quick telephone call resulted in a summons to the Executive Mansion where Truman was immediately ushered into Eleanor Roosevelt's study. The First Lady informed Harry of her husband's death at Warm Springs,

Georgia, nearly two hours before. Truman recalled the historic meeting:

"Is there anything I can do for you?" I asked at last.  
I shall never forget her deeply understanding reply.  
"Is there anything we can do for you?" she asked. "For you are the one in trouble now."<sup>57</sup>

After the meeting with Mrs. Roosevelt, Harry went to the Oval Office in the west wing to call Bess and Margaret to the White House. Assembled in the Cabinet Room at 7:09 p.m., were members of the Roosevelt cabinet; Bess and Margaret Truman; and Harlan Fiske Stone, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Justice Stone began: "I, Harry Shipp Truman...." The somber Vice-President, with right hand raised over the Bible, repeated the oath, correcting the error over his middle name:

I, Harry S Truman, do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of the President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. So help me God.<sup>58</sup>

[See Figure 35].

The news of President Roosevelt's death was heard in Independence over the radio. The Examiner, because of the wartime shortage of newsprint, could publish no special edition. Scrawled across the office's pane glass, a reporter broke the news to passersby:

"President Roosevelt Is Dead." Relatives and friends of the Trumans



FIGURE 35

FIGURE 35: Harry S Truman takes the oath of office becoming the 33rd President of the United States as Bess and Margaret Truman, and members of the Roosevelt cabinet, look on.  
Date: April 12, 1945, 7:09 p.m.  
International News Photo, Connally Papers  
Truman Library Photo No. 64-19-3

began calling their 4701 Connecticut Avenue apartment almost immediately. Although guarded by the Secret Service, all calls from Kansas City were put through to the new First Family.<sup>59</sup>

Following a half-hour with the Roosevelt cabinet, Harry Truman returned to the apartment to find Bess, Margaret, and Madge Wallace at the next-door neighbors sharing their ham and turkey dinner. It was Harry S Truman's first meal as President of the United States.<sup>60</sup>

THE JUNIOR SENATOR FROM MISSOURI, 1935-1944

<sup>1</sup>David Wallace, "A Nephew Remembers Bess Truman and His Childhood In A Gingerbread Dream House," People (November 8, 1982), p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>"A Tremendous Job To Do," Kansas City Times (April 13, 1945), p. 3, folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1945, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>3</sup>Rufus Burrus, Interviews, July 22, 1983 and February 28, 1984, Independence.

<sup>4</sup>"'Senator Truman' Now," Kansas City Star (January 3, 1935), file-HST Senator 1935, No. 1, KCSL.

<sup>5</sup>"Nation On Sound Basis," Kansas City Times (June 8, 1935), file-HST Senator, No. 2; and "Home Best After All," Kansas City Star (June 9, 1935), file-Truman, Harry S. Mrs., 1937-45, No. 1, KCSL.

<sup>6</sup>"All Must Help Pay Bill," Kansas City Star (August 4, 1935), file-HST Senator No. 2, KCSL.

<sup>7</sup>Margaret Truman, Souvenir, p. 38.

<sup>8</sup>Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, "Christmas Reminiscence of 219 North Delaware Street," handwritten statement, December 25, 1982, Office of the Superintendent, HSTR.

<sup>9</sup>Ferrell, Dear Bess, June 18, 1935, p. 363.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., August 9, 1935, p. 375.



- <sup>11</sup>Ibid., January 16, 1936, p. 385.
- <sup>12</sup>"Plan For Speech Stands," Kansas City Times (October 9, 1936), file-HST Senator 1936, KCSL.
- <sup>13</sup>"Truman To Kansas City," Kansas City Star (February 28, 1937) and "Truman At Roosevelt Dinner," Kansas City Times (April 7, 1937), file-HST Senator 1937 No. 2, KCSL.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid., "The Supreme Bench Cannot Be Packed, Truman Asserts in Speech Here," Kansas City Times (April 20, 1937).
- <sup>15</sup>"Threat to Senator Truman," Kansas City Star (April 20, 1937); "Truman Wants No Guard," Kansas City Times (April 21, 1937); "'Crank Letter,' Truman Says," Kansas City Times (April 22, 1937); "Close Guard on Truman," Kansas City Star (April 22, 1937), file-HST Senator 1937 No. 2, KCSL.
- <sup>16</sup>"Senator Truman to Ft. Riley," Kansas City Times (August 25, 1937), file-HST Senator 1937 No. 3, KCSL.
- <sup>17</sup>"A Loan to Mrs. Truman," Kansas City Star (April 5, 1938), file-HST Senator 1938 No. 2, KCSL.
- <sup>18</sup>"Truman In Quick Visit," Kansas City Star (June 22, 1939), file-HST Senator 1939 No. 3, KCSL.
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., "A Truman Loan Edict," (July 7, 1939).
- <sup>20</sup>"Act On Trumans," Kansas City Star (June 14, 1940), file-HST Senator 1940 No. 2, KCSL.
- <sup>21</sup>Ferrell, Dear Bess, August 13, 1940, p. 442.
- <sup>22</sup>"To Back The New Deal," Kansas City Star (February 4, 1940), file-HST Senator 1940 No. 1, KCSL.
- <sup>23</sup>Harry S Truman, Year of Decisions, pp. 159-162.
- <sup>24</sup>"Truman to Head Probe," Kansas City Star (March 9, 1941), file-HST Senator 1941 No. 1, KCSL.
- <sup>25</sup>Harry S Truman, Year of Decisions, pp. 166; 185.
- <sup>26</sup>Margaret Truman, Harry S. Truman, p. 137.
- <sup>27</sup>"Senators To Capital," Kansas City Times (December 8, 1941), file-HST Senator 1941 No. 4, KCSL.

<sup>28</sup>Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview, Independence, June 14, 1983.

<sup>29</sup>Margaret Truman, "Smithsonian World," pp. 15-6.

<sup>30</sup>Margaret Truman, Letters From Father, June 16, 1943, p. 45.

<sup>31</sup>"Sees Goods Hitch," Kansas City Star (July 19, 1943), file-HST Senator 1943, KCSL.

LEADING THE SENATE: THE VICE-PRESIDENTIAL EXPERIENCE

<sup>32</sup>Harry S Truman, Year of Decisions, p. 190.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 191-2.

<sup>34</sup>Oral History Interview with Tom L. Evans, Kansas City, April 17, 1963, Vol. II, by J. R. Fuchs, pp. 335; 335a, HSTL.

<sup>35</sup>"Big Cheer For Truman," Kansas City Star (July 22, 1944), file-HST Senator April-August 1944 No. 2, KCSL.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., Alvin S. McCoy, "Hand From F.D.R.," Kansas City Star (July 22, 1944).

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., "Truman Is Home," Kansas City Times (July 24, 1944); and "Truman of Missouri: A Vice-Presidential Candidate Comes Home To His Relatives and Friends in Independence," Life (August 21, 1944), p. 75, folder-Truman, Harry S July-September 1944, HSTL.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., "Town Turns Out," Kansas City Times (July 25, 1944).

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>"Mrs. Truman On Pay Roll," Kansas City Times (July 27, 1944), file-HST Mrs. 1937-45 No. 1, KCSL.

<sup>41</sup>"Truman of Missouri," Life, p. 77.

<sup>42</sup>"Eager for Lamar Trip," Kansas City Star (August 29, 1944), file-HST Senator No. 3, KCSL.

<sup>43</sup>George K. Wallace, "In Plea for F.D.R.," Kansas City Times (September 1, 1944), file-HST Senator Sept.-Nov. 7, 1944, KCSL.

<sup>44</sup>Ferrell, Dear Bess, October 20, 1944, p. 511; and Alvin S. McCoy, "Truman Proud of Plainness of His Bobtail Special Train," Kansas City Star (October 25, 1944), file-HST Senator Sept.-Nov. 7, 1944 No. 3, KCSL.

<sup>45</sup>"Truman Is Home," Kansas City Times (November 4, 1944), file-HST Senator Sept.-Nov. 7, 1944 No. 4, KCSL.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., "In A Busy Return," Kansas City Star (November 4, 1944).

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., "A Truman Day," Kansas City Times (November 5, 1944).

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., "Trumans To The Polls," Kansas City Star (November 7, 1944).

<sup>49</sup>"Joy For Trumans," Kansas City Times (November 8, 1944), file-HST Senator Nov. 7-Dec. 31, 1944, KCSL.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., Duke Shoop, "Quiet Life For Truman," (December 14, 1944).

<sup>51</sup>"Senator Truman Comes Home," Examiner (December 23, 1944), p. 1, MCPL.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., "The Trumans At Home," (December 23, 1944).

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., "A Truman Family Dinner," Kansas City Times (December 26, 1944), and "The Trumans to Capital," Kansas City Star (December 29, 1944).

<sup>54</sup>"A Firm Truman 'I Do,'" Kansas City Star (January 20, 1945), file-HST Vice President Jan.-April 1945 No. 1, KCSL.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., Duke Shoop, "In Society's Limelight," Kansas City Times (January 25, 1945).

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., "Bomber To Bring Truman," (January 29, 1945).

<sup>57</sup>Harry S Truman, Year of Decisions, pp. 4-5.

<sup>58</sup>Ferrell, Truman, p. 132; and Harry S Truman, Year of Decisions, p. 8.

<sup>59</sup>"Home Town Calm," Kansas City Times (April 13, 1945), file-HST Vice President Jan.-April 1945 No. 1, KCSL.

<sup>60</sup>Harry S Truman, Year of Decisions, p. 13; and Ferrell, Off The Record (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), p. 16.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE SUMMER WHITE HOUSE

- \* Renovating the "Summer White House," Spring 1945
- \* President Harry S Truman's First Homecoming
- \* From Potsdam to Christmas, 1945
- \* Toward the '48 Election, 1946-1947

Renovating the "Summer White House," Spring 1945

With the nation suddenly confronted by a new First Family, journalists scrambled to obtain information about the Trumans and their home in Independence. Photographs of 219 North Delaware appeared in newspapers and magazines across the nation. A White House press release, composed by friends of Bess Truman and the Democratic Committee's Women's Division, called the Wallace/Truman home "The Gates Victorian Mansion."<sup>1</sup> Just as the Roosevelt estate at Hyde Park, New York, was in the limelight, the Truman's Independence home was also the focus of national attention. In the early weeks of the Truman presidency, 219 North Delaware was called "The Hyde Park of the West."<sup>2</sup>

Missourians, especially the people of Jackson County, were eager to please their favorite son, the President of the United States. One Kansas City lumber company president offered to head a statewide fund raising campaign to build President Truman a new home with a pricetag of more than \$100,000. His offer read:

I would like to contribute together with thousands of Missourians in honoring you by raising a fund by small gifts to furnish you and your family a beautiful home or a nicely improved farm in or near Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri. ...This is certainly no reflection on your present home, but I don't believe your present home would be adequate in the future for so prominent a person.<sup>3</sup>

The polite rejection was formulated by William D. Hassett, Secretary

to the President:

Greatly as the President appreciates your desire to start a movement to present him with a new home by popular subscription, it would be impossible to authorize you to proceed. The old home of President and Mrs. Truman in Independence is hallowed by long family associations through the years. Neither the President nor his family would for a moment entertain the thought of leaving it.

You must not think for one minute that this attitude minimizes the President's appreciation of your generous thought. But I am sure, upon reflection, you will understand the deep considerations which move the President and his family to cling to their present home.<sup>4</sup>

The appearance of the Wallace/Truman house in the spring of 1945 was in sharp contrast to the stately grandeur of Hyde Park. The weathered exterior and unkempt grounds reflected the years of neglect while the family lived in Washington and the home stood empty. Aware that her family home was the object of public scrutiny, Bess Truman negotiated an agreement with Independence contractor Orville Campbell in early May to renovate the structure's exterior. Two coats of paint and minor carpentry repairs to the porches and roof were included. Because of spring rains the renovation work did not begin until May 21, when scaffolding was erected around the front facade and workmen began repairing rotted millwork and patching the slate roof. [See Figure 36].

Gleaming white paint was chosen to conform to the home's new title, the "Summer White House."<sup>5</sup> The new appellation was of local derivation as a newspaper explained:



FIGURE 36

FIGURE 36: Painters, roofers and carpenters begin the renovation of 219 North Delaware into the "Summer White House."

Date: May 21, 1945

Associated Press, New York Herald Tribune

Truman Library Photo No. 69-146

Painters, roofers, and carpenters go to work on the home here of President and Mrs. Harry S. Truman. Friends and neighbors of the President and First Lady are calling the rambling house, built just after the Civil War [sic], "THE SUMMER WHITE HOUSE," anticipating a visit from Mrs. Truman, daughter Mary Margaret, and Mrs. Truman's mother—and possibly the President himself.<sup>6</sup>

White House Press Secretary Charles G. Ross added credence to the local claim when he announced the Trumans' plans for the summer on May 23. He told reporters that Bess and Margaret were "eager to return to Independence and resume a more normal life," and that the President would make "occasional visits." He added that their old home was "being transformed from its staid gray to gleaming white" before the family's arrival.<sup>7</sup>

The Trumans left their small apartment on April 16 and moved into Blair House across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House. By May 7, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt had moved out of the Executive Mansion and the Trumans then moved in "with very little commotion, except that Margaret's piano had to be hoisted through a window of the second-floor living room."<sup>8</sup> Furniture from the Washington apartment was crated and shipped back to Missouri. The arrival of the crates caused a dilemma for George and May Wallace. They were in charge of looking after the "big house" which was soon filled with crates and boxes while barrels of dishes sat in the kitchen. Furniture and other items belonging to the Fred Wallace family, who had moved into a Denver furnished apartment, made conditions even more crowded. A



collect call to the White House was made appealing to Bess for instructions. She replied, "You just leave everything the way it is and I'll take care of it when I get there."<sup>9</sup>

Mayor Roger T. Sermon, who owned a grocery store on the Square, filled Bess's long distance order to stock the pantry with canned goods. Although customers for 25 years, no meat was sent to the Truman home because the family's ration coupons had not been received.

Harrison Irving, a black yardman who had worked for the family for 12 years, commenced work on the grounds. Landscaping work concentrated around the pergola and back porch, a favorite area for the family. A newspaper reported:

Flat on the ground below the high back porch were a 45-year-old grapevine and a climbing rose vine with a number of bright red blossoms. The painters were working on the rear of the home.

"I'm going to get rid of that old grapevine," George Wallace said. "But I've got to get that rose vine fastened up again some way before they get in. If she (his mother) sees it, she'll have a fit."<sup>10</sup>

A doghouse "in a nest of spirea at the rear right of the home" was given a fresh coat of white paint. "Spotty," a three-year-old brown and white dog owned by David and Marian Wallace, vacated the house to make room for Margaret's new pet, "Mike," an Irish setter. Left behind when his owners moved to Denver, Spotty was taken in by George and May Wallace.<sup>11</sup>

No domestic help had been employed since Vietta Garr was let go. Vietta had cooked and cleaned for the family for 16 years until Fred Wallace moved his family to Denver. Managing a soda fountain and lunch counter at Crown Drug Store (12th and The Paseo) in Kansas City, Vietta was asked by May Wallace (upon Bess Truman's instructions) to resume working at 219 North Delaware. Fondly recalling the Truman's huge old fashioned icebox, Vietta told the press, "I don't think they will ever have an electric icebox in the house... as Mr. Fred owns some stock in the Independence Ice Company."<sup>12</sup> Stating she could still make the angel food cakes the President loved, Vietta was unsure about returning to work for the family:

I don't know--they're a nice family to work for, but I'm sort of on the outs with the cooking right now. I'm going to make up my mind after I talk with Mrs. Truman.<sup>13</sup>

Bess Truman announced she was returning home early to supervise her home's renovation and cleaning. Replaying a summer homecoming tradition which began in 1935, Bess arrived at 7:59 p.m., June 3, at the Missouri Pacific Railroad Depot with Madge Wallace and daughter Margaret. Two hundred people greeted them and they were then driven to Frank Wallace's home. Margaret immediately walked through the back yard to check on "Mike," her new Irish setter.\* With scores of

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\*"Mike" spent his first and only summer at the Truman home before being shipped back to the White House. Spoiled and fed candy by the Secret Service, Margaret Truman gave the dog away to a man who raised bird dogs on the East coast.

people slowly driving by 219 North Delaware, police directed traffic while Secret Service agents kept the curious public from getting too close.<sup>14</sup>

While Margaret slept at 601 W. Van Horn, Bess and her mother stayed the first night in their own home and rose early to examine wallpaper samples. Howard McKerns, a professional house cleaner, negotiated a contract with Bess to

clean the entire house as soon as painters and paper hangers are through. Windows and woodwork and some walls will be washed, floors waxed and carpets and rugs cleaned, and fresh curtains will be hung along with the general spring house cleaning job.

Cleaning the three marble mantels and two chimneys was also part of the contract.<sup>15</sup>

On June 4, the White House announced the President planned a few short trips of two days or more to visit his family at the Summer White House. Harry's schedule was subject to change "because of the uncertainty over the international situation" which necessitated staying close to the capital.<sup>16</sup> A subsequent announcement revealed Bess's determination to keep her family life in the background. In deference to the spotlight which illuminated the White House and its occupants, a statement declared that the First Lady would discontinue her predecessor's weekly press conferences. Only written questions

from the press would be accepted through Miss Reathel Odum (Mrs. Truman's Secretary) or Mrs. Edith Helm (White House Social Secretary).<sup>17</sup>

June 5 was furniture moving day inside the Truman home. While tinnners replaced gutters and downspouts and painters painted woodwork and shelves, a moving van pulled up to the house. From Collins Furniture Moving and Storage Company (11701 Winner Road), four workmen took away the Fred Wallace family's furniture to their warehouse. To shield the activity from the relentless stream of curious passersby, blinds were pulled and lights turned on as furniture was shifted from room to room upon the direction of the First Lady.<sup>18</sup> [See Figure 37].

Taking time out from housecleaning to make her first public appearance since Harry became President, Bess typically shunned the spotlight on June 21 at a celebration at Kansas City's Liberty Memorial. The First Lady declined an invitation to sit on the platform with the honoree, General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Preferring to sit in the audience instead, she stated, "It is General Eisenhower's day, and these people are here to honor him."<sup>17</sup>

North Delaware Street neighbors helped supervise the spring 1945 transformation of the Summer White House. Some readily volunteered their services. On one occasion, Henry J. Heifner was called to



FIGURE 37

FIGURE 37: The vanguard of many more visitors to see President Truman's home, the "Summer White House," the structure appears gleaming white from its fresh coat of paint.

Date: June 5, 1945

Acme Photo

Truman Library Photo No. 66-2897

extricate a swarm of bees which had entered the attic through a window on the north side of the Summer White House:

"Reid Turner says there is a swarm of bees in the White House," Mrs. Heifner told her beekeeper husband. "We'd better go and get them."<sup>20</sup>

Although rushed, the renovation was completed shortly before the President's arrival on June 27. One final project was the installation of a 34-foot flagpole presented by Mayor Sermon to the Truman family on behalf of the City of Independence. Erected on June 25 in honor of the President's first homecoming since assuming his office, the location on the northwest corner of the lawn was selected by Bess and her mother. The first flag was hoisted up the staff at 9 a.m., June 26, by Secret Service agents. This activity by the Secret Service, who were in charge of raising and lowering the Stars and Stripes, became a signal that the First Family was indeed in residence.<sup>21</sup>

#### PRESIDENT HARRY S TRUMAN'S FIRST HOMECOMING

As the first weeks of the Truman administration passed, interest in Independence about the President's plans for the summer increased. No one was surprised when it was announced that Bess and Margaret Truman, and Madge Wallace would continue to come to Independence to spend the summer at 219 North Delaware Street. Civic leaders were more interested to learn the "specifics" of the President's plans.

As late as May 31, however, there were no specifics. Press Secretary Charles G. Ross wrote the manager of the Independence Examiner:

The President has expressed the hope that he might make a few visits to his home during the summer, but, as yet, no definite plans have been made and no arrangements for setting up an office, or establishing any office staff, have been gone into."<sup>22</sup>

When the White House disclosed a tentative date of June 27, several days later, Independence executed its plan to greet its favorite son.

Two thousand Chamber of Commerce banners proclaiming "Welcome Home, Mr. President" graced the storefronts of Independence merchants as residents put up their flags, mowed their lawns, and trimmed their shrubs in preparation of the homecoming.<sup>23</sup> The city, as well as all of Jackson County, braced itself for the arrival of the President of the United States and for the eyes of the nation to be focused on them.

Harry Truman arrived for a four-day weekend vacation from the United Nations San Francisco Conference on June 27.<sup>24</sup> The President held his first and only "official" Independence press conference in the Memorial Building where he announced several historic decisions. He accepted Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius's resignation and subsequently appointed him U.S. Representative [Ambassador] to the U.N. He dodged questions that James Byrnes was his appointment for Secretary of State. Truman said the announcement would come on

July 1, but that Byrnes would accompany him to the Potsdam Conference. The President stated the U.N. Charter would also be submitted to the Senate for ratification on July 1, and asked for swift approval. He declared that Stettinius would not go to Potsdam, but would guide the charter debate. Fifty reporters and 150 spectators witnessed the event, staged in "an air of informality" foreign to the more structured Washington press conferences.<sup>25</sup> [See Figure 38].

In an evening town meeting in the R.L.D.S. Auditorium, 10,000 people crowded into the 8,000-seat building to greet the new President and hear him speak. Amidst ovations and cheers, he proclaimed to his home town:

There are two things that I must accomplish as President of the United States. The first is to win the war with Japan--and we are winning it. The next one is to win a peace.<sup>26</sup>

[See Figure 39].

President Truman spent his last day and evening of his weekend trip in Independence at home with his family. In response to reporters' pleas to pose for informal photographs, he established a three o'clock photo session in the back yard near the pergola. The adamant position of the First Lady forbidding any intrusion of her privacy became immediately apparent as a journalist reported:

All summer, newsmen have been trying to get photographs of the inside of the summer White House--without success.



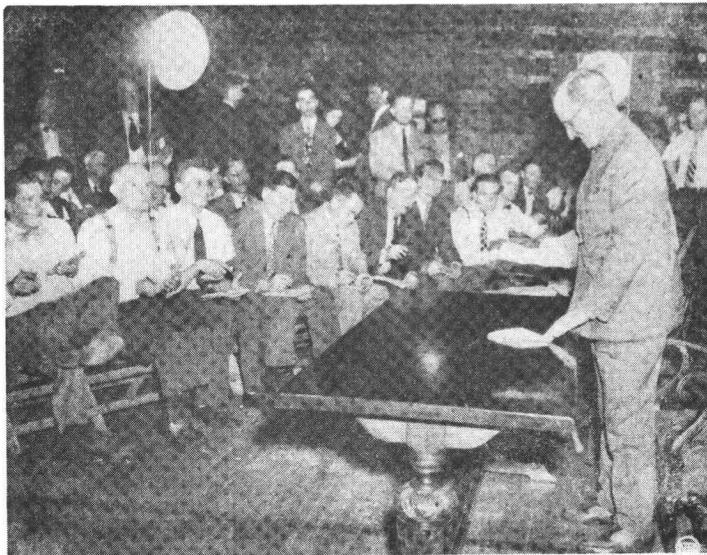


FIGURE 38: President Truman holds a press conference in the Independence Memorial Building to announce the resignation of Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius.

Date: June 27, 1945

Truman Library Photo No. 78-98

FIGURE 39: In a town meeting in the R.L.D.S. Auditorium, Independence honors its native son.

Date: June 27, 1945

Vernon Galloway, photographer (Chamber of Commerce)

Truman Library Photo No. 67-3862

They have implored Mrs. Truman to let them have some informal shots of herself inside the old family home. But Mrs. Truman has been adamant. On one occasion, the President obligingly agreed to pose on the lawn with members of his family. He and Margaret arrived and waited for Mrs. Truman. She didn't come. Finally the President went inside the house to get her. In a few minutes he came out without his wife.... "We'll go ahead with the pictures now," he said quietly.... There was no further comment. Obviously Mrs. Truman had refused to budge.<sup>27</sup>

Bess Truman's shyness was in part a result of her decision to distance herself from Eleanor Roosevelt's reputation and desire to remain a housewife, out of the public eye. The President later wrote:

She was entirely conscious of the importance and dignity of White House life. She was not particularly interested, however, in the formalities and pomp or the artificiality which, as we had learned from our years in Washington, inevitably surround the family of a President.<sup>28</sup>

Margaret Truman further explained:

I don't think the public ever really understood Mother. She didn't give them any help in this either. She disliked publicity and avoided giving those long in-depth interviews First Ladies sometimes give about what they are supposedly thinking, feeling and doing. Had she done so, the public might have understood her better. But Mother was not a very public person, and she tried whenever possible to keep it that way.<sup>29</sup>

Another explanation garnered from family friends involves Madge

Wallace and her desire for privacy in her own home:

...the summer White House belongs to Mrs. Truman's mother, Mrs. D. W. Wallace, and Mrs. Wallace is quite a dominant force in the Truman family.... Mrs. Wallace believes that a home is a home. It is not a place to be photographed on the inside. It is a place to live in.<sup>30</sup>

On his last night home, the President relaxed with his relatives in an evening picnic. Following supper in Frank Wallace's back yard, the President walked to Louis L. Compton's house at 318 North Delaware. There a reunion of the Harpie (or Harpy) Club was in progress. Truman was a member of the club during his county court years when a group of county employees spent a night out each week playing poker. The simplicity of his activities further cultivated the President's reputation of "Plain Old Harry":

The President's last hours at home, chatting with neighbors along the quiet streets and green lawns, probably will be recalled in history books. It was a peculiarly American contrast, the modest, unassuming Truman at home, dropping into a neighbor's home for dinner and meeting old "night out" friends on the eve of his great venture into world affairs [Potsdam Conference] at this critical hour.<sup>31</sup>

The homecoming saw the President busy running the country and the war from Jackson County. Daily mail pouches from the White House arrived in Harry's downtown Kansas City office. There he cabled General Douglas MacArthur and praised him for his successes in the Philippines. He also signed a bill increasing the wages of Federal employees.

Upon his departure for Washington, Mrs. Truman called in the Secret Service agents assigned to guard the home. She informed them that "while there might be occasions in Washington or elsewhere where their presence would be required, she wanted nobody trailing her when

she chose to go to the store, to her bridge club or out to luncheon."<sup>32</sup> Only Margaret accompanied her around town, walking or driving to the Square to shop. She declined to participate in local social or political functions, refusing countless invitations. Only invitations from close friends for small gatherings were accepted and those principally came from the 11 women of her Tuesday Bridge Club. Similarly, only a small circle of close friends ever "dropped in" to the Summer White House.<sup>33</sup>

#### FROM POTSDAM TO CHRISTMAS, 1945

Following Harry Truman's first homecoming, Life featured the President's home state in its July 1945 edition. Beside a full-page photograph of the Summer White House, the magazine stated that "It is easily the most impressive house in the town."<sup>34</sup>

The Potsdam Conference in Berlin saw the President out of the country most of July. On July 18, 1945, a historic telephone hook-up was made between the former German capital and the Summer White House. Harry Truman later wrote:

Late that night I talked with Mrs. Truman in Independence via transatlantic radiotelephone. It was the first call from Berlin to America since 1942. The connection was just as clear as if it had been between Independence and Washington. I learned later that the calls were routed over Signal Corps circuits through Frankfurt and London to New York and from there to Independence.<sup>35</sup>

Several calls were made to 219 North Delaware during the Potsdam Conference. On July 29, Harry wrote, "It made me terribly homesick when I talked with you yesterday morning. It seemed as if you were just around the corner. I spent the day after the call trying to think up reasons why I should bust up the conference and go home."<sup>36</sup>

As the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, on August 6, 1945, Bess Truman was getting ready return to Washington to see her husband following his return from Berlin.<sup>37</sup> The decision to use the weapon, as with many others, was discussed in advance with her.<sup>38</sup> Traveling by train on the evening of August 8, she was en route to the capital when the second and final atomic weapon was used on Nagasaki, Japan. On the same train was "Mike," Margaret's Irish setter. The dog was being shipped back to his White House pen following countless incidents of slipping out of his harness and roaming free in the Truman neighborhood.<sup>39</sup>

Harry and Bess Truman both arrived back in Independence at 7:00 p.m., September 14 aboard the presidential plane "Sacred Cow." The weekend visit was in stark contrast to the June visit. At the President's request, no fanfare or celebrations were held. Two hundred people were waiting outside 219 North Delaware as the First Family arrived. Shortly afterwards, father and daughter walked across the street for a 10-minute visit with the Nolands.<sup>40</sup> The Nolands enjoyed hearing the President play the piano and Margaret sing. According to

Margaret, "He was a good piano player but he was a lousy accompanist.... People used to say, 'Oh you used to sing while your father played,' and I'd say, 'No way. He couldn't accompany anybody. He was a soloist.'" <sup>41</sup> The quiet two-day trip ended September 16 at 1:30 p.m. when the President flew back to Washington. <sup>42</sup> Bess and Margaret Truman, Madge Wallace, and Vietta Garr followed two weeks later. Four Secret Service agents remained on duty at the Summer White House "to ward off souvenir seekers." They helped in the process of winterizing the home by carrying the flower boxes to the basement. <sup>43</sup>

The President returned to Jackson County on November 25 to celebrate his mother's 93rd birthday. He flew to Grandview to surprise Martha Ellen Truman and spent two hours with her before making the return flight. The White House did not announce the President's trip until he was on his way back. <sup>44</sup>

To give the President more opportunity to relax instead of enduring the four-to five-hour flights to Missouri, a 245-foot offshore cruising yacht was made available. The S. S. Williamsburg with its four guest statesrooms, two baths, an office and a bedroom and bath for the President, was first used on December 2, 1945. Harry Truman took the "Hardrock Club," the group of newspapermen who accompanied him on his 1944 campaign trips, for the first cruise on the diesel-powered vessel. <sup>45</sup> Other places he and his family went to relax was a Key West, Florida, retreat which was called "The Little White House"

and Shangri-La-on-Catoctin Mountain [now called Camp David] in Frederick County, Maryland.

By the third week of December, a ten-by-twelve-foot security booth was constructed in the Truman's back yard. Installed by the Secret Service, the booth was white with "windows on three sides" which "gives a full view of the premises, except the front, and no one is admitted at the front door for the present."<sup>46</sup>

The Secret Service booth was in place in time for the arrival of the female members of the First Family. On December 22, Margaret drove her mother to the Square to shop in a new 1946 Ford, a gift from Henry Ford. A 16-foot Christmas tree, sent from Denver by David and Marian Wallace, had to be shortened to accommodate the 12-foot living room ceiling.<sup>47</sup> President Truman, flying to Kansas City on Christmas Day, was delayed four hours by bad weather. When it became apparent he would be late, Martha Ellen and Mary Jane Truman canceled their Christmas dinner to come to the Wallace/Truman home to join the First Family, Madge Wallace, the Fred Wallace family, George and May Wallace, and Frank and Natalie Wallace. Mrs. Joseph T. Noland ("Aunt Ella") had a dinner waiting for nephew Harry, too, along with his favorite pound cake, a family recipe for two centuries.<sup>48</sup>

The New York Times and Washington Post castigated Harry Truman for taking "chances with his personal safety." While the inclement

weather grounded commercial flights, the "Sacred Cow" proceeded, creating a "hazardous" situation "risking his life." The editorials declared the President should "not take chances even if it breaks a 27 [sic] year tradition."<sup>49</sup> Bess was upset with Harry for a different reason. He was only able to schedule a single day at home for Christmas. Responding to her stinging censure, he wrote from the White House on December 28:

Well I'm here in the White House, the great white sepulcher of ambitions and reputations....

When you told me I might as well have stayed in Washington so far as you were concerned I gave up....

You can never appreciate what it means to come home as I did the other evening after doing at least one hundred things I didn't want to do and have the only person in the world whose approval and good opinion I value look at me like I'm something the cat dragged in and tell me I've come in at last because I couldn't find any reason to stay away. I wonder why we are made so that what we really think and feel we cover up?

This head of mine should have been bigger and better proportioned. There ought to have been more brain and a larger bump of ego or something to give me an idea that there can be a No. 1 man in the world. I didn't want to be. But, in spite of opinions to the contrary, Life and Time say I am.

If that is the case you, Margie, and everyone else who may have any influence on my actions must give me help and assistance; because no one ever needed help and assistance as I do now. If I can get the use of the best brains in the country and a little bit of help from those I have on a pedestal at home, the job will be done.<sup>50</sup>

#### TOWARD THE '48 ELECTION, 1946 TO 1947

As Madge Wallace departed for Denver, Bess and Margaret Truman left for the capital on New Year's Day traveling with Vietta Garr in a private Pullman compartment.<sup>51</sup> In his syndicated "Washington



Merry-Go-Round" column, journalist Drew Pearson erroneously reported that the Truman women had had "a private car for their trip back to Washington from Missouri after the holiday season, and so had forced GIs to travel in day coaches." The column, clearly designed to embarrass the Trumans, caused the President to pull the columnist aside after an Oval Office press conference to give him a thorough "bawling out."<sup>52\*</sup>

Bess Truman returned to Independence on March 21, 1946, on her way to Denver to visit her mother and Fred Wallace's family. Relatives met her at the Missouri Pacific depot during the 10-minute stop.<sup>53</sup> On March 26, she returned with her mother. Both women stayed at the Frank Wallace house until they continued on to Washington the following day. Two-nineteen North Delaware, however, remained closed.<sup>54</sup>

After the Trumans had been in the White House nearly a year, the 10 members of Mrs. Truman's bridge club arrived in the capital from Independence on April 10. Staying in the Executive Mansion for the four-day weekend were Mrs. Leslie Shaw, Mrs. J. C. Noel, Mrs. Oscar

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\*In a July 25, 1945, letter to Bess, Harry revealed an acute sensitivity about the press, particularly Drew Pearson, reporting on his family: "If that so-and-so ever says anything to your or Margaret's detriment I shall give him a little Western direct action that he'll long remember. I don't care what he says about me but I can get hotter than a depot stove when he mentions my family." (Dear Bess, p. 521).

King, Mrs. Tom Twyman, Mrs. Mize Peters, Mrs. Frank Wallace, Mrs. George Wallace, Mrs. Mell A. Palette, Mrs. John Hutchison, and Mrs. E. K. Crow.<sup>55</sup> The "homey" event was featured in Life which reported that the bridge club's real business following luncheons was to "exchange menus, gossip, talk about children, fashions, and husbands."<sup>56</sup> A White House employee, impressed at how closely the Trumans regarded their friends and servants, remarked about the First Lady:

She would make more of a fuss when her old bridge club came from Independence than when she was entertaining the social queens of Washington. I suppose she knew those bridge buddies were the ones she was going home to in a few years. She never lost sight of realities.<sup>57\*</sup>

On May 19, the President flew to Kansas City to visit his family in Grandview and to receive an honorary degree from William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri. He stayed for two days at the Muehlebach Hotel and did not go to Independence.<sup>58</sup> The visit was especially enjoyable for him because he was able--with the help of close friends--to buy the remainder of the family Grandview farm from the county on May 4. Because of the advanced age and deteriorating health of Martha Ellen Truman, however, the decision was made that she and Mary Jane would remain in the bungalow they had occupied since 1940.<sup>59</sup>

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\*Lilian Rogers Parks, said that the White House staff marvelled at the closeness of Harry, Bess, and Margaret Truman, and referred to them as "The Three Musketeers."

On May 28, the "Sacred Cow" flew Mary Jane Truman and the three Wallace brothers and their families to the first family reunion in the White House. The event coincided with Margaret's May 29 graduation from George Washington University. Harry Truman, who received an honorary doctorate of laws, presented Margaret with her college diploma.<sup>60</sup>

Bess and Margaret Truman, Madge Wallace, and George and Frank Wallace and their wives returned home on June 9.<sup>61</sup> Margaret's singing lessons kept her occupied as she began limited summer concert tours.<sup>62</sup> As for the President, the prospect for relaxing in Independence seemed remote as he lamented on June 19: "Things have eased up somewhat but not enough to justify a vacation for me. Since I'm not accustomed to vacations it won't matter much."<sup>63</sup> The First Lady spent part of her summer at home while all of July, she was in Washington.<sup>64</sup>

It was on June 27 that press accounts of a June 8 fatal accident involving an automobile owned by Bess Truman surfaced. On U.S. Highway 40 six miles west of Warrenton, Missouri, a car with Missouri tags 369-369 driven by Secret Service agent Henry J. Nicholson swerved in front of a car attempting to pass it, causing that car to leave the road, careen over a 10-foot embankment, and overturn. The driver of the passing car, Mrs. J. R. Pearson of Washington, Missouri, was not injured, but her husband died four days later from

his injuries. The accident occurred as the agent was taking the car to Independence for Mrs. Truman.<sup>65</sup>

On August 3, Harry Truman returned to the Summer White House for the first time since Christmas. Accompanied by Mrs. Truman, the couple was met at the airport by Margaret who drove her parents to Grandview, and then to 219 North Delaware. There the First Family greeted friends and neighbors in an informal reception. The well-wishers filled North Delaware Street and the front sidewalk, but were asked by the Secret Service not to spill onto the lawn. While his wife and daughter went inside almost immediately, President Truman stayed on the sidewalk shaking hands for a half-hour.<sup>66</sup>

A family picnic that evening received in-depth coverage in the Kansas City Times: "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>67</sup> The Trumans spent the afternoon sitting on the back porch, when the shirt-sleeved President went into the back yard to sit in a lawn chair around 5:30. He was soon joined by Fred Wallace, whose children, David (age 11) and Marian (age 9), played in the yard. Frank and George Wallace soon walked over from their homes, followed by their wives carrying covered dishes. The First Lady and Natalie Wallace shook out two white tablecloths and spread them on two tables. All the women then

carried out platters, dishes, silverware, glasses, and napkins.

While Margaret Truman, Madge Wallace, and Christine Wallace joined the group, Mrs. Truman went for two more chairs from the back porch.

The picnic supper consisted of sliced ham and other cold meats, bowls of salad including potato and vegetable dishes; platters of sliced tomatoes, assorted cheeses, pickles, hard-boiled eggs, and fresh rolls and butter. Harry Truman was first at the food table to fill his plate, take a glass of ice tea, and return to his lawn chair. A plate was prepared for Madge Wallace and the family sat either at the tables or in lawn chairs with plates balanced on their laps. While Vietta circled the tables swishing a branch of maple leaves to ward-off pesky flies, the family ate and returned for second helpings.

For desert, ice cream and homemade cake were devoured. Following the meal, the family sat and visited in the back yard. At 7:15, the President stood up, stretched, and took David and Marian by the hands and walked with Natalie Wallace through the south side yard and down the alley to the rear yard of Mrs. Henry J. Ott, 710 West Maple. Mrs. Ott, Natalie's aunt, enjoyed a few minutes talking to her famous neighbor before he returned to the Summer White House. At 8:15, the family left the lawn and entered the house. As the first floor lights went out, lights upstairs came on. By 9:30, the house was quiet; only a dim light in the living room shined through the front,

bay window.<sup>68</sup>

On Sunday, August 4, the President drove his daughter's car to Grandview for a 45-minute visit with his relatives. With a Secret Service man in the front seat and another car following, he returned to the Summer White House. Truman parked the car on the driveway and walked around to the front of the home to pose for photographs for the 15 people waiting outside. Returning to the rear entrance, he paused to talk to Mr. and Mrs. Mize Peters before he joined Bess and Fred and Natalie Wallace. The group proceeded to George Wallace's home where they sat on the front porch talking and reading newspapers. At 1:10 p.m., the extended family went to the "big house" for Madge Wallace's birthday dinner.

At 4:00 the same afternoon, White House Press Secretary Charlie Ross held an informal press conference at 220 North Delaware. Owned by Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Major, the couple often permitted their home to be used as a headquarters for reporters. Ross informed the journalists that the President was principally concerned with relaxing with his family, but that he did pause on August 3 to send condolences to Venezuela upon the death of its ambassador to the United States, Dr. Alfredo Machado Hernandez. President Truman designated his naval aide, Capt. James H. Foskett, to represent him at memorial services in Washington.

That evening the First Family and all of the Wallaces went to the Kansas City home of Mr. and Mrs. T. J. Strickler for dinner. Old family friends, Mr. Strickler was the Vice-President and General Manager of the Kansas City Gas Company while his wife was Margaret's voice teacher. Following a meatless dinner (in accordance with the national food conservation program), the Trumans and Wallaces returned home by 11:20 p.m.<sup>69</sup>

By 7:40 a.m., August 5, Harry Truman emerged from the Wallace/Truman home for his morning walk. Determined to see some old friends and neighbors, he strolled west on Van Horn, crossing Delaware to Union, then went south to the northwest corner of Maple to Ray Wills' filling station. Finding Wills absent, he walked west on Maple to River, south to Lexington, and east to the Examiner building. Discovering Editor William Southern not yet at work, the President crossed the street to the post office on Osage to visit with Edgar Hinde, postmaster and former Battery D member. Disappointed a third time, he strolled past Palmer Junior High School, down Van Horn, and entered his home through a rear entrance.<sup>70</sup>

That evening, 22 members of the American Legion's "Voyageurs of Voiture Trois, 40 & 8" held a quiet ceremony on the north lawn of the Summer White House. The group, which Truman had joined 20 years before, presented the President with a life membership. Afterward, members of the Chamber of Commerce arrived to have their photographs

taken with the President. Addressing reporters, President Truman said, "Boys, I'm not going to do a thing this evening except sit on the back porch and swap a little gossip. There's some fellows sitting up there right now."<sup>71</sup> Among the group men was Albert A. Ridge, a Federal judge. During the meeting, presidential military aide Harry Vaughan came with a telegram which the President scanned and stuffed into his pocket. At 8:15, Harry drove Margaret's car with a Secret Service agent to 1121 S. Main, the home of John B. Hutchison. There more than a dozen men played poker until past 11:30, when Harry Truman left to go home to bed.<sup>72</sup>

At 5:30 the next morning, the President rose to say goodbye to the Fred Wallace family as they left for Denver. Harry stood in the back yard and waved as a presidential limousine took them to the airport. At 7:00, he re-emerged for his walk, going east on Van Horn to Spring, south to Maple, and east to the Square and Roger Sermon's grocery. Sermon drove him to city hall and then drove him home at 7:30. At 10 a.m., the President escorted Margaret to the Memorial Building to vote in the Missouri Congressional primary. It was the first time for 22-year-old Margaret to vote. By 1:06 p.m., the "Sacred Cow" left Kansas City's Fairfax Airport for the capital.<sup>73</sup>

It was not until President Truman was back in the White House that he told his wife in a letter about his confrontation with a Kansas City Star/Times reporter he accused of harrassment and



"spying tactics":

Porter was outside Sermon's store with his notebook out jotting down items for publication and I suggested to Roger that he invite him in. Then I proceeded to tell Mr. Porter that I had gotten out of bed at five-thirty, brushed my teeth, shaved, and attended to certain unmentionable personal matters, put on my underclothes, my shirt, tie, pants, and coat. Had then eaten an egg on toast, after drinking some tomato juice, and wound up with a glass of skimmed milk. Then he was informed that neither I nor my family were appreciative of the spying tactics he had used. I told him I knew of his sitting across the street with a spy-glass, that he had followed me to John Hutchison's house, and that he and his boss Roy Roberts [Star/Times publisher] were only trying to get something nasty on me and that it was not appreciated. He said he was only obeying orders. That was what I wanted him to say. Mr. Shoop [Duke Shoop, Star Washington correspondent] told Charlie [Ross] that Mr. Roberts felt very badly about my attitude, which made me very happy....<sup>74</sup>

The Trumans flew to Independence on the first Tuesday in November to vote in the mid-term congressional election. When they flew back to the capital, Mrs. Wallace did not accompany them. Madge Wallace remained behind with Frank and Natalie Wallace while 219 North Delaware was closed until Christmas.<sup>75</sup> It was a rare occasion for Mrs. Wallace not to be living with the Trumans during the presidential period. Mrs. Truman insisted on caring for her ailing mother. According to one source:

When her brothers in Independence repeatedly offered to have the aging Mrs. Wallace live with them, Bess always replied, "It's a daughter's duty to look after her mother."<sup>76</sup>

On November 24, President Truman again made a surprise flight to Grandview for his mother's 94th birthday. Similarly, the press was not notified until the "Sacred Cow" was on its return flight so that

the President could enjoy privacy with his family.<sup>77</sup>

On Christmas Day 1946, he returned to Jackson County for another one-day holiday vacation. The Wallace/Truman home was bedecked in its customary yuletide finery: a large wreath and red bow on the front door and a "ten foot Christmas tree... twinkling with tinsel and lights in the big bay window of the living room."<sup>78</sup> The President's agenda included a trip to Grandview, a five-minute nationwide radio address from the Wallace/Truman house issuing season's greetings, and Christmas dinner at home. By necessity the trip had to be short because of pressing work on the budget and State of the Union message.<sup>79</sup>

Harry Truman made an unexpected trip to his mother's bedside on February 15, 1947. Mama Truman suffered her third hip fracture in seven years, triggering her slow decline. Presidential physician Brig. Gen. Wallace H. Graham, attended the 94-year-old woman. President Truman stayed at the Muehlebach Hotel during his one-day visit, not 219 North Delaware. He did go to Independence, however, to visit the Wallaces and Nolands.<sup>80</sup>

On his way to Mexico City for a good-will visit, Harry stopped in Grandview for three hours on March 2.<sup>81</sup> The President and Margaret Truman returned to Grandview on April 12 for a weekend visit. There they found Mama Truman healing comfortably. At 3 p.m.,

he participated in an NBC radio memorial service for FDR at his increasingly familiar residence, the Muehlebach.<sup>82</sup> In the evening, Margaret drove him to Independence for a country ham dinner at Frank Wallace's home. On April 13, they returned to the capital.<sup>83</sup>

After a two-hour visit on Mother's Day, May 12,<sup>84</sup> Harry Truman made an emergency pre-dawn flight to Grandview on May 17 when he learned Mama Truman was in "very serious" condition. While the fracture had healed, the condition of her heart had seriously weakened.<sup>85</sup> The President resumed his temporary residence in the Muehlebach penthouse suite to begin a lengthy vigil.<sup>86</sup> The suite became the surrogate Oval Office with official papers flown in by special courier. The eyes of the nation focused on the Grandview cottage while messages of sympathy flooded in. With the President's return to the capital contingent on Martha Ellen's condition, Bess Truman made plans to come home.<sup>87</sup> The First Lady arrived on May 21, and went to the Muehlebach, not the Summer White House. Margaret canceled her singing concert debut to come home and stay with Frank and Natalie Wallace. A historic piece of legislation was signed in the Muehlebach suite, at 8:00 a.m., May 22. President Truman signed the aid bill to Greece and Turkey, a move which formalized the "Truman Doctrine."<sup>88</sup>

The bedside vigil ended on May 29, 1947, when Dr. Graham informed the family that Mama Truman's condition had improved sufficiently

to declare her out of danger. After 12 days in Jackson County, Harry Truman returned with his family to the White House.<sup>89</sup> He returned by himself on June 6 for a three-day visit with his mother.<sup>90</sup>

Bess and Margaret Truman, and Madge Wallace arrived home for the summer on June 30, and had a late evening dinner at May and George Wallace's.<sup>91</sup> Bess Truman accompanied her mother two weeks later to Denver (where Mrs. Wallace intended to stay the summer) and returned to the Summer White House on July 19.<sup>92</sup>

On July 25, 1947, Margaret Truman wrote her father about the unusually cool summer nights:

Beuf [Aunt May Wallace] and I have been playing badminton every night and in sweaters! It's so cold I'm almost blue. I have the heater on in my room tonight as I washed my hair and it's better. We're sleeping under two blankets.<sup>93</sup>

Late that same day, Harry received the news that he dreaded most: Mama Truman had taken a turn for the worse. The following morning, Dr. Joseph W. Greene of Independence called the White House and said that the President's mother was not expected to live through the day. Shortly after noon, after he boarded the "Sacred Cow" to fly to Grandview, Martha Ellen Truman died.<sup>94</sup>

On July 28, according to Martha Ellens' wishes, a private service with no eulogy was held before the body was taken to Kansas City's Forest Hill Cemetery and buried beside John Anderson Truman.

The sad President, who stayed with his family at 219 North Delaware, did not go for his customary morning walk the next day. Before flying back to the capital, he drove to Grandview to visit his sister and brother.<sup>95</sup> On August 4, after spending the weekend at Shangri-La, the President greeted the First Lady upon her return from Missouri. Margaret Truman stayed at home where she continued her voice lessons.<sup>96</sup> Her debut as a singer had come in March when she sang with the Detroit Symphony before a nationwide radio audience. Her first public singing debut came on August 23, 1947, at the Hollywood Bowl.<sup>97</sup> Following her public debut, Margaret soon joined her parents in Washington for a short time, and flew home to Missouri with her mother aboard the new presidential jet, "The Independence," on September 21.<sup>98</sup> The Wallace/Truman house closed for the winter on October 15, 1947. Bess Truman left Independence for Washington by train with Madge Wallace. Margaret and voice coach and manager Mrs. T. J. Strickler departed for Pittsburgh for the beginning of a fall concert singing tour.<sup>99</sup>

The Truman family did not return home for Christmas, thereby breaking a lengthy tradition. Instead, the Truman and Wallace families from Missouri went to Washington to spend Christmas in what conceivably could have been the only White House Christmas celebration of a Truman "caretaker" presidency.

RENOVATING THE SUMMER WHITE HOUSE, SPRING 1945

<sup>1</sup>Bess Furman, "Trumans Give-Up 5-Room Residence," New York Times (April 14, 1945), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1945, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>2</sup>"New 'Hyde Park' of the West," Examiner (April 13, 1945), p. 4, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence (hereinafter cited as MCPL).

<sup>3</sup>Guy Weston, President, Badger Lumber Company, to President Harry S Truman, letter, June 18, 1945, Papers of the President of the United States, 1945-53, President's Personal File, folder-The President's Home in Independence, Missouri, HSTL.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Hassett to Weston, June 25, 1945.

<sup>5</sup>"Presidential Home Town Abode To Get Some External Repairs," Examiner (May 3, 1945), p. 1; and "New 'Hyde Park' of the West," Examiner (April 13, 1945), p. 4, MCPL.

<sup>6</sup>Associated Press photograph caption, New York Herald Tribune (May 21, 1945), Photo Archives, HSTL.

<sup>7</sup>"Trumans Here In June," Kansas City Star (May 23, 1945), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1945 No. 1, KCSL.

<sup>8</sup>Harry S Truman, Year of Decisions, pp. 43; 219.

<sup>9</sup>"Pride Fills Town," Kansas City Star (June 3, 1945), file-HST Mrs. 1937-45 No. 1, KCSL.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., "Task For Mrs. Truman," Kansas City Times (June 1, 1945).

<sup>13</sup>"Truman's Cook is Doubtful," New York Sun (June 1, 1945), President's Personal File 1-G, folder-The President's Home In Independence, Missouri, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>14</sup>"First Lady As A Boss," Kansas City Star (May 24, 1945) and "The Trumans Are Home," Kansas City Times (June 4, 1945), file-HST Mrs. 1937-45 No. 1, KCSL.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., "The First Lady Digs In," Kansas City Star (June 4, 1945).

16Theodore C. Alford, "Plans Trips Home," Kansas City Times (June 5, 1945), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1945 No. 1, KCSL.

17"A Flurry By Trumans," Kansas City Star (June 5, 1945), file-HST Mrs. 1937-45 No. 2, KCSL.

18Ibid., "To Let Spotlight In," (June 11, 1945).

19Ibid., "Oddest Guest," Kansas City Times (June 22, 1945).

20"Truman's Home No San Clemente," Kansas City Times (September 6, 1973), folder-Harry S Truman Heritage District, Vertical File, HSTL.

21"Flag Pole Gift For Truman Yard: Through Efforts of City and Amer. Legion & Several Individuals, Stand Is Being Erected on Lawn," Examiner (June 25, 1945), p. 1, and "City Is Scrubbed Up and Shined For Visit of Its Favorite Son," Examiner (June 26, 1945), p. 1, MCPL; "Busy On Truman Plans: Jackson County Prepares A Welcome For President," Kansas City Star (June 26, 1945), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S July-Sept. 1945, Vertical File, HSTL; and Paul P. Kennedy, "Home Town Opens Arms For Truman: Independence Would Welcome Him as Neighbor, but Many Doubt He Will Return," New York Times (December 10, 1952), p. 1, White House Scrapbooks, HSTL.

#### PRESIDENT HARRY S TRUMAN'S FIRST HOMECOMING

22Charles G. Ross to Frank Rucker, letter, May 31, 1945, Papers of the President of the United States, 1945-53, folder-Official File 78, HSTL.

23"Spruce Up For Truman," Kansas City Times (June 25, 1945), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1945 No. 1, KCSL.

24"Truman Visits At Home; Returns to Washington," Examiner (July 2, 1945), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1945, Vertical File, HSTL.

25"Truman Shifts Stettinius," Kansas City Times (June 28, 1945), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1945 No. 4, KCSL.

26"Looks To World Peace," Kansas City Times (June 28, 1945), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1945 No. 3, KCSL.

27Drew Pearson, "The Trumans and The Public," Kansas City Times (October 11, 1945), HST May-Dec. 1945 No. 4, KCSL.

28Harry S Truman, Year of Decisions, p. 45.

<sup>29</sup>Margaret Truman, Letters From Father, pp. 161-2.

<sup>30</sup>Pearson, "The Trumans and The Public," Kansas City Times (October 11, 1945), HST May-Dec. 1945, No. 4, KCSL.

<sup>31</sup>"Into Peace Role," Kansas City Times (July 1, 1945), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1945 No. 4, KCSL.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Charles Nutter, "The First Lady Is Determined To Avoid The Limelight," Kansas City Star (August 19, 1945), file-HST Mrs. 1937-45 No. 2, KCSL.

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<sup>34</sup>"Harry Truman's Missouri," Life (July 1945), p. 83, folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1945, HSTL.

<sup>35</sup>Harry S Truman, Year of Decisions, p. 354.

<sup>36</sup>Ferrell, Dear Bess, p. 522.

<sup>37</sup>"The First Lady East," Kansas City Star (August 5, 1945), file-HST Mrs. 1937-45 No. 2, KCSL.

<sup>38</sup>Margaret Truman, "Smithsonian World," p. 57.

<sup>39</sup>"First Lady Off For White House," Examiner (August 8, 1945), p. 1, MCPL.

<sup>40</sup>"Truman Is Home," Kansas City Times (September 15, 1945), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1945 No. 2, KCSL.

<sup>41</sup>Margaret Truman, "Smithsonian World," p. 65.

<sup>42</sup>"Back To Capital," Kansas City Times (September 17, 1945), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1945 No. 4, KCSL.

<sup>43</sup>"Mrs. Truman To Leave," Kansas City Star (September 26, 1945), file-HST Mrs. 1937-45 No. 2, KCSL.

<sup>44</sup>"A Truman Visit," Kansas City Times (November 26, 1945), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1945 No. 4, KCSL.

<sup>45</sup>"Truman Ends A Cruise," Kansas City Times (December 3, 1945), file-HST Yacht-Williamsburg, KCSL.

<sup>46</sup>"A Quiet Truman Day," Kansas City Star (December 21, 1945),



file-HST Christmas 1945, KCSL.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., "All Here But the Chief," Kansas City Star (December 22, 1945).

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., "Truman on Way," Kansas City Star (December 25, 1945).

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., "Chief Defied Air Peril," Kansas City Star (December 26, 1945).

<sup>50</sup>Ferrell, Dear Bess, December 28, 1945, pp. 523-4.

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<sup>52</sup>"Slaps At Pearson," Kansas City Times (January 9, 1946), file-HST 1946 No. 1, KCSL.

<sup>53</sup>"Pause By Mrs. Truman," Kansas City Times (March 21, 1946), file-HST Mrs., 1946, KCSL.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., "A Visit By Mrs. Truman," (March 26, 1946).

<sup>55</sup>Malvina Stephenson, "Take Capital In Stride," Kansas City Times (April 11, 1946), file-HST Mrs., Bridge Club, KCSL.

<sup>56</sup>Lillian Rixey, "Bess Truman and Her Town," Life (July 11, 1949), p. 89, KCSL.

<sup>57</sup>Lillian Rogers Parks, "Backstairs at the White House: Why Mrs. H.S.T. Was Her Favorite First Lady," Kansas City Star (April 30, 1961), file-HST Family, KCSL.

<sup>58</sup>"Truman Visit Plans Set," Kansas City Star (May 16, 1946), HST Visits to Kansas City No. 1; and "Truman Is Home," Kansas City Times (May 20, 1946), HST Visits to Kansas City No. 2, KCSL.

<sup>59</sup>J. R. Fuchs, "Oral History Interview with Charles F. Curry, Kansas City, September 30, 1965," transcript (Independence, Mo.: Harry S. Truman Library, 1966), pp. 10-16.

<sup>60</sup>"Truman Clan to Meet," Kansas City Star (May 10, 1946), and "Home In White House," Kansas City Times (May 29, 1946), file-HST Family, KCSL.

<sup>61</sup>"The First Lady Is Home," Kansas City Star (June 9, 1946),

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file-HST Mrs., 1946, KCSL.

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67Ibid., "Truman At Ease," Kansas City Times (August 4, 1946).

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75"Lights On Again This Week At Home of Nation's First  
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76Robert Underhill, The Truman Persuasions (Ames: Iowa State  
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77"A Truman Visit," Kansas City Times (November 25, 1946),  
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78"Quiet and Brief Christmas Visit By Mr. Truman," Examiner  
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80"Mr. Truman Here," Kansas City Star (February 15, 1947),  
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- <sup>81</sup>Ibid., "Cheered By Visit," Kansas City Times (March 3, 1947).
- <sup>82</sup>Ibid., "Truman Is Home," Kansas City Star (April 12, 1947).
- <sup>83</sup>Ibid., "Visit Home Ends," Kansas City Times (April 13, 1947).
- <sup>84</sup>Ibid., "Brief Visit Here" (May 12, 1947).
- <sup>85</sup>Ibid., "Call Truman to Home," Kansas City Star (May 17, 1947).
- <sup>86</sup>Ibid., "Gain By Mother," Kansas City Times (May 18, 1947).
- <sup>87</sup>Ibid., "A Tired Patient," Kansas City Star (May 19, 1947).
- <sup>88</sup>"A Rally Cheers," Kansas City Times (May 22, 1947), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1947 No. 2, KCSL.
- <sup>89</sup>Ibid., "Ends Long Vigil," Kansas City Star (May 29, 1947).
- <sup>90</sup>Ibid., "Salute to Chief," Kansas City Star (June 6, 1947) and "A Major Speech," Kansas City Times (June 7, 1947).
- <sup>91</sup>"The Trumans Return Home" Kansas City Times (July 1, 1947), file-HST Mrs., 1947, KCSL.
- <sup>92</sup>Ibid., "First Lady On Denver Trip," Kansas City Star (July 16, 1947).
- <sup>93</sup>Margaret Truman, Letters from Father, p. 148.
- <sup>94</sup>Harry S Truman, Memoirs; Vol. II, Years of Trial and Hope (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1956), p. 224.
- <sup>95</sup>"Off To Capital," Kansas City Star (July 29, 1947), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1947 No. 2, KCSL.
- <sup>96</sup>"President Back To Desk," Kansas City Star (August 4, 1947), HST Visits to Kansas City 1947 No. 3, KCSL.
- <sup>97</sup>Ferrell, Truman: A Centenary Remembrance (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), p. 159.
- <sup>98</sup>"The First Lady In By Air," Kansas City Star (September 21, 1947), file-HST Mrs., 1947, KCSL.
- <sup>99</sup>Ibid., "Mrs. Truman To Capital," (October 15, 1947).

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### HARRY GIVES 'EM HELL: THE 1948 CAMPAIGN

- \* The Summer White House and Whistlestop Politics
- \* A Political Miracle, Fall 1948

## THE SUMMER WHITE HOUSE AND WHISTLESTOP POLITICS

A familiar sight at the Missouri Pacific Railroad depot in Independence was repeated on May 29, 1948, with the annual summer homecoming of the female members of the First Family.<sup>1</sup> The routine was almost identical. On hand for the train's arrival were Secret Service agents, policemen, the two Wallace brothers and their wives, and a crowd of spectators. Vernon Galloway, an Examiner photographer, was usually present to record the event. As the crowd waited near the sign proclaiming "INDEPENDENCE, the Home of President Harry S. Truman," Madge Wallace was the first to descend from the Pullman car. Vietta Garr, and Margaret and Bess Truman followed with their parcels. The family "embraces almost without a word" and the two Truman women agree to pose for a few photographs for Vernon Galloway beside the train. As Margaret presents a "sweetly patient smile," the First Lady ignores the scene, "more concerned not how she looks but whether Vietta stowed all the parcels away and if her mother is comfortable in the car for the short trip home."<sup>2</sup>

Their return meant the opening of the Summer White House after a long fall and winter. The summer of 1948, however, was not a typically restful season at home. Early in the year, Harry Truman decided to seek election in his own right. All of the Trumans realized the year would be filled with hard work, strain, and hectic schedules. There would be little time to relax in the comfortable old

home on North Delaware Street until after the November election.

Less than a week later, Bess and Margaret Truman left the Summer White House to join the President in Omaha. June 6 marked the starting point of the first campaign tour through the West.<sup>3</sup> An integral component of the Truman campaign strategy was to allow as many of the American people to see him and his family as possible. At the end of every "Give 'Em Hell" speech, the President asked, "Do you want to meet my family?" As the crowd yelled its approval, Bess and Margaret Truman would walk onto the back platform of the railcar and, as the train slowly pulled away, the First Family smiled and waved. [See Figure 40]. One writer noted the psychological impact was profound:

On a personal level, the Truman family probably endeared themselves to the American people even more than the Roosevelts. Bess was a retiring person; she certainly had her own ideas, but did not believe that the country had elected her and so chose to avoid any involvement in public issues. And although Margaret undertook a career, it was resolutely her own. The Truman presidency in so many ways amounted to a change, a turning away from the past. That was the way Harry Truman wanted it, and that was the way it went.<sup>4</sup>

Harry Truman came home again on June 16. Not since his mother died eleven months before had he returned to Jackson County. Five thousand cheering people jammed Kansas City's Union Station as the President's train arrived. On North Delaware Street, 500 people stood in the street and on the front lawn. Harry Truman was the last to go inside, but he soon re-emerged to walk across the street to the Noland house for a short visit. His daughter then drove him to



FIGURE 40

FIGURE 40: A typical scene during the 1948 campaign: the Truman family on a railcar's platform. This photograph was taken before the family embarked from Washington on a 3-day trip to Ottawa, Canada.  
Date: June 9, 1947  
Truman Library Photo No. 59-1286

Grandview to see Mary Jane and Vivian Truman at the cottage and on the farm.<sup>5</sup>

On June 27, Independence honored its native son with another public meeting at the R.L.D.S. Auditorium. Mary Jane Truman, the Vivian Truman family, Nellie and Ethel Noland, and others were already seated on the platform when the overflow crowd of 10,000 people rose to its feet. Bess and Margaret Truman arrived followed by George and May Wallace, Frank and Natalie Wallace, and David Wallace (son of Fred Wallace). As the band struck up "Hail to the Chief," Mayor Roger Sermon escorted President Truman onto the platform. While the President delivered a speech and the ceremonies proceeded, armed soldiers surrounded the Summer White House. North Delaware was closed to traffic until after the family was home and the lights extinguished at 11 p.m.<sup>6</sup>

Harry Truman returned to the White House to prepare for the Democratic National Convention. On July 12, Bess and Margaret Truman left Independence to join him.<sup>7</sup> On July 15, 1948, in Philadelphia's Convention Hall, Bess and Margaret Truman accompanied the incumbent President to the speaker's platform to accept his party's nomination for President of the United States.<sup>8</sup> The First Family returned to the White House where Bess and Margaret Truman departed for Missouri on July 19. The sad President recorded in his diary:

Bess and Margaret went to Mo. at 7:30 E.D.T. 6:30, God's



time. I sure hated to see them go. Came back to the great white jail and read the papers, some history and then wrote this. It is hot and humid and lonely. Why in hell does anybody want to be a head of a state? Damned if I know.<sup>9</sup>

Upon her return to the Summer White House, Margaret Truman set about conducting some household renovations designed to keep herself busy until her presence was needed on the campaign trail. She wrote:

I immediately fell to work polishing the silver. You know how a house deteriorates when the family is away. I looked around speculatively at the kitchen walls and made up my mind to paint the kitchen and pantry.

The painting job was supplemented with planting a flower garden.<sup>10</sup> On July 25, 1948, she wrote her father, "Mother and I have been painting like mad and have finished the china closet. It is a pretty shade of green, but oh my! the work."<sup>11</sup>

Following the summer recess of the 80th Congress, President Truman called a special session and challenged it to enact the administration's key programs. Following the convention, invigorated by the mandate from his party, Harry Truman intensified his "Whistlestop Campaign" by taunting and lambasting the "Do-Nothing Congress." He traveled to Independence for a day to vote in the August 3 primary. He rose early to vote at the Memorial Building, return to the Summer White House for breakfast, and fly alone to the capital aboard "The Independence."<sup>12</sup>

Bess Truman left 219 North Delaware with her mother on August 19 for a two-week vacation in Denver. The women flew aboard "The Independence" which was on a routine flight to the West coast for an overhaul. Their purpose was to see Fred and Christine Wallace's newborn daughter, Charlotte Margaret Wallace. The two women returned via train on September 6,<sup>13</sup> and found that Margaret had completed the second and final coat of green paint in the kitchen.<sup>14</sup>

On September 5, 1948, Harry Truman abandoned the capital to embark upon the major phase of his historic "Whistlestop Campaign" tour aboard the "Truman Special," a 16-car cavalcade of 80 reporters and photographers, and White House aides. The rear car, the "Ferdinand Magellan," featured a sizeable canopied platform with a public address system. The intensive campaign swing covered 31,700 miles and 356 speeches in 35 days.<sup>15</sup>

The Truman Special stopped in Kansas City on September 18 to a cheering crowd. The President came to Jackson County to register for the general election,\* and to rest at the Summer White House.<sup>16</sup> Rest is exactly what he did. No morning walk was taken as the President stayed in bed, hoarse from speechmaking. At mid-morning he drove to the cottage and farm in Grandview before leaving Kansas City at

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\*Before the law was changed, residents of Eastern Jackson County (outside of Kansas City) were required to register before each election to qualify to vote.

8:30 p.m., to continue the Western campaign tour.<sup>17</sup>

Preparations in Jackson County were underway as the November 2 election approached. On October 25, it was announced that on election eve, President Truman would address the Ararat Shrine Temple at Municipal Auditorium and then go to 219 North Delaware to make his final speech of the 1948 campaign. Beginning at 9:30 p.m. on national radio, he would join vice-presidential running mate Alben W. Barkley in an appeal to the American people to get out the vote.<sup>18</sup> It was also planned that the First Family, like four years before, would listen to election returns from the 11th floor Muehlebach suite. Telephones, teletypes, and Morse wires were installed at both the Muehlebach and the Memorial Building in Independence.<sup>19</sup>

#### A POLITICAL MIRACLE, FALL 1948

The Whistlestop Campaign ended at 7:25 p.m., October 31, 1948, as the Truman Special pulled into the Missouri Pacific Railroad depot in Independence. Four hundred people were on hand to greet the weary President who made his last speech from the train's platform: "It's grand to be home." Covering his heart with his hand, Harry said, "It makes you feel good right here...."

I can't tell you how much I appreciate your coming down to see the country boy come back to his home town. I've been through a terrific campaign, trying to convince the people

that I'm doing what's right. When I see this big crowd here to greet me, I'm sure of it.<sup>20</sup>

On November 1, President Truman took a leisurely morning walk (no military pace of 120 steps per minute) going 15 blocks in 25 minutes. From Van Horn, he proceeded east to Pleasant, south to Lexington, west to River, north to Maple, and east to Union where he stopped at Ray Wills's gas station to visit.<sup>21</sup>

That night, election eve, national politics centered on 219 North Delaware as Harry Truman made the most important speech of his career. Because of the slight margin of victory, if enough people listened to the broadcast that evening and were inspired to vote, the election and subsequent course of American history was altered. The President spoke from the living room as 30 relatives and 20 newspapermen huddled together at the two entrances to the room. The four major radio networks began the broadcast with Alben Barkley's six-minute introductory remarks direct from his home in Paducah, Kentucky. At approximately 9:37 p.m., Harry Truman began by praising Alben Barkley as a man who "will go down in history as one of our greatest public servants." The text of the historic speech follows:

During the past two months I have been going up and down the country, telling the people what the Democratic party stands for in government. I have talked in great cities, in state capitals, in county seats, in crossroads villages and country towns.

Everywhere the people showed great interest. They came out by the millions. They wanted to know what the issues were in this campaign, and I told them what was in my mind and in my heart.

I explained the meaning of the Democratic party platform. I told them that I intend to carry it out if they will give me a Democratic Congress to help.

From the bottom of my heart I thank the people of the United States for their cordiality to me and for their interest in the affairs of this nation and of the world. I trust the people, because when they know the facts, they do the right thing. I have tried to tell them the facts and explain the issues.

Now it is up to you, the people of this great nation, to decide what kind of government you want--whether you want government for all the people or government for the privileged few.

Tonight I am at my home here in Independence, Missouri, with Mrs. Truman and Margaret. We are here to vote tomorrow as citizens of this republic. I hope that all of you who are entitled to vote will exercise that great privilege. When you vote, you are in control of your government.

Tomorrow you will be deciding between the principles of the Democratic party--the party of the people--and the principles of the Republican party--the party of privilege.

Your vote tomorrow is not just a vote for one man or another; it is a vote which will affect you and your families for years to come.

Now, maybe you would like to know why I have made this fight for the people. I will try to tell you. It is a matter of the things I believe in.

I believe in a free America--strong and indivisible.

I believe in the principles of the Declaration of Independence--that we the people shall govern ourselves through our elected representatives--that every man and woman has a right to an equal voice in the management of our nation's affairs.

I believe that the Constitution, which rightly protects property, is still more deeply pledged to protect human rights.

I believe that the Democratic party is the party of the people. I believe that through the Democratic party, all classes of our citizens will receive fairer treatment and more security.

I believe, in particular, that the industrial workers, the farmers, and the small businessmen of this country can best protect themselves against reaction and against inflation through the Democratic party.

I believe that a Democratic administration, pledged to continue the present policies of our country is our best insurance against going back to the dark days of 1932.

I believe with all my heart and soul that Almighty God has intended the United States of America to lead the world to peace. We were in that position thirty years ago. We failed

to meet our obligation then, and World War II was the result.

This time we must live up to our opportunity to establish a permanent peace for the greatest age in human history.

We have two great goals—one to build a secure life for ourselves here at home, the other to build a lasting peace for the world.

As you mark your ballots tomorrow, I want every housewife to ask herself: "Will this protect my home and my children for the future?"

I want every husband to ask himself: "Is this best for my wife and family?"

I want all voters to ask themselves: "Is this the best way to insure a free and prosperous country?"

And now, my fellow citizens, the future welfare of our country is in your hands. I have told you the truth as God has given me the wisdom to see the truth.

Go to the polls tomorrow and vote your convictions--your hopes--and your faith--your faith in the future of a nation that under God can lead the world to freedom and peace.<sup>22</sup>

[See Figure 41].

The speech was not a typical election eve "get-out-the-vote" plea. Harry Truman, in his sincere, straightforward manner, attacked the Republican Party as a party for the privileged elite. He presented himself as a candidate for all the people and his party as the brightest hope for the future of America. The Summer White House address was the epitome of Harry Truman's fighting, "Give 'Em Hell" campaign style.

As the speech concluded, the crowd of 75 people standing outside in the rain began chanting, "We want the President." Harry Truman soon emerged on the lighted porch to smile and wave to the crowd.<sup>23</sup>

Because of the rain, Harry, Bess, and Margaret Truman arrived at



FIGURE 41

FIGURE 41: President Truman addresses the nation via radio in an important election eve speech. Speaking from the living room of the Wallace/Truman home, he asked voters to choose "the party of the people."  
Date: November 1, 1948, 9:37 p.m.  
European Photo World, New York  
Truman Library Photo No. 78-603

the Memorial Building at 10 a.m., November 2, by car. They then drove to Grandview and later to the Muehlebach before going to the Rockwood Country Club in Independence to a luncheon given by Mayor Sermon.<sup>24</sup> On election night, 200 people stood outside throughout the night singing and cheering and hoping to catch a glimpse of the President. The four major radio networks established temporary studios in the neighborhood: NBC at 220 North Delaware (home of Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Major); ABC at 224 North Delaware (home of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Luff); CBS at 211 North Delaware (unoccupied house owned by Dr. C. H. Allen); and Mutual Broadcast System at 216 North Delaware (home of Mrs. J. T. Noland and daughters). At 11:00 p.m., the crowd grew impatient watching the lighted house and its quiet inactivity. The chant, "We Want Harry," became a roar and the crowd surged onto the lawn, much to the dismay of the single Secret Service agent on duty. At 11:13, a light on the front porch came on and Margaret appeared, thanking the crowd for its support and announcing that her father was not home.<sup>25</sup> Margaret Truman recalled the special night:

I stayed up all night and fenced with the press who were out on the front lawn. They said, "Margaret, we'll offer you anything if you'll just tell us where your father is." I said, "Nope. I can't do it."<sup>26</sup>

Even after Margaret declared that her father was not at home, many skeptically believed that the President was indeed inside the Truman home. [See Figure 42]

Sue Gentry, Independence Examiner reporter, was in the crowd





FIGURE 42

FIGURE 42: Margaret Truman steps onto the front porch on election night to tell the crowd that her father is not at home. She refuses to tell reporters where he has gone.

Date: November 2, 1948

Acme Newspictures, United Press International  
Truman Library Photo No. 77-3560

outside the Summer White House. She asked Independence police officer Mike Westwood what became of the President. The officer admitted that the President had followed a plan Westwood had devised. At 3 p.m., Westwood drove the presidential limousine away from the Summer White House trailed by the Secret Service. Believing that the President was inside, reporters followed in hot pursuit. A few minutes later, Harry walked out the south side kitchen door, to the alley, and across his neighbors' lawns to a car waiting on Maple Avenue. Westwood confided to Sue Gentry that Harry had gone to Excelsior Springs, 25 miles to the north in Clay County, where he was going to spend the night in peace, resting at the Elms Hotel.<sup>27</sup>

In the early morning of November 3, 1948, as the ballots were counted and reported from around the nation, the political miracle of the century was revealed as Harry S Truman pulled ahead of Thomas Dewey by more than 2,000,000 votes. The President arrived at the Muehlebach at 6:45 a.m., when he called 219 North Delaware. Bess and Margaret Truman had stayed up all night with the lights burning and the shades pulled listening to returns. Both women were in tears as they spoke on the telephone. At 10:15, Thomas Dewey conceded the election. In Independence, the whistle atop the Independence Light Company, which normally sounded at dawn, noon, and sunset, blared for 30 minutes to signal the victory.<sup>28</sup>

After acknowledging his re-election at the Muehlebach, President

Truman returned to the Excelsior Springs hotel to bathe in mineral water, eat, and rest. Meanwhile, a spontaneous celebration erupted in his home town. Beginning on the Square, a lengthy procession of bands and various civic groups marched to the Truman home where one-by-one they stopped and cheered. They shouted "We want Margaret!" and sang "For He's A Jolly Good Fellow," "America the Beautiful," and "God Bless America." [See Figure 43]. Neither Bess nor Margaret Truman went outside, but they observed the celebration from behind the curtains.

President Truman arrived home at 6:50 p.m. as a continuous stream of cars drove slowly by. The family proceeded to the Square to the south steps of the Jackson County Courthouse where Harry Truman delivered a three-minute speech to thousands of well-wishers. He finished stating, "I am a citizen and a taxpayer of Independence like the rest of you. I want to be treated like the rest of you. I thank you for your display of confidence." At 8:35, with 600 cheering people gathered in front of his home, the President appeared on the porch to wave. By 9:00, the crowd had grown to more than 1,000, but, given no further encouragement, it soon dissipated.<sup>29</sup>

The Trumans left for Washington early the next morning, and 219 North Delaware remained closed until the evening of December 16 when the female members of the First Family arrived for the holidays.<sup>30</sup> Harry Truman did not return home until December 22. Equipped with a



FIGURE 43

FIGURE: A marching band performs before 219 North Delaware as part of the home town celebration of President Truman's 1948 election victory.  
Date: November 3, 1948  
New York Herald Tribune  
Truman Library Photo No. 68-1613

briefcase full of "homework," he permitted himself the luxury of an entire week at home.<sup>31</sup>

The requisite presidential Christmas greeting to the nation occurred December 24, 1948, at 4:16 p.m. from the living room of the Wallace/Truman house. In a 7-minute speech following the lighting of the National Christmas Tree, the President called on all people to work for peace and then addressed the importance of the home:

The Christmas tree which we have just lighted in the south grounds of the White House back in Washington symbolizes the family life of the nation. There are no ties like family ties. That is why I have made the journey back to Independence to celebrate this Christmas day among the familiar scenes and associations of my old home.<sup>32</sup>

Commenting on the important ties of the family and nation to hearth and home, the President continued:

I have been thinking of all these things here in my home on North Delaware street in Independence. I am speaking to you from our family living room. As I came up the street in the gathering dusk, I saw a hundred commonplace things that are hallowed to me on this Christmas eve--hallowed because of their associations with the sanctuary of home.

I saw the lighted windows in the homes of my neighbors, the gaily decked Christmas trees, the friendly lawns and gardens. The branches of the trees were bare and stark, but somehow they looked familiar and friendly. I looked at all these familiar things--the same things that you will all see tonight as you go toward home.

These are the thoughts--simple, commonplace, everyday thoughts--that we all share tonight.

They are the thoughts that bind us together, one to another. They make up the great American epic--the epic of home.<sup>33</sup>

Another incident during the President's 1948 Christmas holiday came on December 29. A new Truman club was born at a Muehlebach luncheon. A pedometer and hunting cap inscribed with "The Truman Early Risers Walking Society of Independence, Mo.," was presented by the group of newsmen who accompanied the President on his morning walks.<sup>34</sup>

#### THE SUMMER WHITE HOUSE AND WHISTLESTOP POLITICS

<sup>1</sup>"Mrs. Truman Is Here," Kansas City Star (May 30, 1948), file-HST Mrs., 1948, KCSL.

<sup>2</sup>Lilian Rixey, "Bess Truman and Her Town," Life (July 11, 1949), pp. 92-3, KCSL.

<sup>3</sup>"Truman Expected Here On June 16," Examiner (June 9, 1948), p. 1, MCPL; and, "Set To Join President," Kansas City Times (June 4, 1948), file-HST Mrs., 1948, KCSL.

<sup>4</sup>Ferrell, Truman: A Centenary Remembrance, pp. 195-6.

<sup>5</sup>"Home To Cheers," Kansas City Times (June 17, 1948), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1948 No. 1, KCSL.

<sup>6</sup>"To A Familiar Crowd," Kansas City Times (June 28, 1948), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1945 No. 3, KCSL.

<sup>7</sup>"Leave For The Capital," Kansas City Star (July 12, 1948), file-HST Mrs., 1948, KCSL.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., Betty Heineman, "Climax to Convention Thrills Mrs. Truman and Margaret," (July 15, 1948).

<sup>9</sup>Ferrell, Off the Record (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), p. 145.

<sup>10</sup>Margaret Truman, Souvenir, pp. 209-10.

<sup>11</sup>Margaret Truman, Letters From Father: The Truman Family's Personal Correspondence (New York: Arbor House, 1981), letter, July 25, 1948, p. 150.

<sup>12</sup>"Truman to Vote Early," Kansas City Times (August 3, 1948),

file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1948 No. 1, KCSL.

<sup>13</sup>"Mrs. Truman to Denver," Kansas City Star (August 19); "Mrs. Truman Sees New Niece," Kansas City Times (August 20, 1948); and "Mrs. Truman Back Home," Kansas City Star (September 6, 1948); file-HST Mrs., 1948, KCSL.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., letter, August 22, 1948, p. 151.

<sup>15</sup>Terrence Thompson, "Riding the Rails to Victory," Kansas City Star (May 6, 1984), p. 4C.

<sup>16</sup>George K. Wallace, "Home To Cheers," Kansas City Times (September 19, 1948), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1948 No. 1, KCSL.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., "Truman On Way," (September 20, 1948).

<sup>18</sup>"Truman In Hall," Kansas City Times (October 26, 1948), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1948 No. 2, KCSL.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., "Hotel To Be News Hub," (October 28, 1948).

#### A POLITICAL MIRACLE, FALL 1948

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., "Truman Is Home," Kansas City Times (November 1, 1948).

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., "Shrine Parade Is Off," Kansas City Star (November 1, 1948).

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., "Plea By Truman," Kansas City Times (November 2, 1948).

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., "Warm To First Family," Kansas City Star (November 2, 1948).

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., "Sing At Truman Home," Kansas City Times (November 3, 1948).

<sup>26</sup>Walter Cronkite, CBS News: "The Legacy of Harry S. Truman" (New York: CBS-TV production, July 1984).

<sup>27</sup>Sue Gentry, Interview, Independence, June 22, 1983.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., "A Happy Truman," Kansas City Star (November 3, 1948).

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., "Hail A Neighbor," Kansas City Times (November 4, 1948).

<sup>30</sup>"Mrs. Truman Is Home," Kansas City Times (December 17, 1948), file-HST Mrs., 1948, KCSL.

<sup>31</sup>"Truman Is Home," Kansas City Star (December 22, 1948), file-HST Christmas 1948, KCSL.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., "Text of the Christmas Message by Mr. Truman," Kansas City Star (December 25, 1948).

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., "Hunting Cap for Truman," Kansas City Star (December 29, 1948).



## CHAPTER NINE

### THE "SECOND" TRUMAN TERM, 1949-1953

- \* The 5 Percenters and "The Freezer Scandal"
- \* Fencing the American Public Out
- \* Enclosing the Back Porch
- \* The Korean Crisis, June 24-25, 1950
- \* Business As Usual, 1951
- \* The Last Year As The First Family, 1952

## THE 5 PERCENTERS AND "THE FREEZER SCANDAL"

On January 20, 1949, the day Harry Truman was inaugurated, the street beside his home in Independence was named in his honor. Fifteenth Street in Kansas City and Van Horn in Independence were renamed "Truman Road." Area planners envisioned Truman Road would one day become the "Avenue of Presidents," extended and widened to become "a major sectional and even national highway." They foresaw statues of all the Presidents of the United States placed along the roadway,

including one of President Truman on the lawn of the Summer White House facing Truman Road in Independence, Missouri. In the years to follow succeeding Presidents' statues will grace the road at one-hundred mile intervals.<sup>1</sup>

Although publicly grateful, the family's private response to the redesignation was one of regret.<sup>2</sup>

With four more years in the role of First Lady, Bess Truman relented to demands from the press and made an exception to the ban on photographing the interior of the Summer White House. Complementing an article by Jonathan Daniels in the April 1949 edition of McCalls magazine was a photograph of Mrs. Truman seated in the living room. The angle revealed the Gates grandfather clock, a corner of the living room previously photographed. [See Figure 44].

The summer of 1949 was quiet in Independence with only the First Lady's June 7 arrival causing a mild stir. She found the painting of



FIGURE 44: Bess Truman in the Summer White House.  
Date: Circa late 1948, early 1949.  
Photographers: Gray-O'Reilly  
Truman Library Photo No. 58-392

the Summer White House incomplete; the porch latticework and barn still had to be done. Painter John L. Moler, 67, had been delayed because of bad weather.<sup>3</sup> The Examiner reported that the home, which had been painted only four years before, was painted "in order to give it a fresh look for the summer tourists."<sup>4</sup> Beset with labor disputes throughout his administration, President Truman was attacked by painters unions when it was discovered that housepainter John Moler did not belong to a union. Hired by Bess Truman at no cost to the government, Moler was employed because of his painting skills, regardless of his union or nonunion affiliation. According to one press account:

"I don't know why the union is upset," Moler said. "I've been painting in Independence for 20 years and I've painted for the Trumans before." The summer before last, the painter said, he had painted the woodwork and had told Mrs. Truman he was not a union man. "Makes no difference," he said she told him, "you're a good painter."<sup>5</sup>

Bess Truman returned to the capital by August 4 noticeably thinner. Commenting on the weight loss, the White House announced that the First Lady had lost 20 pounds by eliminating salt from her diet.<sup>6</sup>

A July 22, 1950, request to erect a marker in the back yard of the Summer White House was politely denied. A trade school operated by the Booker T. Washington Birthplace in Virginia stationed five men studying bricklaying at the birthplace of Dr. George Wash-

ington Carver in Diamond, Missouri. On a visit to Independence, the young bricklayers wanted to set up a small 30-by 14-by 30-inch marker on the property. President Truman, who read the request, wrote a note to Charlie Ross to "say no as politely as you can." Turning down the bricklayers' request, Ross reasoned,

As you know the President has tried to keep his home out of the limelight as much as possible, and Mrs. Truman too is adverse to publicity. Moreover, Mrs. Truman's mother is now very ill at the Independence home, and Mrs. Truman is in constant attendance upon her. It is felt that nothing should be done to attract outsiders to the house at this time.<sup>7</sup>

Two cars collided at the intersection of Truman Road and North Delaware on the morning of July 30, while Bess Truman and her mother were home. One car was propelled over the curb and smashed into a tree in the yard of the Truman home.<sup>8</sup> A similar non-injury accident at the popular junction four days later prompted the city council to recognize the area as a "dangerous intersection."<sup>9</sup>

On August 12, the Senate's "5 Percenters"\* hearings revealed that the quest for corrupt elements within the administration led even to the Summer White House. Invoices proved that several top officials received gifts of deep freezers from a known Milwaukee

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\*Harry Truman's political enemies claimed that his administration bowed to grafters who took their cut--five percent--from the contracts they helped obtain. A favorite target was Harry Vaughan who frequently used his influence to help friends, especially those from Missouri.

grafter. The invoices revealed that a home freezer was sent to Mrs. Harry S Truman in Independence, Missouri, while others went to Chief Justice Fred Vinson, Treasury Secretary John Snyder, Federal Reserve Governor James K. Vardaman, Military Aide Maj. Gen. Harry Vaughan, Secretary to the President Matt Connelly, and one for the executive retreat at Shangri-La. The freezers, shipped during the Potsdam Conference in the summer of 1945, were paid for by the Albert Verley Company, a Chicago perfume manufacturer. John Maragon, the man "whose name has been threaded through the [5 Percenters] inquiry into alleged influence in the government," was an employee of the company.

Uncertain who was kind enough to send her a freezer, the First Lady sent a thank you note to Albert J. Gross of Milwaukee, the man who shipped the freezer to Independence. It was Albert Gross who presented the delivery invoices to the Senate committee and named Harry Vaughan, the President's Military Aide, in the scandal. Until more evidence was submitted, Gross's testimony was halted by the chairman, Senator Clyde R. Hoey of North Carolina, who declared, "We don't want to smear anyone."<sup>10</sup>

Under investigation for "attempted smuggling activities" in connection with a French perfume essence, John Maragon paid for the home freezers plus shipping costs to Independence and the other locations. During an August 15 hearing, Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin said there was nothing "even remotely improper" on Bess Truman's part

in the scandal.<sup>11</sup> On August 19, Senator Hoey announced:

In my opinion the home freezer matter has been magnified out of all proportion to its importance. It is not an uncommon thing for gifts to be made to public officials as well as officials of private corporations and others in the public mind, without the desire or expectation of receiving any favors or rewards in return.<sup>12</sup>

Harry Vaughan later explained that a friend was in his office one day while he was attempting to locate a freezer for the First Lady. Bess was interested in renting a freezer in which to store the "vast quantity of food gift items she received" from her neighbors. Word of the First Lady's predicament spread and individuals eager to please the administration purchased and shipped the home freezers. The explosion in the press over Vaughan's involvement with "5 per-centers" and their "influence peddling" caused Vaughan to offer his resignation. The President responded:

You and I came in the White House on the same day. We're going out on the same day. If it weren't you, it would be someone else. They're really aiming at me. Don't let me hear anything more about resigning.<sup>13</sup>

Ironically, what was not revealed at the time was that Bess Truman ordered the Summer White House freezer scrapped during the summer of 1945. According to one source:

...one morning after Mrs. Truman quite innocently had received her freezer as arranged by Vaughan, she awoke to an overpowering stench of rotting food. She ordered a Secret Service agent, Henry J. Nicholson, to call a refuse truck, and the \$390 gift was carted off, presumably to be flung upon the town dump.<sup>14</sup>

Harry Truman returned to Independence on September 5 to spend the Labor Day weekend with his family. With 1,000 people waiting at 219 North Delaware, it took 10 minutes of greetings and hand clasping before he could close the front door behind him.<sup>15</sup> Before he left the next morning, the President walked over to 216 North Delaware for a visit during which time it began raining. Without a raincoat, Secret Service agents were sent to the Summer White House to retrieve one for the President. Bess Truman did not return to the capital with her husband as planned. She stayed to care for Madge Wallace who was injured in a fall at the home the previous day.<sup>16</sup> She departed on September 9, however, leaving Vietta Garr behind with her mother. She caught the last train available before the scheduled nationwide railroad strike began.<sup>17</sup>

President Truman flew back to Kansas City on September 29, 1949, to attend a testimonial celebration for former Chief of Police William M. Boyle, Jr., the newly-designated Chairman of the Democratic National Committee. The President's speech initiated the party's 1950 election campaign. He stayed at the Muehlebach Hotel, not his own home.<sup>18</sup>

Harry and Margaret Truman flew home on December 23 and were met at the airport by the First Lady. The family arrived at their home at 12:35 p.m. The women went inside immediately while Harry Truman



remained on the sidewalk to greet 50 to 75 people. He called his family back to the front porch to pose for photographs.<sup>19</sup> [See Figure 45]. His afternoon was spent visiting Ted Marks [Best Man at the Truman wedding] in the hospital and delivering Christmas gifts to relatives in Grandview. After an evening at home, lights went off at the Wallace/Truman home at 10:00, only to go on again at 11:15. Two Gas Service Company trucks arrived to repair a furnace control valve. With no gas leakage with which to contend, repairs were completed by 11:40.<sup>20</sup>

The annual Christmas greeting and lighting of the National Christmas Tree was broadcast from 219 North Delaware in the afternoon of December 24.<sup>21</sup> Christmas Day was "quiet and restful" as the family exchanged gifts at the foot of the large Christmas tree in the living room. Customary gifts such as ties, scarfs, and gloves were opened before Harry Truman left on his 30-minute pre-breakfast walk. He was the only family member not to go to Trinity Episcopal Church, fearing his presence might attract a large crowd and thereby cause a distraction. At noon, the Wallaces and Trumans (including Mary Jane Truman) gathered for a turkey dinner, after which the President napped and then went to visit the Nolands across the street.<sup>22</sup>

On December 26, 1949, President Truman attended a masonic installation ceremony at the Grandview Lodge. The following night the family attended a dinner and reception in their honor at the home of



FIGURE 45: The Trumans arrive home for Christmas and pose for photographs on the front porch.

Date: December 23, 1949

Vernon Galloway, photographer

Truman Library Photo No. 60-410-2

Blevins Davis, a former local schoolteacher turned New York producer and playwright. Held for the second year in a row, the invited dinner guests ate at Davis's Glendale Farm (two miles southeast of the Square on Lee's Summit Road) before 100 of the Trumans' friends arrived for the reception. The First Family enjoyed the remainder of their holiday at home before leaving for Washington on December 29, 1949.<sup>23</sup>

#### FENCING THE AMERICAN PUBLIC OUT

When Harry Truman first became President, he informed the Secret Service, "I'll do anything that you think necessary--only don't try to fence me in."<sup>24</sup> By the fall of 1945, however, the Secret Service was investigating how to do just that, by fencing in the Summer White House.<sup>25</sup> While the security booth was installed adjacent to the barn in 1945, the fence was vetoed. Bess Truman finally approved the idea of a fence the next year. On June 19, 1946, her husband wrote, "I am glad you agreed to the fence. The souvenir hunters would probably carry everything off without it."<sup>26</sup>

Unknown circumstances intervened, changing the Trumans approval and delaying the construction of the fence more than three years. In the meantime, record numbers of tourists paraded past the home, an ever-increasing onslaught which proved too much for the small, perm-

anent Secret Service detail. Young Margaret Truman especially represented the more aggressive curiosity-seekers:

The people who regarded our house as public property were the ones who annoyed me most. Often they would drive down the long alley on the right of our house, into the backyard where our garages are. When I was there, I would march right out and say to them, "Get off here. You're on private property and you're trespassing."<sup>27</sup>

It was not until 1949 when former President Herbert C. Hoover pressed Harry Truman on the matter of a fence to protect his Independence home that Harry revived the plan. Hoover told Truman about how his own Palo Alto, California, home had been damaged by souvenir hunters before he was forced to put up a fence to keep them at bay.<sup>28</sup>

According to Harry Truman:

I was told by the former President, Mr. Hoover, that souvenir hunters had even taken the doorknobs off his house, had taken some of the weatherboarding off his house. And when I became President, the Secret Service had found out all about his situation, and they decided that the property where Mrs. Truman and I lived ought to be protected. So they put an iron fence around it so people couldn't come in and pick up flowers and souvenirs around the place.

On one occasion, when the back gate was left open, some old lady drove in and began pulling up the tulips that Mrs. Truman had set out, beautiful white tulips. And she was stopped by the guard who happened to be on duty and told that it was private property and she shouldn't do that.

"Oh," she said, "Mrs. Truman won't care if I take a few of her tulips," and kept on pulling them up. So that's the reason we have to be surrounded by an iron fence, and I don't like it. Never did like it and never will like it, but it has to be done because of the souvenir hunters. They're not real Americans. They're just people who want to accumulate a lot of stuff and then throw it away. You find most of it in the attic when they die.<sup>29</sup>

The Trumans first saw the black picket fence at Christmas 1949. Built in late November, the fence never completely encompassed the property. The east end was left open to give easy access to the two Wallace brothers' properties, thus forming a compound for the extended Wallace-Truman family.<sup>30</sup>

The task of guarding the Summer White House began as a pleasant experience for the Secret Service. One agent observed in the spring of 1945:

A lot of people just come by to look, and want to know if it is the home of the President. Everyone in Independence seems to know the Truman family, so there isn't anywhere out here they can go incognito. And everyone seems to appreciate the family's desire for quiet. We have no trouble whatsoever.<sup>31</sup>

The return to a peacetime economy meant more Americans on the nation's highways. By 1948, the Secret Service job of protecting the Truman home became increasingly difficult. On June 15, 1948, the Examiner commented:

The annual parade of picture-taking tourists has begun to arrive in Independence and Delaware Street is often lined with cars with out-of-state licenses in front of the Truman home. Before the summer is over nearly everyone in town will have been asked by a stranger, "Can you direct me to the Truman house?"<sup>32</sup>

In October 1948, President Truman acknowledged to reporters the security problems at home. Stating that he had lived in Independence off and on since he was six years old and "nobody paid much attention

to me, now when I go back it takes the Independence police force and half the Secret Service to get me in the front door."<sup>33</sup>

The night of the 1948 election proved to the Secret Service why the Truman property should be sectioned-off from the public by a security fence. An impatient crowd filled North Delaware Street and the sidewalks in front of the home. Neighbors, curiosity-seekers, and the national press corps were hoping to see the President. The agents repeatedly asked them not to come onto the front lawn, but their pleas were ignored. Finally, Margaret Truman came out on the front porch to announce that her father was not home. The Examiner reported:

The Secret Service was getting worried because the crowd was gradually closing in on the house. They asked everyone to step back, and when the President's daughter went into the house, the crowd dispersed from the lawn.<sup>34</sup>

Nineteen forty-nine brought another seasonal tourist onslaught. In July, the Examiner reported that in a 20-minute period, cars from 14 different states passed by the Summer White House. Even worse, the tourists were becoming emboldened. While the agents were patrolling the grounds, a carload of six girls rushed up the front walkway and almost to the front door before an agent could stop them.<sup>35</sup> On August 22, 1949, the newspaper stated, "an ever greater number of tourists than usual swarmed by the home...."<sup>36</sup> According to a neighbor, the tourists "got to pulling weather boarding off and everything. Why, they'd pull the leaves off the trees and just [do] any-

thing for a souvenir from the Truman home. They were tearing it up."<sup>37</sup>

The President often repeated a favorite tale concerning the fence around his home:

That fence always reminds me of what some smart alecs of those days after World War I used to say: "The French fought for liberty, the British fought to control the seas, but the Americans fought for souvenirs."<sup>38</sup>

#### ENCLOSING THE BACK PORCH

In April 1950, the rear porch was refloored, extended six feet on brick tiers to the east, and completely screened-in. Bill E. Gragg, an Independence carpenter, transformed the rear porch.<sup>39</sup> Always a popular spot, the construction turned the area into one of the family's favorite places in their home to relax, read, or eat.<sup>40</sup> Bess Truman especially enjoyed having a cool place to entertain her Tuesday Bridge Club during warm weather.<sup>41</sup>

#### THE KOREAN CRISIS, JUNE 24-25, 1950

When Margaret Truman sang in a concert at the Music Hall in Kansas City on March 21, 1950, her mother arrived home by train the previous day. The singer stayed at the Muehlebach, while her mother stayed with Frank and Natalie Wallace. The Wallace/Truman house was

not opened.<sup>42</sup>

Bess Truman arrived home by train for the summer on May 29, 1950, three days after her mother who flew to Missouri.<sup>43</sup> Harry Truman came home to rest and observe his 31st wedding anniversary on June 24 and 25. The White House announced the President wanted to spend his time visiting with his family in Independence and Grandview and take care of some undisclosed personal family business before departing on Monday, June 26. No public appearances or speeches were scheduled. An informal family reunion was planned, however, as the Fred Wallace family, now living in Albuquerque, New Mexico, arrived for the weekend.<sup>44</sup> After dedicating Baltimore's Friendship International Airport on June 24, Harry Truman wrote to an aide: "I'm going to see Bess, Margie and my brother and sister, oversee some fence building--not political--order a new roof on the farmhouse and tell some politicians to go to hell!"<sup>45</sup>

Harry flew into Kansas City on June 24, arriving at 219 North Delaware in mid-afternoon. The President's car entered the grounds through the gate off Truman Road and came to a halt on the driveway before the barn. So as not to disappoint the crowd which had assembled on North Delaware, he walked around the south side of the house into the front yard to greet the crowd of friends and neighbors.<sup>46</sup> One hundred people stood in the blazing heat to greet the President who told reporters he was home to conduct "personal busi-



ness" and would therefore be too busy to take his pre-breakfast walk.<sup>47</sup> Harry could not have known that he would have little time to enjoy his new back porch or conduct much personal business.

On the evening of June 24, 219 North Delaware became the focus of international attention. It began when Margaret Truman answered the central hallway telephone by the main stairs. President Truman later remembered:

It was a little after ten in the evening, and we were sitting in the library of our home on North Delaware Street when the telephone rang. It was the Secretary of State calling from his home in Maryland.

"Mr. President," said Dean Acheson, "I have very serious news. The North Koreans have invaded South Korea."

My first reaction was that I must get back to the capital, and I told Acheson so. He explained, however, that details were not yet available and that he thought I need not rush back until he called me again with further information. In the meantime, he suggested to me that we should ask the United Nations Security Council to hold a meeting at once and declare that an act of aggression had been committed against the Republic of Korea. I told him that I agreed and asked him to request immediately a special meeting of the Security Council, and he said he would call me to report again the following morning, or sooner if there was more information on the events in Korea.<sup>48</sup>

The invasion of South Korea flew in the face of the administration's security guarantees and the Truman Doctrine of containing the spread of communism. As East-West tension heightened, rumors of war focused world attention on Harry Truman at the Summer White House. The President tried to maintain his normal schedule, awaiting further details from the Secretary of State. As the UN Security Council met in emergency session on Sunday morning, June 25, Harry Truman calmly

left his home to visit Mary Jane and J. Vivian Truman in Grandview. At 11 a.m., he returned to Independence, and prepared to eat lunch. At the same time the White House announced that while President Truman was "deeply concerned about the invasion, but not alarmed," he was staying in Independence awaiting briefings from the State Department.<sup>49</sup> Harry Truman later recalled:

Acheson's next call came through around eleven-thirty Sunday morning, just as we were getting ready to sit down to an early Sunday dinner. Acheson reported that the U.N. Security Council had been called into emergency session. Additional reports had been received from Korea and there was no doubt that an all-out invasion was under way there. The Security Council, Acheson said, would probably call for a ceasefire, but in view of the complete disregard the North Koreans and their big allies had shown for the U.N. in the past, we had to expect that the U.N. order would be ignored. Some decision would have to be made at once as to the degree of aid or encouragement which our government was willing to extend to the Republic of Korea.

I asked Acheson to get together with the Service Secretaries and the Chiefs of Staff and start working on recommendations for me when I got back. Defense Secretary Louis Johnson and Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff General Omar Bradley were on their way back from an inspection tour of the Far East. I informed the Secretary of State that I was returning to Washington at once.<sup>50</sup>

Harry Truman apparently had already made the decision to commit U.S. forces to assist South Korea maintain its independence. After lunch, Margaret Truman helped him pack and prepare for the return flight. What she wrote in her diary for that day clearly reflects her father's determination to stand up to the communists:

...Northern or Communist Korea is marching in on Southern Korea and we are going to fight.<sup>51</sup>

As the Cold War crisis unfolded, traffic passing the Truman home became so heavy that Independence policemen were stationed at the corner of North Delaware and Truman Road to direct traffic. The volume of cars slowly passing by was estimated at 25 per minute.<sup>52</sup>

Harry Truman boarded "The Independence" alone at 2:10 p.m., June 25, 1950. In informal comments to reporters, the serious President stated, "I can't answer any questions. I can't make any comment on what is likely to happen.... I'm sure that the North Korean Communists had not declared war" in advance of their attack.<sup>53</sup> Before boarding his plane, he appealed to reporters stating, "Don't make this alarmist. It could be dangerous, but I hope it isn't."<sup>54</sup>

Bess Truman left Independence on July 28, leaving her mother behind while she visited her husband at Blair House and her daughter in New York.<sup>55</sup> She returned on September 6,<sup>56</sup> and departed east again on October 7 with Madge Wallace.<sup>57</sup> On October 19, the White House announced that the President, who previously applied for an absentee ballot, now planned on going home to vote in the November 7 Congressional elections and to attend the dedication of a replica Liberty Bell at the Independence Memorial Building. Positive developments in the Korean War permitted him the luxury of a fall homecoming.<sup>58</sup>

President Truman arrived in Kansas City on November 5, 1950, for

a two and a half-day visit. Security was the tightest ever for a presidential visit, coming as it did only four days after two Puerto Rican nationalists failed in an assassination attempt at Blair House. The President stayed at the Muehlebach as a large contingent of Secret Service and Kansas City policemen stood guard. That evening, he went to Independence to eat dinner at the home of Frank Wallace.<sup>59</sup> On November 6, he attended the dedication of the Liberty Bell replica given in friendship from the people of Annecy-le-Vieux, France. (The bell is now in front of the Truman Library). In brief remarks he acknowledged the "great, great day for Independence," and spoke about the surrounding neighborhood, the site of the old high school and the First Presbyterian Church, where "I went to Sunday school.... That was a long time ago. In that class I met a little golden-haired, blue-eyed girl, and I fell in love with her. Her hair is no longer golden, but gray now, but she is still my sweetheart." In concluding remarks, he stated that the Korean conflict proved that free nations would "not permit Communism to swallow up free peoples one by one."<sup>60</sup>

The women of the First Family arrived home by train for Christmas on December 17, 1950.<sup>61</sup> Lights were turned on and the thermostat set the previous evening by May Wallace. The Christmas arrival also brought more Secret Service men to guard the property. A house full of people was expected with the December 19 arrival of the Fred Wallace family from Albuquerque, New Mexico.<sup>62</sup> The President flew home on December 22, ordering "The Independence" to be kept ready in

case of any emergency return flight. On his first visit home since the beginning of the Korean War, Harry planned to work on preparing his State of the Union and budget messages, attend a December 22 masonic dinner at the Muehlebach Hotel, and help dedicate the new building of the Grandview Baptist Church on December 24.<sup>63</sup>

At 4:15 p.m. on Christmas Eve, Harry Truman again lit the National Christmas Tree, pressing the same gold-plated telegraph key he had used every year since 1945. He did so from a desk in the parlor/music room while his family looked on from the living room. The room was decorated with two small Christmas trees, one on the desk and one on the mantel between two candles and potted flowers and plants.<sup>64</sup>

On Christmas Day, 1950, the President paused in the midst of opening Christmas packages to "direct his personal thanks to troops who successfully evacuated Hungnam beachhead." He directed his staff to tell Gen. Omar Bradley, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, to convey to Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Vice-Admiral C. Turner Joy, Maj. Gen. Edward M. Almond, and "all your brave men" his thanks. He stated that the "saving of our men on this isolated beachhead is the best Christmas present I have had." On his pre-breakfast walk, he told reporters that he intended to spend the day reading. [See Figure 46]. Declaring that Santa Claus "always treats me too good," he said that his presents under the tree included clothes, The Age of Faith by Will Durant, and Flowers For The Judge by Joseph C. Baldwin.<sup>65</sup>



FIGURE 46

FIGURE 46: President Truman, on a morning walk going south on North Delaware toward his home, is accompanied by reporters and Secret Service men.  
Date: December 25, 1950  
Acme purchase--U.S. Information Agency  
Truman Library Photo Number 66-2246

The next day, in a repeat of his aborted June trip, President Truman left the Summer White House 20 hours ahead of schedule "to study national defense matters and confer with the secretaries of state and defense." The decision to cut his vacation short came after a telephone call from Dean Acheson who set up a conference that evening at Blair House with generals Marshall and Bradley. Although no new problems had developed, the President needed to discuss several military issues before Congress convened.<sup>66</sup> He recorded in his diary: "Dean Acheson called, and I had to go back to Washington. [I've] Never been home in the last five years that something didn't happen."<sup>67</sup>

#### BUSINESS AS USUAL, 1951

Bess Truman and Madge Wallace returned to the Summer White House via the presidential railcar on May 29, 1951.<sup>68</sup> A week later, following a telephone call to Independence, Harry wrote that he was concerned about both women's health:

Your voice sounded as if you were very tired last night. Please get some rest. That's what you are at home for. I am sorry Frank [Wallace] is under the weather. Hope he comes out of it.

If you want Dr. [Wallace] Graham, he can be there in three hours. You should take no chances with your mother. We have a doctor to keep us healthy and that is what he is assigned to do. So don't hesitate if he's needed.

Please take care of yourself. I don't think you fully understand that I can face the world and all its trouble if you and Margie are all right. I don't think I can do it if you are not.<sup>69</sup>

On July 17, 1951, Harry Truman came home for his shortest visit since becoming President. He flew to the Kansas City-Grandview Airport at 2:45 p.m., to investigate flooded areas in Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma. Greeted at the airport by Bess and Margaret Truman, the President embarked upon a 530-mile aerial survey of the devastated valleys of the Missouri, Kaw, and Neosho rivers. Upon his return to Jackson County, he voted in a special bond election and stopped for only a few hours at his home. Bess and Margaret Truman waved goodbye to him from the front porch as he returned to the airport bound for Washington at 8:00.<sup>70</sup>

The President returned to Independence on September 5 for a five-day vacation following the opening of the Japanese Peace Conference in San Francisco. Motoring to 219 North Delaware, he entered through the rear and soon emerged from the front door to greet a crowd of 100 people. He informed reporters that he intended to spend the rest of the day at home, leaving only to view a collection of masonic books on display at the Jackson County Public Library. The following day, he drove to the flooded Argentine and Armourdale districts in Kansas City, Kansas.<sup>71</sup>

On September 8, the President broke the uneventful quiet of his vacation with an announcement that he was pleased with the success of the San Francisco conference and the signing of the peace treaty with Japan. President Truman did not view the signing, aired on Kansas



City's only television station, WDAF, because there was no television set in the Summer White House. He returned to the capital on September 9.<sup>72</sup> Bess Truman and her mother followed him by train on September 20.<sup>73\*</sup>

On December 13, Bess Truman and Madge Wallace returned home for the Christmas holidays.<sup>74</sup> "The Independence" landed at 10:55 a.m. on December 24 with Harry and Margaret Truman on board. Arriving home and entering through the back door, the President spent the afternoon preparing for his Christmas address to the nation at 4:45 p.m. from the parlor/music room. It was the sixth and final such address and lighting of the National Christmas Tree from 219 North Delaware.<sup>75</sup>

At an informal press conference held in the library prior to the lighting ceremony, President Truman told reporters he would "use all the laws on the books" to keep the steel mills operating and avoid an imminent nationwide strike. He inferred that he would use the emergency provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act to enact an 80-day anti-strike moratorium and/or a Federal seizure of the steel industry. The strike threat by the United Steelworkers of America, C.I.O., loomed on New Years Day. At the President's direction, the dispute was referred to the Wage Stabilization Board. He said he hoped that management and workers would keep the mills operating in the national

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\*Margaret left the Summer White House in mid-summer bound for New York to rehearse for a fall television program.

interest.<sup>76</sup> After the ceremony, he went to Grandview to assist in the installation of masonic officers.

There was no morning walk on Christmas Day, only a 25-minute visit with the Nolands. Dinner was served at 1 p.m., and the remainder of the day was spent on the budget, described as the "most troublesome in his past 16 years" in Washington.<sup>77</sup>

On December 26, 1951, Press Secretary Joseph Short announced from the Muehlebach that the President had "reluctantly accepted" the retirement of Alan G. Kirk as United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union. Ambassador Kirk's replacement in Moscow was George Frost Kennan.<sup>78</sup> That evening, the Truman family attended the annual dinner and reception at the Blevins Davis home, Glendale Farm. The local newspaper reported that the event, held each Christmas since 1946, was intended to allow the President to "greet friends he otherwise might not see."<sup>79</sup> Repeating a similar visit in 1949, Harry, Bess, and Margaret Truman went to the home of Miss Grace and Miss Eleanor Minor at 314 North Spring on the evening of December 27. One hundred people attended the open house Christmas party to greet the President before he left Independence the next morning.<sup>80\*</sup> Margaret Truman

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\*Harry confided to a friend that he paid dearly for his homecoming. He estimated that his Christmas holiday would "cost him two extra hours of work each day for the next week" in order to catch up with his paperwork. Because he wanted his staff to enjoy Christmas, he spent more time with his family and friends and took a smaller than normal staff with him to Independence. (See James F. King,

followed him a week later. Bess Truman and her mother left after the first week in January. The Wallace/Truman home was "closed again until the summer vacation."<sup>81</sup>

#### THE LAST YEAR AS THE FIRST FAMILY, 1952

Harry Truman summoned George and Frank Wallace to Blair House on March 1, 1952, because of his deteriorating mother-in-law's health. Madge Wallace, 89, had caught pneumonia and was in serious condition.<sup>82</sup> Within a week, the danger had passed and by late May, Mrs. Wallace and her devoted daughter were back at the Summer White House. On July 16, the First Lady departed again for the east to help Margaret prepare for a trip to Europe.<sup>83</sup>

Harry and Bess Truman returned home on July 26. The President, fresh from the Democratic National Convention, came home for a 10-day vacation and to vote in the August 5 primary.<sup>84</sup> Secure in his decision not to seek re-election to the presidency, Harry Truman had introduced to the Chicago conventioners his choice for the 34th U.S. President, Adlai Stevenson. The homecoming was typical. Bess Truman emerged from the car and walked straight into the house while her gregarious husband paused to shake hands and pose for the cameras at the front gate.<sup>85</sup>

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"Must Pay For Holiday," Kansas City Times (December 29, 1951), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1951, KCSL.

On Sunday, July 27, President Truman drove to Grandview to visit relatives and returned home where George and Frank Wallace chatted with him on the back porch. After a fried chicken dinner, the family adjourned to George and May Wallace's house for the afternoon, ignoring the large crowd around the Summer White House and the police who were called in to disperse the traffic jam. The President did pause, however, to send condolences to President Juan Peron of Argentina upon the death of his wife, Mrs. Evita Peron.<sup>86</sup>

President Truman spent his days at the Muehlebach suite working on documents flown in from Washington. On July 30, he breakfasted on the back porch with Frank Wallace and was interrupted by a telephone call from Henry P. Chiles. Chiles, up for re-election as Jackson County Treasurer, got his friend's endorsement. Reporters who asked the President why he had not taken his morning walk, were told, "I'm not taking my walks any more."<sup>87</sup>

A historic document was signed August 2, 1952, in the Muehlebach suite. Truman became the first Western leader to agree to the establishment of a democratic West German republic, abolishing the three Allied commissioners and granting near autonomy to "West Germany." At the same time he signed a protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty allowing the new nation to join NATO.<sup>88</sup>

The following day, the Trumans phoned their daughter who was

attending a music festival in Salzburg, Austria, with Mrs. Drucie Snyder Horton, daughter of Secretary of the Treasury John Snyder. Harry Truman subsequently drove to Grandview. He visited Mary Jane Truman at the bungalow and then saw Vivian Truman at his farm where the two went on a walking survey of the area. The President told reporters that he was "feeling fine," and enjoying "the most restful week he has spent since entering the White House, except for vacations to Key West."<sup>89</sup>

On primary day, Harry and Bess Truman walked the two blocks--east on Maple to Pleasant--to the Memorial Building. [See Figure 47]. By 10 a.m., "The Independence" whisked the President to Washington, while Bess Truman remained behind to care for her ailing mother.<sup>90</sup> Harry Truman returned to Jackson County with his daughter on October 8, for an 80-minute stop. Traveling on the "Ferdinand Magellan" on a whistlestop campaign tour for Adlai Stevenson, they drove from Kansas City's Union Station to the Jackson County Courthouse in Independence. After registering to vote in the November election, they again passed by the Summer White House on their way to the Missouri Pacific Railroad depot to reboard the train and continue the campaign tour. The President made no political speech in Jackson County.<sup>91</sup>

The "Ferdinand Magellan" returned to Independence at 7:30 a.m., November 2, carrying Harry, Margaret, and Mary Jane Truman.<sup>92</sup> A re-



FIGURE 47

FIGURE 47: Harry and Bess Truman, followed by Secret Service and reporters, return to the Summer White House after voting in the Missouri primary election.  
Date: August 5, 1952  
Associated Press/New York Herald Tribune  
Truman Library Photo No. 68-1507

union of Battery D members was held on election eve.<sup>93</sup> On November 4, the Truman family rose early to vote before leaving for the capital at 9:30 a.m. Harry Truman later wrote of this special day:

I voted early, before breakfast, on November 4, 1952, in the Memorial Hall at Independence, where I had been voting for more than three decades. It is a short walk from my home. But this voting was a new experience. It was one of the few times in more than thirty years that I was marking a ballot on which my name did not appear as a candidate for some office. Mrs. Truman and Margaret walked along with me to the polls, and we thought of the happy prospect of returning to the peace and quiet of our home in Independence.

Immediately after voting we boarded the presidential train for the return to Washington.<sup>94</sup>

The deteriorating health of Mrs. Wallace had the entire family worried during the fall of 1952. The President wrote in his diary on November 24:

Bess's mother is dying across the hallway. She was 90 years old August 4th.... Since last September Mother Wallace has been dying--even before that, but we've kept doctors and nurses with her day and night and have kept her alive. We had hoped--and still hope--she'll survive until Christmas. Our last as President.<sup>95</sup>

In a White House press briefing on December 4, President Truman moved to squelch rumors that he and his wife would establish a home in the eastern United States. Announcing his intention to move back to Independence in January, the President added that he had decided to keep the high iron fence around the Summer White House. Former President Hoover's experience was cited by the White House as the reason why the Truman fence would be retained.<sup>96</sup>

The family had not planned on returning home until after Inauguration Day, spending their last Christmas in the White House, not in Missouri. The death of Madge Gates Wallace, at 11:35 a.m., December 5, 1952, in her White House bedroom necessitated a sad homecoming. Mrs. Wallace, age 90, succumbed to a stroke which progressed into pneumonia. With her at her death were Harry and Bess Truman, and Dr. Wallace Graham.<sup>97</sup> On December 6, 1952, the family traveled by train back to Independence, arriving the following day. The funeral service, at 3 p.m., December 8, was private and was held at the Truman home.<sup>98</sup> According to her wishes, Madge Wallace's casket was placed in the parlor/music room and the minister of Trinity Episcopal Church presided. After the funeral, the casket was taken to Woodlawn Cemetery for interment in the Gates family plot.<sup>99\*</sup>

Harry Truman's last day home as President, December 9, 1952, was a typical one. While he spent most of the day at his Muehlebach office suite, he also visited Grandview and walked around the Square in Independence--without a top coat in the near-freezing weather. The Trumans departed for the capital from the Missouri Pacific Railroad depot at 6 p.m.<sup>100</sup> On their next Independence homecoming, they would be private citizens once again.

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\*In a final snub to her husband who committed suicide 49 years before, Madge chose to be buried with her family. David Willock Wallace rests beside his mother and father in a different section of the cemetery.



THE 5 PERCENTERS AND "THE FREEZER SCANDAL"

<sup>1</sup>The Truman Road Story, sponsored by Women's Truman Democratic Club of Missouri, Inc. (Kansas City, Kansas: Lane Printing Company, 1952), p. 6, folder-Jackson County History, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>2</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>"Mrs. Truman Is Home," Kansas City Times (June 8, 1949), file-HST Mrs., 1949, KCSL.

<sup>4</sup>"Mrs. Truman and Mother Home Soon," Examiner (May 25, 1949), p. 1, MCPL.

<sup>5</sup>"Truman's Home No San Clemente," Kansas City Times (September 6, 1973), p. 3D, folder-Harry S Truman Heritage District, HSTL.

<sup>6</sup>"Mrs. Truman Thinner," Kansas City Star (August 4, 1949), file-HST Mrs., Diet, KCSL.

<sup>7</sup>S. J. Phillips to Charles Ross, letter, July 22, 1950; and Ross to Phillips, letter, July 25, 1950; folder-Official File 78, Harry S Truman, Papers of the President of the United States, 1945-53, HSTL.

<sup>8</sup>"Motorist Hits Tree At Truman Home," Examiner (July 30, 1949), p. 1, MCPL.

<sup>9</sup>"Another Crash at Truman Corner," Examiner (August 4, 1949), p. 1, MCPL.

<sup>10</sup>"Freezers To Five," Kansas City Times (August 13, 1949), file-HST Gifts, KCSL.

<sup>11</sup>"New Probe Turn," Kansas City Star (August 15, 1949), file-HST Mrs., 1949, KCSL.

<sup>12</sup>"The Propriety of Gifts to Officials Defended by Hoey," Kansas City Times (August 20, 1949), file-HST Gifts, KCSL.

<sup>13</sup>"Ex-Aide Cherishes Presidential Kick," Kansas City Star (April 30, 1967), file-HST Article--Gen. Harry Vaughan, KCSL.

<sup>14</sup>Robert J. Donovan, Tumultuous Years: The Presidency of Harry S Truman, 1949-1953 (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1982), p. 117.

<sup>15</sup>"Visit by Truman," Kansas City Times (September 6, 1949), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1949, KCSL.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., "Back to Capital," Kansas City Star (September 6, 1949).

<sup>17</sup>"Mrs. Truman to Capital," Kansas City Star (September 9, 1949), file-HST Mrs., 1949, KCSL.

<sup>18</sup>"Capital For Day," Kansas City Star (September 29, 1949), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1949, KCSL.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., "Truman Is Home," Kansas City Star (December 23, 1949).

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., "A Hospital Visit," Kansas City Times (December 24, 1949).

<sup>21</sup>Photograph caption, Kansas City Star (December 25, 1949), folder-Truman, Harry S Oct.-Dec. 1949, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>22</sup>"Day With Family," Kansas City Times (December 26, 1949), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1949, KCSL.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., "Truman In Lodge Role," Kansas City Times (December 27, 1949).

#### FENCING THE AMERICAN PUBLIC OUT

<sup>24</sup>Duke Shoop, "Washington On Review," Kansas City Star (March 3, 1946), file-HST 1946 No. 2, KCSL.

<sup>25</sup>Maj. Charles G. Heitzeberg, Assistant Secretary, General Staff, War Department, to Gen. Harry Vaughan, memo, October 8, 1945, folder-The President's Home in Independence, Mo., President's Personal File 1-G, HSTL.

<sup>26</sup>Ferrell, Dear Bess, June 19, 1946, P. 527.

<sup>27</sup>Margaret Truman, Harry S. Truman.

<sup>28</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 33.

<sup>29</sup>Merle Miller, Plain Speaking: An Oral Biography of Harry S. Truman (New York: Berkley Publishing Corporation, 1973), p. 397.

<sup>30</sup>Sue Gentry, Interview, Independence, June 22, 1983.

<sup>31</sup>"Harry's On His Way Home, to Just Rest and Visit A Bit," Kansas City Star (n.d., circa mid-June 1945), folder-October-December

1945 (misfiled), Vertical File, HSTL.

32"Local Groups to Meet Mr. Truman, Examiner (June 15, 1948), p. 1, MCPL.

33"The Job of President Is A Wonderful One, Truman Says," Kansas City Times (October 20, 1948), file-HST 1948 No. 6, KCSL.

34"A Holiday and Ovation Tonight For Mr. Truman," Examiner (November 3, 1948), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S October-December 1948, Vertical File, HSTL.

35"Vacationing Motorists Pause At Truman Home By Dozens Daily," Examiner (July 8, 1949), p. 1, MCPL.

36"Tourists Swarm By Summer White House," Examiner (August 22, 1949), p. 1, MCPL.

37Henry P. Chiles, Oral History Interview, Independence, Mo., November 1, 1961 and August 14, 1962, by J. R. Fuchs, HSTL, p. 67.

38Harry S Truman, Mr. Citizen (New York: Popular Library, 1960), p. 25.

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39Robert Sanders, Interview, Independence, June 30, 1983.

40Cockrell, Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman, p. 35.

41Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace and Mrs. H. H. (Ardis) Haukenberry, Interviews, Independence, June 14, 1983.

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42Mrs. Truman Arrives For Concert Tonight," Examiner (March 21, 1950), MCPL.

43"Mrs. Truman Is Home," Kansas City Times (May 30, 1950), file-HST Mrs., 1950, KCSL.

44"Truman On Short Visit," Kansas City Times (June 24, 1950), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1950, KCSL.

45Ken Hechler, Working With Truman: A Personal Memoir of The White House Years (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1982), pp. 147-8.

- <sup>46</sup>"Home To Family," Kansas City Star (June 24, 1950), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1950, Vertical File, HSTL.
- <sup>47</sup>Ibid., "A Quiet Stay At Home," (June 25, 1950).
- <sup>48</sup>Harry S Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, p. 332.
- <sup>49</sup>"Haste In Leaving," Kansas City Times (June 26, 1950), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1950, KCSL.
- <sup>50</sup>Harry S Truman, Years of Trail and Hope, p. 332.
- <sup>51</sup>Donovan, Tumultuous Years, pp. 195-6.
- <sup>52</sup>"President's Home Visit Curtailed," Examiner (June 26, 1950), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1950, Vertical File, HSTL.
- <sup>53</sup>"Haste In Leaving," Kansas City Times (June 26, 1950), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1950, KCSL.
- <sup>54</sup>Ibid., "Korean Crisis Causes Truman To Cut Short His Visit Here," Kansas City Times (June 26, 1950).
- <sup>55</sup>"Mrs. Truman to Washington," Kansas City Star (July 28, 1950), file-HST Mrs. 1950, KCSL.
- <sup>56</sup>Ibid., "President's Wife At Home," Kansas City Star (September 6, 1950).
- <sup>57</sup>Ibid., "Mrs. Truman to Capital," Kansas City Times (October 7, 1950).
- <sup>58</sup>Duke Shoop, "Coming Home To Vote," Kansas City Times (October 20, 1950), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1950, KCSL.
- <sup>59</sup>"Dual Purpose In Trip," Kansas City Star (November 5, 1950), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1950, KCSL.
- <sup>60</sup>Ibid., "Gay At The Fete," Kansas City Times (November 7, 1950).
- <sup>61</sup>"Truman Family Is Home," Kansas City Star (December 17, 1950), file-HST Mrs., 1950, KCSL.
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- <sup>63</sup>"His Holiday Busy," Kansas City Star (December 22, 1950), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1950, KCSL.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., "In A Church Role," Kansas City Times (December 25, 1950).

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., "Special Bow To Troops," Kansas City Star (December 25, 1950).

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., "To Capital Today," Kansas City Times (December 26, 1950).

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<sup>67</sup>Ferrell, Off The Record, diary, December 27, 1950, p. 206.

<sup>68</sup>"Mrs. Truman Is Home," Kansas City Times (May 30, 1951), file-HST Mrs. 1951, KCSL.

<sup>69</sup>Ferrell, Dear Bess, June 7, 1951, p. 564.

<sup>70</sup>"Truman Pledges Quick Help," Kansas City Times (July 18, 1951), file-HST Flood Area Survey, KCSL.

<sup>71</sup>"Truman Is Here," Kansas City Star (September 5, 1951), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1951, KCSL.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., "Back To Capital Today," Kansas City Times (September 9, 1951).

<sup>73</sup>"Mrs. Truman to Capital," Kansas City Star (September 21, 1951), file-HST Mrs., 1951, KCSL.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., "Mrs. Truman Is Home," Kansas City Times (December 14, 1951).

<sup>75</sup>"Grim and Tired President Is Home For Holiday Visit," Examiner (December 24, 1951), p. 1, MCPL; and "Truman Is Home," Kansas City Star (December 24, 1951), file-HST Visits to Kansas City, 1951, KCSL.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., "President Back To Work After A Restful Day," Examiner (December 26, 1951), p. 1; and "Truman On Steel," Kansas City Times (December 25, 1951).

<sup>77</sup>"Truman Has Quiet Day," Kansas City Star (December 25, 1951), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1951, KCSL.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., "To Russian Post," Kansas City Times (December 27, 1951).

79 Ibid., "Trumans At A Party."

80 Ibid., "End To Holiday Visit," (December 28, 1951).

81 "Miss Truman Goes Back To Washington," Examiner (January 3, 1952), p. 1, MCPL.

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82 "Mrs. Wallace Seriously Ill," Examiner (March 1, 1952), p. 1, MCPL.

83 "Mrs. Truman to Capital," Kansas City Star (July 16, 1952), file-HST Mrs. 1952-56, KCSL.

84 "Truman High In Praise For Sparkman," Examiner (July 26, 1952), p. 1, MCPL.

85 "A Happy Truman," Kansas City Star (July 26, 1952), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1952, KCSL.

86 Ibid., "Truman In Homey Role," Kansas City Times (July 28, 1952).

87 Ibid., "A Red Fuss To Truman," Kansas City Times (July 29, 1952), and "No More Early Walks," Kansas City Star (July 30, 1952).

88 Ibid., "A German Pact," Kansas City Star (August 2, 1952).

89 Ibid., "To Margaret By Phone," Kansas City Times (August 4, 1952).

90 Ibid., "To Capital After Vote," Kansas City Star (August 5, 1952).

91 Ibid., "Truman On Rolls," Kansas City Times (October 9, 1952).

92 Ibid., "The Truman Train In Today," (November 2, 1952).

93 Ibid., "Truman To Polls Early," (November 3, 1952).

94 Harry S Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, p. 504.

95 Ferrell, Off The Record, pp. 275-6.

96 Jack Williams, "Iron Fence at the Summer White House Figures in Truman Plans," Kansas City Times (December 5, 1952), p. 1, White House Scrapbooks, HSTL.

97 "Mrs. Wallace Is Dead," Kansas City Star (December 5, 1952),  
p. 1, White House Scrapbooks, HSTL.

98 "Mrs. Wallace's Rites Simple," Examiner (December 8, 1952),  
p. 1, MCPL.

99 Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman,"  
p. 40.

100 "Variety in Truman Day," Kansas City Star (December 9,  
1952), file-HST Visits to Kansas City 1952, KCSL.

## CHAPTER TEN

### RETIREMENT AT THE TRUMAN HOME, 1953-1960

- \* A Spectacular Homecoming, January 22, 1953
- \* "Mr. President" or "Mr. Citizen?"
- \* Harry and Bess Purchase 219 North Delaware
- \* Bess Begins Her "Modernization" Program
- \* "Person To Person" Films The Truman Home
- \* Margaret Gets Married and The Library Is Built



A SPECTACULAR HOMECOMING, JANUARY 22, 1953

In the last weeks of the Truman presidency, family lawyer Rufus Burrus believed that the family might want to relocate into a more modern, spacious home in Independence. Burrus and an Independence realtor, acting without the consent of the President, found a large home on a sizeable piece of land on the "northern edge of town." Burrus informed the President that it could be purchased at a bargain price. Although grateful, President Truman said that 219 North Delaware was "a comfortable place to be," and, in response to buying the other residence, said, "No. It sure is a good price, but I've got all the property that I can take care of now."<sup>1</sup>

Harry and Bess Truman left Washington, D.C., following the inauguration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower on January 20, 1953. Margaret, remaining in the east (New York) where her singing career was based, accompanied her parents to the railroad station to bid them farewell on their journey to Missouri. The former President and First Lady were private citizens eager to return to 219 North Delaware for a well-deserved rest from the rigors of public life. Their train passed cities, towns, and villages where thousands of people gathered to cheer the former First Family.

The Trumans' train pulled into the Independence depot of the Missouri Pacific Railroad fifty minutes late on the evening of Janu-

ary 22, 1953. The greeting awaiting Harry and Bess, however, was unparalleled in the town's history, surpassing both the 1945 homecoming and 1948 victory celebrations. In the vicinity of the depot were an estimated 8,500 enthusiastic people, while along the route and in front of the former Summer White House were another 1,500 people.<sup>2</sup>

Harry Truman later recorded his version of the heart-warming Independence welcome:

...I was completely unprepared for what happened when we arrived at Independence.

There probably would be a reception of some kind, I'd thought, maybe a hundred people or so. But when we stepped out of the car the hundred had multiplied. There were people as far as you could see in every direction, shouting and waving. A band was playing "The Missouri Waltz" and everybody was yelling his head off.

I remember noticing a billboard beside the track. "Independence," it read, "Home of President Truman." Some kid had chalked in a big Ex- before the word President and for some reason that seemed the only sensible, down-to-earth thing in sight.

Mrs. Truman didn't look as if she would be able to talk and I spoke up for the family. I was happy to be home, I told them, and when I added that I was home for good I really meant it.<sup>3</sup>

Bess Truman was presented a sheaf of red roses from the "City of Independence." In brief remarks to the crowd, Harry declared:

We're back home now for good. I'm in the army of the unemployed now, although [laughter] it's a very small army, and I'm here to tell you that a little later on when I get the job done that Mrs. Truman has for me--what she says I'm going to have to do is to unpack all of our goods and chattels; it took about seven or eight men three months to get it done so I

don't know how long it's going to take one man to get it undone [laughter]. After that I'll be open for dinner engagements and things of that kind because I may be hungry by that time! [laughter].<sup>4</sup>

We are back home for good.... I'm not running for anything and I haven't been elected to anything. I never saw a welcome equal to this anywhere in the world.<sup>5</sup>

[See Figure 48].

The Trumans were driven to the former Summer White House by the mayor and his wife. The Truman neighborhood, jammed with cars and people, was paralyzed in a six-block radius. Their motorcade arrived on North Delaware and stopped before the iron gate. Twelve Independence police officers were stationed in front of the Truman home as the couple emerged from their automobile and slowly made their way up the walk to the front porch, all the while acknowledging their neighbors' greetings and posing for photographs.<sup>6</sup> [See Figure 49]. As the couple said their final goodbye to the crowd, walked into the house, and closed the doors of the vestibule, Bess Truman summed-up the evening's emotional experience. Normally oblivious to public adulation, she declared,

Well, this is the pay-off for all we have been through. I guess we can stand it all after this reception.<sup>7</sup>

Harry described his first morning at home as a private citizen and his unwanted title of "Mr. President":

When I awoke the morning after I arrived home from Washington the room looked familiar but the light was wrong. Looking at the clock, I saw that it was 7:30, which accounted for the light. I am not used to sleeping so late, except on vacation, and this was not exactly a vacation. It was the



FIGURE 48

FIGURE 48: Harry and Bess Truman arrive at the Independence railroad depot to a crowd approaching 10,000 greeters.

Date: January 21, 1953

United Press, New York Herald Tribune

Truman Library Photo No. 68-1402



FIGURE 49

FIGURE 49: Bess and Harry Truman stand on the front porch of 219 North Delaware where Harry says a few words to reporters and a throng of greeters.  
Date: January 21, 1953  
Donor: Sue Gentry  
Truman Library Photo No. 68-279

start of a new period in my life and there was a great deal to do. I took a bath and shaved, dressed and went downstairs. The morning paper was in the front yard. I picked it up and took it into the living room where I sat down to read. A headline on the front page said:

HOME TO CHEERS

About 10,000 persons greet Mr. and Mrs.  
Truman in Independence.

A WELCOME BY THE MAYOR

"You'll always be Mr. President to us,"  
Weatherford tells townsmen.

The story interested me although I knew better than any reporter what had been happening. I had not expected any trouble in making the change from Mr. President to Mr. Citizen. Now it said in print that I was always going to be Mr. President.<sup>8</sup>

Secret Service protection at 219 North Delaware ended with the inauguration of the new President. There was no break in the watch, however, as Independence policemen took over in the small back yard security booth. The police chief pledged protection for the former First Family through his department and the Missouri State Highway Patrol for as long as required.<sup>9</sup>

On January 27, an Army truck stopped before 219 North Delaware. Carrying Margaret's baby grand piano, it was followed by a tractor-trailer bearing the Trumans' belongings packed in large wooden crates marked, "The White House."<sup>10</sup> Furniture and personal belongings were not the only items arriving from the east. During the first two weeks following the Trumans' homecoming, an estimated 70,000 cards, letters, and gifts were received at the home from well-wishers across the nation.<sup>11</sup>

An official homecoming celebration was hosted by the City of Independence on February 5, 1953. A dinner to honor the Truman family (including Margaret who came home to visit her parents) was held in the Laurel Club Dining Hall at the R.L.D.S. Auditorium. Harry delivered a moving speech which turned from light humor to deep emotion as he described how the couple felt being home at last.<sup>12</sup>

Although busy putting their home in order, the couple quietly settled into a retirement which would prove far from sedate. Bess enjoyed entertaining her Tuesday Bridge Club on a regular basis. The group of ladies met alternately in one anothers' homes every other Tuesday. She guarded her privacy and shunned many invitations, accepting only those from close friends. While the Trumans seldom entertained in their own home, "they go out fairly often."<sup>13</sup> She was particularly disappointed that she could not enjoy her own back yard without being bothered by tourists. In the summer of 1954, she received a gift of a garden umbrella, table, and chairs which she set-up in the back yard. One afternoon she sat outside to read, but so many people gathered at the fence to stare and take pictures that she scurried into the house.<sup>14</sup> Harry, too, was determined to resume a normal life as a private citizen. He realized the difficulty of doing so as he once wrote:

I try to live the way I did before I went to Washington, try to live like I always did, but it's a hard thing to do. When you get to be a notorious character, people are always

around with curious ideas of taking a look at the fellow who's been through what I have. And I'm patient with them because I know exactly what's affecting them. But it's not very good for privacy.<sup>15</sup>

When Harry Truman decided against seeking re-election in 1952, he began contemplating what his life outside of public office would entail:

I had come to a decision months ago while still in the White House. The rest of my life was to be spent teaching our young people the meaning of democracy.

I was going to spend it in writing and in creating a library where the papers I had gathered as President could be made available to students and to the public.

In this way I felt I could best serve as a private citizen again without being used by any private interest because of the great office I once held.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout 1953, Harry Truman advocated building his presidential library in Grandview. He planned to donate 60 to 80 acres of the Young-Truman farm for the project. He also envisioned building "the first home of my own" near the library:

Some day, after the library is built, I think I'll move Mother's house back a way and build myself a home in front of it. It's a nice site.

I was mentioning this to an acquaintance of mine the other day, and he said, "You mean you feel you could be secluded out here?"

I didn't know what to answer at the moment and I've been thinking about it ever since. In fact, I've been thinking about it all the time I've been home.

An embarrassing thing seems to be happening to me. I now wonder whether I am ready for or will ever be completely satisfied with privacy. I like people too much, and I must keep in touch with them for my mind is crowded with many thoughts.

So the answer to my friend's question is, "No. I don't think I want to be secluded. I don't want to move out here



until there are crowds of people coming to visit the library, until I can meet them there and talk to them.

...[it will] be nice to move into my Grandview home. Come to think of it, it would be the first home of my own.<sup>17</sup>

Harry Truman loved the Grandview farm. His daily routine was formulated during the farm years (1906-1917). Retirement now in Independence was no exception:

I... got the habit of getting up early in the morning. In those days farmers had to make use of every daylight hour. I've never been able to break that early-rising habit. When I was in the Army, I was the fellow who used to wake the bugler. Then I'd go off and think. Morning's the only time for solid thinking.

Back home now, in Independence, I run on the same schedule I've followed for years, up at 5:30, dress, then downstairs to read the paper the boy has flipped over the fence. This is the first paper of the day; later come four or five others from different parts of the country. You do not get all the facts from just one paper, and unless you have the facts, you can't think properly.

In spring and summer, I take the paper around to the back porch and settle down with it and with the correspondence I haven't had a chance to look at the day before. I sit there for an hour, alone, feeling the sun slanting in at me and putting my thoughts straight. In winter, I do the same thing in the living room. Then I go for a walk.

I began taking these walks when I first went to Washington and, since they seemed to keep me fit in spite of all the sitting around I had to do, I've kept them up. Except for the absence of the Secret Service and the reporters, the walks happen about the same now as in the past.

...Usually there are one or two cars parked out front, waiting for me--at seven o'clock in the morning! Yesterday there was one with baggage all over it. "Is there where Truman lives?" the fellow at the wheel yelled at me. I said it was, and he said, "You Truman?" I said I was. "Well," he said, "me and the old lady are on a motor trip, all the way from the Island of Maui. Been all over the country, but seeing you walk out of that house, big as life, tops everything else we've seen. Would you mind if I just got a picture of you, standing there?"

If someone down in Washington had told me that this sort of thing was just as common after you left the White House as it was before, I might have suspected that he was trying to

tempt me to run for another term.

...Sometimes whole delegations stand outside, looking in over the fence—school children, Girl Scouts, all kinds of people. I realize they've come to see the striped mule of Missouri, and I don't want them to be disappointed.

You sometimes get into funny situations--like a few weeks ago. A woman asked me to pose with her for a photograph. I said, jokingly: "Madam, what's your husband going to say when he sees us together in a picture?" "Oh," she says, "don't worry about him--he's the one who's taking the picture." "Well," I said, "I'm glad he's here. Tell you what--I'll pose with him and you take the picture." She did, too--though she looked kind of surprised for a minute.<sup>18</sup>

[See Figures 50 and 51].

#### "MR. CITIZEN" OR "MR. PRESIDENT?"

Harry Truman occupied a 3-room office suite on the 11th floor of the Federal Reserve Building in Kansas City, where he went each work-day to answer correspondence, organize personal papers and business affairs, and write his memoirs.<sup>19</sup> Just as he enjoyed going to work, he looked forward to going home to Bess:

At two-thirty or three, I close up shop, get the car and drive back to Independence. Once or twice a week I find Bess playing bridge or canasta with friends or relatives. The other days she's there alone. In either case, I go upstairs and take a nap, as Dr. Graham ordered. He's promised me another 20 years if I follow the rules, and I don't want to disappoint him.

The house seems quiet and too big now, with just Bess and me and Vietta Garr, our cook. We miss Margaret, but she has her own career and must live in New York, or Hollywood, or wherever it takes her. I'm not complaining.

Meanwhile, we keep in touch by telephone. There's an extension line upstairs, and every day after my nap, I pick up one phone, Bess picks up the other, and we call Margaret--or, if we miss connections, she calls us.

...We have dinner at six-thirty or seven, either alone or



FIGURE 50

FIGURE 50: Harry steps outside the Truman Road gate to begin one of his morning walks. A reporter is waiting to accompany him.

Date: February 1, 1953

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Truman Library Photo No. 65-839

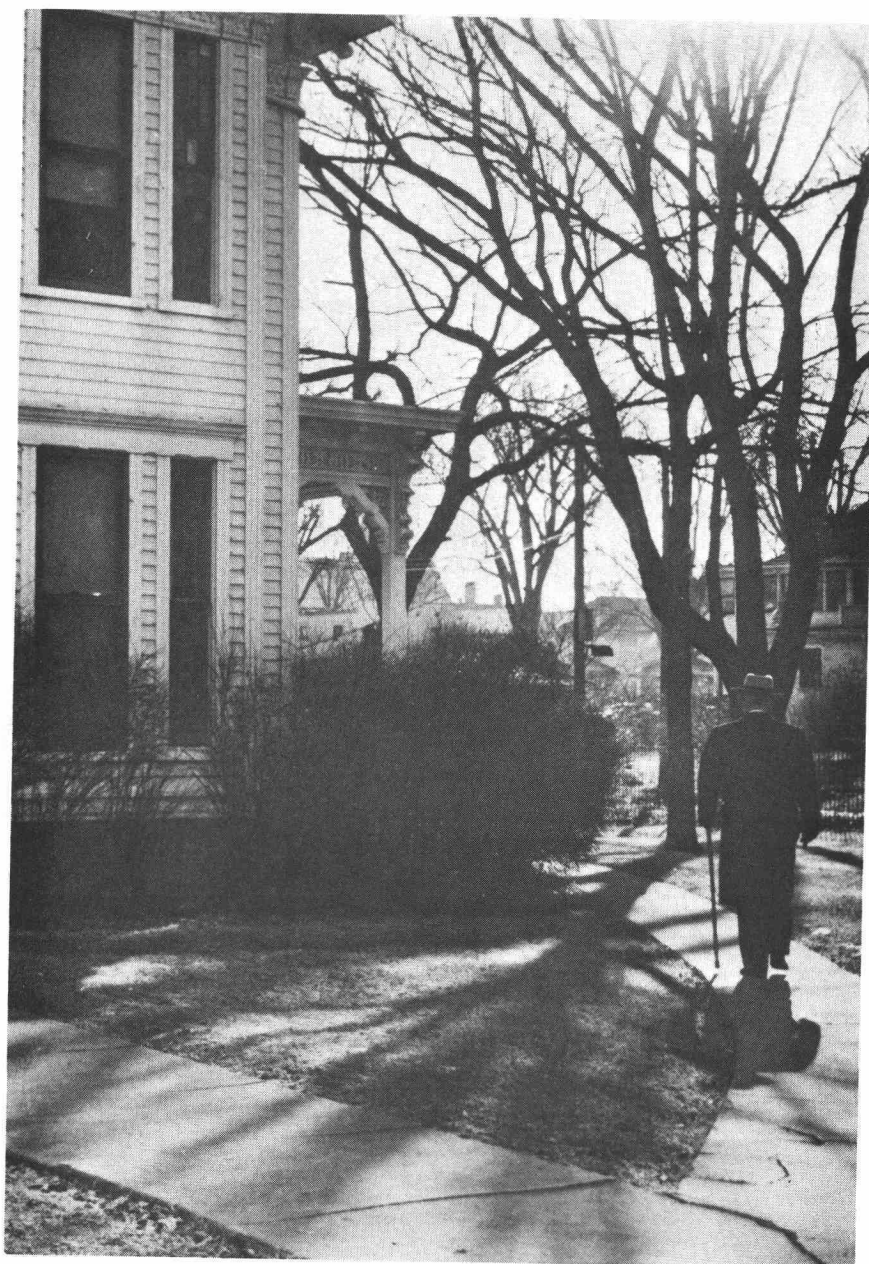


FIGURE 51

FIGURE 51: Harry Truman embarks on an early morning stroll.  
Date: 1953  
United Press International  
Truman Library Photo No. 78-64

with friends or relatives who live nearby (they come in through the back gate), or sometimes with other friends who happen to be passing through town. The neighbors usually join us somewhere along the line, if not for dinner then later, to hash over local gossip.

Those last few years in Washington kind of got me out of the habit of doing much on the outside but read. In fact, most of our evenings are spent reading. Bess favors detective stories, and I favor history, but I like Who-Done-Its, too.

...People keep asking me about poker--I don't think I've played the game once since I've been home, and the only time I've sat down at the piano was one night last June when it was too hot to do anything else. Incidentally, Margaret won't let me accompany her--says I'm not good enough, and she's right. But she can't get around the fact that I gave her her first music lesson when she was five years old. I didn't suspect at the time that she was going to be a singer.<sup>20</sup>

For transportation, Harry and Bess Truman purchased a new Chrysler 4-door sedan, black with tan upholstery on February 16.<sup>21</sup> This vehicle was intended for the family's use while a Dodge Club Coupe, two-tone green with chrome wire wheels, acquired on March 7, was Harry's car.<sup>22</sup> The two 1953 cars were a subject of a humorous story Harry later recounted:

...driving through the narrow back gate of our home in Independence, I scrapped all the chromium off one side of it. That gate always reminds me of the camel and the needle's eye, and I thought I would never hear the end of it from Bess. But then one morning she called me at the office and her voice sounded a little unhappy.

"Anything the matter?" I asked.

"Well," she said, "I hate to tell you this, but the truth is I was coming through the gate this morning and scrapped the chromium off the side of my car."

After that neither of us mentioned chromium again.<sup>23</sup>

The day following the purchase of the 1953 Chrysler, Harry and

Bess Truman were involved in an automobile accident, but not with their own car. Both were passengers in the car of Sergt. Arthur H. Bell, the Missouri State Patrolman temporarily assigned to the couple, when a minor collision occurred at 13th and Harrison streets in Kansas City. No one was injured in the mishap and there was only slight damage. The other driver was arrested and charged with careless driving.<sup>24</sup>

Speculation about the Trumans moving to the East was particularly rampant in the spring of 1953 and received an airing in the New York press. In a March 18 interview with KCMO radio from his Kansas City office, Harry Truman denied a New York World-Telegram report that he was searching for a stylish apartment on New York City's Park Avenue.<sup>25</sup> Despite the disclaimer, the New York Daily News ran a story the following day that the Trumans were "house-hunting in Connecticut and dickering for a palatial 54-acre estate in Fairfield (with a music room)." The newspaper reasoned that Mr. Truman wanted to be near Margaret and Henry S. Luce (Time-Life-Fortune publisher who contracted to buy his memoirs for \$600,000).<sup>26</sup>

The Truman family returned from a 30-day vacation to Hawaii on May 5, looking tanned and rested.<sup>27</sup> By June 19, they were off again. At 7:00 a.m., the black Chrysler sedan pulled out of the driveway with Harry behind the wheel and Bess beside him. As they had done countless times before gaining notoriety, three days were allotted to

drive to Washington, D.C.<sup>28</sup> Harry wrote:

Bess and I wanted to go to Washington to see some of our old, dispossessed friends, then on to Philadelphia for a speech I had to make to the Reserve Officers, and finally to New York to see Margaret--and we wanted to drive. After getting back from Hawaii [sic], we'd become the owners of a couple of new cars, one for her and one for me, and I was looking forward to giving mine a real tryout.

Before starting for Washington, I took out the road maps and figured the distance--exactly 1,050 miles from my garage door to the door of the Senate garage--and the best places to stop over on the way, as I always used to do. Up to this time, I hadn't had much luck in living like the plain ordinary citizen I'd hoped to become on leaving the White House, and I thought that this trip would give me a chance to do so at last. The press knew I intended to make the trip, but they didn't know how or when exactly--only our closest friends knew that, and they were pledged to secrecy.

Both were looking forward to going incognito. Unfortunately the plan was doomed from the start. "The Boss" made her husband go 55 miles per hour. As the cars sped by them, many people peered into the slow-moving car and recognized them. In restaurants along the highway, people made a fuss over them. The Trumans were mobbed by reporters at their hotels where they required police protection.<sup>29</sup>

The innocent motor trip caused such a stir the couple never again attempted such a spontaneous, unannounced trip. The home was left in the hands of Vietta Garr until they returned to Independence at 9 p.m., July 8, having traveled 3,000 miles.<sup>30</sup>

The first known overnight guest at 219 North Delaware since the January homecoming was John W. Snyder, former Secretary of the Treas-

ury, who stayed the night of May 10. The following evening, Stanley Woodward, former Ambassador to Canada and Chief of Protocol, also was an overnight guest.<sup>31</sup>

On June 18, 1953, Harry Truman made his first public political comment since leaving the White House. Allowing President Eisenhower a 5-month "honeymoon" period, he declared from his Kansas City office:

The Democratic party not only is a going concern today, but always will be because it represents the common people and not the party of special interests.

The Republican party has demonstrated it is the party of special interests.<sup>32</sup>

As the months passed, public interest in the Trumans did not abate. News reports abounded detailing how the couple enjoyed retirement and their life in Independence. Tourists continued to flock past the former Summer White House hoping to catch a glimpse of Harry and Bess Truman. During the summer of 1953, road construction on Truman Road made access to the Truman home impossible for many tourists. The street's expansion and installation of new sewer lines made the home,

completely isolated from the swarm of visitors who have gone out of their way during the past several years to pass the home. Independence found itself in the embarrassing position of having its chief tourist attraction shut off to the visitors.<sup>33</sup>

While the Trumans used the alley on the south side of their property



to enter and leave, tourists parked a block or two away and then climbed atop the piles of dirt against the north fence to get a closer look. Bess contended with the dust which covered the yard, porches, and walks, while Harry enjoyed making "regular inspection tours" of the project during his morning walks.<sup>34</sup>

To satiate the growing public curiosity regarding their private lives, the Trumans agreed to pose for photographs in their home. The photographs were published along with a series of five articles written by Harry Truman which appeared in The American Weekly, a supplement to newspapers owned by William Randolph Hearst. The feature on the Trumans, titled "Mr. Citizen," appeared in late 1953. (An album including all the articles and photographs is at the Truman Library). [See Figures 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, and 57].

#### HARRY AND BESS PURCHASE 219 NORTH DELAWARE

Because their mother died intestate, Bess Truman and her three brothers had to settle Madge Wallace's affairs between themselves. Frank Wallace, the eldest son, financial adviser, and conductor of the family's interests in the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company, was appointed administrator of Madge Gates Wallace's estate. Her four children agreed to divide her estate equally between them. There was no question which heir would continue occupy the family home. The three Wallace brothers had long since established their own homes



FIGURE 52

FIGURE 52: Harry and Bess pose arm-in-arm on the front porch of 219 North Delaware.

Date: 1953

Bradley Smith, Photographer; Mr. Citizen  
Truman Library Photo No. 66-3703

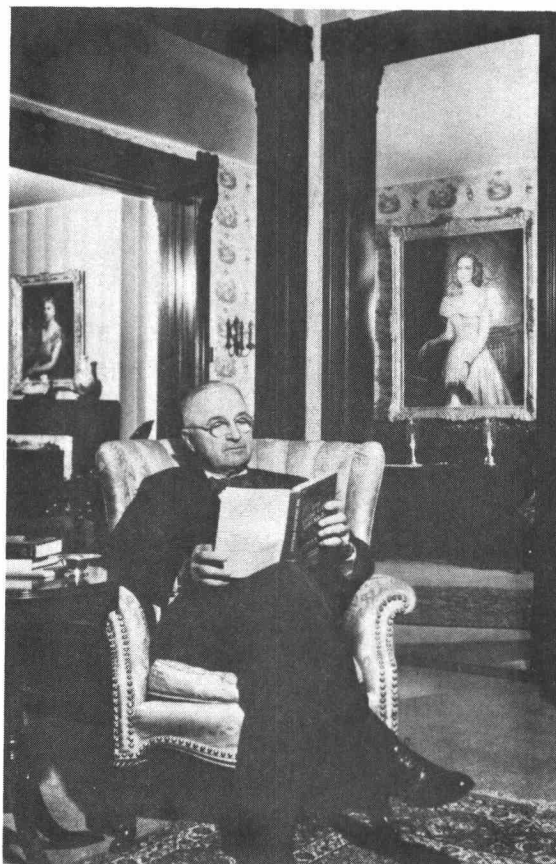


FIGURE 53

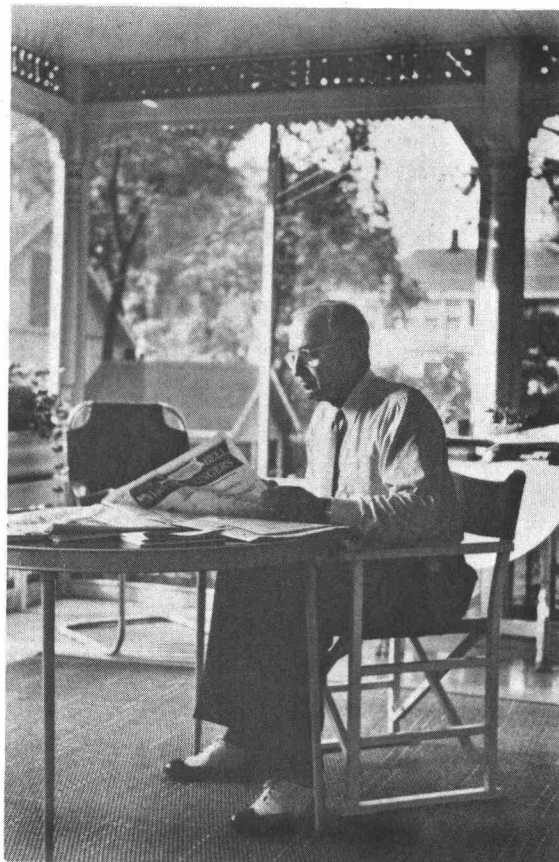


FIGURE 54

FIGURE 53: Harry reads The Legislative Struggle in the living room with portraits of Bess and Margaret in the background.

Date: 1953

Bradley Smith; Mr. Citizen

Truman Library Photo No. 66-3727

FIGURE 54: Harry reads his selection of daily newspapers on the back porch.

Date: 1953

Bradley Smith; Mr. Citizen

Truman Library Photo No. 66-3706



FIGURE 55



FIGURE 56

FIGURE 55: Harry plays Margaret's baby grand piano in the parlor/music room.  
Date: 1953  
Bradley Smith, Mr. Citizen  
Truman Library Photo No. 66-3728

FIGURE 56: Harry and Bess sit in the living room and read.  
Date: 1953  
Bradley Smith, Mr. Citizen  
Truman Library Photo No. 66-3729



FIGURE 57

FIGURE 57: Bess plays Canasta with three friends on the back porch of her home. At the far left is May Wallace (Mrs. George P. Wallace).  
Date: 1953  
Bradley Smith, Mr. Citizen  
Truman Library Photo No. 66-3723



while Bess had not known any other Independence residence since 1904.

The house would go to the Trumans. Margaret later recalled:

...the whole family had agreed that Mother and Dad should live here. This should be their house. But they [Harry and Bess] insisted on buying [it], assuming that everybody had a quarter share, and paying everybody what a quarter share was worth. That they would own it free and clear.<sup>35</sup>

On July 17, 1953, the process of transferring ownership of 219 North Delaware began when Madge Wallace's heirs deeded the property to Frank Gates Wallace. Eight days later, July 25, 1953, Frank and Natalie Wallace in turn deeded it to:

Harry S. Truman and Elizabeth (Bess) Truman, husband and wife, as an estate by the entirety with right of survivorship. . . . in the consideration of the sum of ONE (\$1.00) DOLLAR and other valuable considerations.<sup>36</sup>

[See Figure 58].

According to family lawyer Rufus Burrus, the Trumans wanted the property placed in both of their names in order that it revert automatically to the surviving partner.<sup>37</sup>

The home's appraisal was revealed on February 8, 1954, when the final estate settlement was filed in probate court: \$25,000.<sup>38</sup> A quarter share of 219 North Delaware, therefore, came to \$6,250. To purchase the remaining three-fourths interests in the house, Harry and Bess Truman paid at least \$18,750. Final settlement of the estate was approved on May 10, 1954, with the financial (non-real

## Missouri Warranty Deed

1934 PAGE 631

This Indenture, Made on the 25th day of July A. D., One

Thousand Nine Hundred and Fifty-three by and between

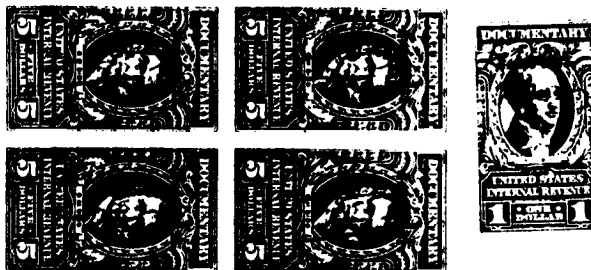
FRANK G. WALLACE and NATALIE O. WALLACE, his wife,

of the County of Jackson, State of Missouri parties of the first part, and  
 HARRY S. TRUMAN and ELIZABETH (Beas) TRUMAN, husband and wife, as an  
 estate by the entirety with right of survivorship,

of the County of Jackson, State of Missouri parties of the second part,

WITNESSETH: THAT THE SAID PART IES OF THE FIRST PART, in consideration of the  
 sum of ONE (\$1.00) DOLLAR, and other valuable consideration - - DOLLARS,  
 to them paid by said parties of the second part (the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged), do  
 by these presents, Grant, Bargain and Sell, Convey and Confirm unto the said parties of the second  
 part their heirs and assigns, the following described lots, tracts or parcels of land  
 lying, being and situate in the County of Jackson and State of Missouri, to wit:

All of Lots Two (2) and Three (3), MOORE'S  
 ADDITION in and to the CITY OF INDEPENDENCE,  
 Jackson County, Missouri.



TO HAVE AND TO HOLD The premises aforesaid with all and singular, the rights, privileges, appur-  
 tenances and immunities thereto belonging or in any wise appertaining unto the said parties of the  
 second part and unto their heirs and assigns forever; the said Frank G. Wallace and  
 Natalie O. Wallace hereby covenanting that they are  
 lawfully seized of an indefeasible estate in fee of the premises herein conveyed; that they have  
 good right to convey the same; that the said premises are free and clear from any incumbrance done or suf-  
 fered by them or those under whom they claim; and that they will  
 warrant and defend the title to the said premises unto the said parties of the second part and unto  
 their heirs and assigns forever, against the lawful claims and demands of all persons  
 whomsoever

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, The said parties of the first part have hereunder set their  
 hand and seal the day and year above written.

Frank G. Wallace (SEAL)  
Natalie O. Wallace (SEAL)  
 (SEAL)

estate) settlement set at \$8,385.90 per heir.<sup>39</sup>

#### BESS BEGINS HER "MODERNIZATION" PROGRAM

There was never any question that the mistress of 219 North Delaware "ruled" her house. With the assistance of only a few domestics such as Vietta Garr, Bess (the "Boss" as Harry called her) enjoyed doing things for herself. When the Trumans returned to Independence, however, one problem they encountered was securing domestic help who could be trusted not to add fuel to the Independence gossip mills.

Harry wrote:

We found it difficult to get domestic help--help that would, as my mother used to say, "keep their mouths shut when they ought to."

We are of the old-fashioned cult that believes in home privacy, and we would much rather do things that need to be done in the home ourselves than have someone around who will go out and gossip about it.

Most of the people who worked for us before we went to the White House were no longer physically able to do steady work when we returned home. But we got along reasonably well. We have two or three people come in once or twice a week to clean up and help Mrs. Truman get things arranged so that the house runs almost exactly as it used to.<sup>40</sup>

The arrival in Independence of the Trumans' personal possessions and furniture, accumulated over 18 years in Washington, necessitated much redecoration to fit the items into the existing decor of Gates/Wallace heirlooms. As the sole mistress of the home, Bess Truman was charged with the principal responsibility of renovating the old home to the couples' needs.



Major repairs were also desperately needed as the home reflected the long periods when it stood empty two-thirds of each year. The Trumans' finances were limited, however; all improvements were judged on an as-needed basis, prioritized according to the Trumans' budget. There was no presidential pension or franking privilege; pensions for congressional members were authorized two years after Harry resigned the Senate. His sole income after January 1953, was a \$95.66 monthly pension from the military (for his duty in World War I and reserve service until retiring as a colonel).<sup>41</sup>

Bess did not make changes without first consulting Harry. According to Margaret, her father

agreed with everything she wanted done... When she wanted to put down wall-to-wall carpeting, he agreed that was a good idea; when she wanted to change the upholstery on a chair or a sofa, why, she would ask him, she wouldn't just do it. And he would agree with her usually. Hardly ever disagreed with her if you must know. But my mother had very good taste and I don't think Dad wanted to disagree with her.<sup>42</sup>

On the morning of his first day of retirement at home, Harry sat in the living room and gave some thought to the first interior change he wanted to accomplish:

I recall making a mental note to balance Margaret's [portrait in the central hall] with one of Mrs. Truman over the mantel in the other room [parlor/music room]. (I did, later, even though Mrs. Truman objected. I had to sneak the thing up one day while she was out. She still objects but says it's too much trouble to take it down).<sup>43</sup>

Only six days after the Trumans returned to Independence, the "modernization" of the Gates/Wallace/Truman home began.\* Robert Nickell, an Independence painter and wallpaperer, began working at 219 North Delaware on January 27, 1953. Intermittently over the course of 20 years, he worked in every room on the first floor except the living room and all but the bathroom on the second floor.

Charles E. Anderson (nicknamed "Andy"), a local carpenter, began working for the Trumans on February 9, 1954. After building bookshelves in Harry's first floor library, he remodeled the attic, an area haphazardly jammed with trunks and boxes from Washington interspersed with items dating to the Gates/Wallace occupancy. Gifts from heads of state, now on display at the Truman Library, were also stored there, at the mercy of the dusty, drafty, and damp attic environment. Anderson set about transforming the attic into a more secure (air-tight and fireproof) storage place by replacing windows, lining the rafters with insulation board, and installing a new floor. Storage closets were also added, providing room for shoes and clothing in the closet-sparse home.

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\*Detailed information about the renovation of 219 North Delaware can be found in Chapter 11, "'Modernization': Madge Wallace's House Becomes The Trumans' Home," Ron Cockrell, Historic Structures Report: History and Significance, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri (Omaha: Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, 1984).

Anderson's major task came on November 24, 1954: a contract to shore-up the main floor with steel beams. The column jacks were especially required for the parlor/music room where the weight of Margaret's piano made the floor sag. In another section of the basement, a rotted support post was not installed in the correct spot. As Anderson continued to work in the basement, the Trumans noticed that the house was shifting, prompting Bess to call out in alarm from the kitchen stairway, "Andy, something's happening up here!" Anderson left immediately to purchase three house jacks to prop up the sagging main floor.

Under the same contract, the basement was remodeled to make the utility room more presentable. The old floor was excavated a half-foot to accommodate more head space and to repair the plumbing. A new cement floor was poured. Two bases were added to hold a washing machine and a deep freezer. The stucco walls were patched and painted, and a new staircase was built. Other minor repairs Anderson conducted throughout the home included installing storm doors and windows, replacing rotted millwork and broken locks, mending cracks in the fireplace mantels, rescreening, and weatherstripping.<sup>44</sup>

During the early modernization effort (Nickell worked at the Truman home sporadically until 1973, while Anderson finished in late 1956), the Trumans did not stay at home and supervise. Either Vieta Garr remained to look after the property or, as Charles Anderson

fondly recalled, Harry left him a key.<sup>45</sup>

One such time was May 1954, when Harry and Bess went to Washington and New York to visit. Once in the capital, Harry made a point to announce that he was not going to ask for an appointment to visit the White House because of a snub from President Eisenhower.<sup>46\*</sup>

Before they left on vacation, however, a mishap occurred at the Truman home which resulted in permanent injury to George P. Wallace. On the evening of May 3, George Wallace was helping his brother-in-law carry a heavy liquor service chest up the steep, narrow staircase to the attic. Under Bess's supervision, Harry went first up the stairs with George taking up the rear. Nearing the top of the steps, the cumbersome chest slipped from Harry's grip and crashed down the stairs, chasing George to the bottom where it pinned his legs against the wall. George was taken to the hospital for treatment of a fractured left ankle. In a cast for six months, the 61-year-old man's leg never regained its proper size and he limped for the rest of his life.<sup>47</sup> A five-foot birch handrail was subsequently added atop the stairway to reduce the safety hazard.<sup>48</sup>

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\*On October 15, 1953, while Eisenhower was visiting Kansas City, Truman called his hotel and asked for an appointment to welcome Ike to the city. An aide, stating that the President's schedule was full, promised to call back, but did not. The bad feelings between the political rivals intensified over this incident.

Upon their return to Independence, the chamber of commerce sponsored a \$25 a plate dinner on June 9, 1954, with Harry and Bess the guests of honor. Proceeds were earmarked for the "Harry S. Truman Library" project. While proposed locations included the Truman farm at Grandview, and the University of Missouri, (Columbia or Kansas City), Independence went on record with an appeal to build the Truman Library in the President's home town.<sup>49</sup>

Less than two weeks later, a life-threatening illness struck Harry. Attending a June 20 performance at Kansas City's Starlight Theater, he became so ill that Bess drove him home before the play was over. Dr. Wallace Graham was summoned, and the couple left 219 North Delaware in Graham's car bound for Research Hospital. Diagnosed as "acute cholecystitis," the former President underwent surgery shortly after midnight to remove his infected gall bladder and appendix.<sup>50</sup>

Complications involving hypersensitivity to certain drugs slowed his recovery. The oppressive summer heat was also not conducive to recovery, and Harry resisted Bess and his doctors' demands that he be placed in an air-conditioned room. Harry did not like air conditioning and believed it was unhealthy. Bess, on the other hand, did not share her husband's views. For his recuperation at home, she purchased a small window unit for the first floor bedroom. Her only problem was to persuade Harry to go along with her. Rufus Burrus

helped convince his friend that he should accept Bess's present. Harry relented. Arriving home on July 9, he found an air conditioner in the first floor bedroom, his temporary recuperation quarters.

Harry left the hospital at 5:30 a.m., walking on his own out of the building to his Chrysler. Driven by Mike Westwood, Harry and Bess were home at 6:15, where Harry exclaimed, "It's good to be home. I'm feeling fine." The former President ate breakfast on the back porch before going to bed to rest.<sup>51</sup>

Harry moved back to his second floor bedroom on October 22, 1954. Bess informed Margaret of the development in a letter in which she also wrote about the visit of Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn:

Dad moved back upstairs this morning while I was getting breakfast. Guess he wanted to avoid any argument!

Mr. Rayburn is due at three & no telling how many others. I am getting out all the liquor glasses in the place--also all the liquor.

What Bess did not tell Margaret, because she did not know it when she wrote the letter, was that Eleanor Roosevelt also stopped by the home that day.<sup>52</sup>

While he was in the hospital, Harry aborted his plan to build the Truman Library, and "the first home of my own," in Grandview. He accepted Independence's offer to locate the presidential library in Slover Park, less than a mile north of 219 North Delaware, at the

termination of the street across U.S. Highway 24.<sup>52</sup> On July 22, 1954, in an informal ceremony on the screened-in back porch, Harry accepted a check from the president of the chamber of commerce, the first of many such donations for the construction of the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum in Independence.<sup>54</sup>

The need to build a presidential library was acute. Traditionally Presidents have taken their papers and files home with them. While George Washington took 200 folio volumes to Mount Vernon, Harry Truman had 3.5 million documents filling 1500 to 1600 file drawers. As David Lloyd, Executive Director of the Truman Library, Inc., commented:

A staff of 20 or 30 persons worked for several years filing and indexing them. They were just something he couldn't put in the attic of the home on Delaware.<sup>55</sup>

Most of the administration's papers were stored at the Independence Memorial Building and the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City.

The first world leader to visit Harry Truman after his retirement was South Korean President Syngman Rhee. Rhee came to Independence to thank Truman for his support of South Korea. On August 5, 1954, the two men stood on the front porch of 219 North Delaware and visited 20 minutes.<sup>56</sup>

On December 29, 1954, Harry and Bess Truman sold 100 unimproved

acres of the Grandview farm for \$75,000,<sup>57</sup> a considerable boost to their finances.

On the second anniversary of leaving the White House, Truman declared:

I have enjoyed being home with my family and friends. I don't miss anything about Washington. The people here have been nice to me and I have appreciated it. I was always in favor of my home state and my two home towns, Independence and Grandview.<sup>58\*</sup>

A month later, Mr. and Mrs. Dean Acheson arrived for a three-day visit. The former Secretary of State and his wife stayed at 219 North Delaware from February 16 through 19, 1955.<sup>59</sup>

A lengthy article on "Truman In Retirement" in the February 1955 issue of Collier's revealed, among other points, that Harry believed 219 North Delaware was haunted: "haunted just like the White House-- it creaks and groans."<sup>60</sup> Truman, famous for his tales of Lincoln's ghost in the White House, never mentioned if he had ever seen a supernatural figure at the former Summer White House.

The reception at 219 North Delaware following the groundbreaking

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\*On the first anniversary of his retirement, Harry Truman stated he had spent a "pleasant year at home" and was "approaching an adjustment to civilian life.... As for being homesick for Washington, I've always been homesick for Missouri and now I am here." See "Truman Happy At Home," Kansas City Star (January 20, 1954), file-HST 1954 No. 1, KCSL.



for the Truman Library was hailed by the Examiner as "one of the largest festivities which the stately old home, tourist attraction No. 1 in Independence, has boasted in many years." Hosted on the former President's 71st birthday (May 8, 1955), the family arranged the combination groundbreaking-birthday dinner for nearly 150 out-of-town dignitaries.

As the guests arrived from the library site and entered through the front door, Bess stood in the vestibule to greet them with Harry immediately inside the foyer. Margaret stood in the middle of the central hallway directing the guests to the dining room by way of the parlor/music room and library. A country ham, smoked turkey, and hot biscuit dinner was served on the large dining room table which was "covered with a lace cloth and centered with an arrangement of yellow snadragons, yellow gladioli, and carnations."

The meal was prepared with additional hired help by cook Vieta Garr in the Truman kitchen. Bess and Margaret Truman worked unpretentiously refilling trays and glasses for the distinguished guests who were all seated at tables in the back yard. Harry Truman was surprised with a birthday cake in the shape of the Truman Library.<sup>61\*</sup>

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\*Among those dining at 219 North Delaware were Paul M. Butler, Chairman, Democratic National Committee (DNC); Frank McKinney, former DNC Chairman; John Snyder, former Secretary of the Treasury; Jesse M. Donalson, former Postmaster General; Senator Stuart Symington (D.-Mo.); and Matt Connelly, former Secretary to the President.

The event was significant because it helped solidify financial support. The psychological impact, witnessing the Trumans' commitment to the project with an invitation to the family's private sanctuary, helped in the ultimate realization of the Truman Library.

#### "PERSON TO PERSON" FILMS THE TRUMAN HOME

Television cameras from the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) converged on 219 North Delaware on May 27, 1955, to present Edward R. Murrow's "Person To Person" interview show. From CBS studios in New York, Margaret Truman acted as guest host for Murrow who was on assignment for CBS News in London. The focus of this special segment, broadcast "live" from the Truman home, was on Harry and Bess Truman in retirement. It marked the first time the 30-minute program's producers devoted their entire program to one family home, and the first time in history that "such a telecast had been conducted in the home of a president or a former president."<sup>62</sup> It also marked the first time that television cameras were permitted inside the Truman home.

Television crews arrived several days in advance of the telecast to make preparations. Nearly 40 CBS technicians, four cameras, and two tons of other equipment were allowed onto the property. Two large micro-wave transmitter cones were elevated to the tops of the telephone poles on Truman Road equipped to transmit 500-watt beams to

the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company building in downtown Kansas City. Half of the barn/carriage house was converted into a control center.

The entire first floor, with the exception of the bedroom, was flooded with television lights. [See Figures 59, 60, and 61]. Physical changes to the home to accommodate the filming included moving some of the furniture. The Examiner reported:

...furniture was cleared from some of the rooms to give the television lens a wide focus. The "spare" furniture was shoved into the downstairs guest bedroom, Mrs. Truman said.<sup>63</sup>

Bess and Vietta had spent many hours cleaning and polishing before the broadcast. Both were upset by the wires strewn about and the crewmen leaving cigarette butts all over the house. According to Margaret, her mother

took a dim view of the mess they made of her house, but I told her, "Now listen, that crew is really very neat. They took the cans of film and used them for ashtrays, they didn't use your ashtrays."

She said, "There were those ashtrays all over the place!"

I said, "Well, yes, but they used the ashtrays, didn't they?"<sup>64</sup>

According to the couple's wishes, the interview began with the Trumans sitting on the rear porch where normally "they sit and chat with old friends in the spring, summer, and fall."<sup>65</sup> The conversation between daughter and parents ranged from the weather to politics to baseball. The cameras panned from the back porch to the kitchen



FIGURE 59

FIGURE 59: Harry and Bess Truman sit on the back porch during the filming of the 1955 "Person to Person" program at the Truman home.

Date: May 28, 1955

Kansas City Star

Truman Library Photo No. 64-1062



FIGURE 60

FIGURE 60: Harry and Bess Truman sit in the parlor/music room during the filming of the 1955 "Person to Person" program at the Truman home.  
Date: May 28, 1955  
Kansas City Star  
Truman Library Photo No. 64-1066

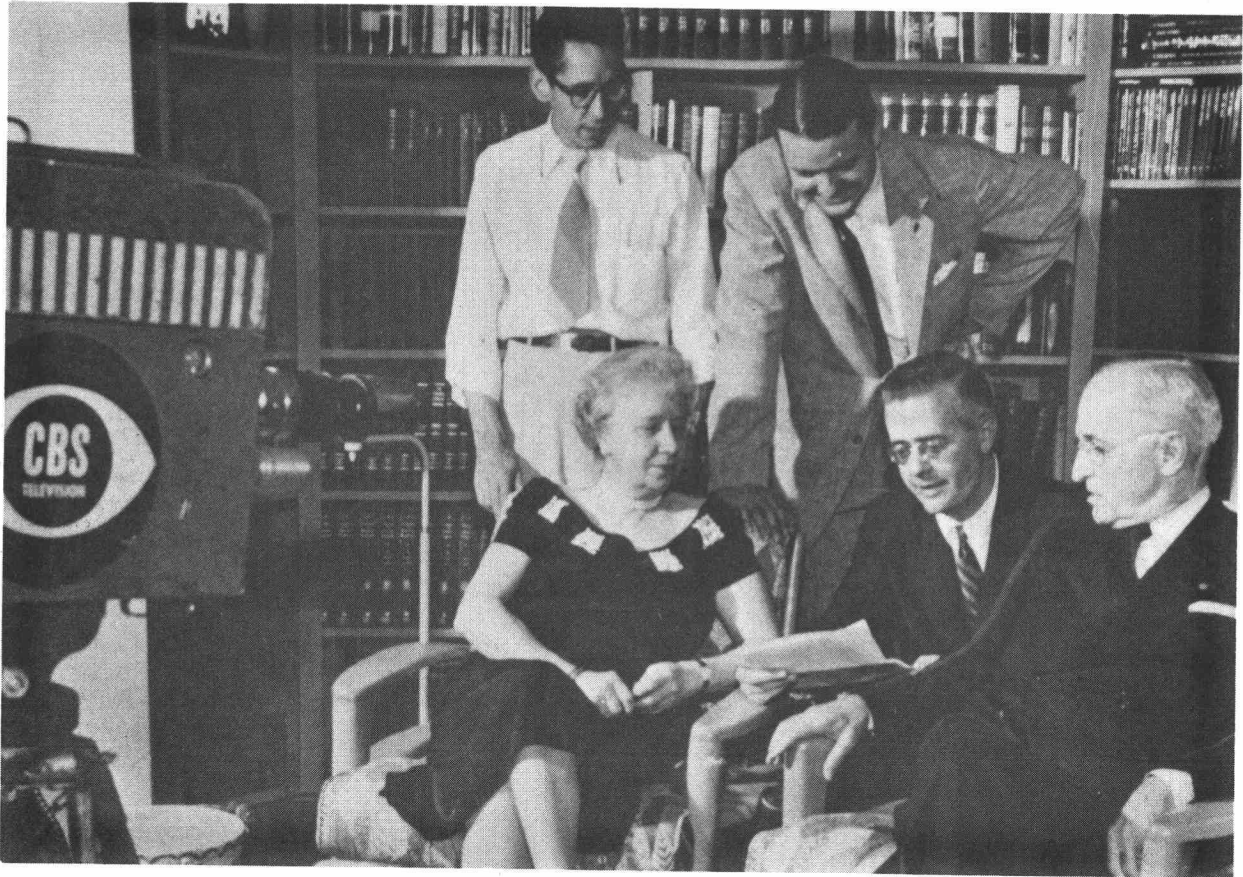


FIGURE 61

FIGURE 61: Harry and Bess get ready for the television broadcast of "Person To Person." CBS-TV technician Vernon Cheesman and others look on as the Trumans sit in the library.  
Date: May 28, 1955  
Kansas City Star  
Truman Library Photo No. 64-1050

where Vietta was baking brownies. They shifted back to the porch from where Harry and Bess walked to the side porch entering the dining room, past the stairway, and into the living room. There they sat on the couch in front of the colored glass bay windows. From there they proceeded to the music room and sat on the settee against the north wall. Margaret pointed out a painting by Sir Winston Churchill done at Marrakech and an original by Grandma Moses hanging over the piano. Mr. Truman played part of Paderewski's "Minuet" before the couple walked into the library. Margaret noted that her father's work table was gone to which Bess responded, "We had to have some room in here today." While in the library, the icon from the Mosque of St. Sophia was featured. Given to President Truman by Romania's Queen Hellen, the icon was propped up on the stereo/phonograph, leaning against the bookshelves.

From the 1955 film, there are no startling changes. Although it reflects most of the "modernizations" which had begun in 1953, the furnishings and interior decoration have remained nearly the same.<sup>66</sup>

#### MARGARET GETS MARRIED AND THE LIBRARY IS BUILT

The summer and fall of 1955 were quiet and uneventful in Independence as construction of the Truman Library progressed. One of the primary contenders for the 1956 Democratic presidential nomina-

tion came to Jackson County seeking advice and encouragement from Harry Truman. On November 12, 1955, Tennessee Senator Estes Kefauver arrived at Truman's Kansas City office. He came away without an endorsement. Harry Truman maintained his public neutrality on the subject. Political insiders speculated that the former President was leaning toward either Adlai Stevenson or W. Averell Harriman.<sup>67</sup>

Independence was far away from the intrigues of Washington. That was just the way Harry Truman liked it. He had priorities apart from politics. His Independence home was used as a base from which he launched an intensive campaign to raise funds for the Truman Library. With speaking engagements in the Midwest, he usually drove to the distant city, stayed overnight, and returned home to Bess. Further destinations entailed longer absences from 219 North Delaware. He often checked on the progress of the Library's construction during his morning walks. The home was also his literary base. While Harry wrote most of the rough draft of his memoirs at the Federal Reserve office, it took actual shape at the Truman home. There, Bess served in a familiar capacity as editor and critic for Harry's voluminous memoirs. The preface to the first volume of the book, Year of Decisions, was finished at 219 North Delaware on August 5, 1955. Harry wrote that "I owe a great debt of gratitude to Mrs. Truman, on whose counsel and judgment I frequently called."<sup>68</sup>

At Christmas 1955, a widely-known incident occurred in the liv-



ing room. As Harry walked into the room, he saw Bess stooped before the fireplace feeding papers into the fire:

"What are you doing, Bess?" asked the President.  
"I'm burning your letters to me," said Mrs. Truman.  
"Bess!" he said. "You oughtn't to do that."  
"Why not?" she replied. "I've read them several times."  
"But think of history!" said the President.  
"I have," answered Bess.<sup>69</sup>

The trimming of the Christmas tree in 1955 was held up pending Margaret's arrival from New York. Family custom continued unchanged as the large, formal Christmas Day dinner was eaten at noon in the dining room. The Examiner commented that "mail to the Truman home continues to be heavy. Greeting cards are coming from all over the world." Gifts and packages also poured in 219 North Delaware. One delivery man, stopped at the front gate, declared, "It seems to me that Mr. Truman is just as popular now as he was when he was president." The newspaper added, "The lighted Christmas tree in the window of the old mid-Victorian home of the Truman family, still No. 1 tourist attraction even in mid-winter, always lures bands of Christmas carolers during the holiday season."<sup>70</sup>

Margaret's marriage in the spring of 1956 was a milestone in the Trumans' lives. At 32, Margaret was engaged to New York Times journalist E. Clifton Daniel, Jr. Scheduled for April 21 at Trinity Episcopal Church, the wedding day began as Harry emerged for his morning walk at 6:15 a.m. He told reporters that his future son-in-law and Clifton's parents (Mrs. and Mrs. E. Clifton Daniel, Sr.) were

staying with the Trumans. He reminisced about the significance of his neighborhood and said that the wedding rehearsal had gone "without a hitch, just fine." Before the ceremony, the families ate lunch at George and May Wallace's, feasting on chicken salad, biscuits with ham, and tea, coffee, or milk.<sup>71</sup>

The Truman/Daniel wedding attracted national attention. A friend of the bride, Margaret Cousins spent the day of the wedding inside the Truman home. She recorded the event in an article for McCall's magazine:

President Truman was trying to read the New York Times and was being shunted from room to room by the ubiquitous vacuum cleaner being run under his feet. "Harry," Mrs. Truman said at last, "would you mind reading the paper upstairs? We've simply got to get this place ready for the reception!" President Truman docilely departed for the upper regions.

It was a scene so intrinsically American that it could have been painted by Norman Rockwell for posterity.<sup>72</sup>

During her frantic housecleaning, Bess Truman declared:

"Isn't that just like Margaret Truman!"

Cousins asked, "What did she do wrong?"

"She decided to get married on the opening day of the baseball season," Mrs. Truman said, "when there are 364 other days in the year!... I always go to the game in Kansas City on opening day," she said wistfully.<sup>73</sup>

For the third consecutive generation, in a repeat of June 13, 1883, and June 28, 1919, a reception was held at 219 North Delaware following the wedding. Invited guests were given the run of the house as wedding gifts were displayed on the beds in the second floor

bedrooms.<sup>74</sup> [See Figures 62, 63, and 64].

A month after the wedding, Harry and Bess left Independence for a six-week vacation in Europe. The trip came, in part, to what Harry confided to Margaret the previous fall: "Your mother is moaning because she sits at home so much but I'll remedy that!"<sup>75</sup> The Trumans were scheduled to sail May 11 aboard the S. S. United States. The week prior to the trip was hectic; in the the scramble to pack, Harry had an accident which nearly ruined the entire vacation:

...we began to assemble the necessities and the trimmings and to visit and talk with our friends [whom we'd be visiting]. The last few days were rather hectic. We had to write letters to people who had written us about Margie's wedding, assemble hats and dresses, stockings, sox and shoes, tails and tuxedos, and all sorts of things you never worry about at home or in the White House either because there you have someone to do it.

In assembling my individual luggage I was coming down the stairs, missed a step and rolled a half dozen steps to the landing and pulled a ligament loose in my right ankle. It was seven o'clock in the morning and by noon I had an ankle as big as two should be. Dr. Graham... bound it up and I managed to get around.<sup>76</sup>

The Trumans returned to New York on July 3 to visit Margaret and Clifton Daniel,<sup>77</sup> before arriving home on July 7. At the Missouri Pacific Railroad depot Harry declared that Europe was "wonderful," but "nothing looked as good as Independence."<sup>78\*</sup>

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\*Harry's love of his home town never diminished and he reveled in constant praise for Independence. For example: "I have been everywhere and seen nearly everything... and this is one of the finest places in the world. This is the center of things as far as I

*Mr & Mrs Harry S. Truman*  
*request the pleasure of your company*  
*at the wedding reception of their daughter*  
*Mary Margaret*  
*and*  
*Mr. Elbert Clifton Daniel, junior*  
*on Saturday, the twenty-first of April*  
*at five o'clock in the afternoon*  
*219 North Delaware Street*  
*Independence, Missouri*

FIGURE 62

FIGURE 62: Invitation to Miss Elizabeth Woodson, Family Papers of Margaret Woodson, A/75/1F15, Jackson County Historical Society Archives, Independence, Missouri.

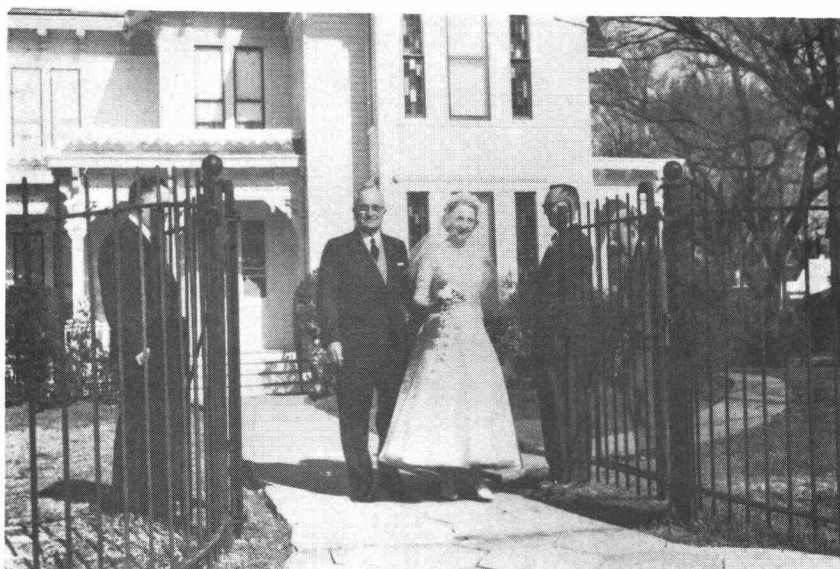


FIGURE 63: The proud father escorts his daughter from the Truman home.

Date April 21, 1956

From the papers of Margaret Truman Daniel  
Truman Library Photo No. 82-21-1

FIGURE 64: Truman-Daniel Wedding Party: (L to R) George Backer (former Times publisher); Turner Catledge; Best Man John Barrow; E. Clifton Daniel; Margaret T Daniel; Mrs. John (Drucie Snyder) Horton; and Mrs. William Coleman (Mary Shaw) Branton. Main Hall, 219 North Delaware. Truman Library Photo No. 59-626

Several weeks later, Randall Jessee presented the Trumans with a composite film of their European excursion, courtesy of NBC-News. Harry invited the Jessee family to 219 North Delaware one evening to watch the film along with his family (including the Wallaces, and the Trumans from Grandview). The film was shown in the back yard and was followed by ice cream. The Jessee's four-year-old daughter was taken by the Oxford scenes depicting Harry in his befeater hat and robes receiving an honorary degree. Harry, excusing himself to disappear into the house, emerged soon after walking across the lawn in his red Oxford robes and black befeater's hat. Asked what he was up to, he replied, "Well, I think any little girl that's so interested in the robes of Oxford should be able to see the real thing."<sup>79</sup>

As the only living former President from the Democratic Party, Harry Truman played a vital role as a senior statesman whose support was actively cultivated. Presidential contenders and candidates called or visited him in Independence seeking advice or an endorsement. The last Democratic National Convention he attended was in 1956 when Truman again backed Adlai Stevenson. Tennessee Governor Frank Clement came to Independence on July 23, 1956, to confer with Harry Truman. Clement delivered the keynote speech at the party convention. A dark horse candidate for the vice-presidential nomina-

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am concerned." He added that "citizens of Independence are welcome inside or outside the iron fence" surrounding 219 North Delaware. See "Truman Urges Close Study of Government," Examiner (January 13, 1956), p. 1, folder-Libraries, Presidential HSTL 1956, HSTL.

tion, Governor Clement hoped to gain added strength from his meeting with Truman.<sup>80</sup> Both Harry and Bess Truman traveled to Chicago for the event in August 1956.<sup>81</sup>

The new year 1957 did not begin well for the Trumans. Bess fell at home and fractured her left ankle on January 3. She was at Independence Hospital for three days<sup>82</sup> and wore a cast for several weeks. On February 5, Harry slipped on the ice at home and suffered a scalp wound on the right, rear side of his head. He drove on to his Kansas City office where Dr. Wallace Graham came to sew six stitches.<sup>83</sup>

The outlook improved on June 5, 1957, when Harry and Bess became grandparents. Margaret delivered a 6 lb., 8 oz. boy in the early morning hours. Shortly afterwards she called her parents with the good news.<sup>84</sup> A nursery corner was added in the large front second floor bedroom for little Clifton Truman Daniel for when he and his parents came to visit.<sup>85</sup> E. Clifton Daniel remembered his father-in-law's first solo encounter with his grandson at 219 North Delaware:

As a grandfather the president was alternately delighted and ill at ease, having come to the job late in life. The first time his grandson, Clifton, was taken to visit him, I got up at 6 a.m. to give the baby his bottle. Grandpa, as usual, was already up and dressed and reading the paper. I dumped Clifton in his lap and went into the kitchen to warm the bottle. When I came back, the former president of the United States looked like a man with a time bomb with no place to put it.<sup>86</sup>

Construction of the library progressed feverishly in anticipation of the July dedication. Harry Truman made frequent inspection tours. The former President knew the name of every construction worker at the site which made each one feel he was working personally for Mr. Truman. Many voluntarily worked 10- to 12-hour days to stay on schedule. Rufus Burrus's negotiations with the contractors succeeded in removing the requisite profit margins and yielded an amazingly low total construction bill of \$1.7 million.<sup>87</sup> [See Figure 65].

A third and final large reception was held at 219 North Delaware following the July 6, 1957, dedication of the Harry S. Truman Library. [See Figure 66]. Harry got into "hot water" with Bess because some of their relatives were left off the invitation list. On April 22, 1957, President Truman wrote David D. Lloyd, Truman Library fund raiser:

It pains me to say this, but you have got me into quite a family storm. A large number of the ladies of the bridge club, who like to put it over on one another, have received invitations, but my two sisters-in-law who live right in back of us and who are members of the club did not receive invitations. My sister and brother and my nephews and nieces have not received theirs. Only two members of my office staff have received invitations.

Mrs. Truman is in close daily contact with the sisters-in-law, and if you don't watch out, you will be the principal witness in a divorce case.<sup>88</sup>

The dinner at 219 North Delaware was identical to that which was served at the 1954 groundbreaking reception. The Truman home was



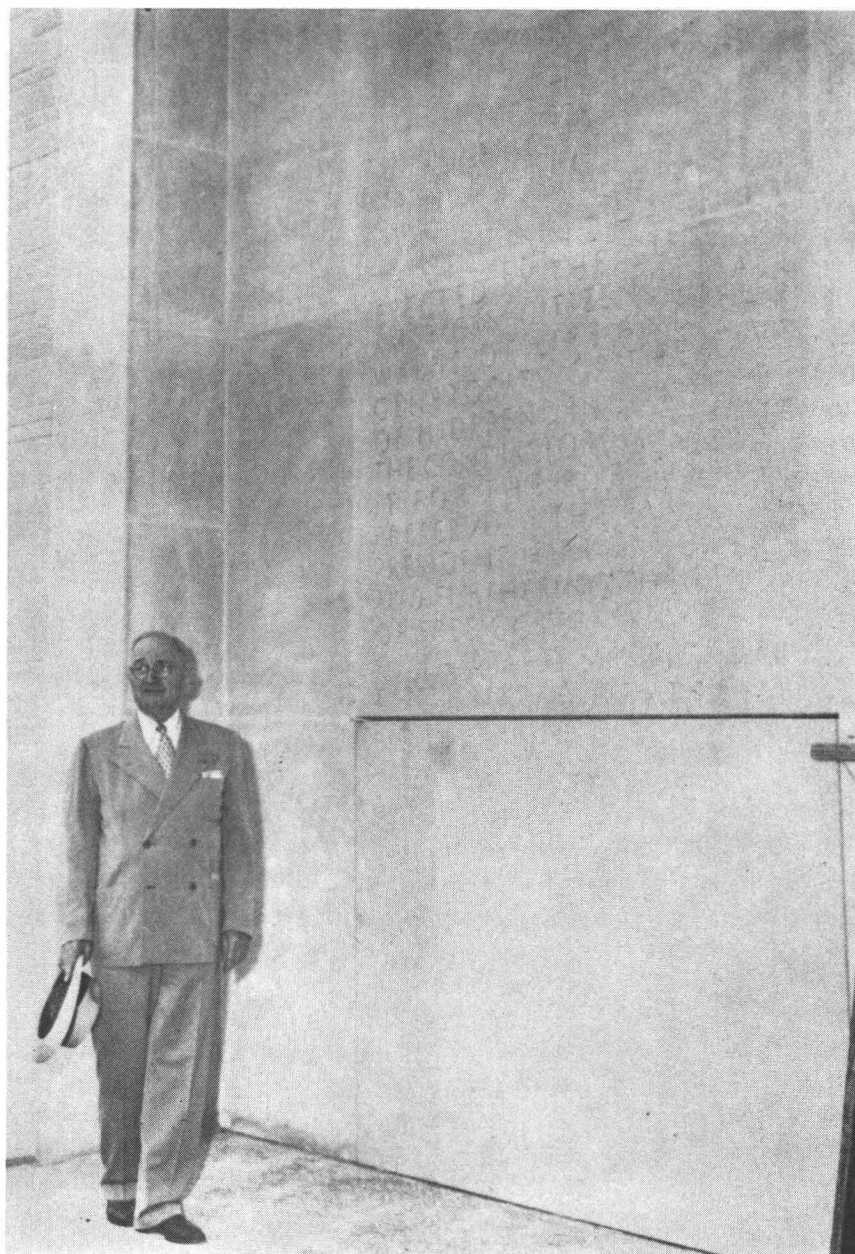


FIGURE 65

FIGURE 65: Harry Truman stands in front of the cornerstone of the Truman Library during the construction period of the building.

Date: early 1957

Kansas City Star

Truman Library Photo No. 58-70



FIGURE 66

FIGURE 58: Dignitaries at the Harry S. Truman Library dedication, L. to R.: Bess Wallace Truman; Eleanor Roosevelt; Chief Justice Earl Warren; former President Herbert Hoover; Basil O'Connor, president of the library fund raising organization; and Harry S Truman.  
 Date: July 6, 1957  
 Associated Press  
 Truman Library Photo No. 70-477

decorated with red roses, while pink roses served as the centerpiece on the dining room table. Among the 400 selected guests for the dedication and reception were former President Herbert C. Hoover, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, Chief Justice Earl Warren, Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn, Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Baines Johnson, Senate Minority Leader William F. Knowland, Dean Acheson, W. Averell Harriman, and Missouri Senator Stuart Symington. Some of the guests were accommodated on the back porch, while the remainder gathered on the rear lawn.<sup>89</sup>

In the organization of the museum section of the library, it was not just Harry Truman who was the key participant. Bess Truman was deeply involved and often made the final selections for exhibits. According to Dr. Philip C. Brooks, the first Director of the Truman Library,

Bess Truman was an invaluable help here. We had the official description of various articles, of course, but Mrs. Truman invariably contributed the missing bits of personal information we needed sometimes in weighing significance [of objects].<sup>90</sup>

#### A SPECTACULAR HOMECOMING, JANUARY 22, 1953

<sup>1</sup>Col. Rufus Burrus, Interview, Independence, July 22, 1983.

<sup>2</sup>"Home To Cheers," Kansas City Times (January 21, 1953), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S January-March 1953, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>3</sup>Harry S Truman, Mr. Citizen, photo album with five articles published in The American Weekly of Hearst Newspapers, Inc.; presented to Mr. Truman in 1953, HSTL.

<sup>4</sup>Walter Cronkite, "The Legacy of Harry S. Truman" (New York: CBS-TV production, July 1984).

<sup>5</sup>Sue Gentry, "Independence Staged Many Activities to Welcome Home Its Famous Citizens," Examiner (January 19, 1984), p. 38.

<sup>6</sup>"Home To Cheers."

<sup>7</sup>"Joy In Being Back," Kansas City Times (February 6, 1953), file-HST Dinners, KCSL.

<sup>8</sup>Harry S Truman, Mr. Citizen.

<sup>9</sup>"Secret Service Ends Vigil on Truman," Kansas City Times (January 21, 1953), file-HST Secret Service Guard, KCSL.

<sup>10</sup>"Truman's Piano Is Home," Kansas City Times (January 26, 1953), file-HST Piano, KCSL.

<sup>11</sup>James C. Fitzpatrick, "A Retirement that Meant Plenty of Work," Kansas City Star (May 5, 1984), p. 12F.

<sup>12</sup>"Joy In Being Back," Kansas City Times (February 6, 1953), file-HST Dinners, KCSL.

<sup>13</sup>"A Birthday Report From Independence: Truman, at 75, Takes Own Advice on Keeping Busy," Washington Sunday Star (May 3, 1959), p. B-3, folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1959, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>14</sup>Helen Worden Erskine, "Truman In Retirement," Collier's (February 4, 1955), p. 21, folder-Truman Harry S January-March 1955, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>15</sup>Merle Miller, Plain Speaking, p. 397.

<sup>16</sup>Harry S Truman, Mr. Citizen.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

"MR. CITIZEN" OR "MR. PRESIDENT?"

<sup>19</sup>"Truman Has Suite Here," Kansas City Times (January 21, 1953), file-HST Office, KCSL.

<sup>20</sup>Harry S Truman, Mr. Citizen.

<sup>21</sup>"New Car For Mr. Truman," Kansas City Times (February 17,

1953), file-HST Motor Cars, HSTL.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., "Gala Car Night," (March 8, 1953).

<sup>23</sup>Harry S Truman, Mr. Citizen.

<sup>24</sup>"Truman In A Collision," Kansas City Times (February 18, 1953), file-HST Motor Cars, KCSL.

<sup>25</sup>"Truman Denies Seeking A Home on Park Ave.," New York World-Telegram (March 18, 1953), folder-Homes, HST, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., Robert Conway, "Trumans Eye A 500 G Conn. Estate," New York Daily News (March 19, 1953), p. 1.

<sup>27</sup>"The Trumans Are Home," Kansas City Times (May 6, 1953), file-HST Vacations No. 3, KCSL.

<sup>28</sup>"Trumans Driving To Washington," Examiner (June 19, 1953), p. 1, MCPL.

<sup>29</sup>Harry S Truman, Mr. Citizen.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., "Trumans Unpack After 3,000 Mile Motor Trip To The East," Examiner (July 9, 1953), p. 1, MCPL.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., "John W. Snyder a Guest of the Trumans," (May 11, 1953), p. 1.

<sup>32</sup>George K. Wallace, "Truman Ends Silence," Kansas City Times (June 18, 1953), file-HST 1953 No. 1, KCSL.

<sup>33</sup>"Truman Home Isolated By Work On Road," Examiner (December 15, 1953), p. 6, MCPL.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

#### HARRY AND BESS PURCHASE 219 NORTH DELAWARE

<sup>35</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 42. Also, Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview, Independence, June 14, 1983.

<sup>36</sup>Missouri Warranty Deed, Frank G. and Natalie O. Wallace to Harry S and Elizabeth (Bess) Truman, July 25, 1953, Land Book 1034, Page 631, No. 609418, Office of Deeds, Jackson County Courthouse, Independence.

<sup>37</sup>Col. Rufus Burrus, Interview, Independence, July 22, 1983.

<sup>38</sup>Report of Appraiser, February 8, 1954, No. 9784, Estate of Madge Gates Wallace, Office of the Probate Court of Jackson County, Independence.

<sup>39</sup>Finding and Order Discharging Administrator, Final Settlement Approved, May 10, 1954, Frank Wallace, Administrator, to the Jackson County Probate Court, No. 9784, Estate of Madge Gates Wallace, Office of the Probate Court of Jackson County, Independence.

BESS BEGINS HER "MODERNIZATION" PROGRAM

<sup>40</sup>Harry S Truman, Mr. Citizen (New York: Popular Library, 1953), p. 59.

<sup>41</sup>"Truman Pension of \$95.66," Kansas City Star (November 6, 1952), file-HST Pension, KCSL.

<sup>42</sup>Margaret Truman, "Smithsonian World," p. 59.

<sup>43</sup>Harry S Truman, Mr. Citizen (photo album from The American Weekly, 1953), HSTL.

<sup>44</sup>Ron Cockrell, Historic Structures Report, History and Significance, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri (Omaha: Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, 1984), chapter 11.

<sup>45</sup>C. E. Anderson, Interview, Harry S. Truman Library, June 20, 1983.

<sup>46</sup>James Reston, "No Truman Visit To Ike," Kansas City Times (May 11, 1954), file-HST 1954 No. 1, KCSL.

<sup>47</sup>"Trumans Find Getting Ready For Vacation Is Troublesome," Examiner (May 4, 1954), p. 1, MCPL; and, Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview, Independence, July 20, 1983.

<sup>48</sup>Agreement, C. E. Anderson and H. S. Truman, October 22, 1954, personal papers of C. E. Anderson, Holden, Mo.

<sup>49</sup>"Set For Truman Event," Kansas City Star (June 8, 1954), file-HST 1954 No. 2, KCSL.

<sup>50</sup>"Truman Sits Up," Kansas City Times (June 21, 1954), file-HST Health, KCSL.

<sup>51</sup>Rufus Burrus, Interview, Independence, February 28, 1984;

and "A Cool Room Awaits Truman," Kansas City Times, and "Truman Is Home," Kansas City Star (July 9, 1954), file-HST Health, KCSL.

52Margaret Truman, Letters From Father, p. 205; and "Police Busy Taking Care of Both Roosevelt and Rayburn," Examiner (October 22, 1954), p. 1, MCPL.

53"Truman Library To Be Built In Independence," Examiner (July 7, 1954), p. 1, MCPL.

54Ibid., "C. of C. Check For Library To Mr. Truman," Examiner (July 22, 1954), p. 1.

55"Could Start Library Soon Lloyd Says," Examiner (June 10, 1954), MCPL.

56Ibid., "Diplomacy on the Front Porch," (August 5, 1954).

57"Trumans Sell 100 Acres," Kansas City Times (December 30, 1954), file-HST Grandview Property, KCSL.

58George K. Wallace, "Likes A Private Role," Kansas City Star (January 20, 1955), file-HST 1955 No. 1, KCSL.

59"Mr. Truman With Guest Atcheson [sic], (February 17, 1955), and "Achesons Enjoy Mid-Western Hospitality As Truman Guests," (February 18, 1955), Examiner, p. 1, MCPL.

60Erskine, "Truman In Retirement," Collier's (February 4, 1955), p. 19, folder-Truman Harry S January-March 1955, Vertical File, HSTL.

61"Missouri Hospitality At Its Best At Truman Home Reception," Examiner (May 9, 1955), MCPL.

#### "PERSON TO PERSON" FILMS THE TRUMAN HOME

62"Nation Eavesdrops As Truman Family Visits on TV," Examiner (May 28, 1955), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1955, Vertical File, HSTL.

63Sue Gentry, "Truman Family Will Take The Nation Into It's Home In 'Person To Person' Telecast To Be Aired Tonight," Examiner (May 27, 1955), p. 1, MCPL.

64Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 38.

65"'Open House' To Nation," Kansas City Star (May 27, 1955),

folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1955, Vertical File, HSTL.

66"Person To Person," May 27, 1955, film, HSTL.

MARGARET GETS MARRIED AND THE LIBRARY IS BUILT

67Don T. Jones, "Kefauver Here In Visit," Kansas City Times (November 12, 1955), file-HST 1955 No. 4, KCSL.

68Harry S Truman, Year of Decisions, pp. xi; viii.

69Ferrell, Dear Bess, p. vii.

70"Trimming of Tree at Truman Home Awaits Margaret's Arrival," Examiner (December 22, 1955), p. 1, MCPL.

71"Day For Remembering," Kansas City Star (April 21, 1956), file-HST Walks, KCSL.

72Sue Gentry, Phase IV: Back Home; Return to Private Life Meant a Joyous Return to Apple-Pie Routines and Friendly Familiarity," Examiner (October 18, 1982), p. 4B.

73Ibid.

74Sue Gentry, Interview, Independence, June 22, 1983.

75Margaret Truman, Letters From Father, October 17, 1955, p. 119.

76Ferrell, Off The Record, p. 326.

77Ibid., June 22, 1956, p. 126.

78"Home Town Still Best," Kansas City Times (July 8, 1956), file-HST 1956 No. 2, KCSL.

79Dr. Philip C. Brooks, "Oral History Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Randall S. Jessee, American Embassy, Copenhagen, Denmark, May 19, 1964," transcript (Independence: Harry S. Truman Library, 1966), pp. 15-17.

80"Clement Back to Tennessee," Kansas City Star (July 24, 1956), folder-Libraries, Presidential HSTL 1956, Vertical File, HSTL.

81"Trumans Leave For Chicago," Kansas City Times (August 9, 1956), file-HST 1956 No. 3, KCSL.

82"Mrs. Truman Injured," (January 4, 1957), and "Mrs. Truman To Home," (January 7, 1957), Kansas City Times, file-HST Mrs.,



1952-56, KCSL.

83"Truman Hurt In Fall," Kansas City Times (February 6, 1957), file-HST 1957 No. 1, KCSL.

84Bulletin, Kansas City Times (June 5, 1957), file-HST 1957 No. 2, KCSL.

85"Modest and Retiring Bess Truman was Powerful Influence Behind the Scenes," Examiner (July 3, 1957), p. 12D, MCPL.

86Clifton Daniel, "My Father-in-Law, the Ex-President" Kansas City Star (August 20, 1984), p. 3B.

87Col. Rufus Burrus, Interview, Independence, February 28, 1984.

88Ferrell, Off The Record, p. 351.

89"Reception at Home to Follow Dedication," Examiner (July 5, 1957), folder-Truman, Harry S July-September 1957, Vertical File, HSTL.

90"A Visit to the Truman Library," Everyday Magazine, St. Louis Post Dispatch (July 28, 1957), p. 1, folder-Libraries, Presidential, HSTL 1957, Vertical File, HSTL.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### LIFE AT THE TRUMAN HOME, 1953 TO 1964

- \* Daily Routines

- \* The Golden Years of Retirement

### DAILY ROUTINES

Harry and Bess Truman enjoyed relatively good health during their first decade of retirement. While occupied by the "modernization" of their home and events connected with the Truman Library, they both reveled in the quiet, comfort, and familiarity of 219 North Delaware. The white gingerbread mansion behind the iron picket fence was their own private retreat from the pressures of the outside world, particularly a curious, adoring public.

By May 1959, at age 75, Harry had slowed down little. Every workday he went to his office at the Truman Library. He had enjoyed walking the six blocks north, down the Delaware Street corridor, to the library, until so many people began lining up along the route to greet him, ask for autographs, and pose for pictures, that he felt like "an animal in a circus." He was forced to begin driving his white Dodge to work.<sup>1</sup>

Although he increased or decreased his morning walks depending on the weather and daily work schedule, Harry averaged a neighborhood pre-breakfast stroll two to three times a week. The outing, between 6 and 6:30 a.m., ranged from 1 to 1.5 miles. Although he used a cane for hills and street crossings, he maintained a military regimen and did not digress for taggers-on:

If they walk with me they have to take 120 steps a

minute.... I don't have any set route. I don't want people from out of town getting the idea they can come here and take a walk with me. That's one walk I want to take alone.<sup>2</sup>

Harry awoke between 5 and 5:30 each morning. He would leave Bess, still asleep in their blue-walled bedroom, walk through the passageway into Margaret's childhood room, and then into the small, north bedroom. It was this room that Harry used for a dressing room, and where, in later years, he would sometimes sleep on the low-lying, twin bed. Before leaving the house for his walk, Harry took a stick with a nail in the bottom and patrolled the grounds for litter or uprooted dandelions. Returning from his walk, he read the local morning papers, wrote, and waited until breakfast.<sup>3</sup>

During the pre-breakfast interim, Harry usually ate an overly-ripe banana to curb his hunger.<sup>4</sup> He sat on the back porch and devoured the Independence Examiner, and several other newspapers to which he subscribed. Harry never trusted the views of a single newspaper, relying on a half-dozen to get a more rounded view of contemporary issues. Because of his stormy relations with the Republican-owned Kansas City Star and Times, he spared no opportunity to denigrate Jackson County's only major metropolitan-wide newspaper. In an August 1964 press conference, Harry declared:

The Independence Examiner is the best newspaper in Jackson County.... When I want the news I read the Independence Examiner. When I want a pack of lies, I read The Kansas City Star.<sup>5</sup>

Bess, having risen and dressed by 7:00, came downstairs to the kitchen to fix Harry's spartan breakfast.<sup>6</sup> Breakfast consisted of "half a grapefruit and usually some tea" (sometimes coffee) followed by either cereal or toast, but never both.<sup>7</sup> Breakfast and lunch were normally eaten at the kitchen table, while the evening meal took place in the dining room.<sup>8</sup> By 7:45, Harry headed for the barn to get his car to drive to the library, leaving Bess behind to start her daily cleaning and other household chores with the assistance of Vietta Garr.

Once at the library, Harry sorted through mail and dictated between 40 and 50 letters or met with individuals with appointments before 11:30. For lunch, Harry sometimes dined at a local restaurant, but he usually drove home to a light meal which Bess or Vietta had prepared.<sup>9</sup> According to Margaret:

Dad would sometimes come home for lunch from his office at the [Truman] Library, to Mother's great dismay. I reminded her of the old saying, "for better or worse, but not for lunch." She said if she never saw another sardine or peanut butter sandwich, she'd be very happy. But that was what he wanted--one of the two.<sup>10</sup>

Another source reported what happened when Harry told Bess he would be coming home for lunch:

"Just give me a roast beef sandwich and a glass of milk." In exasperation, Bess exclaimed to a friend, "He acts like we had roast beef in the refrigerator all the time!"<sup>11</sup>

Occasionally, Rufus Burrus would drop by to visit with Harry and Bess during lunchtime. Finding Harry sitting at the kitchen table, Rufus was always asked to eat lunch with the couple as they visited. Legal business and politics, however, were never discussed at 219 North Delaware; these concerns were reserved for Harry's office at the library. A fellow Mason and Army reservist, Rufus and Harry remained close friends since Rufus served as Assistant Counselor during Harry's county judgeship days. Rufus was instrumental in hurdling legal obstacles in the construction of the library. He also provided free legal advice and attended local functions where he helped Harry avoid crowds.<sup>12\*</sup>

Returning to the library between 1 and 1:30, Harry resumed his work schedule.<sup>13</sup> He enjoyed conducting tours for high school students and addressing groups ranging from 20 to 200 in the building's auditorium.<sup>14</sup> In the late afternoon, he again drove home to nap before dinner which was ready by 5:30 or 6:00. After dinner, the couple enjoyed their favorite pasttime: reading.<sup>15</sup>

Because the first floor library was transformed into a cozy den, the living room ceased to be used for any daily use, especially reading. The living room became an area reserved for special guests and

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\*Devoted to his close friend, Rufus Burrus did not want compensation for any legal work or advice. Harry once wrote him a \$1,000 check, but Rufus refused it. Harry mailed it to him twice. Rufus finally kept the check, but never cashed it.

formal entertaining.<sup>16</sup>

In the first floor library, Harry and Bess sat in their favorite chairs and, by the light of their favorite lamp, spent the evening engrossed in books. Harry enjoyed history, biographies, and political tomes, and always had them stacked on the small work table. He would often alternate between three to four books at a time. Harry and Bess both enjoyed murder mystery novels and traded them through the mail with Margaret in New York. When weary of reading or for background purposes, the Trumans sat listening to recordings of Margaret's concerts, or to composers like Gilbert and Sullivan, Chopin, Strauss, and Mozart.<sup>17</sup>

Although they received a television in the mid-1950s as a gift from Margaret, it was seldom used. Watching it hurt Harry's sensitive eyes. It was relied upon, however, for presidential news conferences, speeches, or other important events.<sup>18</sup> Bedtime came between 9:30 and 10:00.<sup>19</sup>

The relationship with their daughter remained extremely close. Nightly phone calls were exchanged between Independence and New York to discuss daily routines and the Daniel grandchildren. Regular visits were also made, usually coinciding with holidays. On such occasions, as in childhood, Margaret enjoyed arguing with her mother:

...we loved to argue, we really enjoyed it very much and

Dad hated it. Dad used to say, "Why don't you two stop arguing?" And we were just having a great time disagreeing... with each other on everything, everything you could think of about who wrote the best murder mysteries and who was going to be the murderer and "No, no your're all wrong about that," and the next thing we knew, Dad had left the room. He couldn't stop us and he was sick of listening to us.<sup>20</sup>

Margaret refused to ride with her father in a car if he was behind the wheel. She insisted upon driving. Harry, although a good driver, would often proceed with other things foremost on his mind and not concentrate on road conditions. Both Harry and Bess quit driving voluntarily when their health and age prohibited it.<sup>21</sup> According to Margaret, the former President had an obsession with caring for his cars:

...he was obsessed with roads and automobiles and loved them [and] took care of them. If one of them broke down [he] wouldn't have a clue what to do, wouldn't even be able to find the spark plug.... But the car was washed at least every two or three days, the upholstery was vacuumed and cleaned and people did not throw gum wrappers around; they were put in the ash tray. He did not like people to smoke because he had never smoked; he didn't like them smoking in his car because it would, the smoke would get into the upholstery....<sup>22</sup>

Curse words or any foul language were foreign to 219 North Delaware. The Trumans taught their daughter not to curse and they themselves did not curse in their home. Despite Harry's reputation for having a worldly vocabulary, Margaret recalled that "members of our family generally did not use that type of language in front of one another, with the occasional 'hell' or 'damn' from my mother."<sup>23</sup>



The Trumans entertained seldom in their home, partly because they did not want to offend any friend who might feel slighted by the absence of an invitation and partly because 219 North Delaware was an unpretentious place where they could always feel at ease. While they saw few people in their home, they enjoyed social engagements elsewhere more frequently.<sup>24</sup> Harry wrote in 1953:

Occasionally, we're asked out to dinner or to spend the evening. If we know the people, we'll go, but with one or two exceptions we've been avoiding "functions." The exceptions convinced us we'd better avoid them.<sup>25</sup>

He cited an incident where the Trumans attended a basketball game. When the spotlight shone on them, they were mobbed by 300 people demanding autographs. Eight ushers were required to fend them off. Finally, the announcer stated that no autographs would be given while the game was in progress. Five minutes before the game ended, the Trumans' host insisted they leave: "He was afraid if we didn't leave then, we'd never be able to. After that we decided we'd better stay at home for a while and go to bed early."<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless the simple life of Independence was coveted by Harry and Bess. For the first decade of retirement at least, there was no need for any buffer between them and the public. A 1955 incident when the chairwoman of the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee called Bess exemplifies their simple lifestyle. The woman, calling at 5:00 p.m., expected a maid to answer the telephone. She was genuinely shocked when Harry Truman answered and

declared, "Just a minute and I'll call the boss. She's getting dinner."<sup>27</sup>

A personal quirk shared by Harry and Bess Truman was never to throw anything away. The exception to the rule regarded unwanted or frivolous gifts which were in turn often given away. According to his daughter, Harry Truman was "the worst string-saver on earth."<sup>28</sup>

One of Harry's favorite hobbies at his home was checking the thermometers and barometers which were placed at various locations inside and outside. Harry enjoyed monitoring the weather gauges each day. He had an uncanny ability to predict the day's weather more accurately than professional meteorologists with more sophisticated means at their disposal. The crude, home gauges and the shape, density, and color of the clouds were all that he needed. Harry also delighted in observing the wide range of animals which lived in the neighborhood and played in the large, fenced yard. Birds, squirrels, and rabbits were among his favorite creatures to watch from the back porch.<sup>29</sup> Before leaving for San Francisco in 1955 to attend ceremonies commemorating the tenth anniversary of the UN Charter, Harry wrote in his diary:

Bess was at the window waving goodbye to me, the old yard rabbit was looking at me as were two neighborhood cats—a black one and a yellow one from under the spirea bushes at the back door. Pigeons, jay birds, robins, a thrush and a catbird were on hand for a drink and a flutter in the birdbath.<sup>30</sup>

In July 1955, the Trumans were excited and entertained to have some red birds build a nest adjacent to their back porch. The former President recorded the event in two installments in his diary. On July 24, he wrote:

A couple of red birds decided to build a nest on the back porch. Grape vines and rose bushes climb over the south exposure and there is an ideal place for a nest. A few days after the nest was finished four beautiful speckled eggs appeared. And in due time four little naked birds came to life. In a few days these four little birds were able to make hungry noises and the mama and papa birds were busy all day and late in the evening furnishing food to four apparently insatiable appetites.<sup>31</sup>

On July 31, he recorded the sad fate of the young red birds:

The four little birds finally opened their eyes and began to have feathers appear. We watched them grow and wanted to see them fly away at the proper time. The old birds became very tame. We could walk right up to the nest and they would keep right on taking care of their children.

Our next door neighbors on the south across the alley have a great big black cat. He used our yard to walk around and cool off. He would have nothing to do with us individually, except that he'd allow my good brother-in-law George [Wallace] to pet him.

One evening we saw him start up the back steps to the porch where the red birds had their nest with the four little birds. We ran him off but the next morning we heard the mama & papa birds making a great fuss about five o'clock. When we arrived at the porch about 5:15 the nest was upside down and the four little red birds were inside the big black cat. Too bad the cat couldn't have been caught in the act. It would have been too bad for him.<sup>32</sup>

Harry Truman had his own household chores, but he did not consider mowing the lawn among them:

When I get up at about five to five-thirty in the morning, I go downstairs and do a round of work in the house. In the wintertime, this used to include tending the furnace and carrying out the ashes—that is, until gas was put in and made me give it up. Sometimes I try to take care of other household chores, which Mrs. Truman has been trying to keep me from doing. She runs the house.

There was one chore she did ask me to do, which I wanted to get out of doing. That was to mow the lawn. I think she did this mainly to tease me a little. She takes great pride in the yard and puts in many hours tending the rose garden. We do call in outside help to tend the grounds and trees and the cutting of the grass. But one weekend Mrs. Truman said that I had done nothing about the lawn. So I waited till Sunday morning, just as our neighbors were beginning to pass on their way to church, and I took out the lawn mower and started to cut the grass. Mrs. Truman, preparing to leave for church, was horrified to see me cutting the lawn.

"What are you doing on Sunday?" she asked.

"I'm doing what you asked me to do," I replied.

Meanwhile the neighbors continued to pass by the house. Their glances were not lost on Mrs. Truman. She never asked me to mow the lawn again.<sup>33</sup>

Harry Truman had no use for the "litter bugs" who persistently threw trash onto his lawn. In a July 7, 1961, letter to Dean Acheson, he commented:

I have the same trouble with the "litter bugs" you wrote me about. They throw beer cans, pop bottles, lipstick wrappers and anything else for the trash can into my front yard; from sidewalk and the street in front.

As an early riser I pick up the trash and take a walk with most unkind thoughts of the litter bug public!<sup>34</sup>

#### THE GOLDEN YEARS OF RETIREMENT

Although the Trumans enjoyed good health during the first decade of retirement, members of their extended family did not. Tragedy

first struck on September 30, 1957, when David "Fred" Wallace died from a heart disorder. Bess was with him in Denver at the time of his death, while Harry arrived the evening of his brother-in-law's death. Funeral services and burial took place in Independence.<sup>35</sup>

Hospitalized for three weeks following major surgery, Natalie Ott Wallace died on May 26, 1960, at age 68.<sup>36</sup> Ten weeks later, Frank Gates Wallace, also passed away on August 12, 1960. He died at age 73 at Independence Hospital following a lengthy illness.<sup>37\*</sup>

George Porterfield Wallace died May 24, 1963, succumbing to a seven-week illness.<sup>38+</sup> His widow, May Southern Wallace, continued to live in the home she had occupied since 1916 at 605 West Truman Road. The Frank Wallace home (601 West Truman Road), inherited by May Wallace and Bess Truman, was retained by the family and used as rental property.<sup>39</sup>

With advancing age, the Trumans watched their health closely. Dr. Wallace Graham followed them to Jackson County from Washington and established a practice, serving on the staff of Kansas City's

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\*Frank Wallace retired in 1957 as Chairman of the Board of the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company. At his death, he was a director of the Independence Savings and Loan Association and the Independence Ice and Creamery Company.

+Active in Jackson County politics, George Wallace served as an election judge for many years. When he retired in May 1961, he was the maintenance superintendent for the Jackson County Highway Department where he had worked for 27 years.

Research Hospital. Occasional colds and flu kept one or both home in bed. Harry wrote to Margaret on January 2, 1958:

Your ma is getting better--you know how to tell about that. What a way to spend New Years Day! In bed with the old man sitting in a rocking chair looking at her and grinning most of the time. She didn't like my bringing in the Doc but that's what she needed.<sup>40</sup>

On January 28, 1958, Harry wrote about his "dead ear":

Your mother and I are going to the Nelson Gallery [Nelson Art Gallery and Atkins Museum, Kansas City] to see some of [Winston] Churchill's pictures on Thursday at 5:15 and then to dinner with Doc Sam Roberts an ear expert. Dr. Sam as you know is a Republican but he spent several days at Research telling Doc Wallis [sic] what he should do to keep me alive--so I guess I can trust him with a dead ear.<sup>41</sup>

Thanksgiving evening, November 28, 1957, Harry Truman threw the switch turning on the Christmas lights of the Country Club Plaza in Kansas City. The thirty-fifth annual Kansas City "Plaza Lights" celebration, former President Truman delighted in illuminating the fashionable shopping district strung with 30 miles of electrical wire and 50,000 lights. He informed journalists that he and Bess intended to spend Christmas with Margaret in New York.<sup>42</sup> (Bess's previously cited illness kept them home). [See Figure 67]

In the late 1950's, comedian Jack Benny conducted several benefit concerts for the Kansas City Philharmonic Orchestra. Because Benny and Truman were good friends, Harry invited the entertainer to Independence to visit. Randall Jessee, WDAF radio news director and



FIGURE 67

FIGURE 67: Harry and Bess Truman sit and open Christmas gifts in the living room of 219 North Delaware.

Date: December 25, 1957

Margaret Truman Daniel Papers

Truman Library Photo No. 82-38-1

family friend, recalled that Jack Benny arrived at 219 North Delaware before noon. There, a small cocktail party was held in Benny's honor. Bess Truman served as bartender while Randall Jessee acted as a server. Jessee expressed admiration at Bess's diligence and insistence to do her own housework. She admitted to him, however, that Harry often washed the dishes for her and fixed his own breakfast.<sup>43</sup>

On February 15, 1958, Richard Paul Goff, 33, of Altoona, Pennsylvania, was arrested at the Truman Library. Goff, a staff member at a state hospital, was carrying a concealed Belgian .32 calibre pistol when he was arrested. Earlier in the day, he had gone to 219 North Delaware and persistently rang the bell at the front gate. Not recognizing the man, Bess did not answer, but called Harry at the Library who then called the police. The man reportedly only wanted to protect the \$600 in his pocket and to ask the former President if he could help him secure a Federal job.<sup>44</sup>

The incident was not unique. The Trumans had had problems with intruders before. For example, on September 27, 1953, an escapee from the state hospital at Raleigh, North Carolina, was arrested when he tried to climb the fence. Woodrow W. Harris's second attempt to see the former President also failed. On November 7, 1955, the persistent escapee emerged from a cab in the alley to the south of the Truman home and walked to the George Wallace house. He was told to leave, which he did, and the police were summoned as a precautionary



measure. The mental patient was later arrested riding in a cab at Osage and Lexington Avenue.<sup>45</sup>

A few days after the February 1958, incident, Harry and Bess Truman traveled yet again to Washington. On February 20, they hosted a reunion party at the Mayflower Hotel for former Truman administration staff members.<sup>46</sup> By May 24, the Trumans set sail from New York aboard the American Export Lines "Independence." The month-long cruise took them to Algeciras, Genoa, Naples, and Cannes.<sup>47</sup>

Journalists from Life magazine came to Independence in 1958 to feature Harry Truman in retirement. The article, "Happy Days for Harry: Truman Has Achieved A Contentment Few Ex-Presidents Have Known," was published July 7, 1958. Among the photographs were the Trumans sitting in lawn chairs in the backyard and Bess Truman gathering roses from the pergola.<sup>48</sup> The magazine also reported on life in the Truman home:

Only the very closest of visiting friends, such as former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, stay at the house. Other visitors put up at Kansas City hotels. Mrs. Truman does most of the housework with occasional part-time help. A full-time Negro cook who was hired some years ago made the mistake of instructing Mrs. Truman to "stay out of my kitchen." Truman fired her. On rare occasions the Trumans may have a few friends in for an early supper, but the only regular entertaining done at the house is for Mrs. Truman's bridge club.<sup>49</sup>

Although far from well-to-do, the sale of publishing rights to his memoirs finally provided the couple financial stability. Out of

his own pocket, Harry maintained a clerical staff of three to handle his voluminous correspondence. Still, the modernization project on 219 North Delaware was kept at an economical level. At long last, legislation establishing pensions for former presidents was approved on August 28, 1958. Allocated \$75,000 a year, two-thirds of the sum was targeted for clerical help while \$25,000 was paid directly to Harry Truman from the U.S. Treasury.<sup>50</sup>

For Christmas 1958, the Trumans went to New York to be with the Daniels. While there, Harry commented he would like to be appointed to the Senate if Missouri's Stuart Symington received the Democratic presidential nomination and was elected in 1960. He later retracted the wish, (probably after Bess's censure) stating, "I was only kidding."<sup>51</sup>

A scare was interjected into the bliss of retirement when Bess underwent surgery to remove a tumor from her breast on May 18, 1959. The strain of Harry's bedside vigil was relieved when doctors reported that the growth was benign. Bess returned to 219 North Delaware on June 3,<sup>52</sup> and a trip to visit their newborn second grandson, William Wallace Daniel, was postponed until both could travel east.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy came to Independence on November 19, 1959, seeking Truman's endorsement for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1960. The two met at the library, not the Truman home,

and Kennedy came away empty-handed.<sup>53</sup> Harry Truman believed that JFK was too young to be President. He did not trust his father, Joe Kennedy, calling him an "economic royalist." The Trumans did not go to the 1960 convention, saying it was "fixed" for Kennedy.<sup>54</sup>

On February 7, 1960, two paintings from 219 North Delaware were loaned to the Truman Library to grace a new exhibit featuring paintings given to the Trumans. The first, one of Harry's favorites, was "The Plantation" by Anna Mary Robertson (Grandma) Moses. The second was "Marrakech" painted by Sir Winston Churchill.<sup>55</sup>

A week later, Bess Truman, who turned 75 on February 13, 1960, stiffly posed with Harry on the front porch. [See Figure 68].

Vice-President Lyndon Baines Johnson flew to Kansas City on April 25, 1961, at the request of President John F. Kennedy. Kennedy wanted the Vice-President to brief Harry Truman on the developing crisis in Cuba. Truman met Johnson at Municipal Airport, then the two had lunch in Kansas City before beginning a briefing conference and meeting afterwards with reporters.<sup>56</sup>

Ill health avoided Harry since 1954. It struck again in January 1963, when he underwent surgery to repair a hernia. Operated on January 18, he was released from Research Hospital a week later.<sup>57</sup> Recuperation at 219 North Delaware was slow as he related to Margaret



FIGURE 68

FIGURE 68: Harry and Bess Truman on the front porch of 219 North Delaware.

Date: February 14, 1960

Truman Library Photo No. 60-315-2

on April 30:

I am slowly and gradually getting over my upset. For the first time in my life I really passed out. Your mother was suspicious but her suspicions had no foundation in fact. That knifing I had was worse than I thought. I've canceled all dates until July 31st or August 15th.

That hurts worse than the knife did.<sup>58</sup>

It was in the summer of 1961 that Harry Truman worked with film director Merle Miller taping 141 interviews. For one day, the film crew was allowed inside the iron picket fence of 219 North Delaware. In the morning, time was spent filming Harry on his morning walk. In the afternoon, the crew was inside. Merle Miller recalled:

The house was immaculate, the rooms large and comfortable, and everything was in place. There were books in every room, mostly history and biography, although I was happy to see that on a sideboard in the hall there was a volume called The Corpse in the Snow.<sup>59</sup>

Bess Truman put her foot down at the onset that "she would not take part in the filming and would not consent to be interviewed." Observing the proceedings, she relented and agreed to accompany Harry to the front door. When urged to say something, she stated firmly, "I have no desire to have my voice recorded for posterity." It was only the second time that television cameras were permitted inside the Truman home. Like the 1955 "Person To Person" interview, only the first floor was filmed. So cumbersome was the volume of film that no network or public television organization ever aired the series, although a portion was purchased by Screen Gems and some

footage was broadcast.<sup>60</sup>

A technician assisting Merle Miller later wrote in Esquire magazine that he found it strange, considering all the time the film crew spent with the former President, none of them were ever invited to the Truman home except for the one day of filming:

Other evidence gathered over my time with Mr. Truman led me to the conclusion that sometime early in their marriage Bess Wallace Truman had made a deal.

"Harry," I imagined she'd said, "be a judge if you want. Get to be a Senator, Vice-President or even President... but never bring those people you hang around with into my house."<sup>61</sup>

The scenario shows a basic lack of understanding of Harry and Bess Truman and their desire for privacy. Business was business and was not intertwined with the house on North Delaware Street. It was the Truman's private domain. Outsiders were not wanted there.

On June 3, 1962, the Trumans went to New York to visit their daughter and grandchildren. They also attended the funeral of their friend, William Hillman, author of Mr. President.<sup>62</sup>

The assassination of President John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas, genuinely shocked Harry Truman. "Trying to give the world a picture of stability and confidence," President Lyndon Baines Johnson telephoned each of the three former presidents to ask for advice and assistance. Hoover, Truman, and Eisenhower

pledged their support to the new leader. The Trumans flew to Washington, D.C., on November 23, for the state funeral. Although relations had been chilly in the beginning, Harry Truman and Jack Kennedy had become good friends. The Truman family were once the guests of the Kennedys in the White House, the first time they lived in the "Great White Jail" since January 1953. Former President Truman conferred with President Johnson in the Oval Office on the afternoon of November 23.<sup>63</sup> A positive result from the Kennedy funeral was a truce between Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower.

On his eightieth birthday, May 8, 1964, history was made in the U.S. Senate as former Senator and President Harry S Truman addressed the body. It marked the first use of an amendment to Rule XIX of the Standing Rules of the Senate "Authorizing Former Presidents to Address the Senate in Session." Because of the emotion and strain of the occasion, delivered between standing ovations, the speech was brief:

Thank you very much. I am so overcome that I cannot take advantage of this rule right now. It is one of the greatest things that has ever happened to me in my whole lifetime.

It is unique. It is something that has never been done before. And between you, and me, and the gatepost, since I profit by it, I think it is a good rule.<sup>64</sup>

Returning to Independence, Harry's decline from good health began in late 1964. On October 13, at 3:45 p.m., he was in the second floor bathroom when he slipped on a mat and fell forward on his right side. Harry struck his chest against the bathtub, fracturing two

ribs. His eyeglasses were also broken in the fall causing multiple contusions to his right eyebrow and forehead. The former President was discovered unconscious on the floor by Arletta Brown, a maid, who called the police and an ambulance.<sup>65</sup> The accident was the beginning of a new chapter in the second, and final, decade of retirement at the Truman home.

#### DAILY ROUTINES

<sup>1</sup>Mary McGrory, "Truman, at 75, Takes Own Advice on Keeping Busy," The Washington Star (May 3, 1959), file-HST Retirement, KCSL.

<sup>2</sup>"Truman In Step," Kansas City Star (September 17, 1961), file-HST Walks, KCSL.

<sup>3</sup>Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview, Independence, June 14, 1983.

<sup>4</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 32.

<sup>5</sup>Harry S Truman, August 1964 news conference, press release, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, file-HST Star relations, KCSL.

<sup>6</sup>Ferrell, Truman: A Centenary Remembrance, p. 241.

<sup>7</sup>Margaret Truman, "Smithsonian World," p. 96.

<sup>8</sup>Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, "Interview, Independence, March 2, 1984.

<sup>9</sup>Ferrell, Truman: A Centenary Remembrance, p. 241.

<sup>10</sup>Doris G. Kinney, "Harry's Home," Life (May 1984), p. 111.

<sup>11</sup>Sue Gentry, "Phase IV: Back Home; Return to Private Life Meant A Joyous Return to Apple-Pie Routines and Friendly Familiarity," Examiner (October 18, 1982), p. 4B.

<sup>12</sup>Col. Rufus Burrus, Interview, Independence, February 28, 1984.

<sup>13</sup>Ferrell, Truman: A Centenary Remembrance, p. 241.



<sup>14</sup>Mary McGrory, "Truman, at 75, Takes Own Advice on Keeping Busy," The Washington Star (May 3, 1959), file-HST Birthday, KCSL.

<sup>15</sup>Ferrell, Truman: A Centenary Remembrance, p. 241.

<sup>16</sup>Margaret Truman, "Smithsonian World," p. 9.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 36-9.

<sup>18</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 45.

<sup>19</sup>Ferrell, Truman: A Centenary Remembrance, p. 241.

<sup>20</sup>Margaret Truman, "Smithsonian World," p. 58.

<sup>21</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 51.

<sup>22</sup>Margaret Truman, "Smithsonian World," p. 95.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., Letters from Father, p. 137.

<sup>24</sup>Col. Rufus Burrus, Interview, Independence, February 28, 1984. See also, Mary McGrory, "Truman, at 75, Takes Own Advice on Keeping Busy," The Washington Star (May 3, 1959), file-HST Birthday, KCSL.

<sup>25</sup>Harry S Truman, Mr. Citizen (photo album from The American Weekly, 1953), HSTL.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>"Truman's Home No San Clemente," Kansas City Times (September 6, 1973), p. 3D, folder-Harry S Truman Heritage District, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>28</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 60.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid. While not recorded in the transcript, the information comes from a post-interview conversation with Margaret Truman Daniel in the main hallway of 219 North Delaware.

<sup>30</sup>Ferrell, Truman: A Centenary Remembrance, p. 240.

<sup>31</sup>Ferrell, Off The Record, p. 321.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Harry S Truman, Mr. Citizen (New York: Popular Library, 1953), p. 56.

<sup>34</sup>Ferrell, Off The Record, p. 395.

#### THE GOLDEN YEARS OF RETIREMENT

<sup>35</sup>"Fred Wallace Is Dead," Kansas City Times (September 31, 1957), file-Wallace, Frederick, (microfilm obituary), KCSL.

<sup>36</sup>"Mrs. Frank Wallace," Kansas City Star (May 26, 1960), file-Wallace, Frank G., (microfilm obituary), KCSL.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., "Frank Gates Wallace," Kansas City Times (August 13, 1960).

<sup>38</sup>"George Wallace Dies," Kansas City Times (May 25, 1963), file-Wallace, George P., (microfilm obituary), KCSL.

<sup>39</sup>Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview, Independence, March 2, 1984.

<sup>40</sup>Margaret Truman, Letters from Father, p. 130.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>42</sup>"Into a Twinkling Fairyland," Kansas City Times (November 29, 1957), file-HST 1957 No. 4, KCSL.

<sup>43</sup>Dr. Philip C. Brooks, "Oral History Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Randall S. Jessee, American Embassy, Copenhagen, Denmark, May 19, 1964" (Independence: Harry S. Truman Library, 1966), pp. 41-2.

<sup>44</sup>"Alarm In Truman Call: Visitor to Home Arrested At Library," Kansas City Star (February 15, 1958), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S January-March 1958, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>45</sup>"Tries A Truman 'Visit,'" Kansas City Star (November 7, 1955), file-HST 1955 No. 4, KCSL.

<sup>46</sup>Margaret Truman, Letters from Father, p. 130.

<sup>47</sup>"May Delay Truman," Kansas City Star (May 25, 1958), file-HST 1958 No. 3, KCSL.

<sup>48</sup>"Happy Days for Harry: Truman Has Achieved A Contentment Few Ex-Presidents Have Known," Life (July 7, 1958), p. 84, folder-

Truman, Harry S July-September 1958, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>50</sup>"Truman Retains Staff," Kansas City Times (September 5, 1958), folder-Biographical Information, HST, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>51</sup>"Kidding On The Senate," Kansas City Times (December 23, 1958), file-HST 1958 No. 4, KCSL.

<sup>52</sup>"Truman Keeps A Vigil," Kansas City Star (May 18, 1959); "No Malignancy Found," Kansas City Times (May 20, 1959); and "Mrs. Truman Is Home," Kansas City Star (June 3, 1959); file-HST Mrs., 1959-66, KCSL.

<sup>53</sup>"Truman Greets Kennedy," Kansas City Star (November 19, 1959), file-HST 1959 No. 4, KCSL.

<sup>54</sup>James C. Fitzpatrick, "A Retirement that Meant Plenty of Work," Kansas City Star (May 6, 1984), p. 12F.

<sup>55</sup>"Works Given to Truman Represent Individualism," Kansas City Star (February 7, 1960), file-HST Portraits, KCSL.

<sup>56</sup>"Truman Greets Johnson," Kansas City Star (April 25, 1961), p. 1, file-HST Johnson Visit, KCSL.

<sup>57</sup>"Truman Condition Good," (January 19, 1963), and "Truman Out of Hospital," (January 26, 1963), Kansas City Times, file-HST Health, KCSL.

<sup>58</sup>Margaret Truman, Letters from Father, p. 134.

<sup>59</sup>Merle Miller, "HST: Backstage With A Star Performer," Show Magazine (May 1964), p. 76.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Robert Alan Arthur, "The Wit and Sass of Harry S Truman," Esquire (August 1971), p. 115, folder-Truman, Harry S 1971, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>62</sup>"No Truman Stroll," Kansas City Star (June 4, 1962), file-HST Walks, KCSL.

<sup>63</sup>Merle Miller, Lyndon: An Oral Biography (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1980), pp. 324; 331.

<sup>64</sup>"Remarks by Former President Harry S. Truman and Responses by Members of the Senate Thereto in the United States Senate on

May 8, 1964," Senate Document No. 88, 88th Congress, 2nd Session  
(Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1964)..  
p. 2, file-HST Birthday, KCSL.

65"Ribs Cracked, Head Cut in Accident--Truman Rests Well in  
Hospital," Examiner (October 14, 1964), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S  
October-December 1964, Vertical File, HSTL.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### LIFE AT THE TRUMAN HOME, 1965 TO 1972

- \* An Invasion of Privacy: The Secret Service Returns
- \* The Misery of Ill Health
- \* Daily Routines
- \* Establishing the National Historic Landmark District
- \* The Man From Independence Dies, December 26, 1972

AN INVASION OF PRIVACY: THE SECRET SERVICE RETURNS

Secret Service protection, terminated since January 20, 1953, resumed in the aftermath of the November 22, 1963, assassination of President John F. Kennedy. On December 16, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed Public Law 89-186 which extended lifetime Secret Service protection to former presidents, their widows, and minor children. While Harry Truman announced that he would "accept the courtesy offered to him, ...he had not been bothered much in the past 13 years since he left the White House."<sup>1</sup> Agents returned to 219 North Delaware almost immediately. Besides the fence, the only physical reminder of their previous occupation, the security booth west of the barn, had been removed in 1962.<sup>2</sup> When the operatives asked permission to reestablish a command post or erect a guardhouse on the grounds, Bess Truman refused. Margaret Truman Daniel later recalled:

...they were told, "No!" Not under any circumstances. They were told by my mother that she would not have that in the backyard, and that was it.<sup>3</sup>

The Trumans did, however, allow some electronic surveillance systems installed on the grounds "provided there were no modifications of a substantial nature to either the residence or surrounding property."<sup>4</sup>

The agents insisted that Mike Westwood, the Independence police officer assigned by the mayor to protect the Trumans since their return from Washington, be relieved of his duty. The Secret Service

refused to permit him to be around the home with the agency now in charge. Westwood recalled:

The Secret Service took complete charge and just took over the house.... They started immediately installing telephones and such, all of which... annoyed Mr. Truman.<sup>5</sup>

It was Bess, however, who was vehemently against the reintroduction of the Secret Service. She believed that the protection was unnecessary and an infringement upon the couple's cherished privacy. She wanted the Secret Service to leave her and Harry alone.<sup>6</sup> Given this mandate from Bess, Harry reviewed the legislation. Within the bill was a clause which left Secret Service protection to the discretion of a former president. Armed with this ammunition, he ordered the intruders out.

It was only through the personal intervention of President Lyndon B. Johnson that the Trumans were coaxed into permitting the Secret Service to return. Conditions for their return to Independence, however, were that the agents stay away from the Truman home. Permission was reluctantly granted for the operatives to guard the former President during regular working hours at the Truman Library.<sup>7</sup> Mike Westwood returned to act as personal escort and chauffeur for the Trumans.

The "Truman Protective Division" was born in February 1966 with two agents assigned to the Library. In July, Harry requested tempor-

ary surveillance of 219 North Delaware after an incident with a former mental patient.<sup>8</sup> During these initial months of contacts with the Trumans, the agents slowly cultivated their trust and confidence.<sup>9</sup> Surveillance of the Truman home was soon expanded to day duty. In May 1967, the detail at the Truman Library was permanently established in an office and able to offer 24-hour protection.<sup>10</sup> By this time, with Mr. Truman confined to his home, permission to use the west side of the barn was granted.

In September 1967, a panic alarm system was installed at the Truman Library and 219 North Delaware. Three small transmitters the size of cigarette packs were given to the Trumans to place in the various rooms inside the house. A receiver was installed in the barn and at the library security office. Whenever the Trumans pushed the button on one of the transmitters, a signal was sent to the two receivers which sounded a warbling tone to alert the agents. The receiver at the library was connected to the private line with the Secret Service field office in Kansas City.<sup>11</sup>

Closed circuit television surveillance was installed in early August 1969. The camera was placed across North Delaware Street, atop the R.L.D.S. Center Stake Building (constructed in 1967 following the razing of the Watson Memorial Methodist Church). Equipped with a zoom lens, pan and tilt, and remote control, 219 North Delaware was easily monitored six blocks away at the Library.<sup>12</sup>



### THE MISERY OF ILL HEALTH

"Jackson County has been the hub of the west since trail days... and as far as I am concerned, it is the hub of the world,"<sup>13</sup> said Harry Truman in April 1965. It was yet another glowing declaration by the former President expressing his love for his home. The statement came during a period when 81-year-old Harry seemed well on his way to recovery following the accident in his home the previous fall. Trips to his office in the Truman Library resumed on an irregular, restricted basis and Harry began commenting on contemporary issues as he had done before his illness.

Less than two weeks after his fall, Harry was recuperating at home when a group of entertainers, in Kansas City for an engagement, came to Independence to serenade him. On October 26, 1964, Harry Truman watched from the first floor bay window as Henry Fonda, Jackie Cooper, Eddie Fisher, Tippi Hedren, Barbara Rush, and Joan Staley gathered outside the window and sang, notably "I'm Just Wild About Harry." About 300 people also congregated on the lawn to observe the famous carolers serenade the former President.<sup>14</sup>

The Trumans went to the Truman Library on July 30, 1965, to greet President Johnson. Johnson flew to Independence to sign the historic Medicare Bill in the presence of the man Johnson hailed as the "father of Medicare." The legislation was signed in a ceremony

in the library auditorium after which Johnson presented the former President and First Lady the first two Medicare cards.<sup>15</sup>

Following the reintroduction of the Secret Service, Harry suffered another setback on July 30, 1966, when an attack of colitis left him hospitalized for five days. Vice-President Hubert H. Humphrey, his wife Muriel, and Missouri Governor Warren E. Hearnes came to visit at 219 North Delaware on August 8.<sup>16</sup> Harry's illness did not still his pen, however. On August 29, a statement was issued from 219 North Delaware concerning the dangers of interest rates and inflation. "Bothered" by the situation, Harry labored on the statement for three days. Declaring that a "drastic increase in interest rates has been imposed on the American economy," he warned, "...we will bring on a precipitous deflation, if we persist in high interest practices. The result could be a serious depression."<sup>17</sup>

Harry spoke out again from his home on September 22, 1966. Stopping short of a whole-hearted endorsement of the Johnson administration's policies in the Vietnam War, Harry stated, "I am proud of all of our boys in Viet Nam. And I am especially proud of our Independence boys."<sup>18</sup>

During his recuperation, Bess chauffeured Harry around Independence and Jackson County for daily outings. Other than the automobile trips, he stayed close to home, "not feeling vigorous enough as

yet to resume his normal routine at his office in the Truman Library." His personal secretary, Rose Conway, came to the home regularly to take dictation and to give the former President his mail.<sup>19</sup>

The Association of the United States Army awarded its coveted George C. Marshall Medal to Harry Truman on October 12, 1966. Accepting the medal for her father, Margaret Truman Daniel read a statement direct from Independence which evoked hearty laughter:

I wish I could be there with you to honor him. Not even the good Lord and my doctor could ordinarily keep me away on such an occasion. This time, however, they have joined forces with my wife and you know what that means.<sup>20</sup>

The first visit to 219 North Delaware by grandsons Thomas Washington Daniel and Harrison Gates Daniel came on October 22, 1966. Arriving with their mother, Harrison was four-and-a-half, while Thomas was five months old (born May 28). According to Mrs. Daniel, her father enjoyed his grandchildren, "as long as they're quiet." Clifton Truman Daniel (age 9) and William Wallace Daniel (age 7), stayed behind in school in New York with their father, Managing Editor of the New York Times.<sup>21</sup>

Harry Truman's first public outing since his July colitis attack was on November 8, when he and his wife voted in the congressional election at the Memorial Building. Driven by Mike Westwood, Harry

used a cane to walk slowly into the polling place. The couple requested that no photographs be taken as they each took turns going into the voting booth.<sup>22</sup>

Their first venture away from Independence in two years came in March 1967. On March 16, the Trumans flew to Key West, Florida, for two weeks to vacation with the Daniels at the former "Little White House." While Harry's health was said to be "much improved," Bess admitted, "It's the longest I have stayed home since 1934."<sup>23</sup>

On the afternoon of April 9, 1967, Harry Vaughan and his wife visited the Trumans. Vaughan, who operated as Harry's "man in Washington," related that while Truman was glad to see Medicare and civil rights legislation enacted, his greatest disappointment was the weakness of the United Nations. Vaughan also shed a great deal of light on the activities at secluded 219 North Delaware. The visit took place in the library which was filled with "books and magazines." Harry's health problems, compounded by vertigo, resulted in a dramatic weight loss. Although his carriage was erect, mobility was impaired by arthritis in the knees and hips. Harry told his old friend that he missed exercising, principally his neighborhood walks, but he was able to maneuver in his home with the use of a cane. While he neglected playing Margaret's piano in the music room, he "delights in talking politics... and still talks about the last time he went to the polls [in November]." Christmas of 1966 was the first time the

Trumans were not able to go to New York to be with the Daniels, although Margaret and her two eldest sons came to Independence in March.

During the visit, the group was surprised to hear voices coming from the front of the house. Bess left the library to investigate and found two women looking around the hall and living room. Apparently, the front gate and doors had been left unlocked. Vaughan commented that Bess "lost none of her old firmness and soon the two women were on their way."<sup>24</sup>

The Trumans were home when an explosion shook Independence at 3:20 p.m., May 29, 1967. Lightning triggered an internal combustion explosion and intense fire at the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company at Pacific and Spring streets. The major section of the mill, the 12-story grain elevator, and its inventory estimated at \$1,000,000, was destroyed.<sup>25</sup> The mill was forced to close periodically beginning in 1953, when freight rates for wheat were adverse.<sup>26</sup> The Waggoner family sold the 91-year-old firm to Lewis E. and Eugene L. Selders of Kansas City on July 1, 1958. The Selders retained the original name as well as continued producing "Queen of the Pantry" flour.<sup>27</sup> The historic brick roller mill was booming by the mid-1960s,<sup>28</sup> when the explosion terminated the business.

For the first time since he initiated the Independence Day acti-

vities at the library in 1958, Harry Truman was unable to attend and speak at the July 4, 1967, festivities. Instead, he reviewed the parade from the front porch of 219 North Delaware. Harry sat in a lawn chair while Bess stood off to the side, "almost hidden by the clusters of spirea around the porch."<sup>29</sup>

With the spector of racial unrest in Kansas City and rumors that "Black Power" demonstrations would be staged in suburban areas, many feared the inner-city rioting of the troubled 1960s might spread to Independence. Promising that "any attack would be dealt with without mercy," Independence Police Chief George Owens announced on August 4, 1967, that the city was ready to handle the looming crisis. He revealed plans for hand-picked squads of officers to be dispatched to guard the Truman Library and 219 North Delaware "at the first sign of racial outbreaks in Kansas City."<sup>30</sup> No comment came from the Truman home. The couple probably never believed they were potential targets of Black radicals. Predictably, the rumored suburban demonstrations and violence never transpired.

The Trumans remained very much interested in their community. In 1959, for example, they were among the charter members of the Jackson County Historical Society. They were also concerned about the integrity of their own neighborhood. On September 19, 1967, a request to the Independence City Planning Commission to rezone a tract of land north of Truman Road and east of Delaware from two-

family residential and apartment residential to planned apartment residential was blocked by angry property owners. A petition signed by 32 neighborhood residents, including Harry and Bess, denounced the rezoning proposal to build two and three bedroom townhouse apartments in their neighborhood. Although some argued for a zoning change back to single-family residences, the group's attorney argued for maintaining the integrity of the neighborhood because the Truman home would someday be "a national shrine."<sup>31</sup>

Margaret Truman Daniel and three sons (William, 8; Harrison, 4; and Thomas 1 1/2) arrived for a one week vacation on December 31, 1967. As part of a "quiet New Year's Day," they "all took a short drive through Independence in the family car."<sup>32</sup> On March 16, 1968, the Trumans repeated their vacation to Key West, Florida, where they again joined the Daniels.<sup>33</sup> The change of climate apparently refreshed the former President for, upon his return, neighborhood residents were again treated to a once-common sight: Harry Truman on his morning walk. Widely reported in the press, the 84-year-old former President was accompanied by Mike Westwood. He used a cane to accomplish the "8 block jaunt... briskly," and exclaimed that it was "good to get out and greet people again."<sup>34</sup> [See Figure 69].

On May 3, 1968, President and Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson came to 219 North Delaware for a one-hour visit, Johnson's twelfth since 1960. Two-thousand people stood outside the wrought iron picket



FIGURE 69

FIGURE 69: Harry S Truman is accompanied by Lt. Paul "Mike" Westwood on a morning walk.  
Date: April 29, 1968  
Kansas City Star  
Truman Library Photo No. 68-749



fence during the presidential visit. President Johnson briefed Harry Truman on the on-going negotiations with the North Vietnamese at the Paris Peace Conference, and presented him with an autographed picture before he left.<sup>35</sup> Three weeks later, Vice-President Hubert Humphrey visited the Trumans for 40 minutes, and received Harry Truman's endorsement for the Democratic presidential nomination.<sup>36</sup> During a campaign swing through the Midwest, both Humphrey and Democratic vice-presidential running mate Edmund S. Muskie stopped at 219 North Delaware. After the one-hour session, the election hopefuls stated they were inspired by their discussion with the former President.<sup>37</sup>

The landscape of the Truman home changed considerably on October 4, 1968, as workers felled two stately elm trees in the backyard. The trees, which provided abundant shade for many years, died from an elm blight and had to be removed.<sup>38</sup>

On October 11, 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson came to the Truman home again to pay his sixth and final visit during his presidency. Johnson and Truman were good friends, both personally as well as politically. In tribute to Truman's role in helping to realize the birth of the United Nations, President Johnson signed a bill designating October 24 an annual "UN Day" in the United States. Johnson also signed a proclamation praising Harry S Truman for his participation in helping create the international peace organization. The

President's 24-minute visit and signing ceremony took place in the living room of the Truman home.<sup>39</sup> [See Figure 70]. The signing of the two bills are the only legislative acts known to have been signed inside 219 North Delaware.

An attack of gastrointestinal flu in the late evening of February 20, 1969, saw Harry rushed to the hospital via ambulance from his home. Hospitalized for a few days, his remarkable resiliency was demonstrated on March 7, when the Kansas City Star once again pictured Harry Truman strolling through the North Delaware Street neighborhood with Mike Westwood.<sup>40</sup>

On March 21, 1969, on their way to search for a home near San Clemente, California, President Richard M. Nixon and First Lady Pat Nixon paid a courtesy visit to 219 North Delaware. Truman's old political enemy arrived at the home at 11:30 a.m. and went inside for 25 minutes.<sup>41</sup> As with other prominent politicians, the Nixons entered the home alone. Since the structure was already protected by the Secret Service, the Nixons' security men remained outside. The Trumans' own Secret Service detail knew very well that the Trumans "did not like a lot of people in their house."<sup>42</sup>

During the Nixon visit, the two men discussed East-West relations, Nixon's recent trip to Europe, and the President's decision to proceed with a modified anti-ballistic missile system. According to

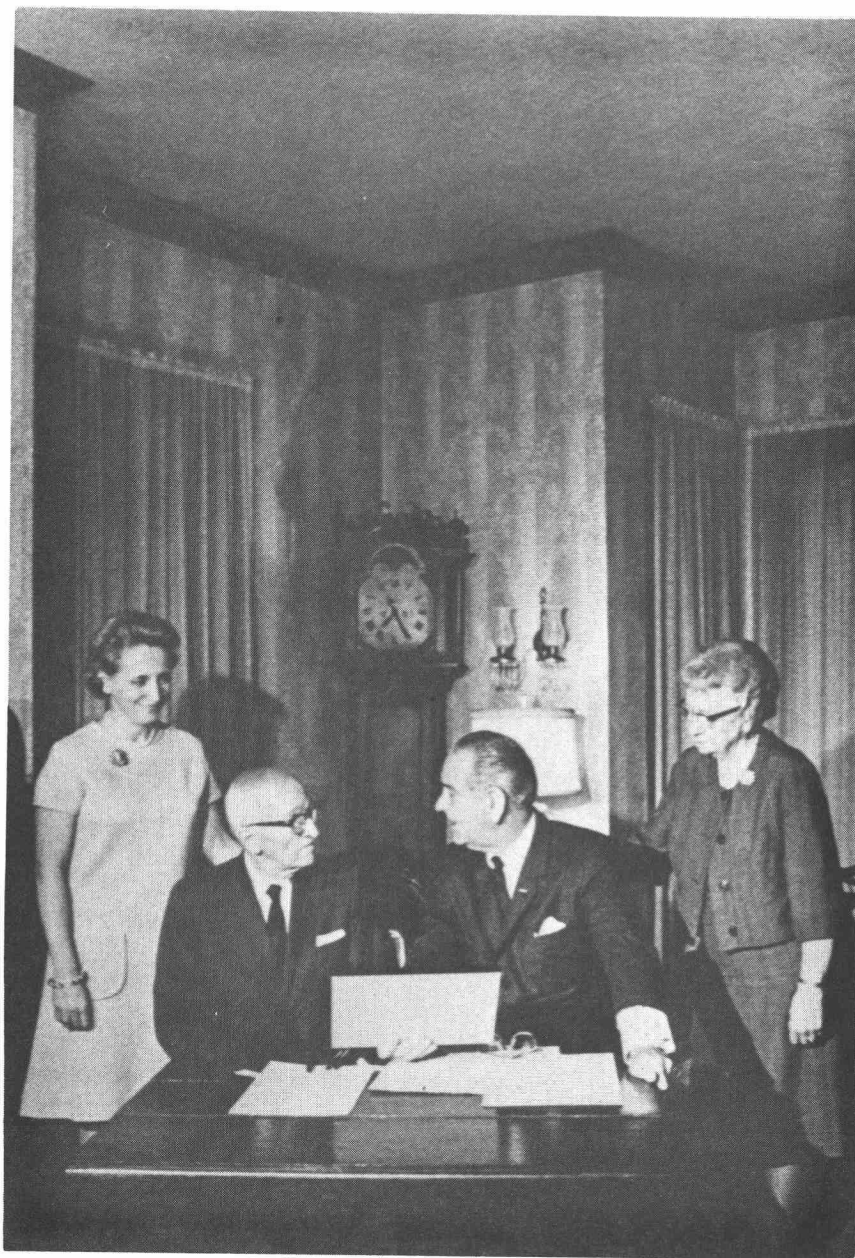


FIGURE 70

FIGURE 70: President Lyndon Baines Johnson signs two United Nations-related proclamations in the living room of the Truman home. L to R: Margaret T Daniel; Harry Truman; President Johnson, and Bess Truman. Date October 11, 1968  
Jack Kightlinger, White House Photographer  
(#B-2041-07A)  
Truman Library Photo No. 70-1321

an amazed Richard Nixon, "He was up on everything."<sup>43</sup>

An estimated 4,000 people watched the Nixons visit the Truman home, and witnessed Richard Nixon help Harry Truman down the front steps as they walked to the front gate. [See Figure 71]. Followed in a second car by Pat Nixon and Bess Truman, they were driven to the Truman Library where the President gave Harry Truman a Steinway piano, one which had gone from the White House to Blair House with the Trumans in 1949.<sup>44</sup>

Three months later, Harry and Bess Truman celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in a manner consistent with their modest lifestyle. Requesting no interviews or photographs, the couple spent June 28, 1969, quietly in their beloved home. The only visible activity outside was the painters busily applying another coat of gleaming white paint.<sup>45</sup>

A major component of the modernization project at the Truman home came in July 1969. The 1885 slate roof had severely deteriorated, especially from winter ice damage and a summer hail storm. It was beyond repair. Although insurance would pay for a new slate roof and interior damage, Bess vetoed any large-scale repairs because of Harry's fragile health. Bess decided that the quickest remedy was for an asphalt shingle roof. On one afternoon, Harry and Bess sat down with the roofing contractor and chose the style and color of



FIGURE 71

FIGURE 71: President Richard M. and Mrs. Pat Nixon visit the Trumans in their home before all proceeding to the Library.

Date: March 21, 1969

Jack Nesbitt (Donor); White House (Origin)

Truman Library Photo No. 72-3838

shingles which would closely match the old roof. Work began on July 14. During the removal of the old slate, the work crew left the Truman Road gate open one afternoon. Proving the validity for a fence, in short order, about 40 tourists swarmed into the yard to pick up the precious souvenirs which littered the ground. The job was completed by September 11, 1969.<sup>46</sup>

One of Harry Truman's last acts to commemorate the past was a gathering at 219 North Delaware with members of his administration on April 12, 1970. Marking the 25th anniversary of his succession to the presidency, the meeting was brief because of his frail health. Those present for the reunion were former Ambassador W. Averell Harriman, former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, former Chief Justice Earl Warren, Treasury Secretary John W. Snyder, and former White House Counsel Charles S. Murphy.<sup>47</sup>

On one of his occasional visits to the Truman home, on September 18, 1970, Truman Library Director Philip C. Brooks was shown an ancient icon which hung in the first floor library. Mrs. Truman informed Dr. Brooks that the icon was a present from Queen Helen of Romania. He observed that the icon, a painted figure on the smooth facade of roughly cut logs, was very old. Bess Truman told him that the couple had tried to get the icon restored by experts at the National Gallery of Art. Unfortunately, the art restorationists said that there was nothing they could do. Bess resigned herself to the

fact that "she could do nothing more about it."<sup>48</sup>

In late 1970 and early 1971, Missouri painter Thomas Hart Benton came to 219 North Delaware often to sketch the former President. Benton, 81, sat in the cozy library and observed Harry Truman sitting in his favorite chair reading, surrounded by stacks of books, newspapers, and magazines. [See Figure 72] Before beginning an oil portrait, the artist made several sketches. Benton scrapped his first attempt. His second effort, titled "The Old President," was shown only for a short time at the Truman Library. Depicting a wrinkled, emaciated old man, the portrait was scorned by the public and some relatives. It was banished to the city manager's office in Kansas City.<sup>49</sup>

On May 8, 1971, to celebrate Harry's 87th birthday and the sesquicentennial of Missouri (150 years), the U.S. Postal Service issued a commemorative stamp depicting Thomas Hart Benton's mural "Independence and the Opening of the West" painted on the lobby walls of the Truman Library.\* Visitors to the Truman home included John Snyder, Mrs. Georgia Neese Clark Gray (former Secretary of the Treasury), Postmaster General Winton M. Blount, and Senator Hubert H. Humphrey. After the 30-minute visit with the Trumans, Senator Humphrey emerged

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\*Independence was the city selected by the U.S. Postal Service for the stamp's unveiling and first day of issue. The first sheet of stamps was sold to Lt. Paul "Mike" Westwood on behalf of Harry and Bess Truman.





FIGURE 72

FIGURE 72: Missouri artist Thomas Hart Benton sketches former President Harry S Truman in the library of 219 North Delaware.  
Date: January 1971  
Donor: Randall S. Jessee  
Truman Library Photo No. 83-51-1



from the home to deliver a scathing attack on the Nixon administration's Vietnam policies. Humphrey called U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia "a kind of sickness, a fever that makes us miserable.... We have done great things for the Vietnamese people, and we have sacrificed greatly."<sup>50</sup>

On June 21, 1971, Bess Truman was admitted to Research Hospital for what was termed a "routine physical checkup." Harry accompanied her to Kansas City in the family car which was driven by Mike Westwood. Bess remained in the hospital 18 days during which time Harry visited every day, including their 52nd wedding anniversary. Bess was released from the hospital and returned home on July 9. The results of her medical examinations were not released to the press.<sup>51</sup>

Christmas of 1971 marked Harry's last visit to the Truman Library. Arriving after closing hours, the former President and the Daniel family were taken on a walking tour by Assistant Director Benedict K. Zobrist. Harry enjoyed viewing the museum exhibits and laughed throughout the film "For All the People" which Dr. Zobrist showed for the group in the library's auditorium.<sup>52</sup>

On June 28, 1972, Harry fell in his home and soon complained of soreness in his back. Admitted to the hospital for 50 minutes, X-rays showed no internal damage. On July 2, he was admitted for a routine examination for a chronic gastrointestinal problem which had

last hospitalized him for 10 days in January and February of 1971. He was released on July 17, 1972.<sup>53</sup>

Harry Truman purchased his last automobile in the summer of 1972. On the advice of Mike Westwood, the Trumans dealt with a Chrysler dealership in Odessa, Missouri. Westwood took booklets featuring new models to the couple who selected the model and color. Their trade-in was a green 1969 Chrysler. The new car (certificate of title is dated July 14, 1972) was also green, a 4-door, 8-cylinder coupe.<sup>54\*</sup> (After 1972, Mrs. Truman continued to use the car until her own death. The car is now owned by the National Park Service).

In a repeat of the August Missouri primary, the Trumans requested absentee ballots for the November 1972 election. The action broke a nearly perfect record of going to the polls, the familiar Memorial Building, to vote.<sup>55</sup> It was the final ballot cast by Harry Truman.

#### DAILY ROUTINES

With former President Truman confined to his home, the Secret

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\*Since becoming Jackson County Presiding Judge, Harry Truman's car featured the license plate number 369. After he went to Washington in 1935, he gave the designation to Mary Jane Truman. In the post-presidential years, the license plate number was 5745, (May 8, 1945), the date on which the German surrender was signed by General Dwight Eisenhower. Mrs. Truman's plates read: 369-369. See Harry Truman to Roy Carson, letter, November 25, 1957, folder-A, Post-Presidential General File, HSTL.

Service established a command post in the Truman neighborhood on November 15, 1970.<sup>56</sup> The brick house on the southwest corner of Truman Road and North Delaware (224 North Delaware) became a 24-hour visual surveillance center capable of providing "immediate response to emergency situations."<sup>57</sup> By September 1971, the closed circuit television camera was augmented to permit nighttime surveillance of 219 North Delaware.<sup>58</sup> Because of this intensive surveillance by the Truman Protective Division which totaled 12 agents, the Trumans permitted the doorbell (which rang at the front gate) to be disconnected. All visitors would first have to be cleared through the Secret Service.<sup>59</sup>

The daily working relationship with the Secret Service endeared the agents to Harry and Bess. According to their daughter:

They didn't mind the Secret Service. They got along with them very well and knew all of them by name and at Christmas they invited them all in for a drink and some cake and coffee or whatever. They were kind of like family.<sup>60</sup>

Still, Bess would not allow anyone to drive or accompany her. When she went to Kansas City for lunch or to shop, she merely drove away with orders to the agents not to follow her. Mike Westwood, who remained Harry Truman's faithful companion, was a source of concern for the agents. According to Margaret:

...Mike was one of the world's worst drivers, and the Secret Service nearly went crazy because Dad didn't want to give up Mike. They were sure he was going to kill both of them and so was I. The day they finally got Mike out of that

driver's seat and got a Secret Service man in there, I breathed a sigh of relief. Mike still hung around. He went walking with Dad every morning. Nobody could take care of Dad as good as he could.<sup>61</sup>

Vertigo, combined with arthritis and the health-related difficulties associated with the aging process slowed Harry down considerably in the mid-1960s and kept him largely confined to home. Time spent at home was not wasted, however. Harry read a book each day while sitting in his comfortable, overstuffed chair in the small library. His personal secretary, Miss Rose Conway, came to the home each weekday morning for dictation of correspondence. While Harry had the afternoons free to read and take catnaps, Bess kept busy with household chores and "weekly trips to the bookstore and public library."<sup>62</sup>

By the late 1960s, Vietta Garr retired. Employed by the family for more than 40 years, the faithful maid and cook had grown "old and cranky." The Trumans retired Vietta with a good pension and Margaret accompanied the woman to purchase a small retirement home.<sup>63\*</sup>

The public remained curious about the oldest living President and his wife. In May 1968, a reporter analyzed the method that the Trumans' neighbors used to determine what the couple were doing; they watched the lights shining through the windows:

The library at the Truman home is only dimly lighted through its windows, and a light always burns when the room is occupied.

Neighbors and passersby watch this light for a clue to the former President's activities. The light goes off about seven each evening, and moments thereafter a light goes on in a bedroom on the second floor, at the south side of the big old house.

There Truman and his wife read, listen to the music he loves, or perhaps watch television, particularly documentaries.<sup>64</sup>

Wherever the Trumans were in their home at night, Bess "was always very careful to keep the shades down and the curtains pulled" to discourage prying eyes.<sup>65</sup>

Harry and Bess's favorite role during this period was that of grandparents. Because Margaret Truman Daniel wanted her sons to be outside the public limelight, she took great pains to shield the boys, waiting until her children were school age to inform them that their grandparents had once served as President and First Lady of the United States. The agreement to withhold the information allowed the children to mature normally in the relative anonymity of New York City. The four Daniel grandsons gave Harry and Bess much joy and they were delighted when the boys came to Independence during vacations and holidays from school. Bess was known as "Grammy" while Harry was called "Grampa."

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\*Vietta Garr died December 31, 1973, following an accident in her home. She suffered critical burns when her dress ignited from the kitchen stove. Bess Truman was among those who attended Miss Garr's funeral.

The older grandsons, Clifton Truman Daniel and William Wallace Daniel, have written about their childhood adventures in the Truman home. The boys from New York loved playing in the "endless rooms" and climbing the trees in the fenced yard. Old fashioned toys abounded in nearly every room on the second floor, remnants from their mother's childhood. The heating grates provided a favorite pastime: "We spent hours talking through the heating ducts in the floor, never realizing that anyone passing an unoccupied vent could hear us."<sup>66</sup> Clifton once dumped a bowl of marbles kept in the dining room down a heating vent in an attempt to discover how the vents went through the old house.

The favorite area of the Trumans' home for the grandchildren was the attic. Although Grammy Truman frowned on the boys playing in the attic, it was a veritable treasure trove:

It was a gold mine of "junk": old furniture, clothing and just plain detritus that you could examine in the soft, dusty light of the winter sun slanting through a lone stained-glass window.<sup>67</sup>

Clifton's favorite items were the hats and individually-wrapped bars of soap from "Truman & Jacobson."

Grammy Truman was known as a "soft touch" who reveled in the opportunity to spoil her grandsons:

Grammy Truman could usually be prevailed upon for goodies or good ideas for having fun. She not only indulged, but

seemed to enjoy our often frenzied playing. Mock battles in the living room behind antique and ivory redoubts? It was OK with Grammy, although she did try to steer us outside. Vietta's brownies before dinner? OK, but don't tell your mother.<sup>68</sup>

Dinnertime found Clifton and William competing for the privilege of ringing the small silver dinner bell. Vietta's cooking was yet another delight: "homemade cookies and brownies, fresh peas and mashed potatoes made from scratch with hot biscuits and gravy."<sup>69</sup>

The grandparents bought their two oldest grandsons authentic-looking plastic machine guns which fired plastic red bullets. During bad weather, the pseudo weapons were taken inside. According to Clifton:

We set a Coke can on the coffee table, among any number of rare and valuable artifacts from around the world, and proceeded to fire away.

Happily pegging plastic bullets at the bric-a-brac, we didn't hear our grandfather coming up on our rear.

At first, I thought the gun had been taken by an unknown force of nature, because it just went out of my hands and straight up into the air. I was close. There stood my grandfather, looking down at us, not scowling, just looking before he turned and walked out of the room with the gun we would never see again. He never said a word, and I guess he saw no reason to scold us. He didn't have to--his presence was enough to get the message across.

I remember that I didn't feel hurt. I just knew, without anyone getting angry or punishing us, that we were never to fire that gun in the house again.<sup>70</sup>

The guns also gave the Secret Service an alarm. One day the Daniel boys were hiding behind the spirea bushes playing "war." From

the command post at 224 North Delaware, the agents spied the real-looking guns jutting out from the bushes. Upon a quick investigation, they discovered the Trumans' grandsons and playfully surrendered to the young bandits. The Daniel boys' relationship with the Secret Service was also close and they enjoyed visiting the command post to learn how the surveillance of Grammy and Grampa Truman was conducted.<sup>71</sup>

The panic transmitters which were placed throughout the house to signal the Secret Service of any problem provided another fascination. William inadvertently triggered a transmitter one day. The result brought agents storming into the front and rear entrances of the home. According to Mrs. Daniel:

...I couldn't figure out why five Secret Service men appeared in the yard. One of them came in the front door, and the others were coming around through the back door. And I said, "What's the matter? Did the smoke alarms go off?" And they said, "No, no. The alarm went off in the window." And I said, "Oh, it did, did it?" And I said, "Oh, remember the boys are here?" And they said, "Oh, how could we forget that?!" So that was it. I gave them hell. I said, "You leave those things alone!"<sup>72</sup>

#### ESTABLISHING THE NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK DISTRICT

In a December 1964, letter to President Truman, Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall, requested that Truman nominate a structure which possessed the most significant association with his career. In his response, Harry wrote:



I must say to you, that in the past I have been reluctant to contribute to any effort designed to commemorate my Presidency. But the scope of your plan is such that I must now think about it. Perhaps we can go into it some time when I am in Washington.<sup>73</sup>

The meeting never took place and the question of a Truman site did not revive until 1971. Following meetings with officials at the Truman Library, on August 11, 1971, Dr. Ernest A. Connally of the National Park Service, conferred with Truman son-in-law E. Clifton Daniel. The men discussed the matter of establishing a national historic landmark to commemorate the Truman presidency. The Park Service proposed to list the North Delaware Street corridor from the Truman home to the Library on the National Register of Historic Places. Discussing the subject with Margaret, Clifton Daniel put forth the Park Service proposal in a letter to President Truman:

Mr. Connally said the Park Service would like to have all of Delaware Street from your house to the Library designated as a National Historic Landmark, in the hope that the present character of the neighborhood could be preserved.

Ordinarily, a bronze plaque is erected to mark a National Historic Landmark, or one is affixed to the structure that is so designated. A dedication ceremony is sometimes held. These formalities are not necessary, and whether they were held or not would depend on your wishes.

The Federal legislation would have no bearing on the future use and disposition of your home. That would be entirely a family decision, not a government one.<sup>74</sup>

Harry Truman's response on September 3, 1971, gave his stamp of approval on the historic district. In language clearly drafted by family lawyer Rufus Burrus, Mr. Truman wrote:

Your letter of August 12, has been received and we have had phone conversations about the Park Service designating the 219 North Delaware home and area from Maple Avenue to The Truman Library, that faces Delaware Street, as a National Historic Landmark.

We understand that the designation by the Park Service will not have any effect upon our use or disposition of the home.

If it is the desire of those who have the authority to so designate the home and the area fronting on Delaware Street, as a National Historic Landmark we have no objections on such action.

We trust that this letter will serve to make our views known and that such action as may be desired to be taken will be done by the authorities as they deem proper.

Thanks to you and Margaret for your help.<sup>75</sup>

A historical inventory of the proposed district was subsequently accomplished, and the declaration of the Harry S Truman Historic District, National Historic Landmark was announced by Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton on February 20, 1972.<sup>76</sup> (The National Historic Landmark was officially entered on the National Register of Historic Places on February 23, 1972). At the request of the Trumans, however, no plaque or ceremony was held to commemorate the new national status of their home and neighborhood.

#### THE MAN FROM INDEPENDENCE DIES, DECEMBER 26, 1972

On December 5, 1972, Harry S Truman was hospitalized for "lung congestion and bronchitis, complicated by hardening of the arteries." It proved to be the last time he would ever see 219 North Delaware. He was placed on the critical list and, by the following afternoon, doctors feared that heart failure was imminent. As in the past,

Harry Truman fooled the experts and three days later his condition was downgraded to serious. His advanced age and the inadequate output of his kidneys continued to be a principal medical concern.

On December 23, evidence of cardiac instability resulted in Bess being summoned to Research Hospital. The next day, Harry's condition was listed as "extremely critical" as a drop in blood pressure at 6:45 a.m. again resulted in a call to 219 North Delaware. The former President lapsed into a comatose state. By the afternoon, however, his condition improved slightly as his blood pressure stabilized. On Christmas Day 1972, a 104-degree temperature and fluctuating pulse rate produced a "debilitating effect on his heart." At 10:15 a.m., doctors declared that "death could occur within hours."

On December 26, 1972, at 7:50 a.m., the 33rd President of the United States died from a "complexity of organic failures causing a collapse of the cardio-vascular system." At 7:52 a.m., a phone call was placed to 219 North Delaware, and Bess and Margaret (who returned to Independence the previous evening) were informed of Harry's death.<sup>77</sup>

At 8:00 a.m., the public announcement of Harry Truman's death was made. At 219 North Delaware, the only physical sign of mourning came when Secret Service agents, raising the flag as part of their morning ritual, hoisted the stars and stripes to the top of the

flagpole and then lowered it to half-mast.<sup>78</sup> A "massive traffic jam" subsequently occurred, "shattering the quiet of the neighborhood." The Truman Library (closed because of the Federal holiday) and home were placed under police guard, as North Delaware Street was barricaded at Maple Avenue and Truman Road. By mid-morning, President Richard Nixon proclaimed a 30-day mourning period and ordered the nation's flags lowered to half-staff.<sup>79</sup>

On December 27, at 1:00 p.m., President Truman's casket was taken by motorcade from the Carson Chapel at Winner Road and Fuller to the Truman Library. As the hearse pulled onto Lexington, the carillon at the Truman Library began tolling at 5-second intervals. Turning north on River Boulevard, east to Maple Avenue, and north on Delaware, the motorcade slowly passed the Truman home. Proceeding along the North Delaware Street corridor, the motorcade arrived at the Library where the casket was taken into the main entrance hall to lie in state. The ceremony was attended by the Daniel family and other close relatives. Bess Truman stayed home to rest from the 22-day bedside vigil. President Nixon, who flew to Richards-Gebaur A.F.B. near Grandview and proceeded via helicopter to the Truman Library, placed a wreath beside the closed casket on behalf of the nation. Former President Lyndon Baines Johnson also placed a wreath near the bier. The lobby doors of the Truman Library were then opened to the public. Seventy-five thousand people--friends, neighbors, and admirers--filed by the casket throughout the night and

following morning.<sup>80</sup>

Following the private ceremonies, the presidential dignitaries visited the Truman home to pay their respects to the widow. The first to arrive were former President Lyndon and Lady Bird Johnson. The Johnsons were greeted at the gate of the Truman home by Margaret and Clifton Daniel who escorted them into the house.<sup>81</sup> The Johnsons sat on the sofa in the living room. In the course of conversation, Margaret Truman Daniel asked the couple how their two daughters were doing. Lady Bird Johnson commented that her daughters and sons-in-law were outside in the car. Mrs. Daniel went outside immediately and ushered the Robbs and Nugents into the house.<sup>82</sup> The Johnson family left after a 15-minute visit. (It is ironic that before the month-long national mourning period for Harry Truman passed, another began. Lyndon Baines Johnson died at his beloved LBJ Ranch on January 22, 1973<sup>83</sup>).

President Richard M. and First Lady Pat Nixon arrived a half-hour later. The Nixons were also greeted at the front gate by the Daniels. During their 15-minute visit, President Nixon complimented the widow on her remarkable stamina, likening her "courage and grittiness" to her former husband. Bess Truman discussed the funeral arrangements. She had watched the nationally-televised motorcade procession and the wreath-laying ceremony. It was she, with the assistance of her daughter and son-in-law, who arranged the simple

services, vetoing elaborate plans for a full state funeral. She told President Nixon that she was satisfied with the simplicity of the memorial services which she believed characterized her husband: "He didn't put on airs," she declared. The group discussed the memorial services for national and world dignitaries scheduled for January 5 at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. President Nixon offered the Truman family the use of Blair House for the occasion. The Daniels then escorted the Nixons back to the limousine. Television cameras and a crowd of several hundred people pressed against the police ropes on the west side of Delaware Street.<sup>84</sup>

A private funeral service took place at 2 p.m., December 28, in the library auditorium. Among those invited (250 people) were the Trumans' house painter, gardener, maid, barber, and clerical assistants. No head of state was present. There was no eulogy during the Masonic service which included Episcopal and Baptist ministers. Burial services in the courtyard were also private. As the family sat in chairs, the emotion of the scene became apparent as Bess and Margaret "wept softly" as Battery D of the 129th Field Artillery, Missouri National Guard, presented a 21-gun salute with six 105-millimeter howitzers. [See Figure 73].

By 3:25 p.m., the Truman funeral services concluded and the family returned to 219 North Delaware. Fifteen minutes later, relatives and friends, totalling 30 people, began arriving. Among the



FIGURE 73

FIGURE 73: Lt. Gen. Patrick F. Cassidy presents the flag which covered Harry S Truman's casket to his widow. Family members L. to R.: Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace; Harrison Gates Daniel; William Wallace Daniel, Clifton Truman Daniel, Thomas Washington Daniel, E. Clifton Daniel, Margaret Truman Daniel, and Bess Wallace Truman.  
 Date: December 28, 1972  
Kansas City Star  
 Truman Library Photo No. 73-1335

visitors were Senator and Mrs. Hubert H. Humphrey. The Humphreys had visited the Truman home earlier that morning for 25 minutes. While only staying a few minutes on the second visit, Senator Humphrey emerged with a gift of a black cane, a memento of the deceased President.<sup>85</sup> Holding the cane in the air, the Senator told an aide, "I didn't steal it. They gave it to me." A newspaper reported: "it was one of Mr. Truman's canes... and it was kept on a coat rack near the door where there was a collection of the late President's canes and fedora hats."<sup>86</sup>

By 5:00, all the visitors were gone and the family was alone.

#### AN INVASION OF PRIVACY: THE SECRET SERVICE RETURNS

<sup>1</sup>"Truman Quick To Get Guard," Kansas City Star (December 17, 1965), folder-Truman, Harry S October-December 1965, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Sanders, Interview, Independence, June 30, 1983.

<sup>3</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 53.

<sup>4</sup>"Expenditure of Federal Funds In Support of Presidential Properties," Fifteenth Report by the Committee on Government Operations, May 20, 1974, Union Calendar No. 490, 93rd Congress, 2nd Session, House Report No. 93--1052, p. 51, folder-Presidential Properties, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>5</sup>Robert W. Phillips, "Truman Trips Recalled By Personal Aide," Kansas City Star (October 1, 1973), p. 1, folder-Westwood, Mike, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>6</sup>Ray Zumwault, U.S. Secret Service, Interview, National Headquarters, Washington, D.C., August 11, 1983.



<sup>7</sup>Phillips, "Truman Trips Recalled By Personal Aide."

<sup>8</sup>"Truman Protective Division," The Service Star, U.S. Secret Service, Department of the Treasury, (September-October 1971), p. 12.

<sup>9</sup>Ray Zumwault, U.S. Secret Service, Interview, National Headquarters, Washington, D.C., August 11, 1983.

<sup>10</sup>"Truman Protective Division," The Service Star, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup>Security Specialist [deleted] to Special Agent in Charge Wong, September 12, 1967, Technical Security Division, U.S. Secret Service, National Headquarters, Washington, D.C., folder-Correspondence 1967.

<sup>12</sup>Security Specialist [deleted] to Special Agent in Charge Wong, August 7, 1969, Technical Security Division, U.S. Secret Service, National Headquarters, Washington, D.C., folder-Correspondence 1969.

#### THE MISERY OF ILL HEALTH

<sup>13</sup>"'Hub of the World,' HST Says of Home," Examiner (April 9, 1965), p. 1B, folder-Jackson County History, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>14</sup>"Performers Sing to HST," Examiner (October 26, 1964), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S October-December 1964, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>15</sup>Miller, Lyndon, pp. 411-12.

<sup>16</sup>"HST Staying Close to Home," Examiner (October 8, 1966), p. 8B, MCPL.

<sup>17</sup>"Truman Shows Concern Over High Interest," Examiner (August 29, 1966), p. 7A, MCPL.

<sup>18</sup>"HST Is Proud of You, Bill," Examiner (September 22, 1966), p. 1, MCPL.

<sup>19</sup>"HST Staying Close to Home," Examiner (October 8, 1966), p. 1, MCPL.

<sup>20</sup>"Rusk Calls Truman 'A Builder of Peace,'" Examiner (October 13, 1966), p. 1, MCPL.

<sup>21</sup>"Newest Grandson Visits Trumans," Examiner (October 25, 1966), p. 1, MCPL.

<sup>22</sup>"HST Goes to Polls in First Public Outing Since Illness,"

Examiner (November 8, 1966), p. 1, MCPL.

<sup>23</sup>Sue Gentry, "Trumans Plan Florida Vacation," Examiner (February 28, 1967), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S January-March 1968 [misfiled], Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>24</sup>Gen. Harry Vaughan, "Ex-Aide Cherishes Presidential Kick," Kansas City Star (April 30, 1967), file-HST Article, Gen. Harry Vaughan, KCSL.

<sup>25</sup>"Blast Rips Old Mill," Kansas City Times (May 30, 1967), file-Waggoner-Gates Milling Company, KCSL.

<sup>26</sup>"A Mill To Close Down," Kansas City Star (June 2, 1953), file-Waggoner-Gates Milling Company, KCSL.

<sup>27</sup>"Buy Old Milling Firm," Kansas City Star (July 1, 1958), file-Waggoner-Gates Milling Company, KCSL.

<sup>28</sup>Margaret Olwine, "Vintage Mill Busier Than Ever," Kansas City Star (January 7, 1965), file-Waggoner-Gates Milling Company, KCSL.

<sup>29</sup>Sue Gentry, "Gen. Chiles Speaks at Library—Truman Reviews Holiday Parade," Examiner (July 5, 1967), p. 1, folder-July-September 1967, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., "'Any Attack to Be Dealt With Without Mercy'-- Police Ready for Rumored 'Black Power' Riots Here," (August 4, 1967), p. 1.

<sup>31</sup>"Petition Opposing Delaware Rezoning Signed by Trumans," Examiner (September 20, 1967), p. 1, folder-Homes--HST, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>32</sup>"Truman Family Enjoys Drive For Holiday," Kansas City Star (January 1, 1968), file-HST New Year's Eve, KCSL.

<sup>33</sup>"Trumans To Key West," Kansas City Times (March 16, 1968), file-HST Vacations No. 3, KCSL.

<sup>34</sup>Photograph caption, Kansas City Star (April 29, 1968), file-HST Walks, KCSL.

<sup>35</sup>"Gains Advice From A Visit," Kansas City Times (May 4, 1968), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1968, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., "Truman Picks Hubert To Win," Kansas City Star (May 25, 1968), p. 1.

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41"Nixon Visits His Old Foe," Kansas City Star (March 21, 1969), p. 1, file-HST Nixon Relations, KCSL.

42Margaret Truman, "Smithsonian World," pp. 59-60.

43"Truman Talks on East, West," Kansas City Times (March 22, 1969), file-HST Nixon Relations, KCSL.

44"Nixon Visits His Old Foe."

45"Trumans to Observe 50th Quietly," Kansas City Times (June 28, 1969), pp. 1-2A; and June Schermerhorn, "Bess and Harry's 50 Golden Years," Detroit News (June 26, 1969), p. 2D, folder-Truman, Harry S 1969, Vertical File, HSTL.

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48Director Philip C. Brooks to Museum Curator, Truman Library Memorandum, September 24, 1970, folder-Biographical Information--HST, Vertical File, HSTL.

49"Painter's Progress," Kansas City Star (May 6, 1984), p. 18F.

50"Mr. Truman Is Lauded," Kansas City Star (May 8, 1971), file-HST Birthday, KCSL.

51"Mrs. Truman To Hospital," Kansas City Star (June 21, 1971);

"Truman Visits Wife In Hospital on Anniversary," Kansas City Times (June 29, 1971); and "Mrs. Truman Leaves Hospital With Harry," Kansas City Star (July 9, 1971), file-HST Mrs., Health No. 1, KCSL.

<sup>52</sup>Sue Gentry, "Library Director: 'Truman A Folk Hero,'" Examiner (January 19, 1984), p. 44, Truman Centennial Edition.

<sup>53</sup>"Truman In Hospital," Kansas City Times (July 3, 1972), file-HST Health, KCSL.

<sup>54</sup>Memorandum of Telephone Call, September 27, 1984, Steve Harrison, Museum Curator, HSTR, to Guy Hinkle, Guy Hinkle Motors, Independence; and State of Missouri Certificate of Title, Pres. Harry S and/or Bess W. Truman, July 14, 1972; Office of the Superintendent, HSTR.

<sup>55</sup>"Trumans Vote Absentee," Kansas City Star (November 6, 1972), file-HST Voting, KCSL.

#### DAILY ROUTINES

<sup>56</sup>"Expenditure of Federal Funds In Support of Presidential Properties," Fifteenth Report by the Committee on Government Operations, May 20, 1974, Union Calendar No. 490, 93rd Congress, 2nd Session, House Report No. 93-1052, p. 51, folder-Presidential Properties, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>57</sup>"Truman Protective Division," The Service Star, U.S. Secret Service, Department of the Treasury, (September-October 1971), p. 12.

<sup>58</sup>Notes from a classified memo dated September 16-17, 1971, U.S. Secret Service, National Headquarters, Washington, D.C., folder-Correspondence 1971.

<sup>59</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 33.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Phil Koury, "Harry Truman Weaves a Legend in Homespun," Kansas City Star (May 7, 1967), pp. 1; 16A, folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1967, Vertical File, KCSL.

<sup>63</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 47. See also, "Mrs. Truman Attends Services For Family Cook," Kansas City Star (January 6, 1974), p. 8B, folder-Truman, Harry S Family Cook (Miss Vietta Garr), Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>64</sup>Margaret Richards, "Truman at 84 Stronger, Feeling Better," St. Louis Post-Dispatch (May 6, 1968), folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1968, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>65</sup>Margaret Truman, "Smithsonian World," p. 45.

<sup>66</sup>Clifton T. and William W. Daniel, "House was a Wonderland for Grandsons," Kansas City Star (May 6, 1984), pp. 1F; 6F, Harry S Truman Centennial Edition.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 53.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

#### ESTABLISHING THE NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK DISTRICT

<sup>73</sup>E. Clifton Daniel to Harry S Truman, letter, August 12, 1971, Superintendent's Office, Harry S Truman NHS, Independence, Mo.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., Harry S Truman to E. Clifton Daniel, letter, September 3, 1971.

<sup>76</sup>Department of the Interior, News Release, "Secretary Morton Adds 78 Historic Landmarks to National Register," February 20, 1972.

#### THE MAN FROM INDEPENDENCE DIES, DECEMBER 26, 1972

<sup>77</sup>"Mr. Truman Dies at 88," Kansas City Star (December 26, 1972), p. 1, file-HST Death and Funeral No. 1, KCSL.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., "Independence Busy With Plans."

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., "Rites Thursday."

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., "Simple Services For Mr. Truman," (December 27, 1972); and, "The World of Harry Truman," Time (January 8, 1973).

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81"Truman's Body Lies in State in His Library," New York Times (December 28, 1972), p. 24.

82Doris G. Kinney, "Harry's Home," Life (May 1984), p. 112.

83Miller, Lyndon, p. 555.

84Jack Rosenthal, "Nixon Invites Trumans to the Capital," New York Times (December 28, 1972), p. 24.

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86Agis Salpukas, "Composure Displayed By Widow," New York Times (December 29, 1972), p. 10.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### BESS LIVES ALONE

- \* "America Needs You, Harry Truman"
- \* Alone in the Family Home
- \* Bess Wallace Truman Dies, October 18, 1982

"AMERICA NEEDS YOU, HARRY TRUMAN"

Following the resignation of President Richard M. Nixon as a result of the Watergate scandal in August 1974, the popularity of Harry S Truman soared. A national disillusionment emerged with the 37th President disgraced, and a hero cult termed "Trumania" evolved. The political arch-enemy of Nixon, Harry Truman's honesty and bluntness held significant appeal for Americans. Harry Truman became a national fad as bumper stickers, buttons, T-shirts, books, and the national media heralded the Man From Independence. Epitomizing the national preoccupation, the rock group "Chicago" released a single recording titled, "America Needs You, Harry Truman."

Attendance at the Truman Library during the first three months of 1975 increased 37 percent. President Gerald R. Ford, revealing his deep respect for Truman, ordered a bust of the 33rd President placed in the Oval Office as well as a portrait for the Cabinet Room. References to Harry Truman became frequent in presidential speeches and comments. For a contemporary, popular play written about President Truman, Gerald and Betty Ford appeared with Margaret Truman Daniel at Ford's Theater on April 17, 1975. They attended the world premier of the Sam Gallu play, "Give 'em Hell, Harry." Starring actor James Whitmore, the one-man play subsequently toured the United States.<sup>1\*</sup>



### ALONE IN THE FAMILY HOME

While the focus of "Trumania" was on President Harry S Truman, Bess Wallace Truman was also revered as a prime example of a devoted wife and First Lady. Bess's presence at 219 North Delaware was not ignored by her community or the nation. News reports of the health and activity of the nation's oldest former First Lady continued to gain wide attention. She was often listed among the nation's most admired women.

Following Harry's death, Bess received full ownership rights to 219 North Delaware under the July 1953 property deed. Having lived there since 1904, she refused to consider living anywhere else. As she told a neighbor, "I was born here and hope to die here. Unfortunately, these days not too many people are in a position to do that."<sup>2</sup> Bess Truman also received an annual pension of \$20,000, and Secret Service protection for the rest of her life.<sup>3</sup>

Harry Truman's will, a 22-page instrument supplemented with two codicils, was executed in 1959. An inventory of the estate was filed in Jackson County Probate Court on March 1, 1973. The inventory, which did not list jointly-held property (including his residence),

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\*The world premier of the film "Give 'em Hell, Harry," starring James Whitmore took place September 18, 1975, at the Independence Cinema. Proceeds of the event were designated for the full-size Truman statue in front of the Jackson County Courthouse (dedicated on May 8, 1976).

totaled \$747,682 and went to his widow. Personal property totaled \$20,000 (including land in Grandview donated to Masonic Lodge 618). Personal furniture, household items, and wearing apparel was valued at \$1,200. The will also transferred ownership of his official papers to the Archivist of the United States.<sup>4</sup>

Three months after Harry's death, the 20 year-long "modernization" program was completed. The "noise and mess" she feared might disturb Harry no longer mattered as Robert Nickell resumed working at 219 North Delaware on March 29, 1973. Repainting the trim in the first floor guest bedroom, Nickell readied the room for the day when Bess would occupy it.<sup>5</sup> According to Margaret Truman, the move downstairs came in the mid- to late-1970s:

Mother stayed up there [in her second floor bedroom] for a long time.... Mr. Lockwood [Robert Lockwood, head of the Secret Service Detail] was absolutely frantic because she would go upstairs at night and he could just see her falling all the way down the stairs. She was using a cane and so he and I finally talked her into moving down here [to the first floor bedroom].... I said, "I will be sure of one thing, if Mr. Lockwood will do it. He and the Secret Service men will change the beds for you so you have your own bed."<sup>6</sup>

Nickell's last job at the Truman home was to re-wallpaper the front foyer, central hall, stairway, and second floor central hall. On April 17, 1973, with the wallpapering completed, the 20-year interior modernization program concluded.<sup>7</sup>

Painter and carpenter Robert Sanders continued to do regular

maintenance work for the widow such as replacing rotted wood and "touching up" cracked and peeling paint. Although the latter work was part of the normal painting contract and concentrated on the facades which tourists could see from the street, Bess emphasized that she wanted the repairs to be "the most economical possible." While Harry never supervised the workers in the past, Bess did; she watched them work from the windows. Once, when the painters had been at 219 North Delaware for 10 days, she summoned one of the painters into the house. From her wheelchair, she reminded him, "I'm not paying for having the whole house painted."<sup>8</sup>

An off-shoot of the emerging Watergate scandal involved allegations of exorbitant sums of tax dollars spent on the Nixon home in San Clemente, California. The public uproar in late 1973 resulted in a lengthy congressional investigation by the House Committee on Government Operations and a report by the General Accounting Office. Investigating Federal expenditures on all past presidential properties as well, by far the shortest discussion was that on President Truman's home. Unlike other presidential homes, any painting or non-security related changes were paid by the Trumans, not the Federal Government. The only significant Federal investments at the Truman home were the construction of the security booth and fence, a paltry sum of \$6,600.<sup>9</sup>

A journalist wrote in 1976, Bess Truman "decline[s] all invita-

tions, even those from her beloved bridge club, since people might be hurt or offended if she accepted one invitation and could not accept them all."<sup>10</sup> As her health deteriorated, in 1978 Bess hired a companion, Mrs. Valerie LaMere, to take care of running the household and to supervise the small staff of nurses. While she was in and out of Research Hospital, Bess spent each recuperation period at 219 North Delaware, getting around by the use (progressively) of a cane, walker, and a wheelchair.<sup>11</sup>

She ceased to sit in the first floor library after her husband's death. "She missed him in the big chair," her daughter explained.<sup>12</sup> Instead, she spent most of her time during the day sitting in the living room:

After Dad died, Mother used to sit in this gold chair. Sometimes the nurses moved the sofa away from the front window so she could sit there and look out. She had a collection of little music boxes. I gave her a solar box she'd put in the sunlight to play.<sup>13</sup>

Margaret and the Daniel grandsons came to Independence to visit. On one visit, Margaret and her childhood friend, Mary "Shawsie" Branton, purchased a chiffonier for Bess's first floor bedroom. Bess resisted the idea of a larger bureau until Margaret offered to pay for it herself:

When she found out how much it cost, she almost killed both of us. Mother was such a tightwad. But it was a good balance, because Dad was the opposite, always giving away things, a sucker for a hard-luck story. We had to watch him carefully.<sup>14</sup>

While "she used every drawer," Bess was quite unconcerned about her jewelry displayed on top of the bureau or inside it. This became an acute problem, especially with the constant stream of nurses going in and out of the house. According to Margaret:

She used every drawer, and finally one day, Valerie [LaMere] was very nervous about her jewelry because she wouldn't put any of her jewelry in the bank. And so I put it all in one drawer and pushed it in the back and put it away.... Finally, Mr. Lockwood called me on the phone. I was coming out here in a few days and he said, "There are too many nurses going into that house." He said, "You've got to take it away; I can't be responsible for your mother's jewelry." So that's when I put a great, big envelope of her jewelry out at the Library....<sup>15</sup>

Bess Truman's relationship with the Secret Service became ever more close since the death of her husband. As her mobility decreased and she was confined to her home, the number of panic transmitters multiplied and were placed throughout the house, especially at the windows where Bess frequently sat. One was even placed in the basket which was attached to her walker; if she fell, help could be summoned immediately.<sup>16</sup> Agents were eventually allowed to remain inside the house, but only at night. According to Bob Lockwood, Special Agent in Charge of the Truman Detail from 1973 to 1982, "...we didn't go in until she'd retired for the night.... We had to move slowly to get permission to stay in the house at all."<sup>17</sup>

The assignment to protect the Truman home and the former First Lady was not at all unpleasant. A 1981 press account called the

Secret Service command post at 224 North Delaware "a Tranquillity Base." In the past decade, agents typically read or watched television while watching the home through the front window or on the monitors. A dozen men had earned master of arts degrees in criminal justice administration. The mildly critical expose stated that while the house rental totaled \$4,200 a year, combined salaries approached \$182,000.<sup>18</sup>

President Gerald R. Ford and First Lady Betty Ford came to visit Bess on May 8, 1976, coinciding with the dedication of the Truman statue on Independence Square. On July 12, 1976, two months after the presidential visit, Bess was hospitalized for arthritis. She was released on August 1.<sup>19</sup> Senator Hubert H. Humphrey's last visit to 219 North Delaware before his death in 1978, came on May 6, 1977.<sup>20</sup> Five weeks later, Bess suffered a fall in her home on June 16, 1977. The 92-year-old former First Lady was in the first floor bathroom around 7 p.m. when she slipped and fell. Secret Service agents, who heard her calling for help, found her lying on the floor. While she spent the night at home, Bess was admitted to Research Hospital the next day for tests which revealed she had suffered no broken bones. A newspaper report stated that while Bess still enjoyed visiting with friends, her activities had "slowed" because of her arthritic condition, resulting in "fewer trips to the market and public library."<sup>21</sup> She remained hospitalized until July 1.<sup>22</sup>

Bess returned to Research Hospital on March 25, 1978, for her "annual routine checkup," and was released on April 22.<sup>23</sup> On June 2, she was back for 15 days suffering "neuromuscular deficit with over-riding arthritis."<sup>24</sup>

Once again, on November 20, Bess was admitted for treatment of "high blood pressure and abdominal stress," and was reportedly "weak but alert, [her] voice barely audible."<sup>25</sup> On November 28, Bess began a thrice-daily exercise program to stimulate her muscles and circulatory system. Bess used her wheelchair and walker in her room, called Margaret every day, and read mystery novels.<sup>26</sup> Having regained her strength and able to stand and walk with assistance, Bess was discharged on December 16, 1978. Instructed to take medication and vitamins, regular visits by Dr. Wallace Graham continued.<sup>27</sup>

The new pastor of Trinity Episcopal Church, Rev. Robert L. Hart, began visiting the former First Lady in 1978. Because of her advanced age, Bess Truman had stopped attending church services. Like his predecessor, Rev. Hart made regular monthly trips to the Truman home to visit with Bess and administer communion. His appointments, usually arranged through the housekeeper, generally were for 3:00 p.m. on Thursdays and lasted about an hour. The Rev. Hart quickly became convinced of one thing:

She really loved Harry Truman. That was evident in everything she has ever said. She always asked me to say a

prayer for him. She always spoke very warmly of him and genuinely missed him. The house is full of him. When you're there, you feel like he will walk around the corner any minute.<sup>28</sup>

Bess's health stabilized for more than two years. In August 1980, she greeted President Jimmy Carter at 219 North Delaware as the 39th President passed through the area on a campaign tour. She returned to Research Hospital, however, on December 30, 1980, suffering from a urinary tract infection and skin rash. Dr. Graham reported that his patient was in a "splendid mood.... She's very reluctant to ever complain."<sup>29</sup> The skin irritation healed, and the 25-day treatment ended on January 24, 1981. To avoid the press, the announcement was made after she had already returned to 219 North Delaware.<sup>30</sup>

Bess Truman's 96th birthday was celebrated on February 13, 1981, with a small "valentine-themed party" in the dining room. A heart-shaped cake was cut and served by Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace. Pink ribbons were attached from the corners of the dining table to the chandelier. Pink icing on the cake read "Happy Birthday, Four to Go." Friends and the household staff sang "Happy Birthday" to the former First Lady.<sup>31</sup>

Bess re-entered the hospital on May 6, 1981, with a broken hip. After 6:00 a.m., she fell from her bed onto the floor, out of reach of the three panic transmitters. Bess was discovered at 7:00 by Valerie LaMere who called for an ambulance. The next day she under-



went hip replacement surgery. The 45-minute operation saw the removal of bone splinters and the replacement of the femur head with a metal ball joint. Margaret Truman Daniel, in Independence for "Truman Week" activities, was staying at 219 North Delaware. She received the well-wishes of former President Jimmy Carter who was also in Independence to receive the "Harry S. Truman Public Service Award."<sup>32</sup>

Assured that her mother's condition was improving, Margaret left Independence a day before Bess became critical, with complications of the kidneys and heart. On May 11, 1981, stating that "Mrs. Truman hasn't been too alert for months," Dr. Graham declared that "she understands and answers questions I ask her."<sup>33</sup> On May 12, the former First Lady entered the "early stages of hypostatic pneumonia" and respiratory therapy was initiated.<sup>34</sup> Rallying from pneumonia, a bladder infection on May 20 complicated her condition.<sup>35</sup>

Although still having problems swallowing, Bess's condition was downgraded from serious to fair on May 27. On June 4, she was moved from the intensive care unit to a private room. On June 22, 1981, after 47-days of hospitalization, Bess returned to 219 North Delaware "in better health than when she entered the hospital."<sup>36</sup>

While in her home on the evening of September 26, 1981, Bess suffered a mild stroke. When she entered the hospital the following

morning, Dr. Graham announced that a cerebral blood vessel spasm aggravated her swallowing problem and the former First Lady was dehydrating. A tube was inserted into her chest for feeding.<sup>37</sup> On October 9, 1981, Bess again went home, although food and antibiotics continued to be administered through a nasal tube.<sup>38</sup> Dr. Graham informed reporters that because of the stroke, Mrs. Truman "has a very, very difficult time saying any words. She has to think about it for some time." Although there was no paralysis, the inability to communicate was "aggravating," because "she wants to talk; she understands remarkably well."<sup>39</sup>

The intense public interest in Bess Trumans well-being was manifested on November 30, 1981, when an ambulance sped to 219 North Delaware. A blood pressure gauge registered zero causing panic at the home. The equipment proved faulty and as medical technicians repaired the equipment, concerned neighbors "stood on their porches, looked out their windows, and prayed." Initial media reports resulted in a flood of calls to Research Hospital inquiring about the former First Lady who had never even left her bed in Independence.<sup>40</sup>

Bess avoided the hospital for nearly 10 months, but re-entered on August 1, 1982, after her pulse and respiration became irregular. Diagnosed with "hyperkalemia, a buildup of potassium caused by diminished kidney function," the condition caused her heart to slow. On August 7, Bess returned home.<sup>41</sup>

On September 2, 1982, Bess was back at Research, and it was not until three days later that doctors were able to identify the source of her internal bleeding: a bleeding ulcer was discovered in her small intestine. Her condition, medical experts reported, had stabilized because of her "indomitable will."<sup>42</sup> On September 9, Bess became worse as the ulcer began bleeding again, but she once again became stable and the bleeding ceased on September 11. On September 24, following 22 days in the hospital, she was released. The credit for Bess's recovery was given to an "excellent mental attitude."<sup>43</sup>

BESS WALLACE TRUMAN DIES, OCTOBER 18, 1982

Bess Wallace Truman's long battle for life ended four months shy of her 98th birthday, and almost a decade after the death of President Harry S Truman. Ironically, despite the seemingly endless trips to and from Research Hospital and Medical Center, Bess Truman did not die there. Rather, her previous wish to die in her beloved 219 North Delaware was fulfilled. In her first floor bedroom, at 3:50 a.m., October 18, 1982, Bess Wallace Truman died of congestive heart failure caused by an accumulation of chest fluids. The former First Lady was rushed to the hospital where she was "officially" pronounced dead at 4:38 a.m.<sup>44</sup>

"AMERICA NEEDS YOU, HARRY TRUMAN"

<sup>1</sup>Thomas A. Fogarty, "America Finding A Salty Hero in Harry," Kansas City Times (April 29, 1975), file-HST Feature By Fogarty; and Carol Conrow, "Warm Independence Reception At Preview of Truman Film," Kansas City Star (July 29, 1975), file-HST Films, KCSL.

ALONE IN THE FAMILY HOME

<sup>2</sup>Bess Truman: A Life Portrait; Phase V: Living Alone," Examiner (October 18, 1972), p. 6B, HSTL.

<sup>3</sup>"Mrs. Truman Gets A Pension of \$20,000," New York Times (December 29, 1972), p. 10.

<sup>4</sup>"Wills of the Month: Truman Library Receives Former President's Papers," Trusts and Estates (May 1973), pp. 374-5; 401, folder-Truman, Harry S. Will, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>5</sup>Robert Nickell to Ron Cockrell, letter, July 28, 1983; and Robert Nickell, Diary 1983, personal papers of Robert Nickell, Independence, Mo.

<sup>6</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 59.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.; and Robert Nickell, Interview, Independence, June 29, 1983.

<sup>8</sup>Interviews, Independence: Robert Sanders, June 30, 1983; and Robert Lockwood, July 1, 1983.

<sup>9</sup>"Truman's Home No San Clemente," Kansas City Times (September 6, 1973), p. 3D, folder-Harry S Truman Heritage District, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>10</sup>Bess Truman: A Life Portrait; Phase V: Living Alone," Examiner (October 18, 1982), p. 6B.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., and "Doctor Says Her Heart Began to Fibrillate," pp. 1; 5.

<sup>12</sup>Doris G. Kinney, "Harry's Home," Life (May 1984), p. 109.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>15</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," pp. 59-60.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>17</sup>Joe Henderson, "Secret Service Ends Vigil at Truman Home," Kansas City Star (December 1, 1982), p. 3A, folder-Truman Home--  
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<sup>18</sup>Mark Peterson, "Secret Service Agents Have a 'Tranquillity Base,'" Kansas City Star (August 25, 1981), p. 3A, folder-Truman, Harry S 1981, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>19</sup>"Bess Truman In Hospital," Kansas City Star (July 15, 1976); and, "Mrs. Truman Home After Hospital Stay," Kansas City Times (August 2, 1976), file-HST Mrs., Health No. 1, KCSL.

<sup>20</sup>"V.I.P. Visitors to the Truman Home," compiled by the National Park Service from HSTL Vertical File folder "Truman Home Visitors, Events, Etc.," Superintendent's Office, Harry S Truman NHS, Independence, Mo.

<sup>21</sup>"Mrs. Truman In Hospital After Fall," Kansas City Times (June 18, 1977), file-HST Mrs., Health No. 1, KCSL.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., "Mrs. Truman Home," Kansas City Star (July 1, 1977).

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., "Mrs. Truman Leaves Hospital," (April 23, 1978).

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., "Mrs. Truman Ill," Kansas City Times (June 3, 1978).

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., "Former First Lady Rests Comfortably At Medical Center," (November 24, 1978).

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., "Mrs. Truman Plans Limited Exercise," (November 28, 1978).

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., "Mrs. Truman Going Home," (December 16, 1978).

<sup>28</sup>Sue Gentry, "Phase V: Living Alone; Pastor Pays Special Attention to Spiritual Needs," Examiner (October 18, 1982), p. 6B.

<sup>29</sup>"Bess Truman Enters Hospital for Testing," Kansas City Times (December 31, 1980), file-HST Mrs. Health No. 1, KCSL.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., "Mrs. Truman Returns Home," Kansas City Star (January 25, 1981).

<sup>31</sup>"Burrus Accepts Honors at Truman High School," Examiner (February 18, 1981), folder-Burrus, Rufus, Vertical File, HSTL.

<sup>32</sup>Terrence Thompson, "Mrs. Truman Breaks Hip In Fall From Her Bed," (May 6, 1981); and Joseph H. McCarty, Jr., "Mrs. Truman

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., Charles R. T. Crumpley, "Bess Truman Has Problems with Kidneys," Kansas City Times (May 12, 1981).

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., "Mrs. Truman Develops Pneumonia," Kansas City Star (May 12, 1981).

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., "Mrs. Truman Still 'Serious,' Develops Bladder Infection," Kansas City Times (May 21, 1981).

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., "Mrs. Truman Is Taken Off 'Serious' List," Kansas City Times (May 28, 1981); "Mrs. Truman Leaves ICU," (June 4, 1981), and "Mrs. Truman Leaves Hospital After 47 Days," Kansas City Star (June 22, 1981).

<sup>37</sup>"Mrs. Truman In Hospital After Stroke," Kansas City Times (September 28, 1981), file-HST Mrs. Health No. 2, KCSL.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., "Mrs. Truman Goes Home," Kansas City Star (October 9, 1981).

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., "Mrs. Truman Has Trouble With Speech," (October 11, 1981).

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., Kurt Hochenauer, "Alarming Moment," Kansas City Times (December 1, 1981).

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., "Bess Truman Hospitalized; Condition Serious But Stable," Kansas City Times (August 2, 1982); and, "Mrs. Truman Returns Home From Hospital," Kansas City Star (August 8, 1982).

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., "Mrs. Truman's Condition Worsens, But Is Stable," Kansas City Star (September 9, 1982); "Mrs. Truman's Bleeding Stops," Kansas City Star (September 12, 1982); and, "Bess Truman Returns Home From Hospital," Kansas City Times (September 25, 1982).

#### BESS WALLACE TRUMAN DIES, OCTOBER 18, 1982

<sup>44</sup>Bob Burgdorfer, "Bess Truman Is Dead At the Age of 97" and "Doctor Says Her Heart 'Began to Fibrillate,'" Examiner (October 18, 1982), p. 1, HSTL.

## ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL RESEARCH NEEDS

AT THE

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

There is a strong need for a park historian. Not only would a historian be helpful in the curatorial area, but in interpretation as well.

Unfortunately, many individuals with significant knowledge of the Trumans and their home are now deceased. Others, including those in the surrounding neighborhood, are quite elderly or in deteriorating health. The most immediate need is for an oral history program. The draft master plan calls for the boundaries of the national historic site to expand beyond 219 North Delaware into the adjacent neighborhood. A valuable historical resource is present in the neighborhood, but it can only be tapped through oral history, i.e., an organized program of interviewing, transcription, and archival care of tapes and transcripts. A park historian able to concentrate full-time on Truman-related history in Independence can help the National Park Service fulfill its mission to preserve and interpret the Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

Similarly, intensive archival research is needed on the immediate neighborhood and Truman-related structures: 216 North Delaware (Noland-Haukenberry house), 605 West Truman Road (George P. and May Wallace house), 601 West Truman Road (Frank G. and Natalie Wallace house), and 224 North Delaware (Secret Service Command Post).

The following National Park Service studies should be prepared for the Harry S Truman National Historic Site:

- Archeological Survey
- Historic Structures Preservation Guide
- Collections Management Plan
- Historic Grounds Report
- Administrative History
- Historic Structures Report, Architectural  
Data Section
- Historic Furnishings Report (complete draft)

The concerted effort to collect Truman-related research materials began only when the Truman Library opened in 1957. Therefore, the library's collection, while continuously growing, is not complete.

hensive. In this Historic Resource Study, local periodicals such as the Kansas City Star, Kansas City Times, and Independence Examiner have been largely surveyed for the 1919-1982 period. An intensive search of the pre-1919 period in these and other periodicals would be helpful in investigating the Gates/Wallace/Truman house and family, their town and neighborhood. Because many news organizations dispatched special correspondents to Independence whenever President Truman came home, additional research is needed in state (Missouri and Kansas) and national newspapers and magazines.

December 19, 1984



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## APPENDIX

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## APPENDIX A

### RESIDENCES OF HARRY S TRUMAN, 1884-1972

- 1884-1885: Lamar, Missouri (Barton County).
- 1885: Farm near Harrisonville, Missouri (Cass County).
- 1885-1887: Farm southeast of Belton, Missouri (Cass County).
- 1887-1890: Solomon Young farm near Grandview, Missouri (Jackson County).
- 1890-1896: 619 South Crysler, Independence, Missouri (Jackson County). [Lots 4, 5, 6, and 7 of Ott and Roberts Resurvey of Munn's Addition purchased December 12, 1890; Lots 32 and 33 purchased July 11, 1892].
- 1896-1902: 909 West Waldo, Independence, Missouri (Jackson County). [Lot 3 of Woodland Place Addition purchased November 21, 1895].
- 1902: 902 North Liberty, Independence, Missouri (Jackson County). [Lot 22 of John Lewis Addition].
- 1902-1905: 2108 Park, Kansas City, Missouri (Jackson County).
- 1905: 2650 East 29th Street, Kansas City, Missouri (Jackson County).
- 1905-1906: 1314 Troost Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri (Jackson County).
- 1906-1918: Solomon Young Farm, Grandview, Missouri (Jackson County).
- 1918-1919: United States Expeditionary Force, Western Front, France.
- 1919-1972: 219 North Delaware Street, Independence, Missouri (Jackson County)—except for residences in the City of Washington, District of Columbia, listed below for the period 1935 to 1953:
- A. Tilden Gardens, 3000 Tilden, N.W., (1935).
  - B. The Sedgwick Gardens, 3726 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., (by April 17, 1936).

- C. The Carroll Arms, 301 First Avenue, N.E., (by February 18, 1937).
- D. Warwick Apartments, 3051 Idaho Avenue, N.W., (by May 5, 1938).
- E. Tilden Gardens, 3000 Tilden, N.W., (by March 23, 1939).
- F. 3930 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., (by June 6, 1940).
- G. 4701 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., (by April 23, 1941 to April 1945).
- H. Blair House and/or the White House, (April 1945 to January 20, 1953).

[Note: This list, compiled by the staff of the Harry S. Truman Library, was reorganized by the author].

## APPENDIX B

### V. I. P. VISITORS TO THE TRUMAN HOME

#### DATE

05-10-53	John W. Snyder, former Secretary of the Treasury. [Stayed overnight].
05-11-53	Stanley Woodward, former U.S. Ambassador to Canada and Chief of Protocol. [Stayed overnight].
08-05-54	Syngman Rhee, President of South Korea.
10-22-54	Sam Rayburn, Speaker of the House of Representa- tives, and Mrs. Franklin D. (Eleanor) Roosevelt
2-16 to 19-55	Mr. and Mrs. Dean Acheson, former Secretary of State. [Stayed three nights].
05-08-55	Harry S. Truman Library groundbreaking dinner recep- tion and Harry S. Truman's 71st birthday party [for 150 invited guests]: Paul M. Butler, Chairman, Dem- ocratic National Committee (DNC); Frank McKinney, former Chairman, DNC; John Snyder, former Secretary of the Treasury; Jesse M. Donaldson, former Post- master General; Senator Stuart S. Symington, (D.- Mo.); Matt Connelly, former Secretary to the President.
04-26-56	Margaret Truman's wedding reception.
07-24-56	Frank Clement, Governor of Tennessee.
07-06-57	Harry S. Truman Library dedication reception [400 invited guests]: Former President Herbert C. Hoover; Kansas City Mayor H. Roe Bartle; U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren; Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn; Mrs. Franklin D. (Eleanor) Roosevelt; Dean Acheson, former Secretary of State; U.S. Supreme Court Justice Tom Clark; Senator Stuart Symington, (D.-Mo.); Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson, (D.-Tx.); Senate Minority Leader William F. Knowland, (R.-Ca.); Averell Harriman, former U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union.



DATE

10-26-64 Henry Fonda, Jackie Cooper, Eddie Fisher, Tippi Hedren, Barbara Rush, and Joan Staley (sang on front lawn).

08-08-66 Vice-President and Mrs. Hubert H. Humphrey; and Warren E. Hearnes, Governor of Missouri.

04-09-67 Gen. and Mrs. Harry Vaughan, former President's Military Aide.

06-21-67 Vice-President Hubert H. Humphrey.

09-14-67 Billy Graham, evangelist; Jack Benny, comedian; Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Gray. [Mrs. Georgia Neese Clark Gray was former Secretary of the Treasury].

09-14-67 President Lyndon B. Johnson.

10-13-67 Maurice Chevalier, French entertainer.

16-??-67 William E. Galbraith, American Legion National Commander; and former American Legion National Commander Charles L. Bacon.

05-3-68 President and Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson; Senator John D. Pastore (D.-R.I.); and Kansas City Mayor Ilus W. Davis.

05-13-68 Bob Hope, comedian [escorted by Joyce C. Hall, President of Hallmark Cards, Inc.].

05-25-68 Vice-President Hubert H. Humphrey.

09-21-68 Vice-President Hubert H. Humphrey and Senator Edmund S. Muskie (D.-Me.) [Democratic Presidential and Vice-presidential nominees]; and Mrs. Muskie.

10-11-68 President Lyndon B. Johnson [Signing of U.N. commemorative proclamations].

10-15-68 Eugene Anderson, former U.S. Ambassador to Denmark.

11-08-68 Members of Battery D, 129th Field Artillery, 35th Division (and wives).

03-21-69 President and Mrs. Richard M. Nixon.

05-09-69 Missouri Senator Jack Gant.

DATE

04-12-70 Truman Cabinet Members, 25th anniversary of Harry S Truman's succession to the presidency: Former Ambassador to the Soviet Union W. Averell Harriman; former Secretary of State Dean Acheson; former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Earl Warren; former Secretary of the Treasury John W. Snyder; and former White House Counselor Charles S. Murphy.

05-08-70 Harry S Truman's 86th birthday: Former Secretary of the Treasury John W. Snyder; and Tom Evans, President of KCMO Broadcasting (radio and T.V.

09-26-70 General William C. Westmoreland, Army Chief of Staff.

12-14-70 Senator Edmund Muskie (D.-Me.).

05-08-71 Harry S Truman's 87th birthday: John Snyder and Georgia Neese Clark Gray, former secretaries of the treasury; Postmaster General Winton M. Blount, and Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, (D.-Mn.).

09-27-71 Lawrence O'Brien, Chairman, Democratic National Committee.

10-12-71 St. Louis Mayor A. J. Cervantes; and Kansas City Mayor Charles B. Wheeler, Jr.

10-15-71 Former President and Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson.

12-13-71 Kansas Governor and Mrs. Robert Docking; and Georgia Neese Clark Gray, former Secretary of the Treasury; and Mr. Andrew Gray.

04-22-72 Former U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union and Mrs. W. Averell Harriman.

05-04-72 Mrs. Margaret Brown Klapthor, Curator, Smithsonian Institution, First Lady Dress Collection.

05-09-72 Harry S Truman's 88th birthday: Edwin Pauley, former Secretary of the Democratic National Committee, and Mrs. Pauley; and Georgia Neese Clark Gray, former Secretary of the Treasury; and her husband, Mr. Andrew Gray.

12-27-72 Former President Lyndon Baines Johnson and Mrs. Lady Bird Johnson; their daughters, Lucy Bird and Linda

DATE

	Bird; and their husbands, Patrick Nugent and Charles Robb.
12-27-72	President Richard M. Nixon and First Lady Pat Nixon.
12-28-72	(Two visits) Senator and Mrs. Hubert H. Humphrey.
05-08-76	President and Mrs. Gerald R. Ford.
05-06-77	Senator Hubert H. Humphrey [last visit before his death in 1978].
08-??-80	President Jimmy Carter.

[Note: This list was compiled by Harry S Truman NHS Seasonal Historian Jim Williams, June 1984, from the Truman Library Vertical File, "Truman Home Visitors, Events, Etc."; Supplemental information was contributed by Midwest Regional Office Research Historian Ron Cockrell].

# UNITED STATES STATUTES AT LARGE

CONTAINING THE

LAWS AND CONCURRENT RESOLUTIONS  
ENACTED DURING THE SECOND SESSION OF THE  
NINETIETH CONGRESS  
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1968

AND

REORGANIZATION PLANS AND PROCLAMATIONS

---

VOLUME 82

IN ONE PART



UNITED STATES  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON : 1969

have radically altered the conditions of life for most men on our planet. Relations between men, and between man and his environment, have been permanently changed by events that began in the scientific laboratory.

As a result of this revolution in knowledge, it has become possible for all men to be adequately fed, clothed, and sheltered; for new energy resources to be committed to man's use; for information to be spread broadly and instantaneously to the remotest regions of the earth.

It has also become possible for man to destroy himself: for local aggression to be converted into global catastrophe; for mis-information and demagoguery to reach millions, and to shape their political destinies.

The scientific and technological revolution offers man unparalleled opportunities to liberate—or to enslave—his spirit. He can gain his freedom from physical want, and lose his identity in the prosperous streets of great cities. He can move his family to a healthier and more spacious environment, and lose the sense of community with his fellow men. He can free more hours for leisure activity, and find those hours empty and purposeless.

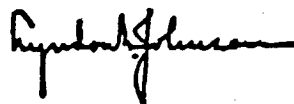
Thus his spirit lives in a state of crisis. In the midst of that crisis—as in days long ago, before “science and technology” were common words to his tongue—man cries out for meaning, for guidance, for assurance that his spirit is of value. In the midst of baffling change, he longs for enduring values. In the impersonal rush of his days, he seeks a sign that he is known, and accepted, as a unique person.

In this era of science and technology, we have set aside a day of prayer. Let us use it to thank God for the blessings of human industry and ingenuity, and to seek His strength, His love, and His guidance in the crisis of our spirit.

The Congress, by a joint resolution of April 17, 1952, provided that the President “shall set aside and proclaim a suitable day each year, other than a Sunday, as a National Day of Prayer, on which the people of the United States may turn to God in prayer and meditation at churches, in groups, and as individuals.”

NOW, THEREFORE, I, LYNDON B. JOHNSON, President of the United States of America, do hereby set aside Wednesday, October 16, 1968, as National Day of Prayer, 1968.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this tenth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and sixty-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and ninety-third.



### Proclamation 3878

UNITED NATIONS DAY, 1968

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

On October 24, 1968, the world will mark the twenty-third birthday of the United Nations.

66 Stat. 64.  
36 USC 185.

October 11, 1968

Our commitment to that organization has been a continuing element of our foreign policy since the U.N. was founded, in 1945. Distinguished Americans of both parties represented our country in the framing of its Charter. Democrats and Republicans alike continued to represent our country in the councils of the United Nations. Together they have contributed to its objectives—the peaceful settlement of disputes, economic and social progress, the control of nuclear armaments, the growth of international law, and the protection of human rights.

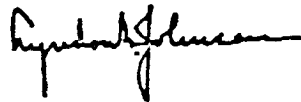
The cause of human rights is receiving special notice in the United Nations this year, for it was 20 years ago that the General Assembly adopted a landmark document, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To mark that anniversary, 1968 has been designated as International Human Rights Year.

As we take stock of the work of the United Nations, let us not be beguiled either by easy optimism or by blind pessimism. Let us look squarely at both its successes and its disappointments. Above all, we must not forget that the cause of peace and progress, in this age of mingled hope and danger, requires nations to reject aggression in favor of conciliation and cooperation—of which the United Nations offers the greatest common instrument. Not by arms, but by giving life and practice to the principles of peace, will men find the peace and security in which freedom can flourish.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, LYNDON B. JOHNSON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Thursday, October 24, 1968, as United Nations Day, and I urge the citizens of this Nation to observe that day by means of such community programs as will contribute to a realistic understanding of the aims, problems, and achievements of the United Nations and its associated organizations.

I also call upon officials of the Federal and State Governments and upon local officials to encourage citizen groups and agencies of communication—press, radio, television, and motion pictures—to engage in special and appropriate observance of United Nations Day this year in cooperation with the United Nations Association of the United States of America and other interested organizations.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eleventh day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and sixty-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and ninety-third.



#### Proclamation 3879

RECOGNIZING THE SIGNIFICANT PART WHICH HARRY S. TRUMAN  
PLAYED IN THE CREATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

October 11, 1968

By the President of the United States of America

#### A Proclamation

*Ante*, p. 1659.

By Proclamation No. 3878, I proclaimed October 24, 1968, as United Nations Day, and urged the citizens of this Nation to observe that day by appropriate community programs.

It is especially fitting that, on United Nations Day, Americans should recall the significant part which President Harry S. Truman played in the creation of the United Nations, and the continued support which he gave to that Organization during his term of office.

Some of Harry S. Truman's first decisions when he became President on the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt concerned the United Nations Conference in San Francisco. From the day the Conference met on April 25, 1945, to draft the United Nations Charter, until it concluded two months later, President Truman gave close direction to the work of our delegation and climaxed the proceedings with an historic address at the closing session of the Conference.

President Truman knew that an effective world organization was needed to prevent a repetition of the devastation wrought by two World Wars. Under his direction, the United States proposed that the development of nuclear energy take place under United Nations control. Through the Point Four Program and in other ways, he projected the United Nations into the field of economic and social development. His concern for human rights led him to appoint Eleanor Roosevelt as the United States spokesman on human rights. Mrs. Roosevelt helped draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose 20th anniversary we celebrate this year.

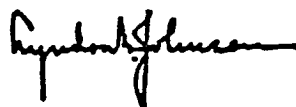
President Truman never flinched in the exercise of United States responsibility in and through the United Nations. Had he not resolutely supported United Nations opposition to the attack on the Republic of Korea in 1950, other aggressive adventures would have been encouraged, and the United Nations would be a far less effective body. He was alert to every possibility for using the United Nations on behalf of peace and justice—whether in Iran, Greece, the Middle East, Kashmir, or elsewhere.

The United States and the world owe much to President Truman's interest in the United Nations. It is right that the Congress should have, by a joint resolution approved October 11th authorized and requested that I issue a proclamation recognizing this fact on October 24—United Nations Day. It is my great pleasure to do so.

*Ante, p. 996.*

NOW, THEREFORE, I, LYNDON B. JOHNSON, President of the United States of America, do hereby urge the citizens of this Nation in their observances of United Nations Day 1968 to give special recognition to the significant part which Harry S. Truman played in the creation of the United Nations and to recall those qualities of character, responsibility and leadership which caused him to support the United Nations in its efforts to keep the peace, and to promote the rule of law and the prevalence of social justice among all men.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eleventh day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and sixty-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and ninety-third.



## APPENDIX D

### Genealogical Charts of the Gates, Wallace, and Truman Families.

#### Family Group:

- \* George Porterfield Gates
- \* Benjamin F. Wallace
- \* David Willock Wallace
- \* John Anderson Truman
- \* Harry S Truman



As of 7/30/84

**HUSBAND GATES, George Porterfield**

Born April 2, 1835 Place Lunenburg, Essex County, Vermont  
 Chr. \_\_\_\_\_ Place \_\_\_\_\_  
 Marr. 1860 Place Port Byron, Illinois  
 Died June 25, 1918 Place 219 North Delaware, Independence, Missouri  
 Bur. June 28, 1918 Place Block 41, Lot 5, Woodlawn Cemetery, Independence, Missouri  
 HUSBAND'S FATHER George W. Gates HUSBAND'S MOTHER Sarah D. Todd  
 HUSBAND'S OTHER WIVES \_\_\_\_\_

**WIFE Elizabeth Emery**

Born February 21, 1841 Place Rounds, England  
 Chr. \_\_\_\_\_ Place \_\_\_\_\_  
 Died June 19, 1924 Place Colorado Springs, Colorado  
 Bur. June 22, 1924 Place Block 41, Lot 5, Woodlawn Cemetery, Independence, Missouri  
 WIFE'S FATHER \_\_\_\_\_ WIFE'S MOTHER \_\_\_\_\_  
 WIFE'S OTHER HUSBANDS \_\_\_\_\_

SEX M F	CHILDREN List each child (whether living or dead) in order of birth Given Names Surname	WHEN BORN			WHERE BORN		STATE OR COUNTRY	DATE OF FIRST MARRIAGE TO WHOM	WHEN DIED DAY MONTH YEAR		
		DAY	MONTH	YEAR	TOWN	COUNTY			DAY	MONTH	YEAR
1 F	Margaret Elizabeth "Madge" Gates	4	August	1862	Port Byron	Rock Island	IL	June 13, 1883 - David Willock Wallace	5	December	1952
2 F	Maud Louise Gates	23	February	1864	Port Byron	Rock Island	IL	October 19, 1893 - William Strother Wells	22	December	1934
3 F	Myra Gates			1866	Census - Port Byron Obit - Indep., Mo.	Rock Island	IL	1893 - Theodoric Boulware (T.B.) Wallace	post 1927		
4 M	George Walter Gates			1868	Independence	Jackson	MO		8	February	1923
5 M	Frank Emery Gates			1871	Independence	Jackson	MO				1925
6 F	Tillie Gates	March	1874		Independence	Jackson	MO		27	May	1877
7 F	Bessie Gates	December	1883		Independence	Jackson	MO		8	October	1884
8											
9											
10											
11											

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

Various: Truman Library/Harry S Truman NHS (genealogy folders, Gates Family)

**OTHER MARRIAGES**

To indicate that a child is an ancestor of the family representative, place an "X" behind the number pertaining to that child.

As of 7/30/84

HUSBAND WALLACE, Benjamin F.

Born April 26, 1817

Place Green County, Kentucky

Chr.

Place

Marr. August 1, 1847

Place Independence, Missouri

Died June 2, 1877

Place Independence, Missouri

Bur.

Place Woodlawn Cemetery, Independence, Missouri

HUSBAND'S

FATHER Thomas Wallace

HUSBAND'S

MOTHER Mary Percey

HUSBAND'S  
OTHER WIVES

WIFE Virginia Willock

Born 1824

Place Green County, Kentucky

Chr.

Place

Died May 28, 1908

Place Independence, Missouri

Bur.

Place Woodlawn Cemetery, Independence, Missouri

WIFE'S  
FATHER

David Willock

WIFE'S

MOTHER Dorothy Ann Johnston

WIFE'S  
OTHER  
HUSBANDS

SEX M F	CHILDREN List each child (whether living or dead) in order of birth Given Names Surname	WHEN BORN			WHERE BORN			DATE OF FIRST MARRIAGE TO WHOM	WHEN DIED		
		DAY	MONTH	YEAR	TOWN	COUNTY	STATE OR COUNTRY		DAY	MONTH	YEAR
1 F	Mary Albina Wallace	21	May	1848	Independence	Jackson	MO		12	January	1854
2 M	David Willock Wallace	15	June	1860	Independence	Jackson	MO	June 13, 1883	17	June	1903
3								Margaret Elizabeth (Madge) Gates			
4											
5											
6											
7											
8											
9											
10											
11											

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Various: Truman Library/Harry S Truman NHS (genealogy folders, Gates Family)

Wallace/

OTHER MARRIAGES

To indicate that a child is an ancestor of the family representative, place an "X" behind the number pertaining to that child.

425

As of 7/30/8.

HUSBAND WALLACE, David Willock

Born June 15, 1860 Place Independence, Missouri

Chr. Place

Marr. June 13, 1883 Place First Presbyterian Church, Independence, Missouri

Died June 17, 1903 Place Independence, Missouri

Bur. June 19, 1903 Place Lot 8, Block 4, original, Woodlawn Cemetery, Independence, Missouri

HUSBAND'S FATHER Benjamin F. Wallace

HUSBAND'S MOTHER Virginia Willock

HUSBAND'S OTHER WIVES

WIFE Margaret Elizabeth (Madge) Gates

Born August 4, 1862 Place Port Byron, Illinois

Chr. Place

Died December 5, 1952 Place The White House, Washington, D.C.

Bur. December 8, 1952 Place Block 41, Lot 5, Woodlawn Cemetery, Independence, Missouri

WIFE'S FATHER George Porterfield Gates

WIFE'S MOTHER Elizabeth Emery

WIFE'S OTHER HUSBANDS

SEX M F	CHILDREN List each child (whether living or dead) in order of birth Given Names Surname	WHEN BORN			WHERE BORN			DATE OF FIRST MARRIAGE TO WHOM	WHEN DIED		
		DAY	MONTH	YEAR	TOWN	COUNTY	STATE OR COUNTRY		DAY	MONTH	YEAR
1 F	Elizabeth Virginia "Bess" Wallace	13	Feb.	1885	Independence	Jackson	MO	June 28, 1919 Harry S Truman	18	Oct.	1982
2 M	Frank Gates Wallace	4	March	1887	Independence	Jackson	MO	April 6, 1915 Natalie Ott	12	August	1960
3 M	George Porterfield Wallace	9	May	1892	Independence	Jackson	MO	October 24, 1916 Mary Frances Southern	24	May	1963
4 F	Infant Daughter	2	May	1898	Independence	Jackson	MO		4	May	1898
5 M	David Frederick Wallace	7	Jan	1900	Independence	Jackson	MO	July 27, 1933 Christine Meyer	30	Sept	1957
6											
7											
8											
9											
10											
11											

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Various: Truman Library/Harry S Truman NHS

OTHER MARRIAGES

To indicate that a child is an ancestor of the family representative, place an "X" behind the number pertaining to that child.

426

As of 12/3/84

HUSBAND TRUMAN, John AndersonBorn December 5, 1851 Place Holmes Park, Jackson County, Missouri

Chr. \_\_\_\_\_ Place \_\_\_\_\_

Marr. December 28, 1881 Place Grandview, MissouriDied November 2, 1914 Place Grandview, MissouriBur. \_\_\_\_\_ Place Forest Hill Cemetery, Kansas City, MissouriHUSBAND'S FATHER Anderson Shipp TrumanHUSBAND'S MOTHER Mary Jane Holmes

OTHER WIVES \_\_\_\_\_

WIFE Martha Ellen YoungBorn November 25, 1852 Place now Kansas City, Missouri

Chr. \_\_\_\_\_ Place \_\_\_\_\_

Died July 26, 1947 Place Grandview, MissouriBur. July 28, 1947 Place Forest Hill, Cemetery, Kansas City, MissouriWIFE'S FATHER Solomon YoungWIFE'S MOTHER Harriet Louise Gregg

WIFE'S OTHER HUSBANDS \_\_\_\_\_

SEX M F	CHILDREN List each child (whether living or dead) in order of birth Given Names Surname		WHEN BORN			WHERE BORN			DATE OF FIRST MARRIAGE		WHEN DIED		
			DAY	MONTH	YEAR	TOWN	COUNTY	STATE OR COUNTRY	TO WHOM		DAY	MONTH	YEAR
1 M	Harry S Truman		8	May	1884	Lamar	Barton	MO	June 28, 1919		26	December	1972
2 M	John Vivian Truman		25	April	1886	Harrisonville	Cass	MO	Elizabeth Virginia (Bess) Wallace				
3 F	Mary Jane Truman		12	August	1889	Grandview	Jackson	MO	October 1911				1968
4									Louella Campbell				
5											3	November	1973
6													
7													
8													
9													
10													
11													

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Various: Truman Library/Harry S Truman NHS

OTHER MARRIAGES

To indicate that a child is an ancestor of the family representative, place an "X" behind the number pertaining to that child.

As of 12/3/84

HUSBAND TRUMAN, Harry S

Born May 8, 1884 Place Lamar, Barton County, Missouri

Chr. June 28, 1919 Place Trinity Episcopal Church, Independence, Missouri

Marr. December 26, 1972 Place Research Hospital/Medical Center, Kansas City, Missouri

Died December 28, 1972 Place courtyard, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri

Bur. December 28, 1972 Place courtyard, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri

HUSBAND'S FATHER John Anderson Truman

HUSBAND'S MOTHER Martha Ellen Young

HUSBAND'S OTHER WIVES

WIFE Elizabeth Virginia (Bess) Wallace

Born February 13, 1885 Place 117 West Ruby Street, Independence, Missouri

Chr. December 5, 1885 Place First Presbyterian Church, Independence, Missouri

Died October 18, 1982 Place 219 North Delaware Street, Independence, Missouri

October 21, 1982 Place courtyard, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri

Bur. October 21, 1982 Place courtyard, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri

WIFE'S FATHER David Willock Wallace

WIFE'S MOTHER Margaret Elizabeth (Madge) Gates

WIFE'S OTHER HUSBANDS

SEX M F	CHILDREN List each child (whether living or dead) in order of birth Given Names Surname	WHEN BORN			WHERE BORN			DATE OF FIRST MARRIAGE TO WHOM	WHEN DIED		
		DAY	MONTH	YEAR	TOWN	COUNTY	STATE OR COUNTRY		DAY	MONTH	YEAR
1 F	Mary Margaret Truman	17	February	1924	Independence	Jackson	MO	April 21, 1956 E. Clifton Daniel, Jr.			
2											
3											
4											
5											
6											
7											
8											
9											
10											
11											

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Various: Truman Library/Harry S Truman NHS

OTHER MARRIAGES

To indicate that a child is an ancestor of the family representative, place an "X" behind the number pertaining to that child.

OF

BESS WALLACE TRUMAN

I, BESS WALLACE TRUMAN, of Independence, Jackson County Missouri, make, publish and declare this to be my last will and testament, hereby revoking all former wills and codicils made by me.

ARTICLE I

A. I bequeath all of my jewelry and clothing to my daughter, MARGARET TRUMAN DANIEL, if she survives me.

B. My daughter, MARGARET TRUMAN DANIEL, is the owner of many of the contents in my home at 219 North Delaware, Independence, Missouri. I bequeath all of the contents of my home, other than those specifically bequeathed in paragraph A of this Article and other than those contents owned by my said daughter, to THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA to be held and operated by it under the direction of the Archivist of The United States in conjunction with the Harry S. Truman Library.

ARTICLE II

I devise any and all interest owned by me at the time of my death in my residence at 219 North Delaware, Independence, Missouri, and in all real property adjoining my residence which passed to me upon the death of my husband, HARRY S. TRUMAN, to THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA to be held and operated by it under the direction of the Archivist of The United States in conjunction with the Harry S. Truman Library, subject however to the provision that during the life of my daughter, MARGARET TRUMAN DANIEL, the area above the first floor of my residence shall not be available to the public. My daughter, MARGARET TRUMAN DANIEL, has participated in the activities of the Harry S. Truman Library and the Harry S. Truman Library Institute. In this connection, I recommend that the Archivist of The United States permit her to occupy my residence one week of each calendar year during her lifetime.

ARTICLE III

A. I bequeath the sum of Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000) to TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH, Independence, Missouri.

B. I bequeath the sum of Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000) to THE HARRY S. TRUMAN LIBRARY INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS.

C. I bequeath the sum of Two Hundred Dollars (\$200) to each of ARLETTA BROWN, GERALDINE PETERSON and EDWARD E. HOBBY who survives me and is in my employ at the time of my death.

ARTICLE IV

All of the rest, residue and remainder of my property, whether real, personal or mixed, of whatever it may consist and wherever it may be situated (including any property over which I

may at the time of my death have only a power of appointment), I devise and bequeath to my daughter, MARGARET TRUMAN DANIEL, if she survives me, but if she should not survive me then to her issue who survive me, per stirpes.

ARTICLE V

I direct my executor to pay out of my residuary estate any and all estate and inheritance taxes that become payable by reason of my death.

ARTICLE VI

My executor shall have all of the powers conferred upon it by law, and without limiting the same, but in furtherance thereof and in addition thereto, I authorize and empower my executor at any time or times during the probate administration of my estate, in its discretion, without procuring the authorization of any court: to settle, compromise, adjust, liquidate or release claims and debts in favor of or against my estate; to retain any and all property owned by me at the time of my death; to manage, invest and reinvest my estate in any manner my executor deems advisable; to borrow money with or without giving security therefor; and to mortgage or sell, or both, all or any part of the property, real, personal or mixed, constituting my estate, upon such terms and conditions and for such considerations as my executor may deem advisable, regardless of whether such borrowing, mortgaging or selling is necessary for the payment of debts, taxes or expenses of administration.

ARTICLE VII

I appoint UNITED MISSOURI BANK OF KANSAS CITY, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, Kansas City, Missouri, to act as executor of this will and I request that no bond be required of said executor.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 21st day of December, 1974.

/s/ Bess Wallace Truman (SEA

The foregoing instrument, consisting of two (2) typewritten pages, was initialed on each page thereof with the initial "B. W. T." by BESS WALLACE TRUMAN (a person known to us to be of sound mind), and was by her signed, sealed, published and declared to be her last will and testament, in our presence, and in the presence of each of us, and we, at the same time, at her request, and in her presence, and in the presence of each other, have hereunto subscribed our names as attesting witnesses this 21st day of December, 1974.

<u>/s/ Robert E. Lockwood</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>11800 E. 60th. Ter.</u> <u>Kansas City, Mo. 64133</u>
<u>/s/ Donald R. Argetsinger</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>1508 "B" St.</u> <u>Blue Springs, Mo. 64015</u>
<u>/s/ Arthur Mag</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Kansas City, Mo.</u>

OF  
BESS WALLACE TRUMAN

I, BESS WALLACE TRUMAN, of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, make, publish and declare this to be the first codicil to last will and testament executed December 21, 1974.

ITEM I

I hereby amend Article II of my said will to the extent of canceling the following words in lines three and four of said Article II: "and in all real property adjoining my residence which passed to me upon the death of my husband, HARRY S. TRUMAN."

ITEM II

I hereby add the following Article II-A to my said will, to be inserted immediately after Article II of my said will and immediately before Article III of my said will:

ARTICLE II-A

I devise any and all interest owned by me at the time of my death in the East 57.09 feet of Lot 1, JAMES F. MOORE'S ADDITION, a subdivision in Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, also known as 601 West Truman Road, to my daughter, MARGARET TRUMAN DANIEL, if she survives me.

ITEM III

I hereby republish, ratify and confirm all of the terms and provisions of my said will as amended and supplemented by this first codicil thereto.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 11 day of November, 1976.

/s/ Bess Wallace Truman (SE)

The foregoing instrument was signed and sealed by BESS WALLACE TRUMAN (a person known to us to be of sound mind) and was by her published and declared to be the first codicil to her last will and testament executed December 21, 1974, in our presence, and in the presence of each of us, and we, at the same time, at her request and in her presence, and in the presence of each other, have hereunto subscribed our names as attesting witnesses this 11 day of November, 1976.

/s/ Donald H. Chisholm Address Kansas City, Mo.

/s/ Rufus Burrus Address Independence, Mo.

/s/ Robert E. Lockwood Address Kansas City, Mo.



## SECOND CODICIL TO LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

OF:

BESS WALLACE TRUMAN

I, BESS WALLACE TRUMAN, of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, make, publish and declare this to be the second codicil to my last will and testament executed December 21, 1974.

ITEM I

I hereby add the following sentences to the end of Article II of my said will:

The manner in which my residence is used by THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA under the direction of said Archivist during the life of my daughter, MARGARET TRUMAN DANIEL, shall be approved in writing by my said daughter. In the event any estate and inheritance taxes are charged against my estate as the result of the devise made under this Article II then THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, beneficiary of said devise, shall bear a ratable portion of said taxes.

ITEM II

I hereby republish, ratify and confirm all of the terms and provisions of my said will as amended and supplemented by the first codicil thereto executed November 11, 1976, and as further amended and supplemented by this second codicil thereto.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 5th day of May, 1978.

/s/ Bess Wallace Truman (SEA

The foregoing instrument was signed and sealed by BESS WALLACE TRUMAN (a person known to us to be of sound mind) and was by her published and declared to be the second codicil to her last will and testament executed December 21, 1974, in our presence, and in the presence of each of us, and we, at the same time, at her request and in her presence, and in the presence of each other, have hereunto subscribed our names as attesting witnesses this 5th day of May 1978.

/s/ Donald H. Chisholm Address Kansas City, Mo.

/s/ Lewis S. Mohr Address Kansas City, Mo.

/s/ Loren G. Procter Address Kansas City, Mo.

APPENDIX F

SUMMARY OF WILL OF HARRY S TRUMAN

(Executed January 14, 1959, as amended by first and second codicils dated October 23, 1961, and November 4, 1967).

1. He provided that his papers as President, Vice President and Senator of the United States and that his historical materials not located in his residence shall be left to the United States of America, except for those which show a reservation of title or which the executors find to be related in whole or in part to the business or personal affairs of President Truman or his family. The Archivist of the United States is designated to control the release and examination of said papers and historical material. He provides that his wife and daughter shall have full access thereto.

2. All other papers and historical materials shall be left, in equal parts, to his wife and daughter.

3. He makes the following cash bequests:

\$1,000 to each of John Curtis Truman, Fred Truman, Martha Ann Truman Swoyer, Harry Arnold Truman, Gilbert Truman, David Wallace, Marian Wallace Brasher and Margo Wallace, and if any of these nephews or nieces should not survive then his or her bequest shall pass to his or her children.

\$500 to each of Mary Martha Truman, Rita Marie Truman, Lorette Ann Truman, Gilbert Higbee Truman, Jean Ellen Truman, Wanda Lee Truman, Linda Kay Truman, Sue Ellen Truman, Karl Swoyer, Anita Luana Truman, Cheryl Anne Brasher, Elizabeth Marian Brasher, Richard Jay Wood Brasher, Lynne Frances Brasher and Pamela Sue Brasher. \$5.00 to John Ross Truman.

\$1,000 to Rose Conway.

\$500 to each of Anne Smith, Frances Myers Williams and Mary Jo Nicks.

4. He leaves to his wife his automobiles, personal and household effects and any farm machinery and equipment that he may own.

5. He leaves to Grandview Lodge No. 618 as a site for its

Lodge Hall, certain property in Shelton's Addition in Grandview.

6. He leaves to his wife, outright, sufficient property so that his estate can obtain the maximum advantage of the marital deduction for Federal estate tax purposes, after taking into consideration any specific property which is left to her by his will or which passed to her outside of his will and qualified for the marital deduction.

7. The balance of his residuary estate (after payment therefrom of his estate and inheritance taxes) is left in trust, to be held as follows:

(a) Income will be paid to his wife for life.

(b) The trustees, other than Mrs. Truman, will have the power to use principal for her benefit.

(c) Upon the death of Mrs. Truman, the trust will terminate and will be distributed to their daughter, if living, otherwise to their daughter's issue, per stirpes.

(d) His wife, his daughter and The City National Bank and Trust Company of Kansas City will be the trustees, with the survivors or survivor to act alone.

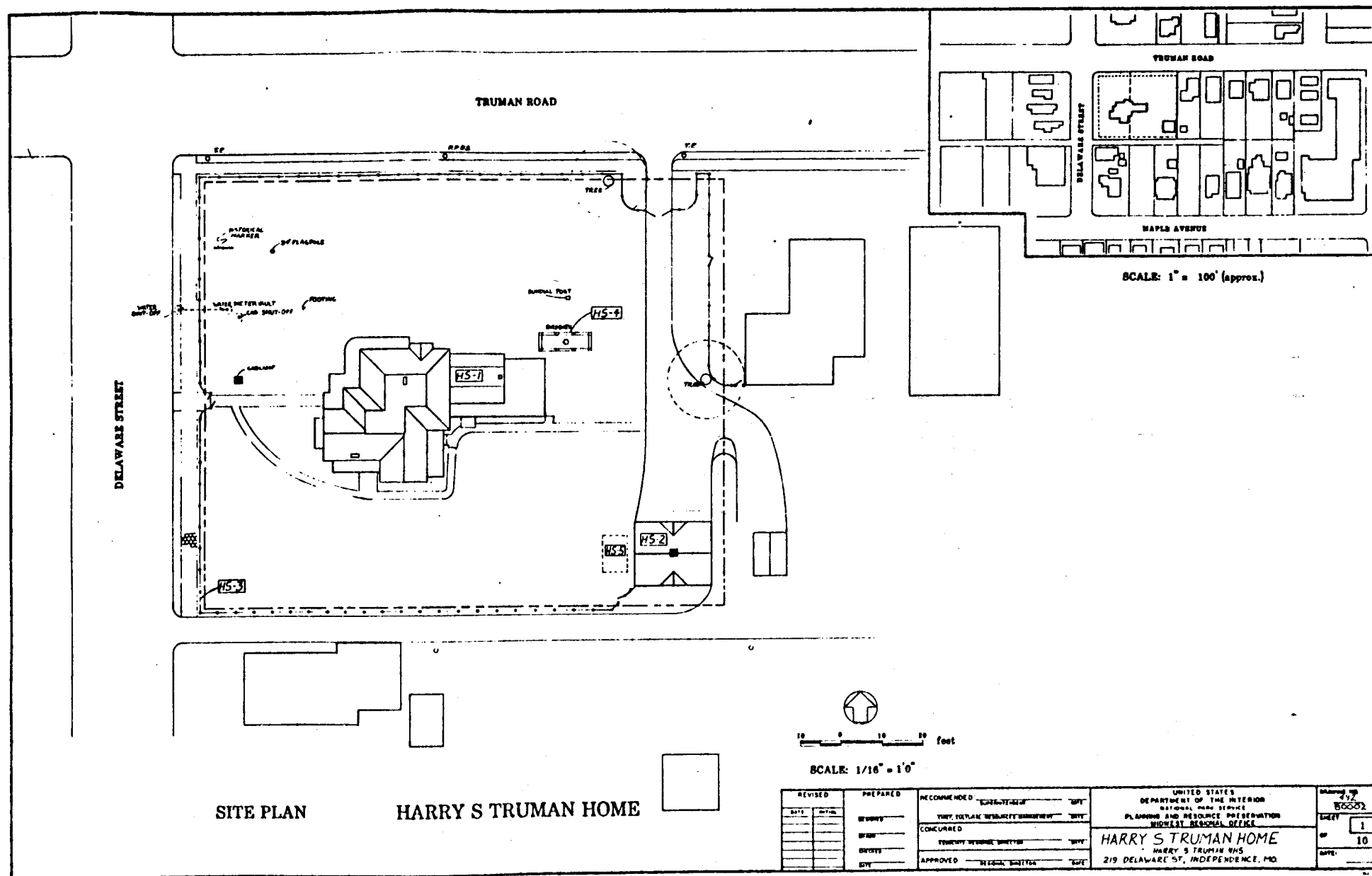
8. The executors will be the same as the trustees.

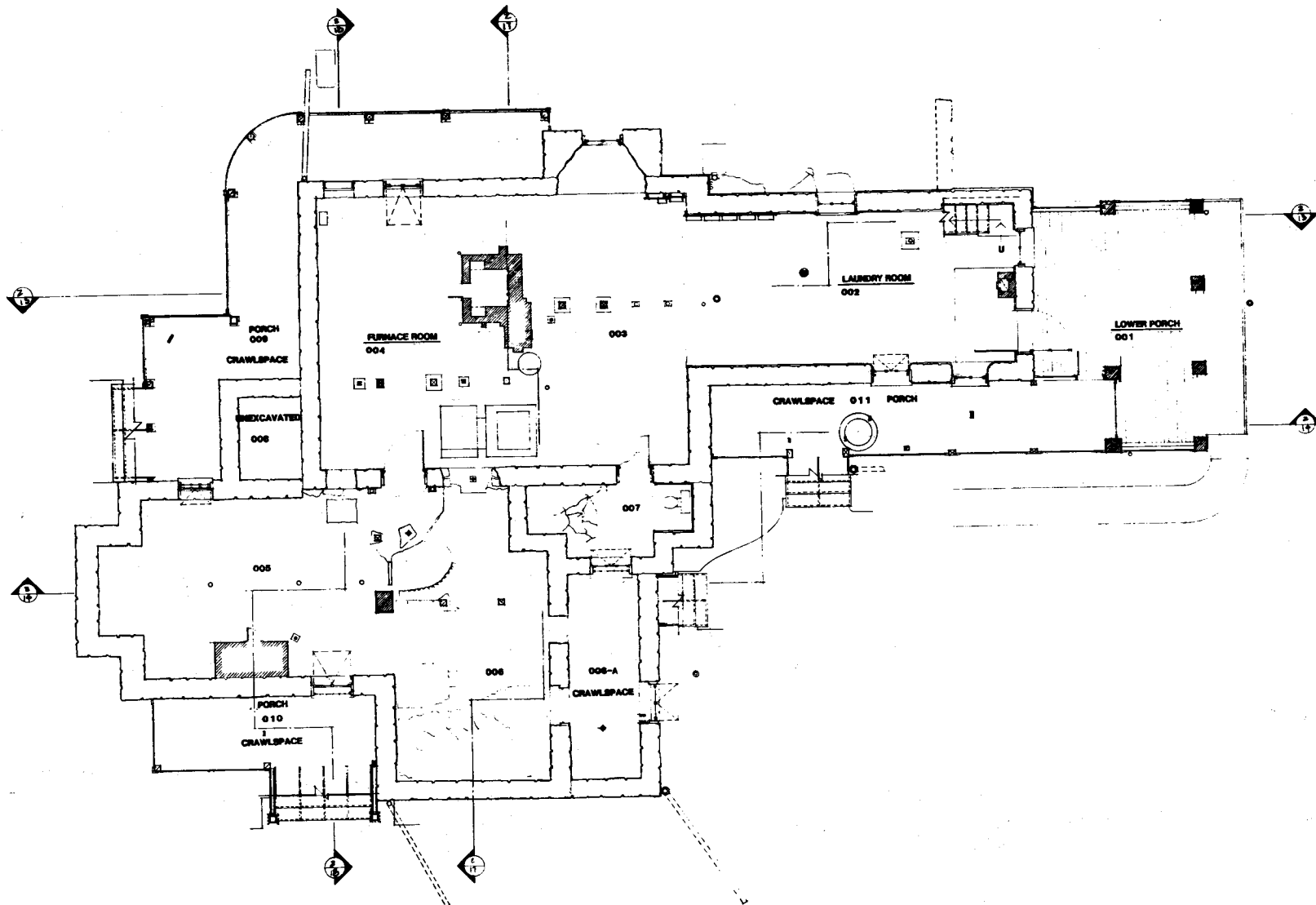
9. The trustees and executors will have broad powers of investment and management. The acts of a majority will control.

10. He directs that the attorneys for his estate be Samuel Rosenman, Arthur Mag and Rufus Burrus.

11. He directs that he be buried in the center of the plaza south of his office on the premises of the Harry S. Truman Library, and gives a direction regarding the inscription on the slab over his grave.

[Note: This summary was obtained from the Truman Library].



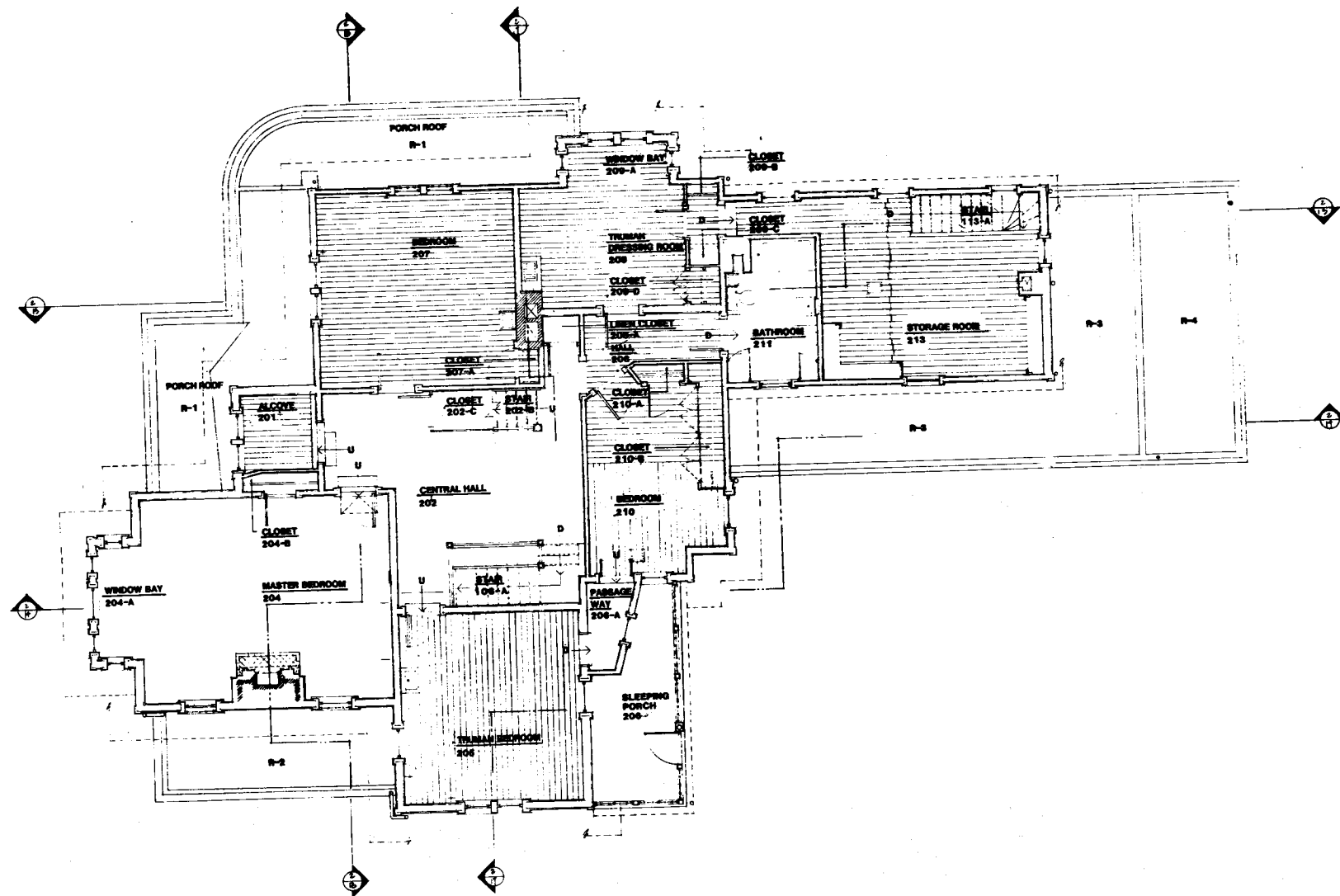


FOOTING/FOUNDATION/BASEMENT PLAN

SCALE : 1/4" = 1'-0"



SCALE : 1/4" = 1'-0"



# SECOND FLOOR PLAN

SCALE : 1/4" = 1'-0"



**SCALE : 1/4" = 1'-0"**



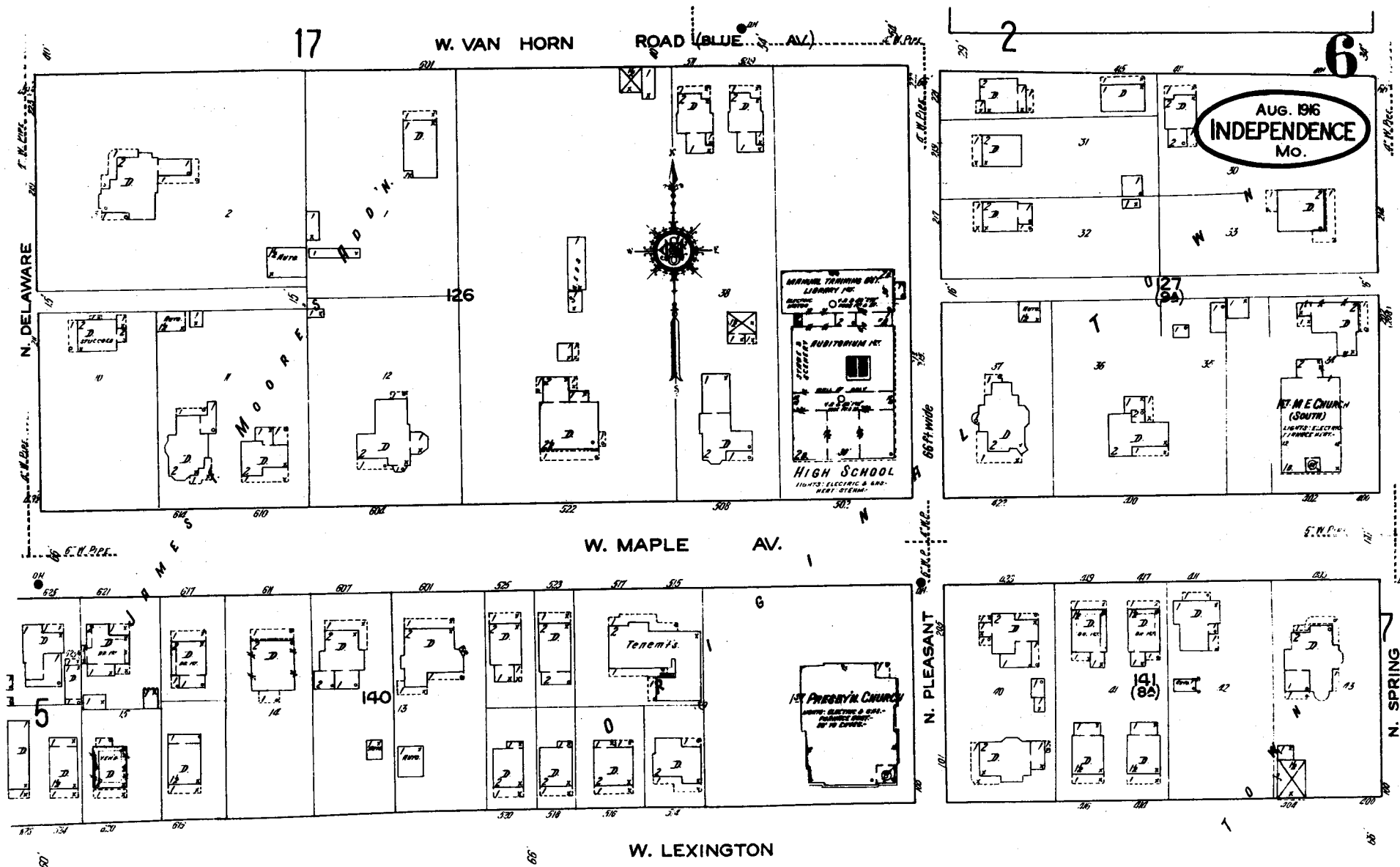
APPENDIX H

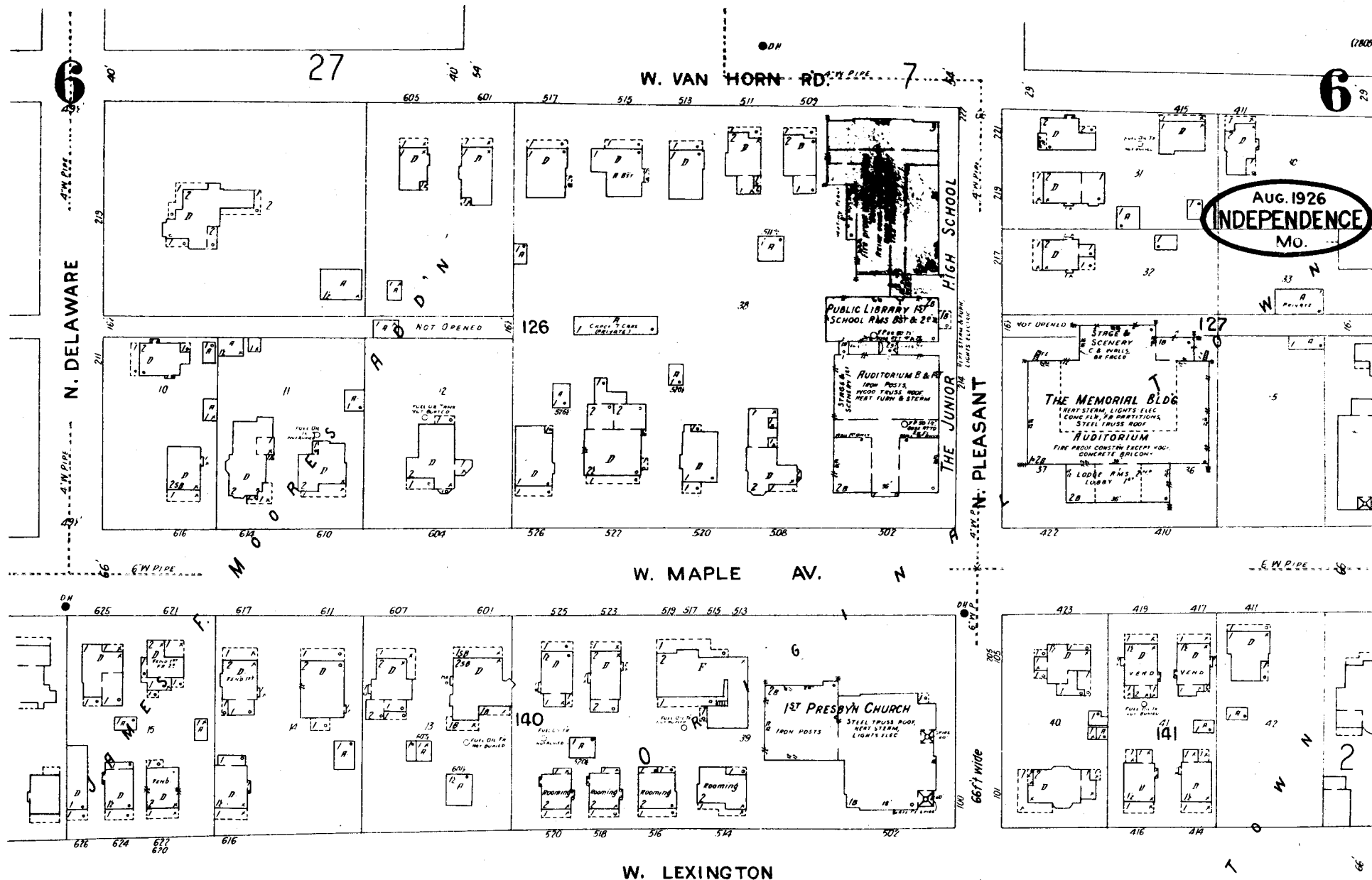
Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps

Independence, Missouri--Vicinity of 219 North Delaware Street

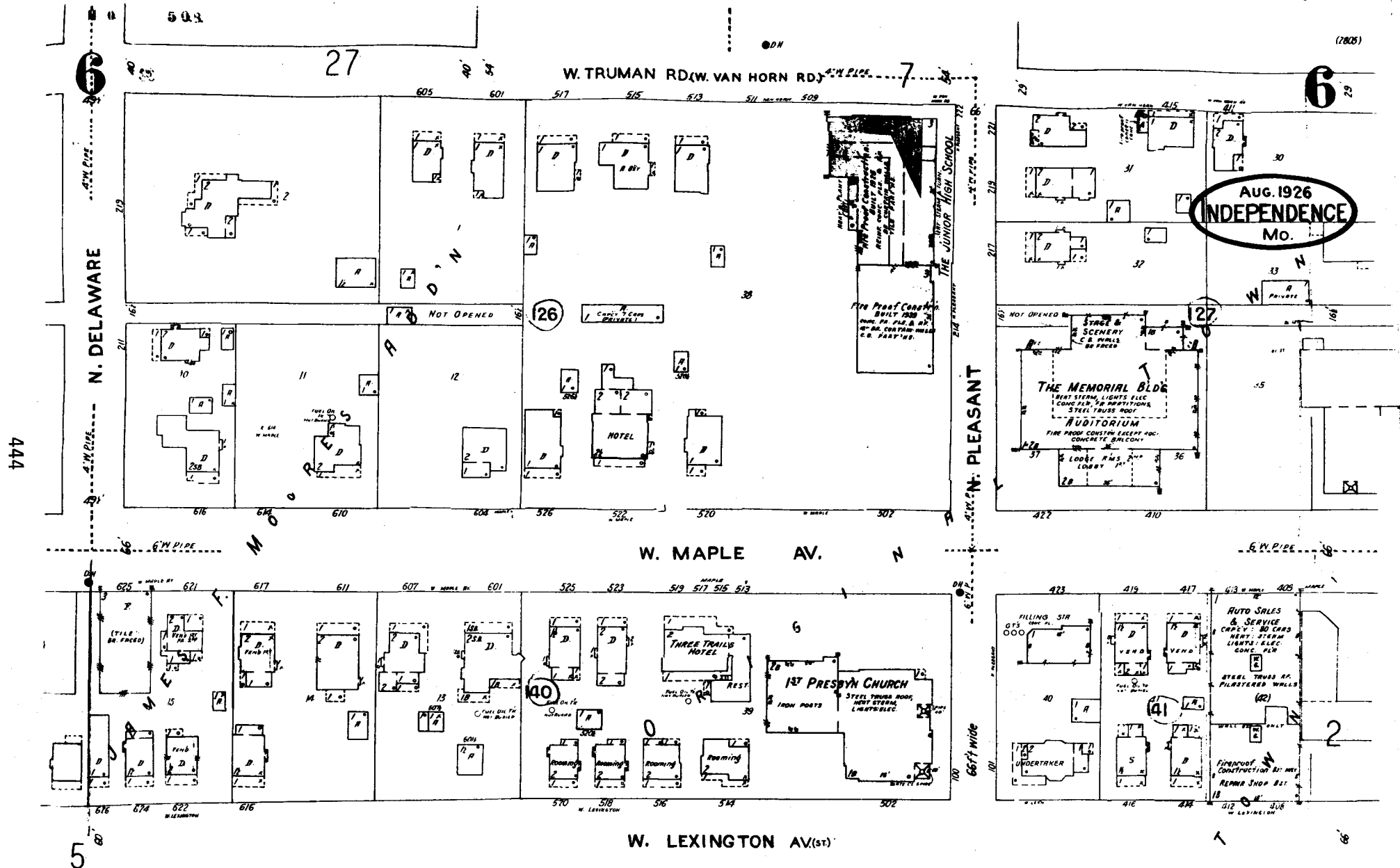
- \* September 1907
- \* August 1916
- \* August 1926
- \* August 1926 (Corrected to 1949)







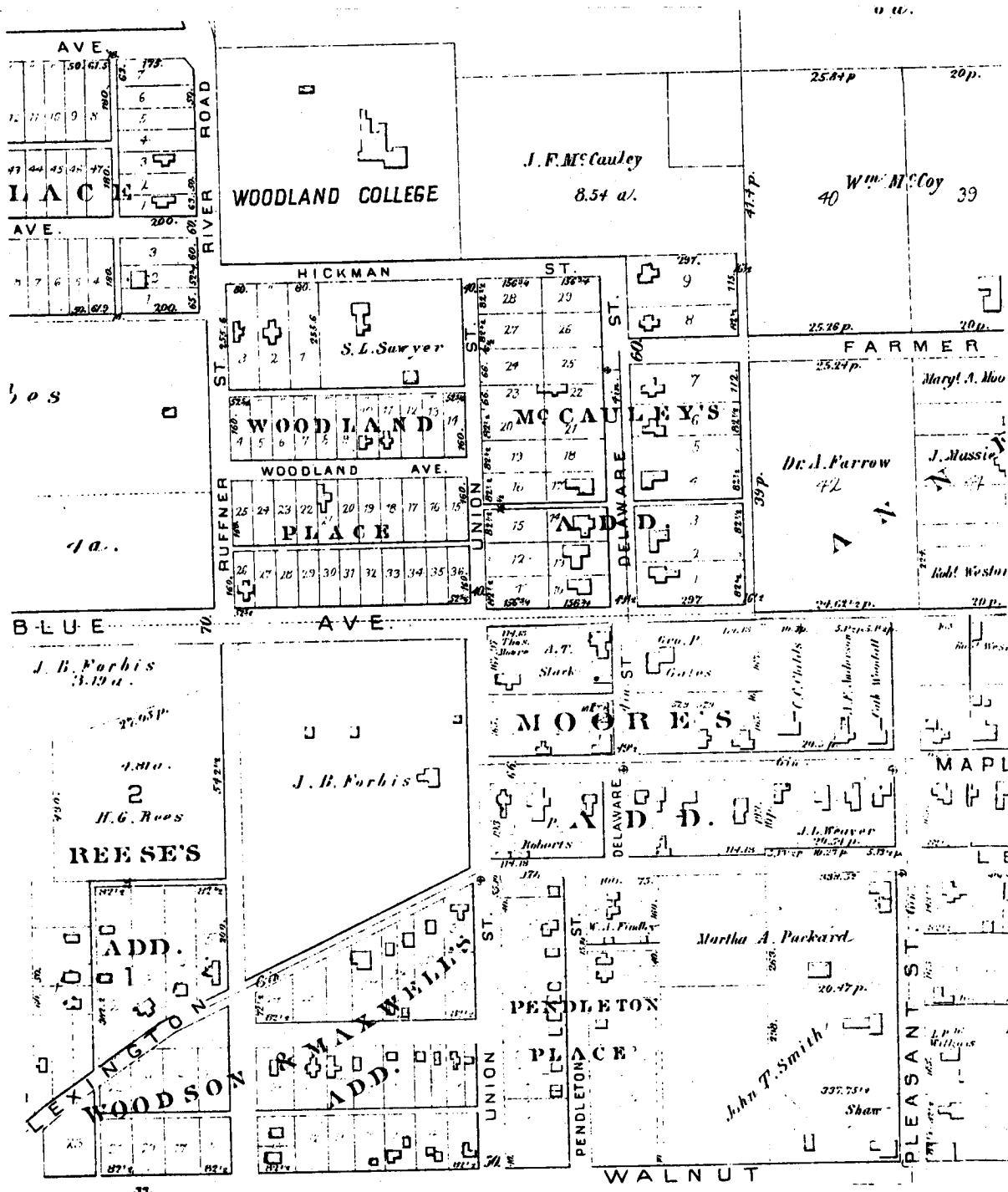
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APPENDIX I

ASSORTED HISTORICAL MAPS OF INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

- \* Atlas of the Environs of Kansas City, 1886
- \* Gallup's Atlas of Independence, Missouri (circa 1925-40)
- \* Map of Independence, Missouri, 1877
- \* Bird's Eye View of Independence, Missouri, 1868
- \* Plat Map of James F. Moore's Addition, 1847
- \* John F. McCauley's Addition, 1852
- \* Quarter Section Maps, Property Location and Parcel Size,  
Subdivisions and Irregular Tracts
- \* Zoning District Map, May 2, 1980
- \* Aerial Topographic Survey, 1979

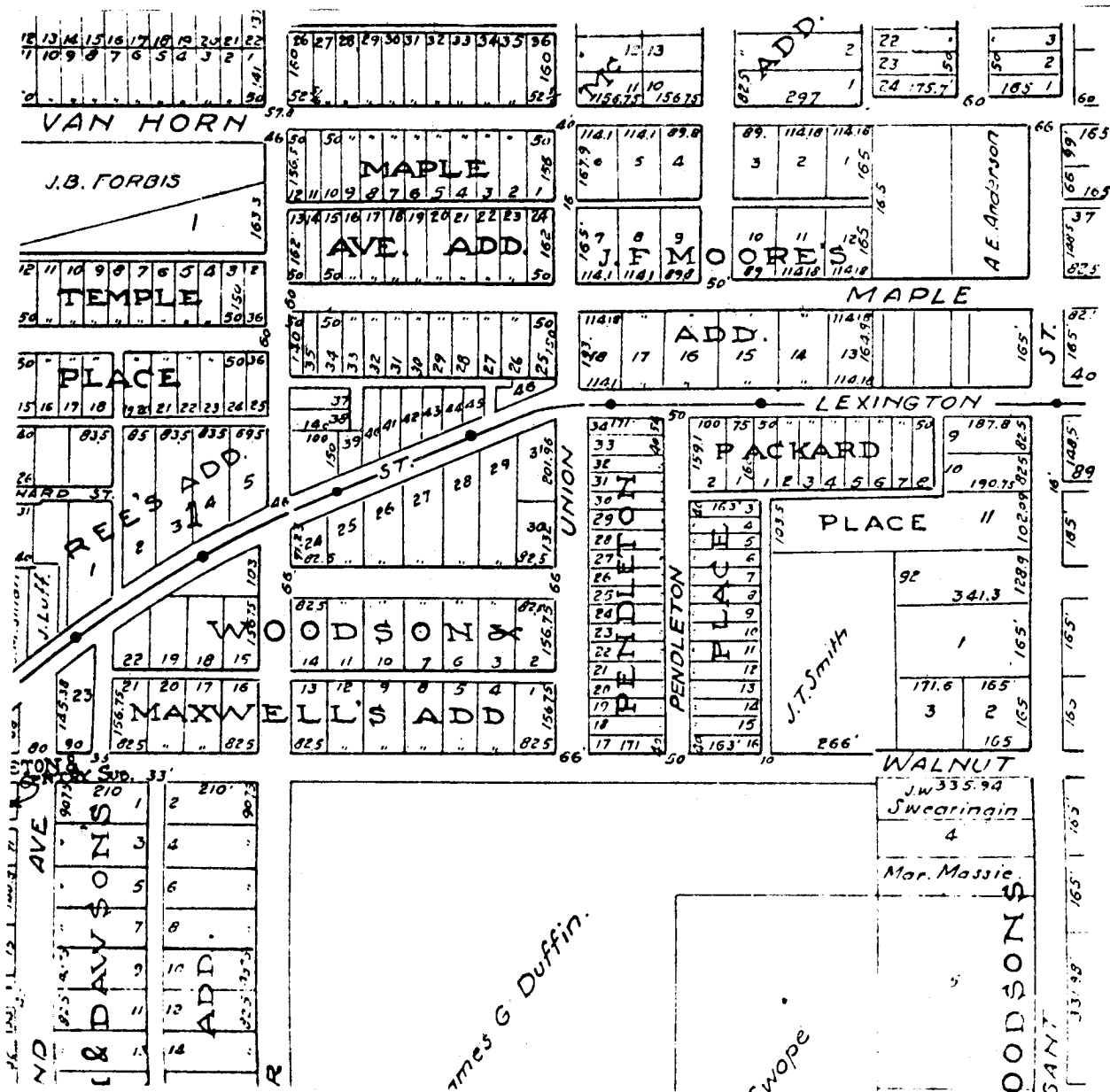


# **ATLAS OF THE ENVIRONS OF KANSAS CITY IN JACKSON COUNTY MISSOURI. FROM OFFICIAL RECORDS AND ACTUAL SURVEYS.**

Published by G.M. Hopkins, C.E. 310 Walnut St. Philadelphia, Pa.

1886

(Jackson County Historical Society, Independence, Missouri)



## GALLUP'S ATLAS OF INDEPENDENCE MISSOURI

Published by Gallup Map and Supply Company,

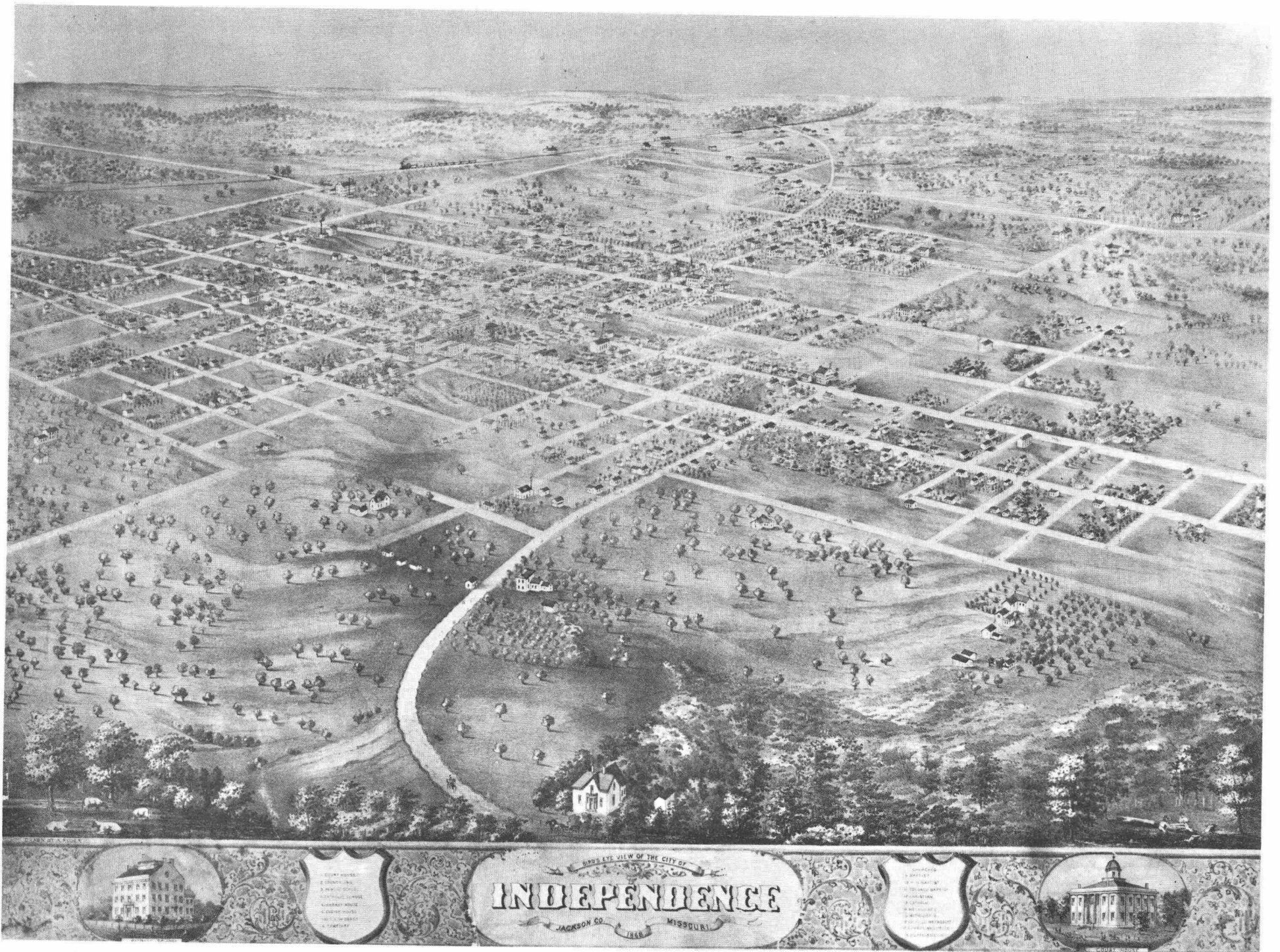
Kansas City, Missouri

No Date. (circa 1925-1940)

(Jackson County Historical Society, Independence, Missouri)

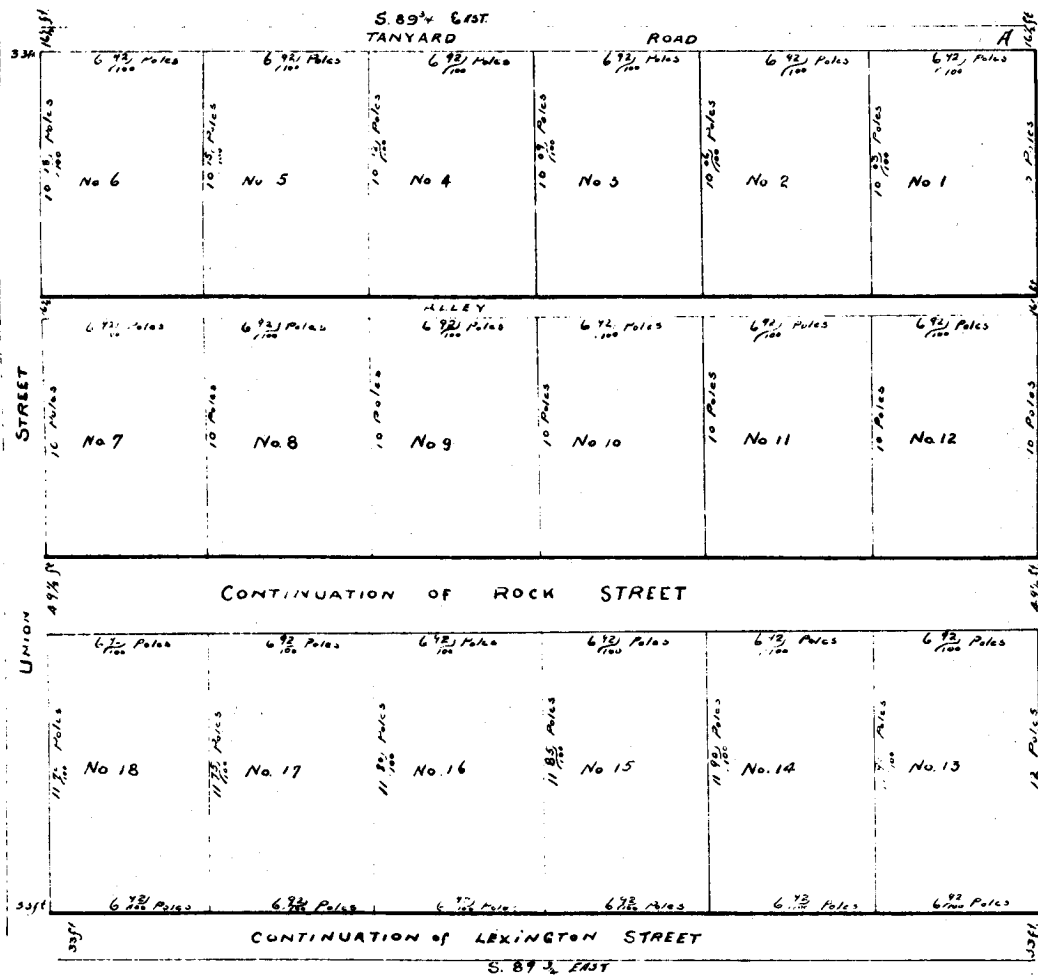




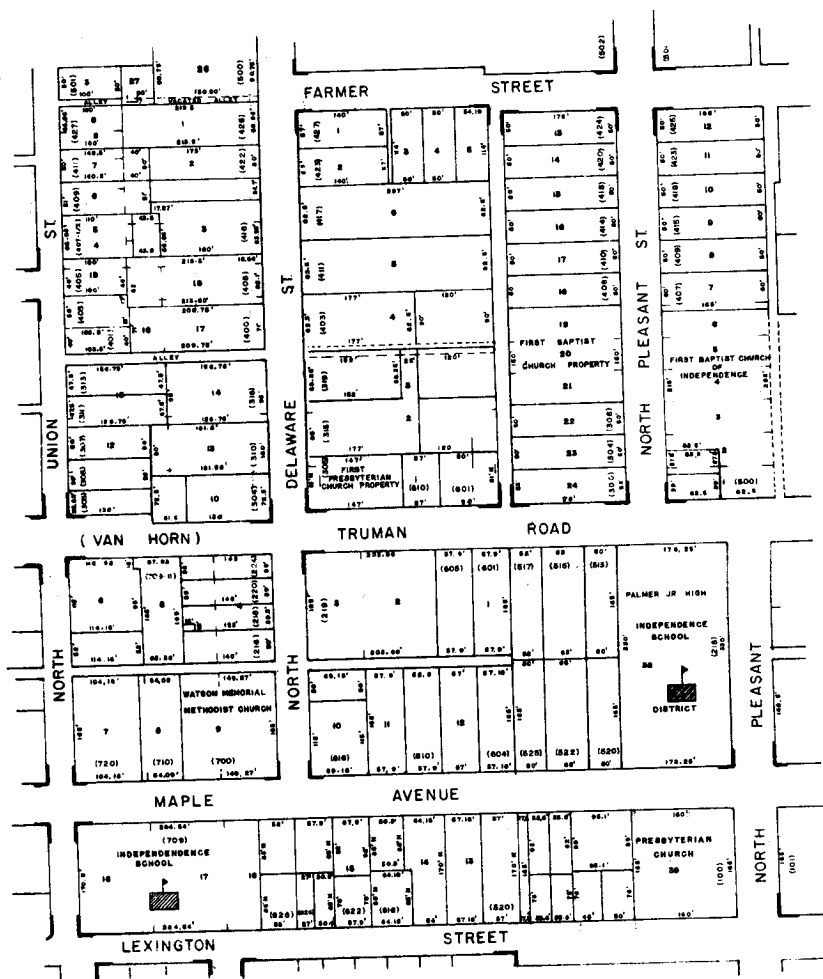


# James F. Moore's Addition

TO THE TOWN OF INDEPENDENCE  
 Ym. 11.11.11 8 1/2 East







CITY OF INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI  
CIRCA 1950

# QUARTER SECTION MAPS, PROPERTY LOCATION AND PARCEL SIZE

SCALE: 1" = 100'

SUBDIVISIONS AND IRREGULAR TRACKS N-4-C, 4, N-5-C, 4.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PLANNING AND RESOURCE PRESERVATION MIDWEST REGIONAL OFFICE		REVISED DATE INITIAL 9-25-88 R.O.S.
HARRY S. TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE		

# INDEPENDENCE, MO.

## ZONING DISTRICT MAP

### LEGEND:

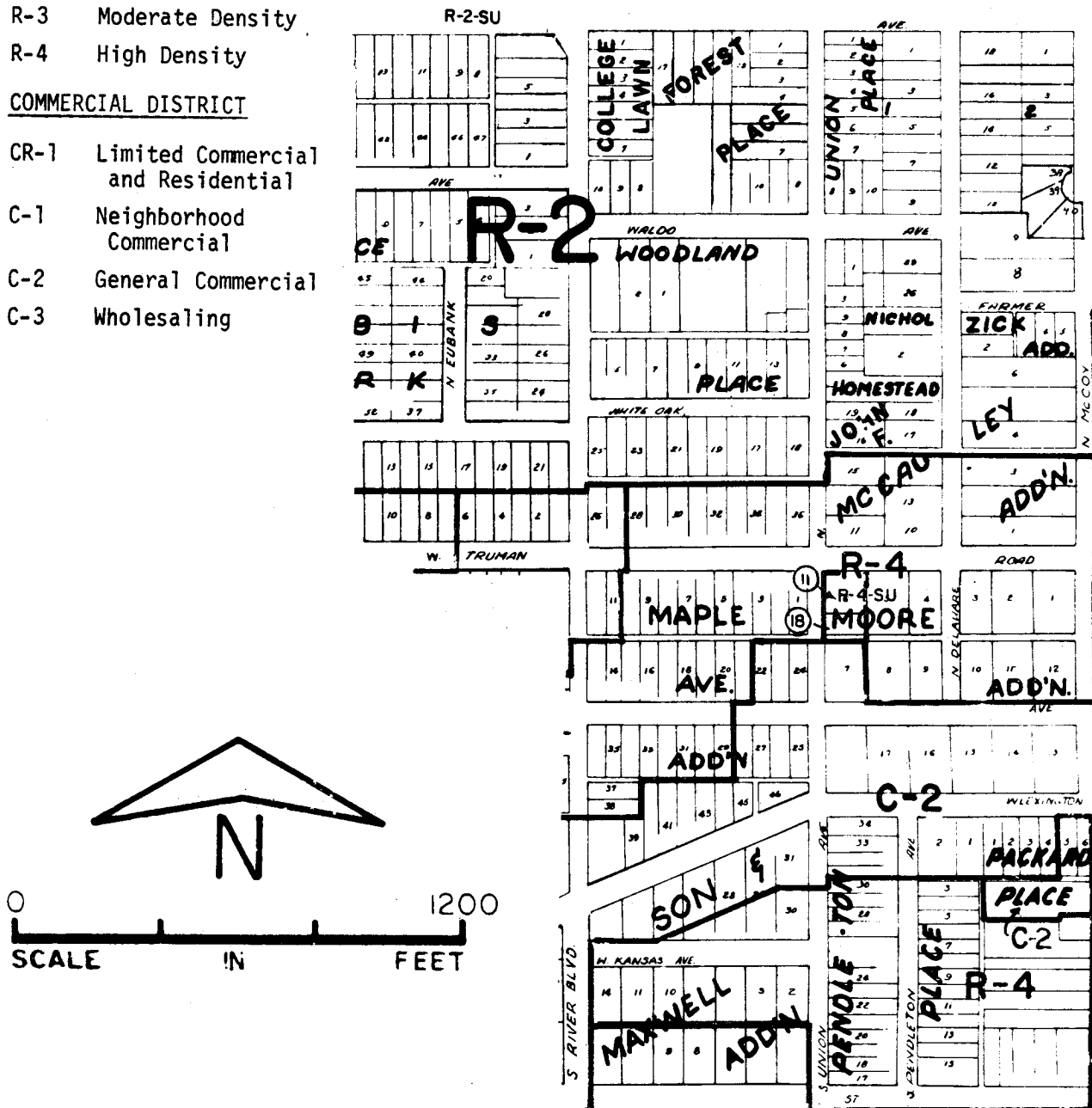
#### RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

- R-E Estate
- R-1 Single-Family
- R-1-A Single-Family
- R-1-B Single-Family
- R-2 Two-Family
- R-3 Moderate Density
- R-4 High Density

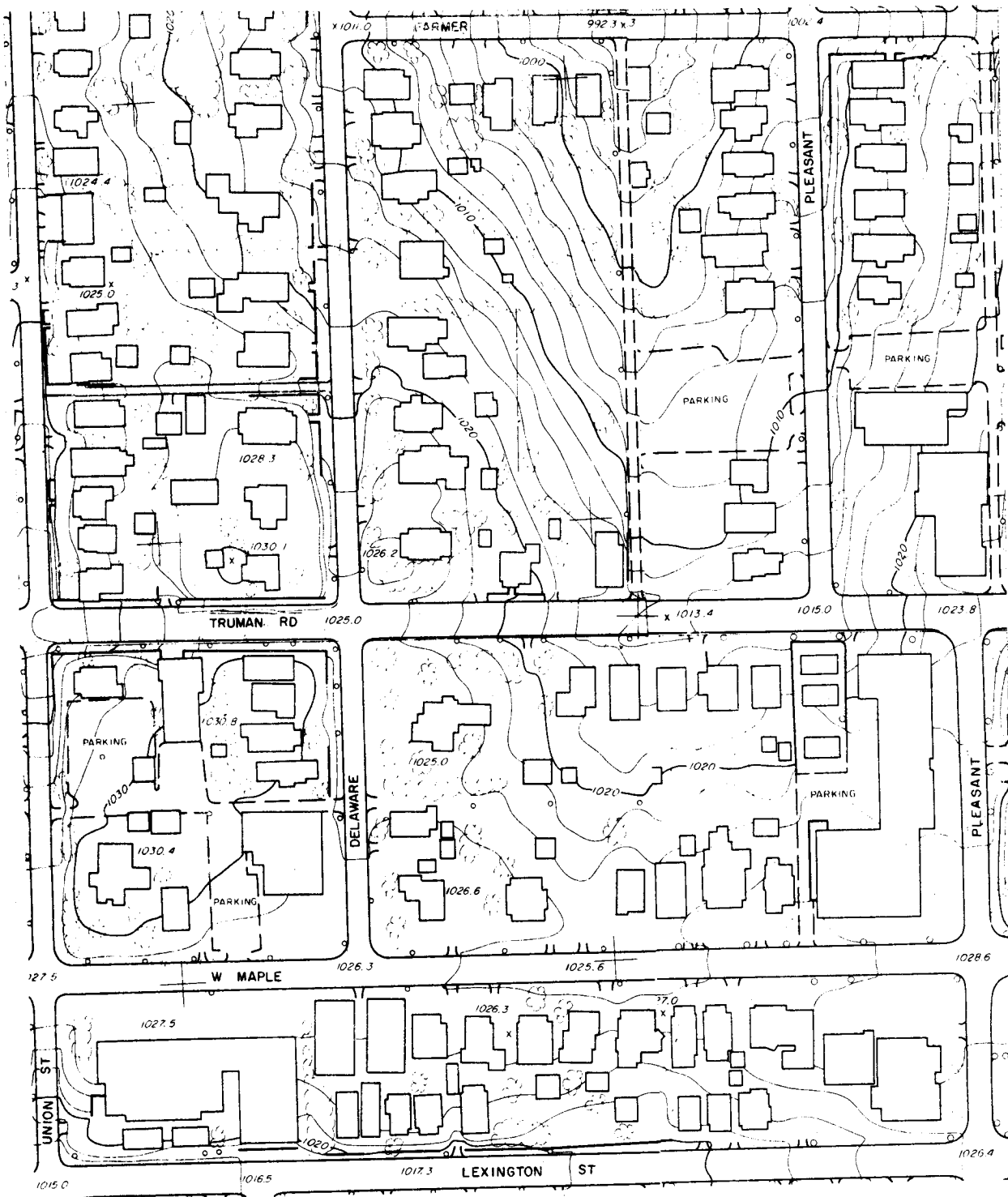
#### COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

- CR-1 Limited Commercial and Residential
- C-1 Neighborhood Commercial
- C-2 General Commercial
- C-3 Wholesaling

ADOPTED THIS 2nd DAY OF MAY 1980 BY  
ORDINANCE NO. 6078 PASSED BY THE  
CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF  
INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI







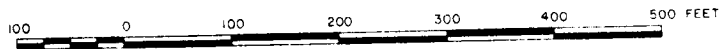
**INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI**

**AERIAL  
TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY**

DATE OF PHOTOGRAPHY APRIL 1979  
DATE OF MAPPING OCTOBER 1979

ABRAMS AERIAL SURVEY CORPORATION  
LANSING, MICHIGAN

SCALE 1:1200



FIVE HUNDRED FOOT GRID BASED ON MISSOURI PLANE COORDINATE SYSTEM

CONTOUR INTERVAL 2 FEET  
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL



## APPENDIX J

Transcript of May 27, 1955, "Person to Person" broadcast. Taken from Margaret Truman's 1956 book, Souvenir.

MISS TRUMAN: Good evening! I'm Margaret Truman. The name of the program is Person to Person. It's all live and there is no film.

It's not possible for Edward R. Murrow to be here tonight. He is in London following up the British election results. He asked me to help escort you through a home in Independence, Missouri, that I know very well--I was born there. And our guests tonight will be two persons of whom I'm very fond--my mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. Harry S Truman. We'll be ready in twenty seconds.

Harry S Truman is a former President of the United States. He spent almost twenty years in Washington as Senator, Vice-president, and President. He loves politics and people, particularly Democrats.

Since the Trumans left Washington, I have been living in New York, but our family home is where it always has been, in Independence, Missouri. It's a rather rambling, Victorian-type house. It was built eighty-nine years ago, shortly after Abraham Lincoln died. It has twelve rooms and stands on the corner of North Delaware Street and Truman Road, about a half acre in all.

It's exactly nine and a half miles from here to my father's present office in the Federal Reserve Bank Building in Kansas City. As he drives himself to work each morning down Truman Road--it will always be Fifteenth Street to me--he passes Truman Car Wash, Truman Road Grill, Truman Pharmacy, Truman Palmistry, and Truman Road Hamburger Shop. And when he makes the thirty-minute trip home each night, he can still note Harry's Tavern, Harry's Cafe, and Harry's Used Furniture.

We love Missouri.

When my father was a Senator we used to spend about six months a year in Independence. Or Mother did. Dad was frequently out speechmaking.

Later when my father was at the White House Mother always came home for the summer.

Now this has been the only home for my parents for the past two years and three months; that is, when Dad isn't out gallivanting around and talking to people.



We have never had cameras in the house before. But I hope they are working tonight.

Good evening, Mrs. Truman!

MRS. TRUMAN: Good evening, Margaret.

MISS TRUMAN: Good evening, Mr. Truman.

MR. TRUMAN: Good evening, Margaret.

MISS TRUMAN: Oh, Dad. Ed Murrow suggested that I lay down some ground rules. Here they are. I ask the questions. Some he suggested and some are my own. Other friends of mine have asked me to ask you and Mother to show us around the house and I am allowed to make fair comment. Agreed?

MR. TRUMAN: It's all right with me.

MISS TRUMAN: Mother?

MRS. TRUMAN: Absolutely.

MISS TRUMAN: Say, is it cool on the back porch tonight?

MRS. TRUMAN: A little cooler after a real hard storm

MISS TRUMAN: Well, I heard about that. Say, Mother, I guess we will be able to dispense with the usual phone call tonight.

MRS. TRUMAN: I hope so.

MISS TRUMAN: What's new at home?

MRS. TRUMAN: Not too much new at home. What's new with you?

MISS TRUMAN: Nothing, not a thing. How are all the aunts and uncles?

MRS. TRUMAN: Oh, fine, fine. They are all listening and watching.

MISS TRUMAN: They'd better be. Dad?

MR. TRUMAN: Yes.

MISS TRUMAN: So many people ask, "How are your parents making out from their switch to Pennsylvania Avenue and Washington to North Delaware Street in Independence?"

MR. TRUMAN: Well, I think we are doing very well. I always like the home town better than any other place I know of. I didn't have anything particular against Washington but I think that Independence is a much better city.

MISS TRUMAN: He is likely prejudiced. Mother?

MRS. TRUMAN: Yes.

MISS TRUMAN: Please tell everyone why you went back to Missouri instead of staying in Washington.

MRS. TRUMAN: There was never any question about staying in Washington. Never any question of not coming home. Is that reason enough?

MISS TRUMAN: That's reason enough. I'll buy that. Mother, have you and Dad had dinner yet?

MRS. TRUMAN: Oh, yes. Oh, we had to have dinner and get ready for this.

MISS TRUMAN: I guess so. Where is Vietta?

MRS. TRUMAN: Oh, she's in the kitchen.

MISS TRUMAN: Oh, Vietta knew me before I knew her. I was three years old when she came to work with us. She raised me too. Hi, Petey.

VIETTA: Hi, Margie.  
MISS TRUMAN: How are you?  
VIETTA: Fine.  
MISS TRUMAN: I must tell everyone that Vietta stayed eight years at the White House as sort of master of bread and rolls, and when I had my first concert Dad insisted she go with me. Now she is the big wheel in the Independence kitchen. Anything you want to add?  
VIETTA: No, you said it all.  
MISS TRUMAN: I guess so. Say, I haven't had a chance to talk to you since the big party celebrating Dad's seventy-first birthday and groundbreaking for the new library. How many people were there?  
VIETTA: Between 200 and 250. I had plenty of help.  
MISS TRUMAN: You got that in. Someone asked me the other day did you like living at the White House?  
VIETTA: I most certainly did.  
MISS TRUMAN: What did you like most?  
VIETTA: I liked to gather around and meet all the big people, all the Congressmen.  
MISS TRUMAN: Oh, that's a good line. I know you must have something cooking in the oven. You always do. What is it tonight?  
VIETTA: Well, tonight one of your favorites. Brownies.  
MISS TRUMAN: Ah. Hey, are those for me?  
VIETTA: Yes.  
MISS TRUMAN: All right, I have got you dead to rights. Don't forget. Bye-bye.  
VIETTA: Bye-bye, honey.  
MISS TRUMAN: I want to go back and talk to Mother and Dad. Mother?  
MRS. TRUMAN: Yes.  
MISS TRUMAN: Are we still getting a lot of sightseers and visitors?  
MRS. TRUMAN: Oh, loads of them, yes.  
MISS TRUMAN: All the time?  
MRS. TRUMAN: All the time. Every day. We had a funny experience the other night. Dad and I went over to see your cousins across the street and there were so many out here in front of the house we couldn't come home. We had to spend most of the evening on the front porch all by ourselves because our cousins weren't at home.  
MISS TRUMAN: Fine.  
MRS. TRUMAN: Isn't that ridiculous?  
MISS TRUMAN: Yes. What about the time someone picked your tulips? You remember?  
MRS. TRUMAN: Oh. Well, yes, some woman came in the back yard and started picking all my beautiful white tulips and one of the men on the place went down there and asked her just what she thought she was doing and she said she didn't think Mrs. Truman cared if she took some of her tulips. She took all she wanted.

MISS TRUMAN: Fine thing, after all the work you did.

MRS. TRUMAN: Yes, isn't it?

MISS TRUMAN: Dad, we know you're not the greatest believer in the accuracy of poll takers, but on your morning walk around town, do you ever take a poll of how people feel toward you?

MR. TRUMAN: Whenever I meet them I can tell very well that they are happy to see me. There are a great many of them who don't know me as well as those home folks do, that are somewhat awed by the fact that I once lived in the White House, but it doesn't bother me because that never occurs to me, and I can see how I'd feel if I were meeting a President and still lived here in Independence as a private citizen.

MISS TRUMAN: Everyone who stopped at the house in recent years knows we have a big iron fence around the property with a gate that opens only when we push a button in the house. Incidentally, Ed Murrow's television men tell me the gate needs an oiling.

MRS. TRUMAN: I am afraid he was telling the truth.

MISS TRUMAN: Dad, why don't you explain why you have that fence out there?

MR. TRUMAN: Well, the fence had to be put up to offset the American propensities for collecting souvenirs and tearing the house down. I was told that when Herbert Hoover went to Washington as President, they took the doorknobs off his house and almost tore the house down, and that was done before they placed the guards there to prevent it. The Secret Service decided that the fence would save our property from being destroyed. It is an old story that Americans like to collect souvenirs. When I was in the First World War it was said that the British fought for the control of the seas; the French for the freedom of France; and the Americans fought for souvenirs and they are still fighting for them.

MISS TRUMAN: Mother, we were talking about tulips a minute ago. How does your garden grow?

MRS. TRUMAN: Oh, we have had some wonderful rains and the garden is all in bloom, especially Mrs. Lasker's Peace roses. They're gorgeous.

MISS TRUMAN: That sounds nice. Daddy?

MR. TRUMAN: Yes.

MISS TRUMAN: Brace yourself.

MR. TRUMAN: For what?

MISS TRUMAN: I am frequently asked what kind of work—manual work, that is—you do around the house.

MR. TRUMAN: I do an immense amount of it from a rocking chair.

MISS TRUMAN: How many times have you mowed the lawn in the past few years?

MR. TRUMAN: As I remember, I think about once.

MISS TRUMAN: Uh, uh. That right, Mother?

MRS. TRUMAN: I don't remember the once.

MISS TRUMAN: Well, that's what I thought. Dad, you used to tell reporters that the White House was a jail. Do you feel free now?

MR. TRUMAN: Well, substantially so; practically as free as I expect we ever will be. For some reason or other I don't suppose we will ever be as free as we would have been if we hadn't lived in the White House.

MISS TRUMAN: I think that sounds logical. Mother, for years we had Secret Service men around us, at least Dad and I did. Do you miss Washington?

MRS. TRUMAN: Oh, yes, I miss Washington. I miss Washington a lot. I loved it there but I am completely happy at home. Of course, the Secret Service men didn't bother me as much as you and Dad.

MISS TRUMAN: I remember you lost them.

MRS. TRUMAN: Yes, I did, early in the day.

MISS TRUMAN: That's what I thought. Mother, would you and Dad show us to the living room, please?

MRS. TRUMAN: Yes, we'd love to.

MISS TRUMAN: All right. This is our side porch. It leads on down to our dining room. We usually have our meals here. No kibitzing, Mother. No kibitzing. No kibitzing. Those stairs are the way up to the upstairs bedrooms. Come on, Mommy, are you having my trouble?

MRS. TRUMAN: No, I'm having mike cord trouble.

MISS TRUMAN: Well, first off let's show everyone the portrait of Dad that you like so much.

MRS. TRUMAN: Yes. Here it is.

MISS TRUMAN: As we know, that's yours, right?

MRS. TRUMAN: Strictly mine. No library, no museum ever gets it.

MISS TRUMAN: All right, Dad, while we are at it, let's show the painting of your daughter and get it over with.

MR. TRUMAN: Right over here.

MISS TRUMAN: Someone asked me recently, Daddy, did your father ever say that your house in Missouri creaks and groans like the White House? Answer, please!

MR. TRUMAN: Yes, it did creak and groan just like the White House. It doesn't groan so much now.

MISS TRUMAN: Remember the night, speaking of ghosts, that you heard a knock on your bedroom door in the White House?

MR. TRUMAN: Yes, I heard the knock and got up and answered it about three o'clock in the morning. There wasn't anybody there. I think it must have been Lincoln's ghost walking up and down the hall.

MISS TRUMAN: It happened two or three times, didn't it?

MR. TRUMAN: Yes, several times.

MISS TRUMAN: Mother, do you think Dad could tell about the time we had Annette and Jane as guests in the Lincoln Room?

MRS. TRUMAN: Yes, if he will tell it straight.

MISS TRUMAN: He could try.

MR. TRUMAN: Did I ever tell anything any other way but straight? I made arrangements for one of our tall doormen to put on a tall hat, act the part of Lincoln, come up and pay you a visit. My nerve failed me and I didn't do it. I was afraid it might scare you.

MISS TRUMAN: Dad, I just won a small bet. Before Ed Murrow left he said that I couldn't steer you away from politics this long. I win, but you'll get your chance. I have a lot of things that he wants me to ask you so in a moment we will come back, so don't go away.

MISS TRUMAN: This is Margaret Truman again. Ninety seconds ago I left my parents in the living room of our house in Independence and I see they are still there. Mr. and Mrs. Truman, I'm back.

MRS. TRUMAN: You told us to stay here.

MISS TRUMAN: Dad, do you have anything left up your political sleeve?

MR. TRUMAN: No, nothing in particular.

MISS TRUMAN: I want Mother to answer this one. Have you made sure that Daddy takes things easy since Dad left Washington?

MRS. TRUMAN: That's a laugh--between the piles of mail and the many, many visitors, it's a little difficult.

MISS TRUMAN: Yes, so I hear.

MRS. TRUMAN: I'm doing my best.

MISS TRUMAN: So many people want to know what you do to relax inasmuch as you don't fish, hunt, or play golf?

MR. TRUMAN: Well, my only relaxation is to work, and I never have known anybody to be injured by too much hard work. It is the lack of it that kills people.

MISS TRUMAN: Well, now I think I will ask you to show us the way to the music room.

MR. TRUMAN: All right, we'll try. Here is another picture that is right interesting.

MISS TRUMAN: No fair. No fair. Go on right by that. Right on by that. [Margaret's portrait in the main hall].

MR. TRUMAN: You can't sell it either.

MISS TRUMAN: Dad, how is the book coming?

MR. TRUMAN: Coming along all right. I think we will meet the deadline on the fifteenth day of June, and the book will probably be published about the fifteenth of September, I hope.

MISS TRUMAN: I know you once had the stories of your years in Washington up to 1,000,000 words. How long is it now?

MR. TRUMAN: We have had to cut down to about 500,000. That is a very hard job, but I think we are going to succeed in doing it.

MISS TRUMAN: That still sounds like a lot of words. Mother, how is

the proofreading going?

MRS. TRUMAN: It is still pretty strenuous.

MISS TRUMAN: Everyone in the Truman family knows that when Mother gets to proofreading on anything Dad is working on, that means it is on the way to completion. Back in the other room we saw the paintings, one of me and one of Dad. Dad, let's look at Mother's. I think that's awfully good.

MR. TRUMAN: That's a wonderful picture of your mother.

MISS TRUMAN: That's my favorite. Let's see some non-Truman paintings. You two sit and I will introduce them.

Over Dad's shoulder is a present to Dad from Sir Winston Churchill painted by his own hand at Marra-kech. I brought this home from London when Sir Winston asked me to bring it to my father. Now, over the piano is an original given to us by Grandma Moses. Dad, now it's your turn to explain things. Could we have the history of the piano, please?

MR. TRUMAN: Well, this piano is the one that was purchased for you when you were a very little girl. You had your first lesson on it and it has been your piano ever since. It gets a right good workout when you're at home.

MISS TRUMAN: I think I was seven or eight. Do you remember the first thing you taught me on that piano?

MR. TRUMAN: Yes, I think it was a little waltz I taught you. I think I can still play it.

MISS TRUMAN: Mother, is the piano tuned?

MRS. TRUMAN: Well, fairly so.

MISS TRUMAN: Dad, when you did that television tour through the White House you showed everyone you could still play. Let's prove you still haven't lost your touch.

MR. TRUMAN: Let's try and see what happens. Then you can tell whether the piano is in tune or not. This is your waltz.

[Mr. Truman played the piano].

MISS TRUMAN: Isn't that Paderewski's Minuet?

MR. TRUMAN: Yes, that's part of it.

MISS TRUMAN: Good hearing you play!

MR. TRUMAN: Not nearly all of it.

MISS TRUMAN: I enjoyed that. If you want to go back to your chair, I have another question to ask.

MR. TRUMAN: Fire away.

MISS TRUMAN: Ed Murrow wanted me to ask you, just how much influence and help was Mother when you were in the White House?

MR. TRUMAN: She was a wonderful influence and help. A President is in a bad way if he doesn't have a First Lady that knows her job and is a full support to him. She's the greatest help a President can have. Mine was.

MRS. TRUMAN: Thank you.

MISS TRUMAN: Mother, let me switch from Washington to Kansas City.

How is your baseball team doing?

MRS. TRUMAN: We are doing pretty well. We are going to have a great team before the season is gone.

MISS TRUMAN: You're the sports fan of the family. Have you seen anything good on TV lately?

MRS. TRUMAN: A few good things, yes. But I haven't been able to find a wrestling match--none at all.

MISS TRUMAN: Dad, how is the new library coming?

MR. TRUMAN: It's coming along all right. They have the ground graded and they are digging the foundation right now. They have the signal to proceed to finish in about a year and two months.

MISS TRUMAN: That's good. Are you going to travel toward the den now and show us some of that?

MR. TRUMAN: Yes, I think so. I have a picture of the library out here I want to show you.

MISS TRUMAN: Mother?

MRS. TRUMAN: Yes.

MISS TRUMAN: You've been cleaning up again. What happened to Dad's work table?

MRS. TRUMAN: We had to have some room in here today.

MISS TRUMAN: That's a good excuse. Mother always cleans up. Where's the picture, Daddy?

MR. TRUMAN: Here it is.

MISS TRUMAN: That's the picture of the library. That's something I haven't seen.

MR. TRUMAN: Quite a picture.

MISS TRUMAN: Have they made much progress since the groundbreaking two weeks ago?

MRS. TRUMAN: Oh, yes, a lot of progress. And he goes by most every morning on the way to the office to see just what they are doing.

MISS TRUMAN: Are you going to go easy on the Truman Library builders?

MR. TRUMAN: I'm going to watch them put it up and I'll see that they do it right, just as I always do whenever I had anything in charge like that.

MISS TRUMAN: Sidewalk superintendent! How much have you stored in Kansas City ready for the library?

MR. TRUMAN: There is an old big vault full of books, papers, and pictures and things of that kind that will go into the library when it's up. There is a tremendous collection of Bibles in the vault that will be very interesting when they are put out for the people to see.

MISS TRUMAN: How much is it all going to cost, and how much cash has the committee raised so far?

MR. TRUMAN: It is estimated that the library itself will cost \$1,700,000 and we have collected \$1,200,000, and I think the rest of it is in sight. We will have the money all collected by the time that the library is

ready to use.

MISS TRUMAN: Good! Dad, to get serious, I suppose someday the scholars will go through your personal papers and draw up a summary of your administration. What do you hope you will be remembered for?

MR. TRUMAN: I hope to be remembered as the people's President. I have always said that there are a great many important organizations with lots of money who maintain lobbyists in Washington. I'd say 15 million people in the United States are represented by the lobbyists in the city of Washington. The other 150 million have only one man who is elected at large to represent them--that is, the President of the United States. When he goes back on them they are in a bad way.

MISS TRUMAN: What do you think has been the most important development in the country or world since you left Washington?

MR. TRUMAN: I think we are approaching a peace settlement and, I hope, the end of the cold war. The signing of the treaty is a step in that direction.

MISS TRUMAN: A moment ago I saw the icon you received from Queen Helen of Rumania. Do you recall the circumstances surrounding that gift?

MR. TRUMAN: The government of the United States, at my direction, sent 200,000 tons of wheat to the starving Moravians and the Queen of Rumania presented me with this icon, which came out of the mosque of St. Sophia--Constantinople, it was then.

MISS TRUMAN: You know a lot of people have said to me, "Your father sure loves a fight." True or false?

MR. TRUMAN: Well, I never promoted a fight, but I never ran from one if it was necessary to meet things head on.

MISS TRUMAN: Mommy, do you want to say a few words about politics specifically or in general?

MRS. TRUMAN: No, not in either category, thank you.

MISS TRUMAN: Well, that's definite. Dad?

MR. TRUMAN: You know your mother never talks about such things.

MISS TRUMAN: Ed wanted you to talk about the campaign in '48. He wanted to know what made you so sure you would win.

MR. TRUMAN: Well, I have been through a similar experience on two or three occasions and I had come to the conclusion that when the people know the facts and they know that you are telling the truth and stand for the things that are for their best interests they will vote for you, and I was very well assured if I could see enough people and talk to enough people I could be elected, and that is what I did and this is the way it came out.

MISS TRUMAN: Well, tell me, what is the toughest decision you had to make?

MR. TRUMAN: To go into Korea to save the United Nations Republic of South Korea.



MISS TRUMAN: Dad, what advice do you have for young people who want to go into politics.

MR. TRUMAN: Well, the best thing they can do is to study history, particularly the history of their country, their city, their county, and their state, to read all the history they possibly can and study about what makes men act and the biographies of the people whose histories are important to a person who wants to go into politics--and the fundamental thing is that a politician must be fundamentally honest, intellectually or otherwise. Unless he is--he won't make it.

MISS TRUMAN: There goes the clock. Mother, what advice do you have on raising children?

MRS. TRUMAN: Oh, absolutely none. Do you think I have had any luck?

MISS TRUMAN: Let's make it specific. What advice do you have for me?

MRS. TRUMAN: That's a loaded the question.

MISS TRUMAN: I don't know, but I think I have had about the best.

MR. TRUMAN: I have found the best way to give advice to young children is to find out what they want and then advise them to do it.

MISS TRUMAN: Oh, I see. Well, we are coming along here pretty well on our timing and everything, so I think perhaps you'd better say we have had a good time visiting.

MRS. TRUMAN: Wonderful.

MISS TRUMAN: Yes.

MR. TRUMAN: It has been wonderful.

MISS TRUMAN: It's good seeing you. At least I can see you.

MRS. TRUMAN: Lots of fun. Wish I could have seen you at the same time.

MR. TRUMAN: If we could have seen you it would have been perfect.

MISS TRUMAN: Well, I have to go now, so I guess I will have to say good-bye. Thanks for the party. Have a nice time.

MRS. TRUMAN: Will we talk to you again?

MISS TRUMAN: Well, I might talk to you later again tonight.

MRS. TRUMAN: Good. That will be wonderful.

MISS TRUMAN: Next week Mr. Murrow will be here to visit with W. C. Handy, composer of the St. Louis Blues, and that talented actress and writer, Cornelia Otis Skinner. It's almost as much fun to work on this show as it is to be at home watching, and most of the credit goes here: [Program credits appear].

And now, as Ed Murrow would say, from Person to Person, good night and good luck.

[END]

APPENDIX K

National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form  
for the Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence,  
Missouri.

Listed: December 8, 1982

Documentation Accepted: May 31, 1985

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

LISTED: December 8, 1982  
RECEIVED DOCUMENTATION  
DATE ENTERED: May 31, 1985SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Harry S Truman National Historic Site

AND/OR COMMON

Truman Home, Summer White House, Gates/Wallace/Truman House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

219 North Delaware Street

CITY, TOWN

Independence

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

5

STATE

Missouri

CODE  
29COUNTY  
JacksonCODE  
095**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENT
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office

STREET &amp; NUMBER

1709 Jackson Street

CITY, TOWN

Omaha

VICINITY OF

STATE

Nebraska 68102

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Jackson County Courthouse Annex

STREET &amp; NUMBER

306 West Kansas Street

CITY, TOWN

Independence

STATE

Missouri 64050

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

1. Harry S Truman Historic District, National Historic Landmark
2. Harry S Truman Heritage District

DATE

1. February 23, 1972 (Federal)
2. 1974 (Local)

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

1. National Register of Historic Places
2. Ordinance 3407, Office of the City Clerk

CITY, TOWN

1. Washington, D.C.
2. Independence,

STATE

Missouri

## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT

☒ GOOD

☐ FAIR

See following text

☐ DETERIORATED

☐ RUINS

☐ UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED

☒ ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE

☐ MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Harry S Truman National Historic Site comprises the residence of Harry S and Bess Wallace Truman as well as several associated support structures. The Harry S Truman National Historic Site boundary coincides with that of the Truman home (HS-01) proper at 219 North Delaware Street on Lots 2 and 3 of James F. Moore's Addition to the City of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri. The national historic site is rectangular, measuring 175 by 225 feet, or .77 of an acre, and is situated on the southeast corner of North Delaware Street and Truman Road. The land is mostly level with a slight eastward slope. An iron picket fence (HS-03) surrounds the property on three sides while the property is largely open on the east. The "barn," or carriage house (HS-02), stands to the southeast of the Truman home. An alley, which parallels the property on the south, connects the barn to North Delaware Street. An asphalt driveway leads north from the barn to Truman Road. Several other historic structures are present including a pergola (HS-04, in ruins) and the site of the Secret Service security booth (HS-06), a flagpole (HS-08), a gas lamp (HS-09), a sundial (HS-07), a cistern (HS-10), and a birdbath (HS-05).

#### THE TRUMAN HOME (HS-01)

The 2 1/2-story, 18-room Truman home can best be described as an eclectic Victorian style. The white bevel sided balloon framed house, set on a random coursed limestone foundation, was constructed in several phases. The original portion, or kitchen wing, which includes the kitchen and abovestairs storage areas, was constructed prior to the Civil War, probably circa 1850.<sup>1</sup> It features a truncated gable roof, covered with sheet metal at the top and composition shingles on the slopes, and a large screened and open air porch at the east and south elevations.

The main body of the structure was constructed as two primary additions to the kitchen wing in 1867 and 1885. The two additions are virtually indistinguishable at the exterior due to the complimentary decorative elements and asymmetry of massing. The principal portion is topped by a metal decked dentiled "widow's walk" and grey composition shingled mansard roof with four gabled dormers fitted with jalousie windows. The trim of the projecting eaves of the main roof features a molded fascia and decorative frieze work adorned with heavily ornamented wooden brackets set directly above the second

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floor window jamb trim and corner trim. One over one double hung windows are predominant.

The prominent west facade is marked by a two-story bay window featuring multipaned colored glass set in wood muntined double hung windows. The bay window is capped by a bell cast sheet metal clad roof with projecting eaves. A multipaned colored glass casement window with a pedimented hood is set within wing walls formed from the bay window roof. A gabled roof with decorative verge boards extends over and above the bay roof. A similarly detailed gabled roof also exists at the south elevation.

From the west bay window a veranda stretches north then curves east and continues to a two-story north bay window which is characterized by a saw-toothed horseshoe-shaped ornament set within the plane fascia of the bay windows' gable roof. This highly ornamented veranda features a mansard parapet, jigsaw frieze boards, four types of brackets, and perpendicular lattice skirts. A second two-bay porch of the same characteristics, but without a parapet, protects the south entry into the living room.

The main or west entry into the house is situated just north of the west bay window of the 1885 addition. The double leaf nine-foot tall doors features Eastlake style detailing with etched glass panes. The entry leads to a small ceramic tile floored vestibule bay and finally to another set of Eastlake enriched doors. These doors open to a central hall which is adorned with Lincrusta-Walton wainscoting. The primary double landed, U-shaped stairway at the south wall of the central hall features Lincrusta-Walton along its rake, a highly ornamented wooden baluster, and a newel post capped by a feminine statue holding aloft a globe shaded lamp.

The home is in good condition.

BARN/CARRIAGE HOUSE (HS-02)

This white 1 1/2-floor heavy timber framed structure with a shallow limestone foundation measures approximately 24 by 32 feet. Its date of construction is unknown, but probably dates to the late 1860s or 1870s. The barn was adapted as a garage before 1914.<sup>2</sup> The gable roof is sheathed in wooden shingles and crowned with a louvered

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square cupola at the center of the ridge. A gablet is centered on each roof leaf at the eave line. The south gablet features two loft doors. Loft doors also exist at the main gable ends. Two six-pane fixed windows and two shuttered openings grace the east and west facades respectively at the ground floor. The structure has a concrete floor. Overhead rolling garage doors enclose the two-car bays. Vertical board and batten siding is the predominant sheathing material.

The barn/carriage house is in fair condition.

FENCE (HS-03)

This black painted picket fence constructed of stock steel tube and bar set in concrete footings was erected in November 1949, at the insistence of the Secret Service to protect the Truman property from potential souvenir hunters.<sup>3</sup> The fence encloses the property except at the alley driveway entry and the back yard of May Wallace's adjacent property to the east. A small portion of the fence extends to the Wallace home. Three pedestrian gates exist at the barn/carriage house (HS-02), the west main entry, and the Wallace home. The double leafed driveway gate is inset from Truman Road with curved fence sections. Both the driveway and west main entry gate locks are operated electronically from inside the home.

The fence is in good condition.

PERGOLA (HS-04)

The pergola was built after 1924 to accent Madge Wallace's rose garden.<sup>4</sup> Composed of eight doric hollow wooden columns projecting from a cut stone base and red brick edging, diamond-shaped lattice-work enveloped the east and west ends of the rectangular pergola while the central bay of the structure remained open. The columns were topped by a square wooden framework crossed by rafters with decorative ends. The original pergola was claimed by a windstorm before the presidential period (1945-1953) and was rebuilt on the same foundation. The second pergola was also claimed by a severe storm, but was not rebuilt. It was removed before 1970.<sup>5</sup>

Only the stone and brick pergola foundation is extant.

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BIRDBATH (HS-05)

The birdbath is an integral component of the pergola complex since the original construction in the mid-1920s.<sup>6</sup> The birdbath is of poured concrete and stands 3 1/2 feet high. While the stand remains in place in the center of the pergola, the circular basin in recent years was placed on the ground to avoid damage.

The birdbath is in deteriorated condition.

SECRET SERVICE SECURITY BOOTH (HS-06) SITE

A small guardhouse or security booth was built by the Secret Service to the immediate west of the barn/carriage house (HS-02) in late 1945 at an estimated cost of \$1200.<sup>7</sup> The structure, which measured 10 by 12 feet,<sup>8</sup> consisted of two rooms: a bathroom on the east and an observation room on the west for two Secret Service agents. The observation room was surrounded on three sides by large square windows from which to survey the Truman home (HS-01).<sup>9</sup> The white clapboard structure with asphalt-shingled gable roof sat useless after January 20, 1953, and was hauled away in 1962. It was taken to a farm and used as an outbuilding where it was subsequently destroyed.<sup>10</sup> An electric meter which serviced the booth is visible on the west facade of the barn/carriage house near the site of the security booth.

SUNDIAL (HS-07)

Immediately north of the center of the pergola (HS-04) is a concrete stand. The stand accommodated a metallic sundial which became missing sometime between October and December 1982. The sundial's inscription read: "My Face Marks The Sunny Hours. What Can You Say of Yours?" The sundial has stood in this approximate position since the 1920s. It was formerly in the center of four rose beds separated by grass walkways. The area was covered with sod immediately prior to World War II.<sup>11</sup>

The sundial base is in deteriorated condition.

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FLAGPOLE (HS-08)

The steel flagpole measures just over 34 feet high and is on a spot in the northwest corner of the front lawn selected by Bess Truman and her mother, Mrs. D. W. (Madge) Wallace. The standard was a present to the Truman family from the city of Independence to commemorate Harry S Truman's first homecoming as President on June 27, 1945. Two days previously, the flagpole was set in cement. The first flag was raised at 9:00 a.m. on June 26.<sup>12</sup>

The flagpole is in good condition.

GAS LAMP (HS-09)

The 6-foot gas lamppost stands on a concrete base and illuminates the front and north yard of the Truman home (HS-01). The black, cast aluminum light features solid brass accents. Called the "Gettysburg," the gas lamp was presented to the Trumans in 1964 by Hadco Products, Incorporated of Littlestown, Pennsylvania. The gas lamp is a replica of the mid-19th century handcrafted fixtures indigenous to New England. Independence Gas Service Company workmen installed it at the residence free of charge on June 24, 1964. A trench for the gas line was dug to the northwest corner of the property.<sup>13</sup>

The gas lamp is in good condition.

CISTERN (HS-10)

The subgrade cistern lies beneath the kitchen porch floor just east of the porch stair. The date of construction is unknown, but it served as the home's initial water supply, storing water from a spring beneath the property. The cistern's use was discontinued and capped with concrete in 1926 when it was feared the spring was contaminated.<sup>14</sup> The visible portion of the cistern, constructed of pargetted brick, has an outside diameter of approximately three feet. The subgrade depth, diameter, and construction is unknown.

The visible portion of the cistern is in fair condition.



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HISTORIC OBJECTS AND FURNISHINGS

The Truman home (HS-01) contains a wealth of historic objects and furnishings which reflect the successive Gates-Wallace-Truman occupancy. The home, complete with its contents, and support structures were bequeathed to the Federal Government by the estate of Bess Wallace Truman. The historic objects, together with the structures, provide valuable insight into the lifestyle of President Harry S Truman and his family. The contents of the Truman home are significant for the purposes of this nomination and an inventory is being compiled.

NON-CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE:

BICENTENNIAL HISTORICAL MARKER

The black cast aluminum sign stands six feet high and four feet wide and features raised white lettering. It stands near the flagpole (HS-08) on the northwest corner of the lawn. Similar to other such signs throughout Independence, the historical marker was installed by the American Bicentennial Commission of Independence in late April 1976, with the permission of Bess Truman.<sup>15</sup> It reads: "TRUMAN HOUSE Built about 1867 by George Porterfield Gates, a mill owner. President Harry S. Truman and his wife, Bess Wallace Truman, granddaughter of Gates, made this their home from the time of their marriage in 1919. The 'Summer White House' from 1945 to 1953."

The historical marker is in excellent condition.

NOTES

1. Chain of title review by Historian Pauline S. Fowler of Independence, and 1984 National Park Service physical structural investigation. See also Ron Cockrell, Chapter Two, "The Trumans of Independence: Historic Resource Study, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri" (Omaha: Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, 1984).
2. Mrs. H. H. (Ardis) Haukenberry, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 14, 1983.
3. Robert Ferrell, ed., Off The Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 167; and Fencing-Up the

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Summer White House," Examiner, 23 November 1949, 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence (hereinafter cited as MCP Library).

4. Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 14, 1983.

5. Ron Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Mrs. Margaret Truman Daniel at the Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri, November 17, 1983," transcript (Omaha: Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, 1984), 25; 35 (hereinafter cited as Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman"); and Truman Library Photo Archives No. 71-860.

6. Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," 25.

7. "Expenditure of Federal Funds In Support of Presidential Properties," Fifteenth Report by the Committee on Government Operations, May 20, 1974, Union Calendar No. 490, 93rd Congress, 2nd Session, House Report No. 93-1052, 51, folder-Presidential Properties, Vertical File, Harry S. Truman Library (hereinafter cited as HSTL).

8. "A Quiet Truman Day," Kansas City Star, 21 December 1945, file-HST Christmas 1945, Kansas City Star Library (hereinafter cited as KCSL).

9. Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," 31.

10. Robert Sanders, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 30, 1983.

11. Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," 24; 47.

12. "Flag Pole Gift For Truman Yard," 25 June 1945, 1, and "City Is Scrubbed Up and Shined For Visit of Its Favorite Son," 26 June 1945, 1, Examiner, MCP Library.

13. Mrs. Elizabeth Safly, HSTL Librarian (information from Gas Service Company in Independence), conversation, July 11, 1983; Lew Waltz, National Sales Manager, Hadco (Division of Craftlite, Inc.) to Randall J. Pope, Acting Regional Director, National Park Service, Midwest Region, letter, September 20, 1983; Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," 46-7; and, Robert Sanders, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 30, 1983.

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14. Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview, Independence, Mo.,  
June 14, 1983.

15. "Bicentennial Signs Placed," Examiner, 23 April 1976, 1B,  
folder-Truman, Harry S 1976, Vertical File, HSTL.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

ERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

	1. circa 1850		1. unknown
SPECIFIC DATES	2. 1867	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	2. George Porterfield Gates
	3. 1885		3. James W. Adams

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Harry S Truman National Historic Site is of national significance because it was the home of the 33rd President of the United States of America, Harry S. Truman. The residence at 219 North Delaware Street was the home of Harry S Truman from his marriage to Elizabeth Virginia ("Bess") Wallace on June 28, 1919, until his death on December 26, 1972. It was from this house that Truman launched his aborted business career as a haberdasher and then turned to politics, successively serving as Jackson County Judge (1923-25); Jackson County Presiding Judge (1927-35); United States Senator (1935-45); Vice President of the United States (1945); and President of the United States (1945-53). While it was necessary for the Truman family to live in Washington, D.C., for long periods during the senatorial and presidential years, the Trumans eagerly anticipated returning to 219 North Delaware Street for summers, vacations, and holidays. When President Truman was home at the "Summer White House," the eyes of the nation and the world were focused there.

## HISTORY

George Porterfield Gates, the grandfather of Bess Wallace Truman, was born April 2, 1835, in Lunenburg, Vermont. In 1853, the family moved to Port Byron, Illinois, where they engaged in the lumber business. In 1860, G. P. Gates married, and six years later, following the lead of his father and brother, Gates moved his family to Independence. Gates purchased Lots 2 and 3 of James F. Moore's Addition on June 20, 1867, for \$700.<sup>1</sup> Although family tradition dictates that Gates built the original home on the property at 219 North Delaware Street, archival and structural investigations suggest that an earlier structure existed.<sup>2</sup> The second, or 1867, addition came as a result of the expanding Gates family--three daughters, Margaret ("Madge"), Maud, and Myra Gates (born in 1862, 1864, and 1866 respectively). The couple subsequently had two sons, G. Walter (born in 1868) and Frank E. (born in 1871) Gates. From charred roof rafters and a family tale, it is apparent that fire(s) changed the configuration of the Gates house in

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an unknown manner in these post bellum years.<sup>3</sup>

In 1885, G. P. Gates commissioned Independence's most noted builder and architect, James W. Adams, to build a 2 1/2-story facade which fronted on North Delaware and enveloped the west and south part of the 1867 structure with a unifying architectural style. The project involved "Fourteen rooms, water and gas" systems and was the most expensive Independence residence built in 1885 at \$8,000.<sup>4</sup> Finishing touches such as fancy porches, windows, doors, mantels, lights, and a slate roof were in place by mid-1886.<sup>5</sup> The third, or 1885, addition was constructed after G. P. Gates became one of Independence's leading businessmen as a partner in the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company, manufacturers of Queen of the Pantry Flour. Gates wanted to live in a house that would reflect his prominent standing in the community and serve as a comfortable retirement home.

Gates's oldest daughter, Madge, married David Willock Wallace on June 13, 1883. The ceremony took place at the First Presbyterian Church while a reception followed at the bride's parents' house at 219 North Delaware Street.<sup>6</sup> David W. and Madge Wallace lived two miles away at 117 West Ruby Street where their first child, Elizabeth Virginia ("Bess"), was born on February 13, 1885. In April 1887, the family sold the Ruby Street home. Plagued with financial problems, the Wallaces lived for a short time in the Gates house before settling in another home two blocks away at 608 North Delaware Street.<sup>7</sup>

In December 1890, Bess Wallace and Harry S Truman first met at Sunday School at the First Presbyterian Church. For Harry Truman, it was love at first sight. Six-year-old Harry and his family had recently moved to Independence in order for Harry, brother Vivian, and sister Mary Jane to go to school. In 1896, the Trumans relocated to a home on West Waldo Street, an important move because the house, only a few blocks from North Delaware, enabled Harry and Bess to attend the same school. The childhood friends remained classmates until graduating from high school in 1901.<sup>8</sup>

Tragedy struck the Wallace family on July 17, 1903, when Bess's father committed suicide. David W. Wallace's death caused profound changes in his family's life. Madge Gates Wallace took her four children, Bess, Frank, George, and Fred, to Colorado Springs, Colorado, to live with an uncle for almost a year. When the Wallaces returned to Independence in 1904, they were welcomed to their new home, spacious

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219 North Delaware. Shortly afterwards, George P. and Elizabeth Gates converted an area off the living room into a bedroom and bath for their own quarters leaving the upstairs to the Wallaces. Madge Wallace used the space above the kitchen as a sitting/sewing room where her children could congregate at night without disturbing their grandparents who retired early to bed.<sup>9</sup>

One of the frequent visitors to the sitting room was Harry Truman. Truman's relationship with Bess Wallace had lapsed since high school. The Trumans moved away from Independence in 1901, and Harry worked in a succession of clerical and banking jobs in Kansas City before joining his family on the Grandview farm in 1906. Harry and Bess renewed their acquaintance in 1910 at Harry's initiative. Visiting his aunt and uncle, Joseph T. and Ethel ("Ella") Noland, who lived across North Delaware Street from the Gates-Wallace house, Harry immediately volunteered when Aunt Ethel announced she had a cakeplate to return to Madge Wallace. To his delight, Bess answered the door.<sup>10</sup>

The incident began a nine-year courtship. Truman became a frequent weekend visitor. He slept at the Noland house, but spent most of his time across the street. Harry kept in constant touch from the Grandview farm through a barrage of letters, confessing in 1913, "It seems like a hollow week if I don't arrive at 219 Delaware at least one day in it."<sup>11</sup> The 20-mile trip to Independence was facilitated in 1914 when Harry purchased a 1911 Stafford which he parked in the Gates-Wallace barn (HS-02) during each visit.

Harry's desire to make a more lucrative living than farming and Bess's family obligations kept the couple from getting married. Bess felt it was her duty to look after her elderly grandparents and chronically ill mother, and to help raise her youngest brother, Fred. The courtship continued on into 1917 at which time Truman enlisted in the Army. On July 11, 1918, he was commissioned to command Battery D, 129th Field Artillery, 35th Division of the Army National Guard.<sup>12</sup>

While Harry was fighting in France, Bess's grandfather died after a prolonged illness. George P. Gates's funeral was held at the family home on June 27, 1918. While his will provided that the estates' executors (other relatives) had the right to sell his property, Elizabeth Gates and the Wallaces stayed on.<sup>13</sup> Upon Harry's return to the United States, he married Bess Wallace at Trinity Episcopal Church on June 28, 1919. A reception followed at the Gates-Wallace house. After their

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honeymoon, the Trumans returned to 219 North Delaware to begin married life. The decision to live in the Gates-Wallace house was largely a result of Madge Wallace's delicate health, aggravated by chronic sciatica, which worsened that summer. From a financial standpoint, until Harry established himself in a profession, the arrangement was ideal.<sup>14</sup>

Harry abandoned farming in favor of merchandising to support his new wife. Experienced by running a canteen in wartime, Harry joined with Eddie Jacobson to open a men's furnishings store in Kansas City. "Truman & Jacobson" opened in November 1919 with Eddie the buyer and Harry the salesman. While the first year proved lucrative, the postwar price deflation forced the business to liquidate to satisfy creditors. Truman refused to declare bankruptcy, struggling more than a decade to repay his debts.<sup>15</sup>

The business failure, although bitter, was cushioned by Harry's resourcefulness and an invitation to enter the political arena. It was late 1921 when Jim Pendergast, an Army buddy, suggested that Harry consider seeking the Democratic nomination for judge of the Jackson County Court in the Eastern District. In early 1922, as the store began to flounder, Jim's father, Mike Pendergast, the brother of Jackson County Boss Tom Pendergast, also encouraged Truman to run. This time, Harry threw his hat into the ring.<sup>16</sup>

Politics was not new to Harry Truman, however. Upon the death of his father in 1914, Harry inherited his position as road overseer in Washington township. He was also appointed Postmaster at Grandview, a job he held in title only; the position and salary went to a local widow.<sup>17</sup> This prior political savvy helped him win the primary and election in 1922. As Eastern Jackson County Judge, an administrative position similar to a county executive, Judge Truman was not unknown to receive job-seekers in the first floor library of his home.<sup>18</sup>

Next to marrying Bess, the second most important event in the life of Harry S Truman was the birth of his daughter. Bess, 39, refused to go to a hospital, preferring instead to deliver her baby in the comfort and privacy of her family home. In the four years of her marriage, Bess had miscarried twice. During a bitter snowstorm on February 17, 1924, a 7-pound girl was born in their second floor east bedroom. The proud parents had no furnishings for their daughter because of Bess's superstition and previous child-bearing disappointments. Little Mary

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Margaret, dubbed "Margie," spent the first days of her life sleeping on two pillows in the opened drawer of a bureau.<sup>19</sup>

Margaret's birth was the highlight of 1924, while the remainder of the year saw sorrow and defeat. Elizabeth Gates, 83, died three months after her great-granddaughter's birth. Most of her estate went to an invalid son who had no use for the Independence home. Madge Wallace purchased the family home on October 4, 1924, from the trustees of her father's estate for \$10,000.<sup>20</sup> The next blow came when Judge Truman lost his bid for re-election in November. A split in the Democratic Party between the "Goats" (Pendergast faction) and the "Rabbits" (Shannon faction) saw the Rabbits actively supporting the Republican candidate. Following his defeat, in the two years he was out of office, Truman sold memberships to the Automobile Club of Kansas City and participated in savings and loan ventures.

In 1926, Harry ran for presiding judge. Truman won the primary and election handily and began a 4-year term in January 1927. He initiated an ambitious road building program which promised that no one in the county would live more than two miles from a paved road. Judge Truman's record of honesty, hard work, and positive results led to his re-election in 1930. Truman's statewide acclaim prompted Missouri Democrats to encourage the Presiding Jackson County Judge to run for the U.S. Senate in 1934.<sup>21</sup>

Politics intruded directly at 219 North Delaware only rarely. One instance that county administrative matters were brought to the house came on September 3, 1932. A form signed by Missouri Governor Henry S. Caulfield authorizing Kansas City's application for \$300,000 in unemployment relief from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation arrived for Truman's signature. Truman was not home at the time, but did sign it later, thereby making funds available to depression-struck Kansas Citizens.<sup>22</sup> While Margaret was attending elementary school, a kidnap scheme was foiled. For nearly a year, Margaret was escorted to and from school. The sanctuary of the back yard playground, a popular spot for nine neighborhood girls, gave Bess Truman the assurance of knowing where her daughter was.<sup>23</sup>

Harry Truman's November 1934 election to the Senate changed the Trumans' lives. At noon, on December 28, 1934, the two Truman automobiles pulled out of the driveway bound for Washington, D.C., with 10-year-old Margaret clutching a bedraggled Raggedy Ann doll. Madge



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Wallace stayed behind, but was not left alone. Her youngest son, Fred Wallace, and his family continued to live with her. Bess and Margaret came back to live there more than half the year during the summer and fall to care for Mrs. Wallace and for Margaret to attend school. In January, they went back to the capital. Senator Truman returned frequently, but his time was split between his home and official trips throughout the state. Only when the war emergency forced the Congress to remain in session in 1941 did the Trumans remain nine months of each year in Washington. When the Fred Wallace family moved to Denver in 1942, Madge Wallace closed up her home the following year and moved to Washington, too. For the next decade, the family home remained closed except during the summers and other vacation periods.<sup>24</sup>

Truman's nomination as President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's vice presidential running mate in 1944 dramatically altered the Trumans' lives. They and their Independence home were thrust into the lime-light. Returning home from the Democratic convention, the Trumans greeted 3,000 friends, citizens, and well-wishers in their back yard. For more than two hours on the evening of July 24, 1944, the Trumans stood inside the rose-covered pergola (HS-04) and shook hands with a seemingly endless line of people.<sup>25</sup>

Nine months later, on April 12, 1945, Harry S Truman succeeded Roosevelt as President. National attention focused on the Truman family and their home. Two-nineteen North Delaware was hailed as the "Hyde Park of the West." For six weeks in the spring of 1945, roofers, carpenters, and painters worked feverishly to ready the old house for the First Family's arrival. Neighbors helped supervise the painting of the home a brilliant white trimmed in Kentucky green.<sup>26</sup> Mayor Roger T. Sermon approved the gift of a flagpole (HS-08), stating that the "Summer White House" should not be without a standard from which to fly the Stars and Stripes. It was installed on June 26, the day before the President's first official visit to his home town.<sup>27</sup>

Becoming the First Family's residence necessitated several structural modifications to the family home. In late 1945, the Secret Service built a small security booth (HS-06) adjacent to the barn (HS-02) for the two permanent agents assigned to guard the home. Despite Secret Service pressure, the black picket fence (HS-03) was not installed until November 1949. It was erected only after former President Herbert C. Hoover warned that, if Truman wanted to keep his

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house in one piece, he had to fence out the souvenir-minded public. In April 1950, the President had the rear porch refloored, extended six feet, and screened-in. This area became the Trumans' favorite place to spend time relaxing, eating, and visiting friends.<sup>28</sup>

The summer homecomings were eagerly anticipated by the First Lady, Margaret, and Madge Wallace. Bess especially saw her home as a refuge away from the demands of living in the White House, a place the President's family called "The Great White Jail." Harry was forced to spend most of his time in the capital during the hectic postwar years. Whenever he could, however, the President flew west to be with his family aboard the appropriately-named presidential plane, The Independence.<sup>29</sup>

Whenever Bess and Margaret were away in Independence, Harry either wrote or called them on a regular basis. An historic telephone hook-up was made between Berlin and the Summer White House on July 18, 1945. Attending the Potsdam Conference, the President called his wife via transatlantic radiotelephone, marking the first call between Germany and the United States since 1942.<sup>30</sup>

Presidential visits to Independence came regularly at Christmas, except in 1947 and 1952. Truman-Wallace tradition dictated that gifts were opened before the 14-foot tall Christmas tree in the living room followed by a large, formal dinner at noon.<sup>31</sup> Holiday trips included a lot of work for the President, however, as he spent time working on the nation's budget and the annual State of the Union message. Each Christmas Eve, Truman addressed the nation over the radio sending seasons' greetings and lighting the National Christmas Tree in Washington via telegraph key. On such occasions, very few journalists were allowed inside the house and few photographs were taken.<sup>32</sup>

On October 31, 1948, Harry Truman completed his famous "Whistle-stop Campaign" in Independence. The following night, election eve, national politics centered on 219 North Delaware as President Truman delivered his final speech of the 1948 campaign to a national radio audience. Seated in the living room, Harry Truman gave the most inspiring and crucial speech of his life. He summarized the purpose of his "Whistlestop Campaign," explained the issues, and told the American people that the Democratic Party was "the party of the people," compared to the Republican Party, "the party of privilege."<sup>33</sup> If enough Americans listened to the broadcast and were inspired to vote, the speech may have contributed to tipping the election in Truman's favor.

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The home was virtually surrounded by the national press corps on the night of the election. Reporters anxiously awaited an admission of defeat which never came. The President was not even home; he had taken advantage of a Secret Service decoy to slip away.<sup>34</sup>

Harry came home to celebrate his 31st wedding anniversary and to visit with his family the weekend of June 24 and 25, 1950. He was reading in the library shortly after 10:00 p.m., on June 24, when the telephone in the central hallway rang. Secretary of State Dean Acheson told the President that North Korea had invaded South Korea. Truman authorized Acheson to call for an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council. As East-West tension heightened, rumors of war caused world attention to focus on Harry Truman at the Summer White House. A call from Acheson the next morning confirmed that an all-out invasion was underway. Truman called on the Joint Chiefs of Staff to prepare recommendations for him upon his immediate return to Washington, D.C. The blatant act of aggression flew in the face of the administration's security guarantees and the Truman Doctrine of containing the spread of communism.<sup>35</sup> Before his hasty departure from home, the President revealed to his family his determination to answer the threat by committing U.S. forces.<sup>36</sup>

An informal press conference, the only such event at the Truman home, was held prior to the lighting of the National Christmas Tree on December 24, 1951. From the first floor library, Truman told reporters that he would "use all the laws on the books" to keep the steel mills operating and avoid an imminent nationwide strike. He implied that he would invoke the emergency provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act for an 80-day anti-strike moratorium and/or a Federal seizure of the steel industry. Referred to the Wage Stabilization Board at Truman's request, Harry added that he hoped management and workers would keep the mills operating in the national interest.<sup>37</sup>

In what the Trumans planned as their last visit home before leaving the White House in January 1953, they voted in Independence in the fall 1952 election. November 4 was a special day for Harry Truman as he walked with Bess and Margaret from their home to mark a ballot on which, for the first time in 30 years, his name did not appear.<sup>38</sup> The death of Madge Gates Wallace on December 5, 1952, in her White House bedroom, however, necessitated a sad homecoming. A private funeral service was held three days later at 219 North Delaware. The Trumans returned to Washington the next day.<sup>39</sup>

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Harry and Bess Truman left Washington, D.C., immediately following the inauguration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower on January 20, 1953. Private citizens once again without Secret Service protection, both were eager to return to 219 North Delaware for a well-deserved rest from the rigors of public life. The Trumans' train pulled into the Independence depot of the Missouri Pacific Railroad on the evening of January 22. Nearly a quarter of Independence's population braved the winter weather to welcome their famous neighbors home. In the vicinity of the depot were more than 8,500 enthusiastic people, while along the route and in front of the former Summer White House were another 1,500.<sup>40</sup>

With the death of her mother six weeks before, Bess Truman was the new mistress of 219 North Delaware. Madge Wallace's estate was divided equally among her four children. In July 1953, Harry and Bess purchased the other interests in the house which was appraised at \$25,000. The deed gave the property to both partners "as an estate by the entirety with right of survivorship."<sup>41</sup>

Retirement did not mean idleness as the couple immediately began a process which they termed "modernization." Years of neglect while the family was away had taken their toll on the home. During the ensuing years craftsmen worked in nearly every room, transforming the house to suit the Trumans' own tastes. Bess was in charge, but always sought her husband's approval on everything from wallpaper to paint colors, carpeting to sofa covers. The changes were not major: bookshelves for the library, shoring-up the main floor, renovating the attic and basement, paving the driveway, rescreening the windows, and numerous small repair jobs. Harry and Bess emphasized to the workmen that they wanted the modernizations to be economical while not significantly altering the home's appearance.

Rooms were re-wallpapered, carpeting was laid, and Bess was charged with fitting their Washington furniture, mementoes, and gifts into the existing decor of Gates-Wallace heirlooms.<sup>42</sup> They paused on May 27, 1955, to be interviewed by Margaret Truman, the guest host on Edward R. Murrow's 30-minute "Person to Person" television show. It was the first time the American people had ever seen the inside of the home.<sup>43</sup>

The fence (HS-03) around the property was retained, although by 1962, Bess was glad when the Secret Service booth (HS-06) in the back

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yard was hauled away.<sup>44</sup> When the Secret Service returned in 1965 following congressional authorization, the Trumans refused to permit them to rebuild the booth. At one point, the agents were evicted from their command post in the barn/carriage house (HS-02) and returned only after the Trumans were coaxed to relent by President Lyndon Baines Johnson.<sup>45</sup>

The Truman home served as the base from which Harry concentrated his energy on a labor of love: building his presidential library. Harry spearheaded the fund raising program, traveling across the nation for speaking engagements. Receptions for the groundbreaking (May 8, 1955) and dedication (July 6, 1957) were held at the Truman home. Four hundred invited guests attended the dedication reception including former President Herbert C. Hoover, U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren, Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn, Mrs. Franklin D. (Eleanor) Roosevelt, and Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson.<sup>46</sup> In the year between the Library receptions, a wedding reception for Margaret and E. Clifton Daniel was held at the home following their widely publicized April 21, 1956, wedding.<sup>47</sup>

Two-nineteen North Delaware was also Harry Truman's literary base. While Harry wrote much of the rough draft of his memoirs at his office in the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, the work assumed actual shape at the Truman home. There, Bess served in a familiar capacity as editor and critic. The preface to the first volume, Year of Decisions, was finished at 219 North Delaware on August 5, 1955.<sup>48</sup> The second volume, Years of Trial and Hope, was published in 1956.

Upon completion of the Harry S. Truman Library, .7 mile north of his home down the Delaware Street corridor, the former President spent almost all of his time in Independence. From his office, Harry assisted in the organization of the archives and museum exhibits. At noon, he usually came home to eat lunch with Bess before going back to work in the afternoon. Returning home in the evening, Harry napped before dinner and then spent the evening with Bess reading or listening to music. It was a quiet, peaceful "retirement" for the couple. Both looked forward to each visit by the Daniels and their grandsons. A nursery in the second floor front bedroom always awaited them.<sup>49</sup>

A 1964 fall in the upstairs bathroom triggered Harry Truman's decline from good health. Afflicted by vertigo, trips to his office at the Truman Library and customary neighborhood walks became rare. The

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former President spent most of his time reading in the first floor library.<sup>50</sup> Bess was a master at keeping disruptions at a minimum. When the old slate roof finally had to be removed in the summer of 1969, Bess refused to have the water damage to the interior repaired because she feared the noise and mess would disturb her frail husband.<sup>51</sup>

In the two decades since Harry Truman's retirement from the White House, he played an important role in national politics as an elder statesman of the Democratic Party. Syngman Rhee, President of South Korea, stopped by the Truman home on August 5, 1954, to thank the former President on behalf of the South Korean people for his support during the Korean conflict. Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson visited him in Independence.<sup>52</sup> Presidential running mates Hubert H. Humphrey and Edmund S. Muskie came seeking Truman's endorsement and advice in 1968.<sup>53</sup> Even Truman's political arch-enemy, incumbent President Richard M. Nixon, visited 219 North Delaware on March 21, 1969, when their bitter feud finally ended.<sup>54</sup> Celebrities like Bob Hope and Maurice Chevalier also journeyed to visit the Trumans in their home.

The most significant presidential visit came on October 11, 1968, when Lyndon Baines Johnson paid his sixth visit during his presidency to 219 North Delaware. In tribute to Harry S Truman's role in helping realize the birth of the United Nations, President Johnson signed Proclamation 3878 designating October 24 an annual "U.N. Day" in the United States. Johnson also signed Proclamation 3879 praising Truman for his participation in helping create the U.N. Both documents were signed in the Trumans' living room.<sup>55</sup>

Harry Truman died December 26, 1972, in Kansas City's Research Hospital at age 88. Bess never considered leaving Independence. She wanted to remain in the house where she and her husband had found such happiness and comfort. Living alone for almost a decade, the furniture and personal items were left much as they were before Harry's death. It was as if the home had been frozen in time.

Bess Wallace Truman died in her beloved home on October 18, 1982, at age 97. Buried beside her husband in the courtyard of the Truman Library, Bess Truman bequeathed her residence to the Federal Government. On December 8, 1982, Secretary of the Interior James G. Watt, acting under authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935, signed Desig-

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nation Order No. 3088 declaring 219 North Delaware the "Harry S Truman National Historic Site." Congressional authorization followed when President Ronald W. Reagan signed P.L. 98-32 on May 23, 1983. The enabling legislation for the Harry S Truman National Historic Site is to "preserve and interpret for the inspiration and benefit of present and future generations the former home of Harry S Truman, thirty-third President of the United States."

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## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet 9, pages 1 to 4.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .77

UTM REFERENCES

A 15 376920 4327900  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B           
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C           
D           
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property corresponds with the boundary of the Harry S Truman National Historic Site occupying city Lots 2 and 3 of James F. Moore's Addition, Independence, Missouri. It measures 175 by 225 feet in size.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Ron Cockrell, Research Historian/Alan W. O'Bright, Historical Architect 01/29/85

ORGANIZATION

Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service

DATE

(402) 221-3426

STREET & NUMBER

1709 Jackson Street

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Omaha

STATE

Nebraska 68102

## 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES   

NO   

NONE   

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is    National    State    Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

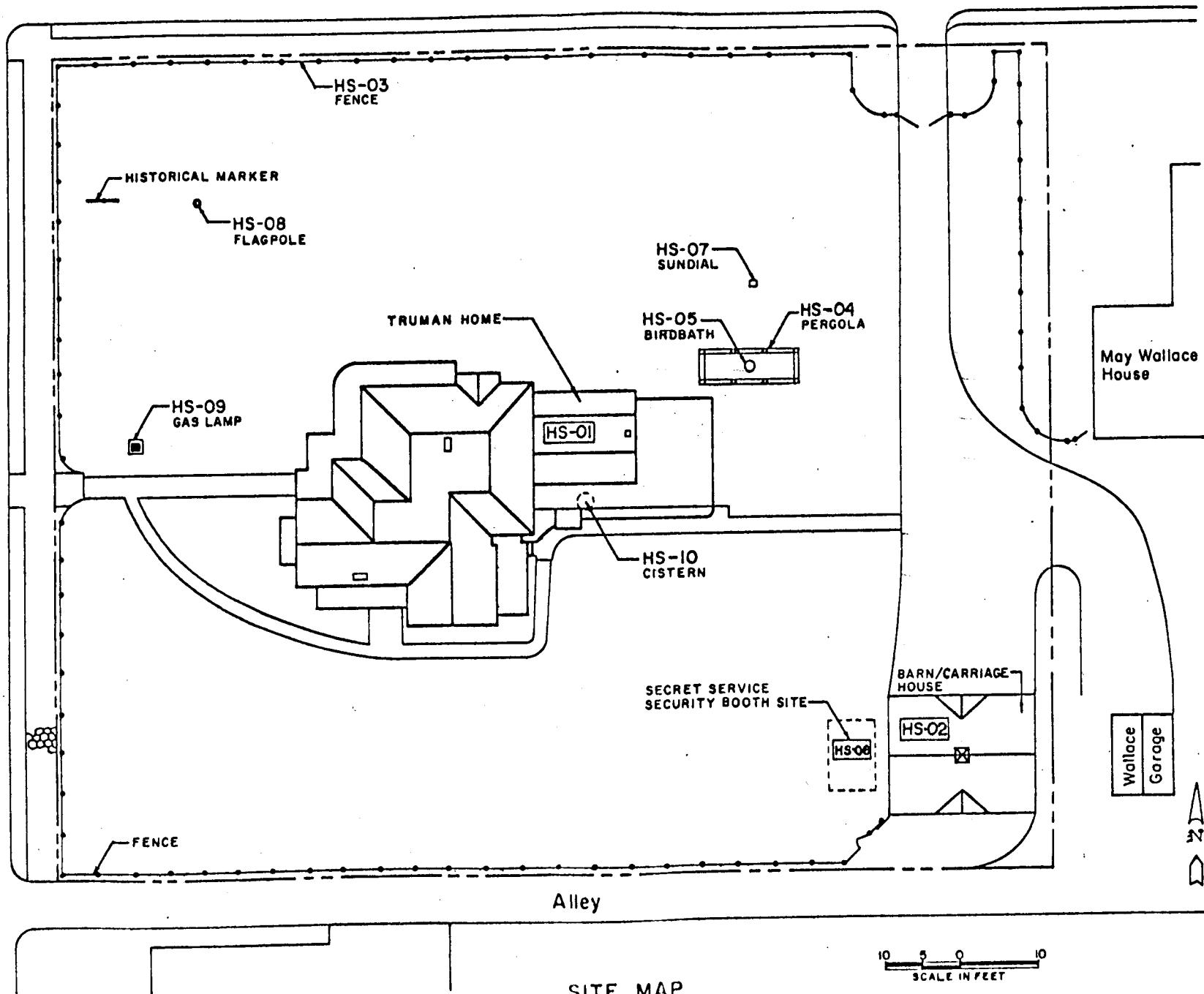
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

North Delaware Street

Truman Road



SITE MAP

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



No. 1

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
Independence, Missouri

View from Northwest Corner of North Delaware Street and Truman Road.

Photographer: Jack E. Boucher  
Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
March 1983

Negative: HABS No. MO-1175-1  
Superintendent, Harry S Truman NHS



No. 2

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
Independence, Missouri

Truman home (HS-01)  
facing west

Photographer: Jack E. Boucher  
Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
March 1983

Negative: HABS No. MO-1175-2  
Superintendent, Harry S Truman NHS



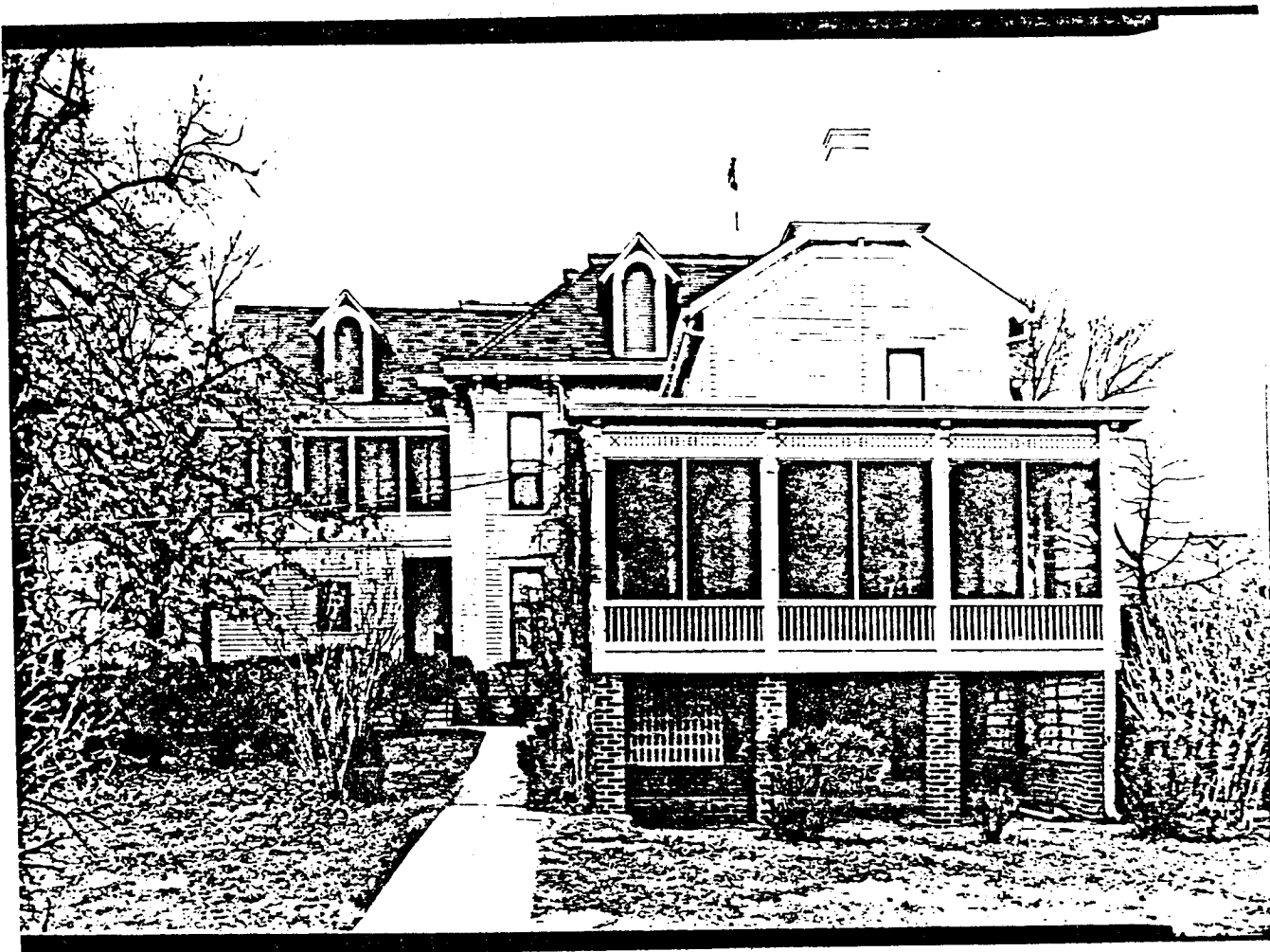
No. 3

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
Independence, Missouri

Truman home (HS-01)  
facing south

Photographer: Jack E. Boucher  
Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
March 1983

Negative: HABS No. MO-1175-4  
Superintendent, Harry S Truman NHS



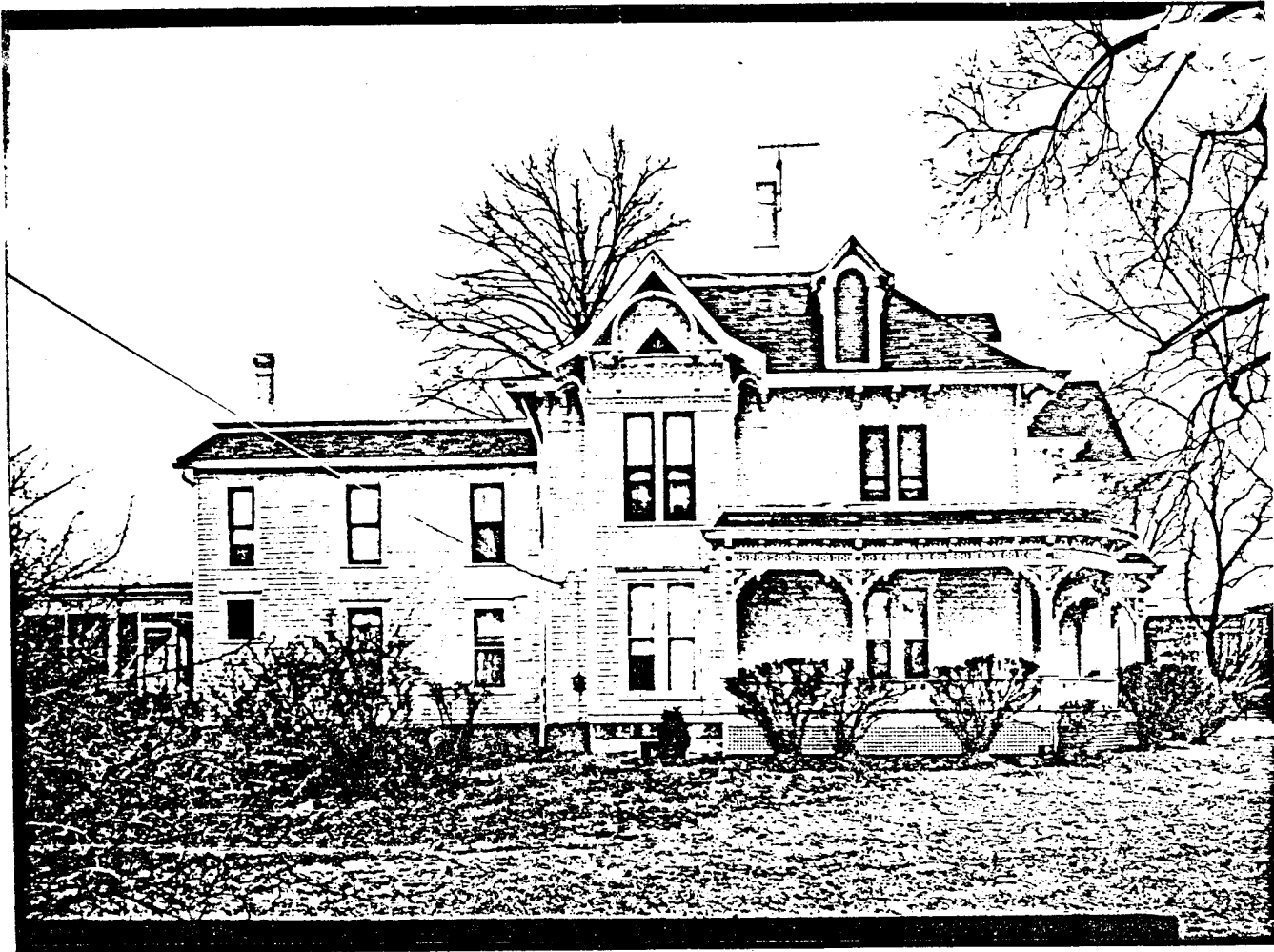
No. 4

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
Independence, Missouri

Truman home (HS-01)  
facing east

Photographer: Jack E. Boucher  
Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
March 1983

Negative: HABS No. MO-1175-7  
Superintendent, Harry S Truman NHS



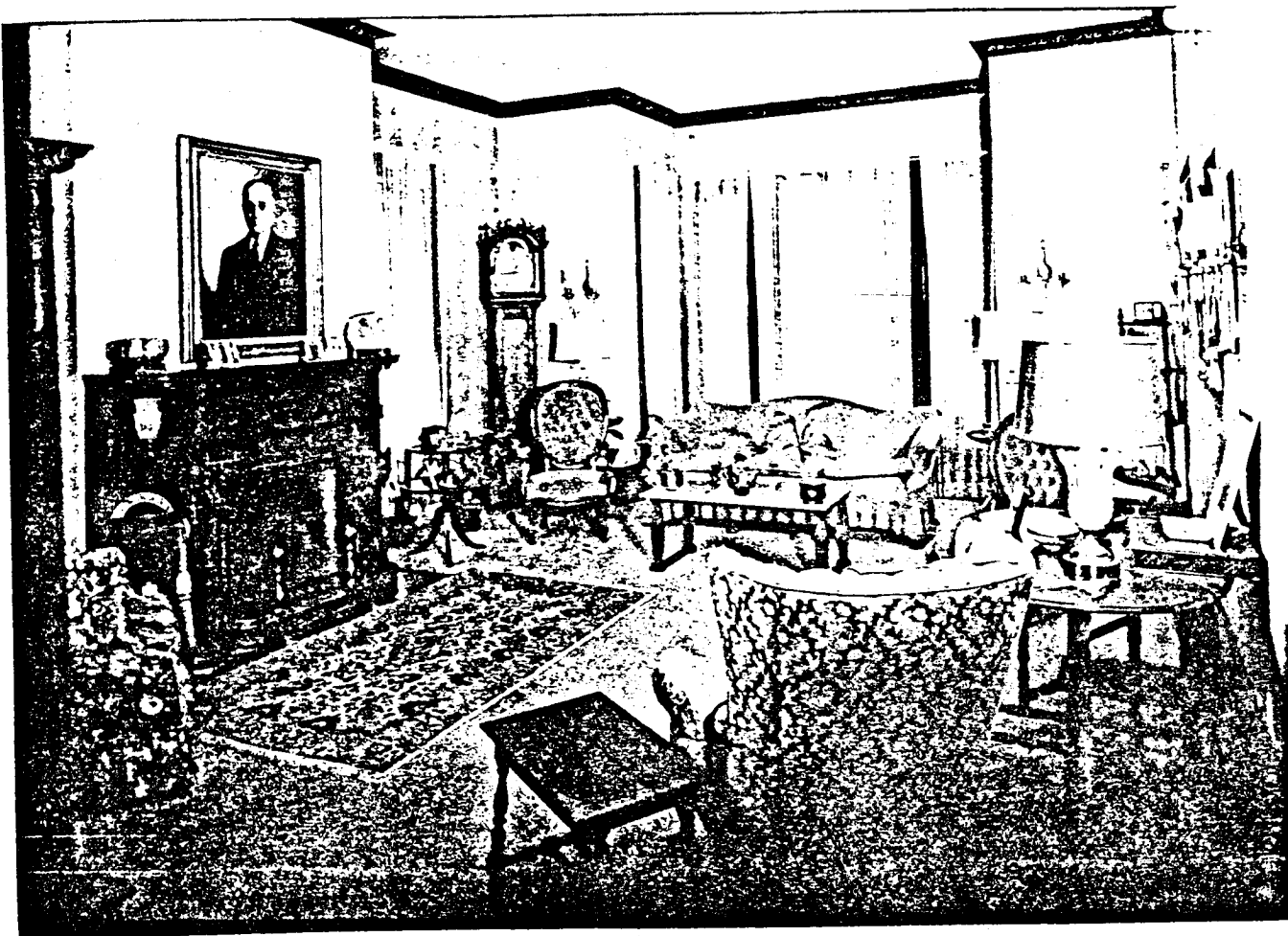
No. 5

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
Independence, Missouri

Truman home (HS-01)  
facing north

Photographer: Jack E. Boucher  
Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
March 1983

Negative: HABS No. MO-1175-5  
Superintendent, Harry S Truman NHS



No. 6

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
Independence, Missouri

Truman home (HS-01)  
Living Room  
facing west

Photographer: Jack E. Boucher  
Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
March 1983

Negative: HABS No. MO-1175-80  
Superintendent, Harry S Truman NHS





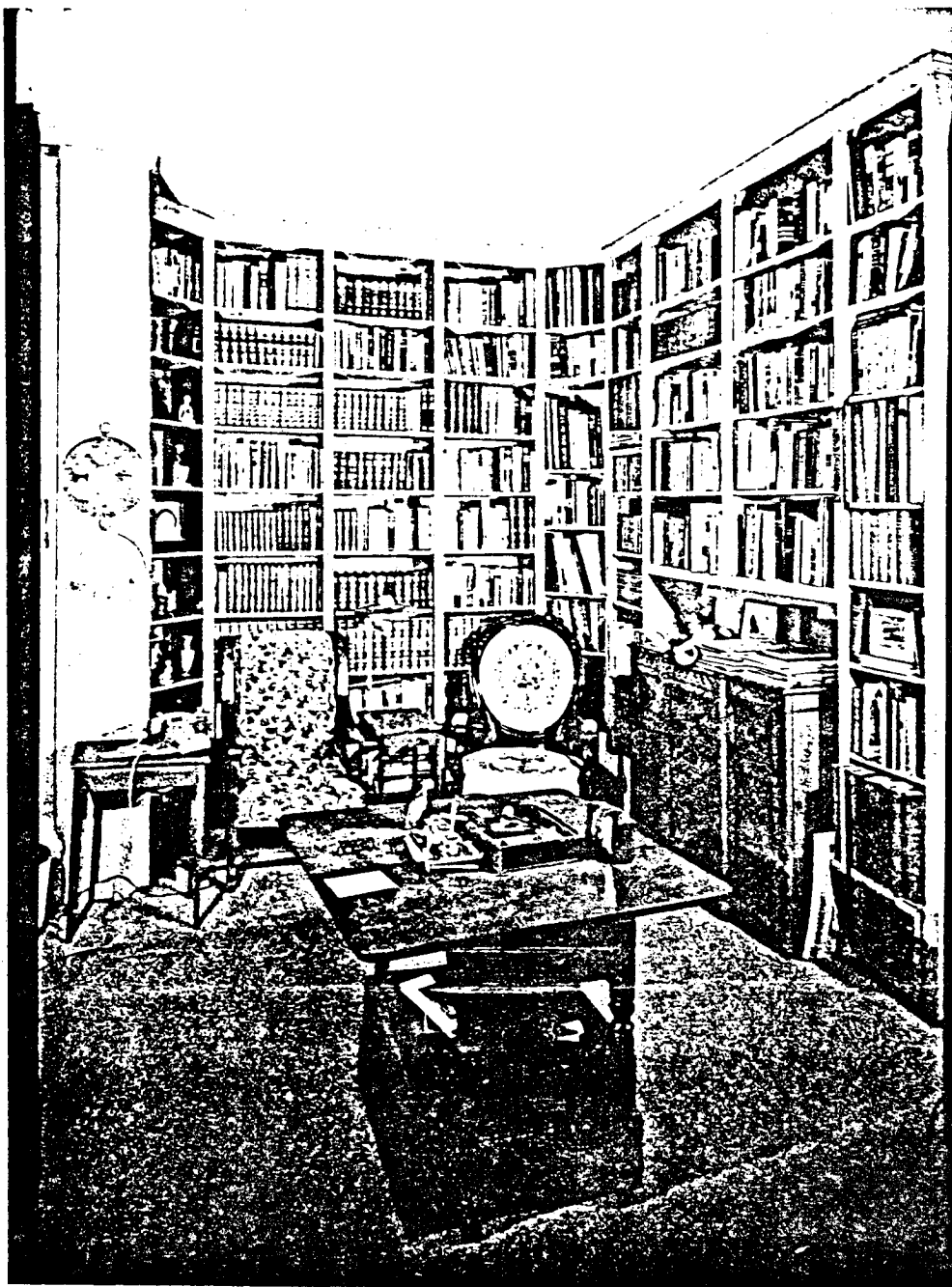
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HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
Independence, Missouri

Truman home (HS-01)  
Parlor/Music Room  
facing north

Photographer: Jack E. Boucher  
Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
March 1983

Negative: HABS No. MO-1175-79  
Superintendent, Harry S Truman NHS



No. 8

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
Independence, Missouri

Truman home (HS-01)  
Library  
facing east

Photographer: Jack E. Boucher  
Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
March 1983

Negative: HABS No. MO-1175-71  
Superintendent, Harry S Truman NHS



No. 9

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
Independence, Missouri

Truman home (HS-01)  
Dining Room  
facing south

Photographer: Jack E. Boucher  
Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
March 1983

Negative: HABS No. MO-1175-75  
Superintendent, Harry S Truman NHS



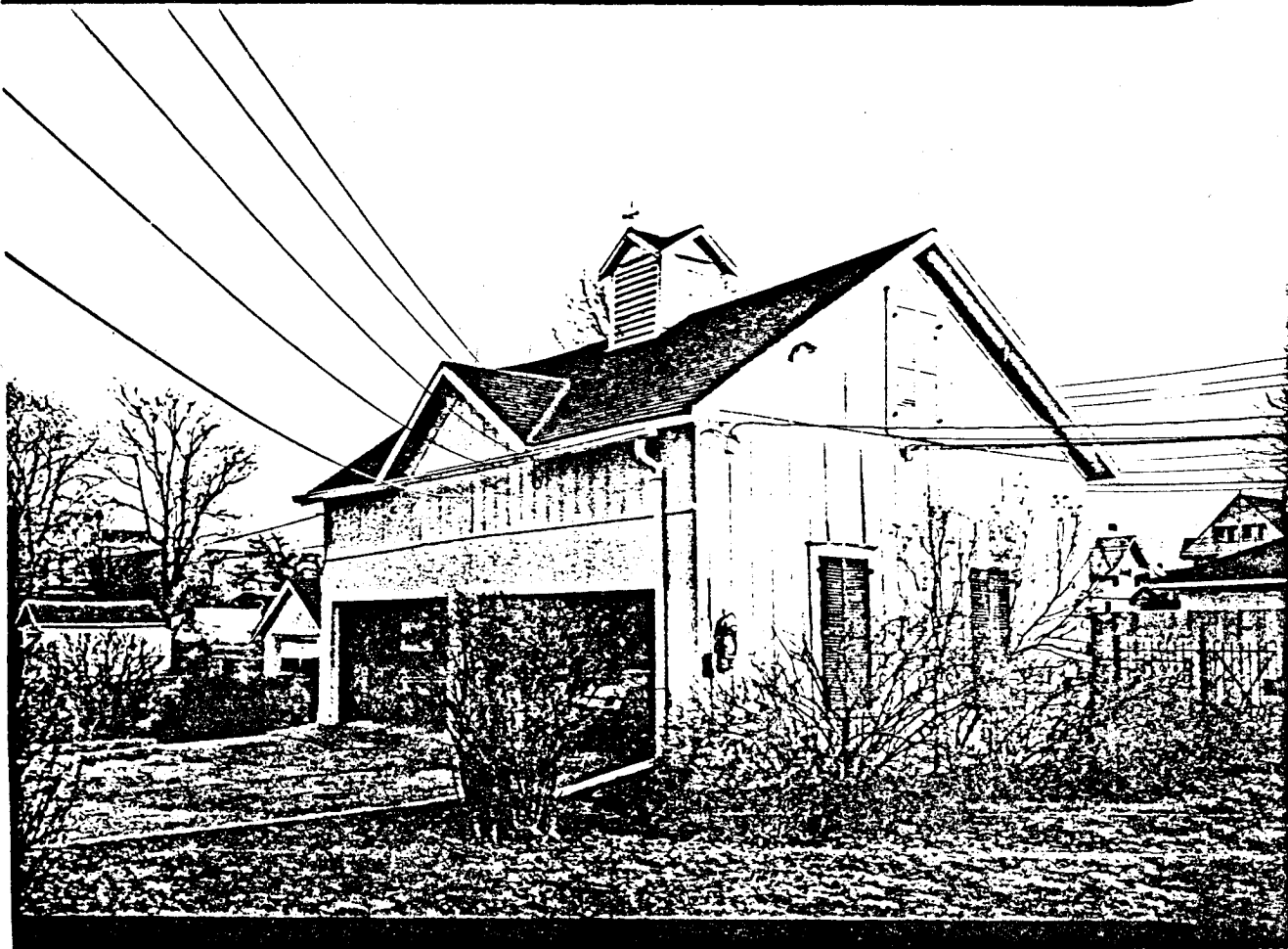
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HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
Independence, Missouri

Truman home (HS-01)  
Kitchen  
facing west

Photographer: Jack E. Boucher  
Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
March 1983

Negative: HABS No. MO-1175-91  
Superintendent, Harry S Truman NHS



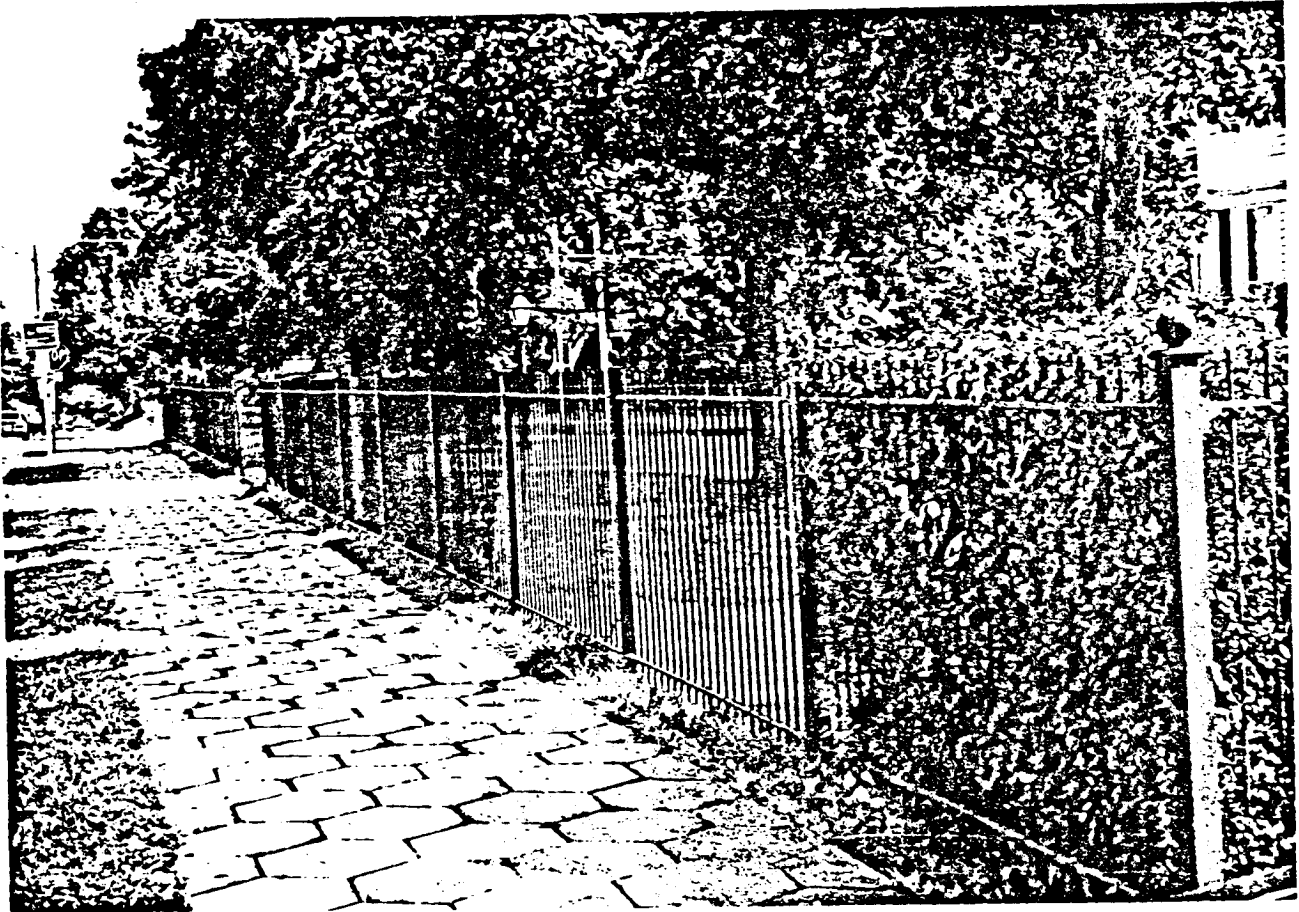
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HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
Independence, Missouri

Barn/Carriage House (HS-02)  
Secret Service Security Booth (HS-06) Site (to right)  
facing southwest

Photographer: Jack E. Boucher  
Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
March 1983

Negative: HABS No. MO-1175-A-1  
Superintendent, Harry S Truman NHS



No. 12

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
Independence, Missouri

Fence (HS-03)  
facing north

Photographer: Thomas L. Hensley  
June 1983

Negative: Midwest Regional Office  
National Park Service  
Omaha, Nebraska



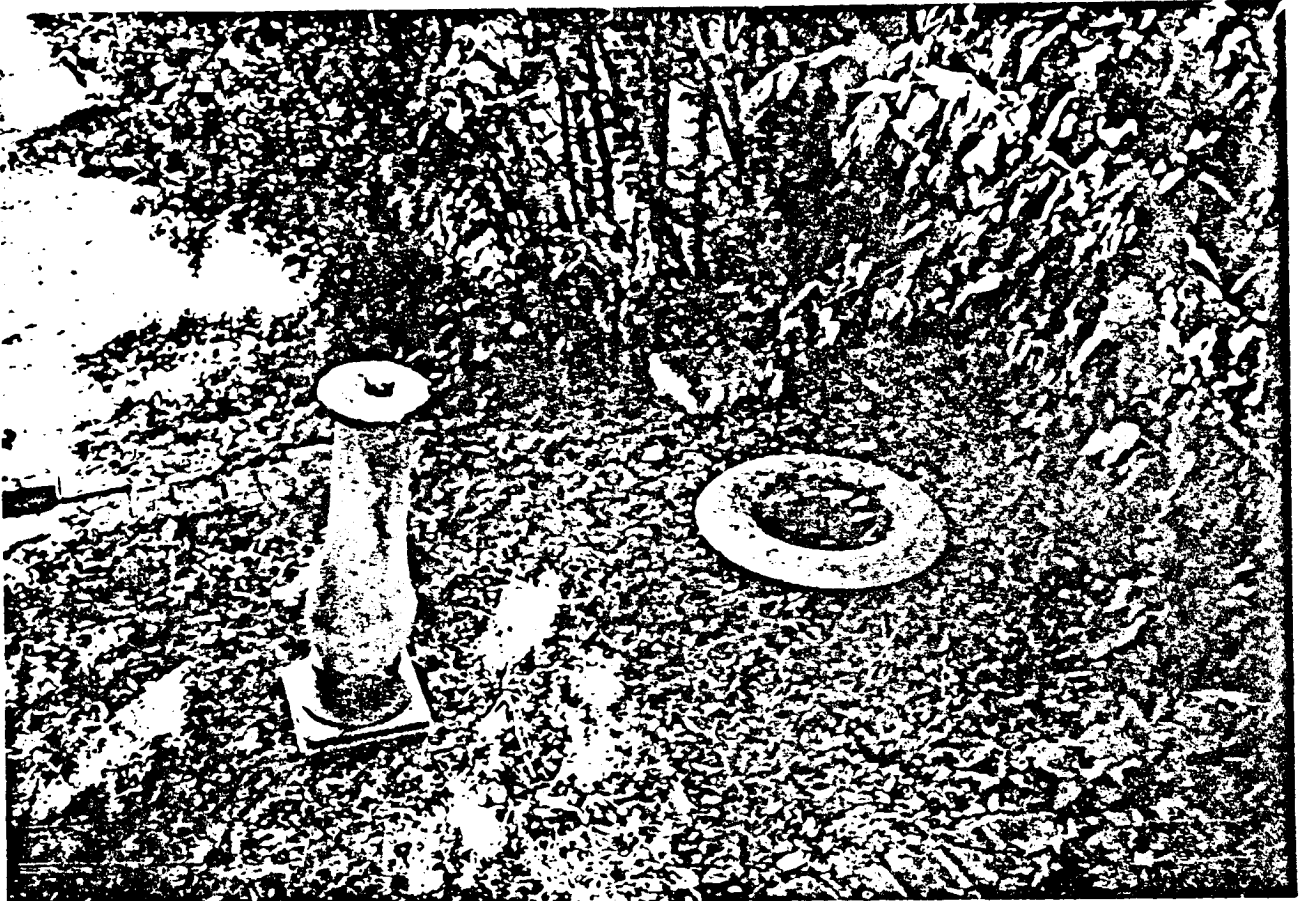
No. 13

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
Independence, Missouri

Pergola (HS-04) and Birdbath (HS-05)  
facing north

Photographer: Thomas L. Hensley  
June 1983

Negative: Midwest Regional Office  
National Park Service  
Omaha, Nebraska



No. 14

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
Independence, Missouri

Birdbath (HS-05) and Pergola (HS-04)  
facing south

Photographer: Thomas L. Hensley  
June 1983

Negative: Midwest Regional Office  
National Park Service  
Omaha, Nebraska





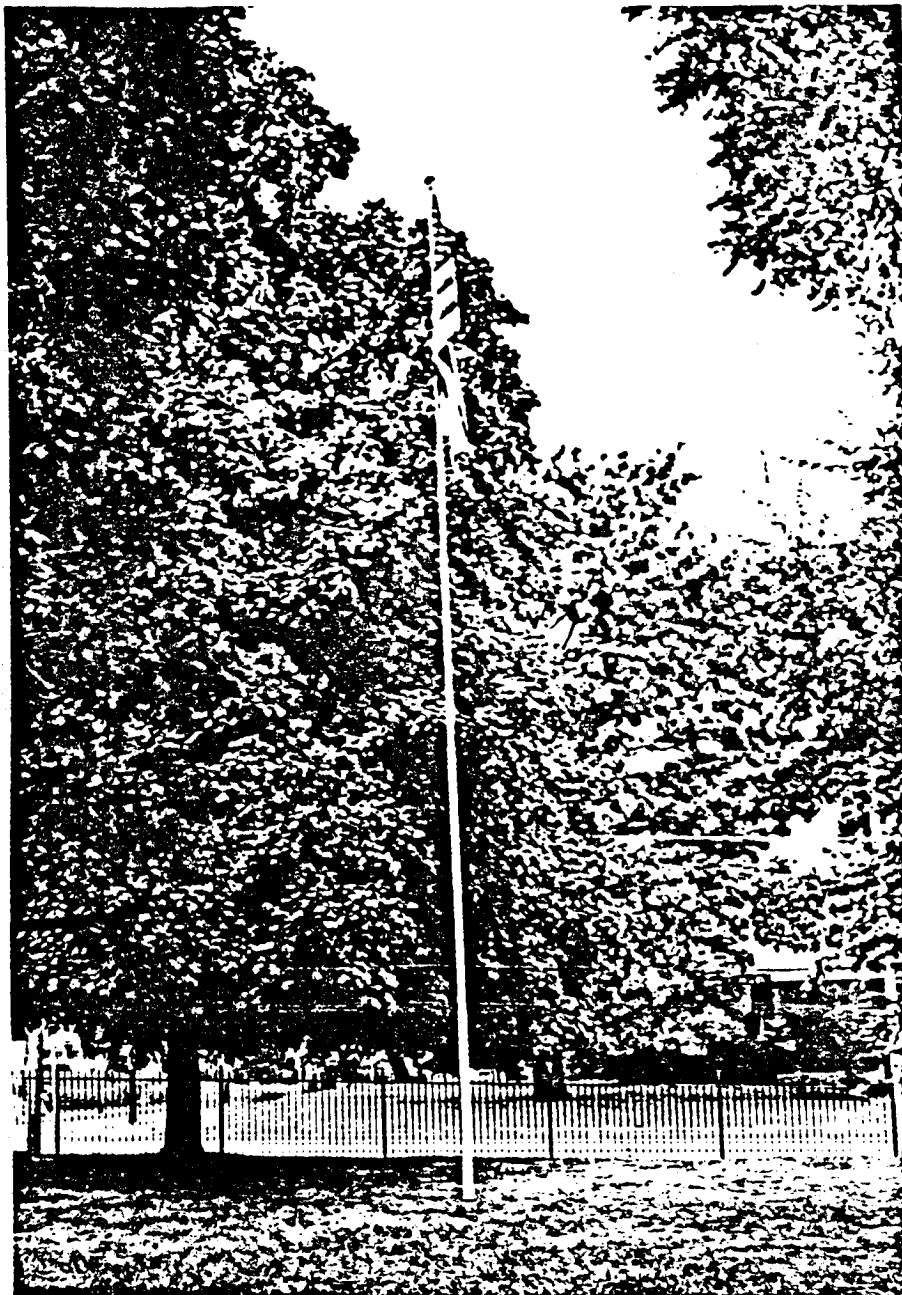
No. 15

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
Independence, Missouri

Sundial (HS-07) (at left)  
facing southwest

Photographer: F. A. Ketterson, Jr.  
January 1983

Negative: Midwest Regional Office  
National Park Service  
Omaha, Nebraska



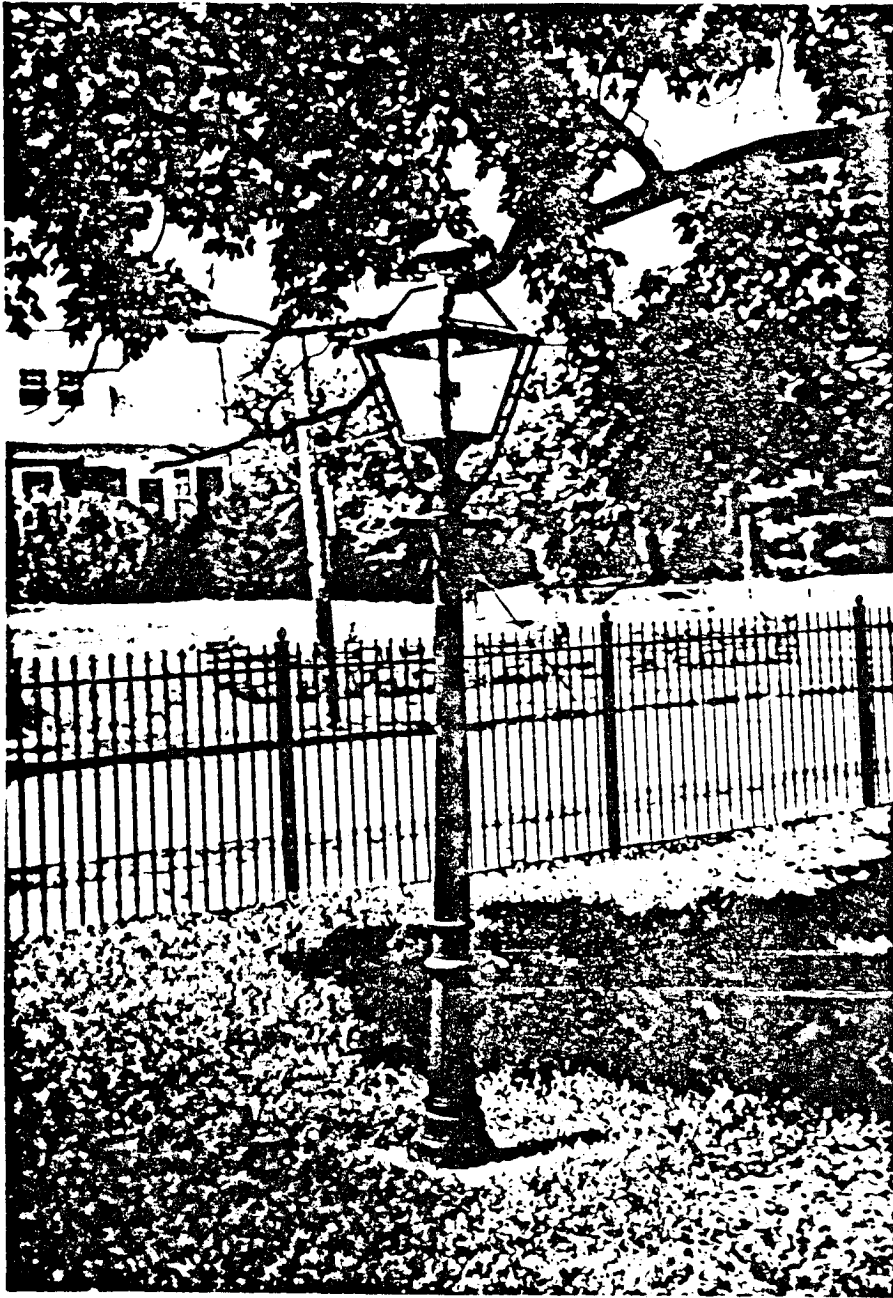
No. 16

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
Independence, Missouri

Flagpole (HS-08)  
facing north

Photographer: Thomas L. Hensley  
June 1983

Negative: Midwest Regional Office  
National Park Service  
Omaha, Nebraska



No. 17

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
Independence, Missouri

Gas Lamp (HS-09)  
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Photographer: Thomas L. Hensley  
June 1983

Negative: Midwest Regional Office  
National Park Service  
Omaha, Nebraska



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