CHAPTER NINE

THE WHITE HOUSE YEARS, 1945-1953

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Transforming the Gates-Wallace House Into the 'Summer White House', 1945

Resting and preparing for the upcoming San Francisco Conference which would spawn the United Nations, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt worked in his study in the "Little White House," a frame cottage atop Pine Mountain, in Warm Springs, Georgia. It was shortly after 1 p.m., April 12, 1945, when the President signed a bill extending the Commodity Credit Corporation that he complained of "a terrific headache." Aides carried the ailing President to the bedroom where he could lie down or sleep. His condition continued to worsen, however, and at 3:35 p.m., Franklin D. Roosevelt died from a massive cerebral hemorrhage.[1]

At the moment of Roosevelt's death, Vice President Harry S Truman had finished presiding over the day's Senate debate and was in House Speaker Sam Rayburn's office. At 5:15 p.m., Truman was telephoned by Presidential Press Secretary Steve Early and told to come to the White House as soon as possible. Rushing to the Executive Mansion, Harry Truman was ushered into Eleanor Roosevelt's second floor study. A calm Mrs. Roosevelt told the Vice President that her husband was dead. "What can I do for you?" asked Truman. The First Lady responded, "Tell us what we can do. Is there any way we can help you?"[2]

Assembled in the Cabinet Room at 7:09 p.m., were members of the Roosevelt cabinet; Bess and Margaret Truman; and Harlan F. Stone, Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, who administered the Presidential oath of office to the somber Vice President. At 7:10 p.m., April 12, 1945, Harry S Truman became the 33rd President of the United States.[3] Life for the Trumans of Independence, Missouri, would never again be the same as they suddenly found themselves the nation's First Family.

Just as Franklin D. Roosevelt's beloved estate at Hyde Park, New York, was constantly in the public eye during his presidency, so, too, was the Trumans' home in Independence thrust into the national limelight. Photographs of the house appeared in newspapers and magazines throughout the country as Americans sought in-depth information on the new First Family. In the early weeks of the Truman presidency, many referred to 219 North Delaware as the "Hyde Park of the West."[4]

The years of neglect when the house stood empty for long periods while Mrs. Wallace and the Trumans were away in Washington had taken their toll. By the spring of 1945, the property was in a state of disrepair. On April 13, 1945, the Independence Examiner noted that the home's "clapboards are badly in need of paint and its ornate gingerbread gables and

porches are in need of repair."[5] Americans throughout the country were eager to help the President beautify his home. In response to national media exposure of the house, the White House received offers to landscape the unkempt grounds[6] (See Figures 15, 16, and 17).

Aware that her family home was the subject of public scrutiny, Bess Truman negotiated an agreement with a local contractor to refurbish the exterior of the house. On May 3, 1945, the local newspaper reported that "the contract included carpenter repairs on the outside where needed to be followed by two coats of paint." Orville Campbell was the Independence contractor in charge of the renovation project. His task of readying the house before the arrival of the First Family for the summer was stalled for several weeks because of "inclement weather."[7]

The renovation finally commenced on May 21, 1945, as roofers, painters, and carpenters worked feverishly to transform the exterior of the Wallace house. Scaffolding was erected around the front porches for the workmen to replace rotted millwork and slate shingles (See Figure 18). Painters began covering the worn, gray exterior with gleaming white paint and Kentucky green for windows and other trim areas. The sparkling white was chosen to conform to the home's new title,

FIGURE 15

Truman Library Photo Archives, 62-383

Summer White House

Circa 1945

The "wild" appearance of the shrubbery and indications of lighter colored trim would suggest the photograph was taken in the early spring before the renovation of May and June.

Source: Kansas City Star

FIGURE 16

Truman Library Photo Archives, 67-3886

Circa March-April 1945

The President's home shortly before renovation into the Summer White House.

FIGURE 17

Truman Library Photo Archives, 66-2963

Circa mid-April to mid-May 1945

219 North Delaware before painting and exterior renovations. Note the light-colored trim compared to the darker main parts of the facade.

FIGURE 18

Truman Library Photo Archives, 69-146

Transformation Into The Summer White House

May 21, 1945

Painters, roofers, and carpenters erect scaffolding around the front facade to make repairs. Note the heavy growth of shrubbery and the stark contrast in color as the painter on the ladder paints the guttering.

Source: Associated Press, donated by New York Herald/Tribune.

the "Summer White House."[8]

Arriving with Mrs. Wallace and daughter Margaret by train on June 3, 1945, Bess Truman came to Independence early to supervise the renovation and spring cleaning projects.[9] The First Lady was particularly occupied with fitting her Washington apartment furniture into the existing decor. The furniture remained in crates scattered throughout the house, transported there following the family's move into the White House.[10]

The renovation work progressed into a "rush job"[11] as painters and other craftsmen hurried to finish the project before the President's arrival on June 27. It marked his first visit home upon succeeding Franklin D. Roosevelt to the presidency two months before. Work was completed in time for Harry S Truman's four-day weekend to relax after his participation in the historic United Nations San Francisco Conference (See Figure 19). During his stay in Independence, the President's busy schedule allowed him to eat only one meal in his own home.[12]

FIGURE 19

Truman Library Photo Archives, 65-3360

Appearance For The President's First Visit

June 27, 1945

This is how the house looked the day of Harry S Truman's first visit home upon his succession to the presidency. The renovations and trimming of shrubbery has been completed.

Source: George Dodsworth, photographer

Flagpole

The flagpole which now stands on the northwest corner of the Truman property was erected through the efforts of Independence citizens on June 26, 1945, in honor of the President's first homecoming since assuming his office. The more than thirty four-foot flagstaff was delivered to the residence at 219 North Delaware on June 25. It came from the City of Independence supply yard after local citizens, Hugh Miller, John Fish, and Robert Joyce approached Mayor Roger T. Sermon with the idea of presenting it to the First Family. They argued that the Independence White House should not be without a flagpole from which to fly the Stars and Stripes.

Mayor Sermon approved the gift of the flagstaff and Orville Campbell, contractor in charge of the renovations at the Summer White House, agreed to set the pole. The location on the northwest corner of the lawn was approved by Mrs. Madge Wallace and the First Lady. A free-will donation was taken up for citizens who wished to cover the city's cost for the standard.[13]

The flagpole was set in a concrete foundation which was poured the evening of June 25.[14] The project was completed and the regulation flag (five by eight feet) was hoisted up the

steel staff at 9:00 on the morning of June 26, 1945, the day before the President arrived home.[15]

The significance of the flagpole to the local citizens during the presidential period was profound. Whenever the flag was raised--presumably by Secret Service agents--"the town knows that the President is home again."[16]

The Summer White House During the Truman Presidency, 1945-1953

Tremendous changes occurred in the daily lives of the Trumans beginning on April 12, 1945, when they found themselves the new First Family of the United States. The family soon moved from their Washington apartment into the Blair House and then into the White House in early May after Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt had vacated it. Secret Service protection stripped the family of its previous freedom of movement. One tradition the family refused to relinquish, however, was the practice of spending the summers in Independence. It was Mrs. Madge Wallace who especially preferred the familiar surroundings of her own home during the hot summer months. So, too, did Mrs. Truman and her daughter Margaret who began the summer homecoming tradition as early as 1935.

The President, charged with the awesome duty of running the country in the hectic postwar years, could not afford the luxury of a summer vacation. Most of his time was spent in Washington, keeping in close contact with his family by letters and frequent telephone calls. The President took advantage of Florida's favorable weather and stayed in Key West at a retreat which became known as "The Little White House." Harry Truman made regular trips to Independence during the summer to visit with his family and friends. Arriving aboard the presidential planes "Sacred Cow" and, later, "The Independence," none of his vacations were for periods longer than ten days.[17]

Summertime did mark the longest periods the Trumans spent in Independence during the presidential years, adding credence to the designation of "The Summer White House." Other homecomings came around major holidays such as Christmas. Occasional trips to Missouri were made on weekends to visit with family and friends. President Truman made special trips to see his aged mother at the Truman family farm in Grandview, Missouri. The First Family, without exception, came to Independence to cast their ballots in all local, state, and national elections.

During the absence of the First Family, 219 North Delaware stood locked and empty. In cold weather, George P. Wallace

drained the home's pipes to guard against freezing and damage to the plumbing system. Both the Wallace brothers and their wives regularly prepared the home preceding each arrival of the First Family. They also helped in closing up the home until the next visit.[18]

The Summer White House was a refuge for the family, a place which provided an escape from the highly-publicized life in the Executive Mansion. The Trumans did find a higher degree of privacy in Independence, 1,050 miles away from their busy official duties in Washington, D.C. In Missouri, the local press, in particular, Sue Gentry of the (Independence) Examiner, respected the First Family's privacy at their home and was largely content to report the Trumans' arrivals and departures. Concentrated press coverage came only when the President was in residence. With Secret Service agents policing the grounds, the press was kept at bay, observing the President's home from vantage points in the adjacent neighborhood.

The Trumans, in particular Bess Wallace Truman, cherished and guarded their privacy. It was a family decision not to allow the press to photograph the interior of their home during the presidential years.[19]

The only physical structural changes to the property during the presidential years, other than those at Government expense (See Secret Service section), were the addition of the flagpole and the rear porch construction. In April 1950, the rear porch was refloored and extended to the east six additional feet. The porch was also enclosed with screens.[20] A local carpenter, William E. "Bill" Gragg, did the work[21] (See "Rear Porch" section at the end of this chapter).

Other than the placement of the Trumans' furniture from their Washington apartment into the existing decor of the Wallace house in June 1945, few interior changes occurred during the presidential period. One notable exception involved the painting of the kitchen and pantry green by Margaret Truman during the summer of 1948.[22] This activity by the President's daughter, coupled with the earlier beautification of the grounds and structural exterior, prompted the statement on the back of postcards of the Summer White House which read, "The house has fourteen rooms and has been completely remodeled and redecorated to meet the requirements of the President and his family." Sending one of the postcards to her father in the summer of 1949, Margaret recalled:

> Beside that bit of baloney I wrote: "And I know who did it! Me!" (That was a tribute to a recent outburst of energy on my part which involved painting the kitchen.)[23]

Apparently, other than the painting of the kitchen, the home's interior had not been significantly altered.[24]

The kitchen project was a major undertaking and the subject of correspondence exchanged between the White House and 219 North Delaware. On July 25, 1948, Margaret 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."[25] Three days later, the President wrote, "You seem to have been slaving away at your paint job and your garden. I am hoping to see an excellent result in each instance. I shall expect to be able to pick a nice bouquet from the garden when I come home Sunday and I shall hope to be able to see myself in those slick pantry walls!"[26] The effort involved covering the dark brown woodwork with green paint, a color the family liked and kept in the room to the present day.[27] On August 22, Margaret informed her father, "I have finished 3/4 of the kitchen with the second coat and it looks good. I'll finish it tomorrow afternoon I hope."[28]

On May 15, 1949, green marble-style inlaid linoleum was placed on the floors in the kitchen, pantry, and hallway leading to the dining room. Two "bad places" in the floor were patched before the linoleum was laid, cemented over the felt-covered floorboards. Seventy feet of new quarterboard was also

installed.[29]

Another presidential-era interior change involved new carpeting. On June 1, 1948, Bess Truman bought a 12 by 7-yard carpet with padding.[30] On June 30, 1949, the First Lady bought 66 square yards of carpet and padding as well as "8 additional yards for stairs and landing."[31] A third purchase of carpeting on March 25, 1950, was 73 3/4 yards. The 12 by 17-yard carpet bought in 1948 was returned at this time.[32]

On August 31, 1951, a blue Spruce lavatory was purchased for the second floor bathroom.[33]

The Trumans spent every Christmas at the Summer White House except in 1947 and 1952 when they remained in Washington. Family tradition dictated that the home be decorated with wreaths and holly, and that a large Christmas tree covered with lights be placed in the center of the front bay window. An Australian journalist reported in 1949:

> As Christmas approaches, the old house is decorated from cellar to attic. By the time the President's special train from Washington pulls into the railroad station in Independence, everything is in readiness. There is a big holly wreath of waxy green leaves and vivid red berries on the front door, wreaths are in the windows, mantels are banked with evergreens, a sprig of mistletoe is tied on a chandelier, and tall red candles are placed in the candlesticks.

> A tapering evergreen tree--which may be a spruce, cedar, or fir whose topmost branches brush the ceiling--sits in the bay window of the downstairs living room. Its glittering ornaments and twinkling multicolored electric lights may be seen throughout the holidays by passers-by in the street. Margaret Truman usually decorates the tree herself. She always includes among the ornaments a little silver bell and a miniature red-and-white Santa Claus which were on her first Christmas tree.[34]

The tradition of the President lighting the National Christmas Tree on the south lawn of the White House continued during the Truman presidency. From his first floor study in the Summer White House, President Truman used the same gold-plated telegraph key every year since 1945 to light the huge tree[35] (See Figure 20). At the same time, the President's annual Christmas greeting, which had been pre-recorded, was broadcast to the nation.[36] The 1951 event included a brief informal press conference in his study, the only time such an event took place inside the home during his presidency. Referring to an impending United Steelworkers of America strike for New Year's Day, President Truman promised to use "all the laws in the books" to keep the mills operating.[37]

The house at 219 North Delaware, more than at any other time during the Truman presidency, was the focus of national attention on the night of the 1948 presidential election.

FIGURE 20

Truman Library Photo Archives, 67-7795

Lighting the National Christmas Tree from the Summer White House

December 24, 1951

President Truman uses the gold-plated telegraph key to light the National Community Christmas Tree in Washington D.C., from his library at 219 North Delaware. Note the glass-enclosed bookcase and the room's striped wallpaper pattern.

Ironically, President Truman was not even there, having slipped away to nearby Excelsior Springs, Missouri, to spend the night at the Elms Hotel. Crowds of people and the national press corps surrounded the house hoping for a glimpse of the President or to witness his anticipated defeat. The lights remained on throughout the night in the house as Mrs. Truman and Margaret listened to the election returns. The crowd outside sang songs such as "The Missouri Waltz" and "I'm Just Wild About Harry" and began to surge impatiently onto the lawn. Margaret Truman, at one point, came out onto the front porch and announced to the people that her father was not there. The action succeeded for the crowd obeyed the Secret Service and stayed off the grounds.[38]

The most historically significant event to occur while Harry Truman was in residence at 219 North Delaware during the presidential period was the Korean Crisis of 1950. Reading in the library on the evening of June 24, 1950, President Truman was interrupted by his daughter with an urgent call from Secretary of State Dean Acheson.[39] Acheson informed the President that ground forces of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had invaded the territory of the Republic of Korea. A clear test of the Truman policy of containing the spread of world communism, U.S. military assistance for South Korea was imminent. As the Cold War crisis loomed, traffic

passing the Truman home became so heavy that Independence policemen were stationed at the corner of North Delaware and Truman Road to direct the traffic. The volume of cars slowly passing the Summer White House was estimated at 25 per minute. Truman cut short his vacation and left Kansas City's Municipal Airport at 2:10 p.m., Sunday, June 25, bound for the White House and consultations with his top advisers.[40]

United States Secret Service

Secret Service protection for the Truman family began on April 12, 1945, when Harry S Truman became President of the United States.[41] Two Secret Service agents were assigned permanent duty stations in Independence to guard the home during the eight-year Truman presidency.[42]

No records from the presidential period (1945-1953) survive to tell the full story of the Secret Service's involvement at 219 North Delaware.[43] From press and archival sources, however, a general picture can be seen.

The Secret Service proposed several changes to the property to facilitate its job of protecting the First Family. The dense shrubbery encompassing the house was soon trimmed

away to reduce a potential intruder's hiding places.[44] The west end of the barn was converted into a temporary command post for the two permanent agents and additional operatives who arrived with the President when he came home to Independence. The agency also requested the War Department to have the Army Corps of Engineers construct a fence and security booth on the grounds. How to fund the work and avoid "the possibility of unfavorable newspaper comment" were problems. According to an October 8, 1945, memorandum to General Harry H. Vaughan, Military Aide to the President:

> The principal bar to the construction of the fence and booth by the War Department is that the property is privately owned and does not belong to the government. The War Department does not have an appropriation of funds which could be properly used for this purpose.
>
> The informal concensus [sic] of opinion seems to be that, if the Secret Service believes that this construction is necessary in the fulfillment of its mission of protecting the President, the Treasury Department should provide the funds for the work which, in any event, would have to be done under contract.[45]

Security Booth

The small guardhouse/security booth was built in the backyard to the immediate west of the barn in late 1945 (No photographs from the Truman Library reveal the booth very

clearly; See Figure 21). The estimated cost of the structure was $1200.[46]

When the President became a private citizen on January 20, 1953, the government-paid utilities for the security booth were turned off. Although an electric eye installed in the yard as an added security measure still signaled a "warning in the little guardhouse," the structure stood virtually useless.[47]

The Trumans considered the booth "an intrusion" on their property since the day it was built.[48] Margaret Truman recalled:

> [We] didn't like it at all.... It was just a little tiny box of a house that had a bathroom in it and a room where one or two men could sit at night. That was all we had. We didn't have a big, big detachment.... I suppose he [President Truman] had fifteen men around him.[49]

In 1955, Bess Truman told a journalist of her dislike for the small building: "She'd like to get rid of it, but thus far has not found anyone willing to cart it off."[50]

In 1962, the security booth was finally hauled away by painter/carpenter Robert Sanders and his son, Jerry. They took the building to the Bob Sharp farm on State Line Road in Kansas City. Sharp was a friend of the Trumans who wanted the booth

FIGURE 21

Truman Library Photo Archives, 66-3706

Back Porch with View of Security Booth

1953

Former President Truman sits on the back porch reading newspapers. Note the furnishings and the rooftop of the Secret Service security booth adjacent to the barn.

Source: From the album, Mr. Citizen.

for an outbuilding. The booth was placed in a low-lying area where the elements quickly deteriorated it. It has long since been destroyed.[51]

Wrought Iron Picket Fence

While the Trumans agreed to the construction of the security booth in 1945, they rejected the fence or "any further work on the property."[52]

The annual summer parade of tourists passing by to see the home of the First Family made Independence officials and merchants happy, but caused the Secret Service many headaches. The eve of the 1948 presidential election provided a good argument why the property should be sectioned-off from the public by a security fence. At one point, a large crowd of neighbors, curiosity-seekers, and the national press corps standing vigil around the property surged onto the lawn. The physical security of the house and its occupants was in danger. To calm and dissipate the impatient crowd, Margaret Truman came out on the front porch and announced that her father was not home. The Examiner reported:

> Secret Servicemen were 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 gradually dispersed from the lawn.[53]

The following summer, record numbers of tourists paraded past the home.[54] The onslaught was too much for the small permanent Secret Service detail to handle. As a result of the increased number of tourists, it became clear that not only was the First Family endangered, but the physical integrity of the home and grounds was threatened, also. Local resident Henry P. Chiles stated that the tourists "got to pulling weather boarding off and everything.... Why they'd pull the leaves off the trees and just anything for a souvenir from the Truman home. They were tearing it up...."[55]

During a White House meeting, it was former President Herbert Hoover who persuaded Harry Truman to follow his example and erect a fence around his home. Margaret Truman recalled:

> "May I give you a word of advice?" Mr. Hoover said that. He said, "Is your house in Independence well protected?" And Dad said, "Well, there are two or three Secret Service men out there." [Hoover] said, "No, no... how about the yard?" And Dad said, "No." And [Hoover] said, "May I insist that you put up a fence before the American public walks off with your house?.... They did with mine in Palo Alto. They walked up to it and cut hunks out of it with a penknife until I put a fence around it." So, Mr. Hoover was responsible for the fence and the Secret Service was most grateful....[56]

Reversing his initial decision, the President agreed to the installation of a wrought iron fence in the fall of 1949 at a cost to the Federal Government of $5,400. He also approved the installation by the military of an anti-intrusion alarm system[57] (See Figure 22).

Workmen began digging the postholes and setting the posts in mid-October 1949. In a response to his cousin Nellie Noland's letter of October 24, the President wrote:

> I am glad to hear that we are making some progress with the fence. It is quite a reflection on the American public when the President of the U.S.A. has to fence 'em out to keep them from carrying off the house bit by bit.
>
> You know I've lived in Jackson Co. and Independence off and on for nigh on to 65 years and the last time I was home it took two secret service men and four policemen to get me to my own front door. Then I lost a couple of buttons and a handkerchief! Have I become so much of a curiosity by becoming the President--under protest?[58]

By late November, work on the fence neared an end. On November 23, 1949, the Examiner reported:

> Prefabricated sections of picket fencing has [sic] been placed around the lawn of the Summer White House this week by workmen. The posts have been drilled and laid for some time but the actual assemblage of the fencing was delayed by the steel situation. The fence is 5 feet in height and must be joined in sections.

FIGURE 22

Truman Library Photo Archives, 62-382

The Summer White House Before the Fence

1949

This winter scene captures the entirety of the 1867 and 1885 structures. Taken shortly before the wrought iron picket fence was erected in November 1949, note the "No Parking" sign and the flagpole in the extreme left of the photograph.

Source: Kansas City Star

> The fencing procedure became necessary to protect the lawn and property at the Summer White House. One of President Truman's frequent visits brings out scores of citizens who flock for a glimpse of the chief executive and in doing so stray upon the premises.[59]

Near the end of his term, President Truman announced he planned to retain the high iron fence. Truman cited the souvenir hunters who almost tore former President Hoover's house down as his reason.[60] Truman later admitted that it was on the advice of former President Hoover that he was convinced to erect the fence.[61]

The iron fence never completely encompassed the property, leaving the east end open to give easy access to the two Wallace brothers' properties. The opening between the two garages was never enclosed as it was sometimes used by the family to gain access to and depart from the property. The warning sign in the alley stating "Private Drive" was placed there by the Independence Police Department after Mr. Truman became President.[62]

Maintenance of the fence was the responsibility of the Federal Government. The General Services Administration (GSA), through the Truman Library, paid to have it painted on two separate occasions.[63] Locks are featured on the main gates

opening onto Truman Road and three pedestrian gates. The main pedestrian gate leading to the front entrance on North Delaware Street can be opened by pressing a switch in the vestibule. This lock was broken on January 31, 1977, and was secured temporarily with a Citadel padlock. It was repaired by the Secret Service two months later.[64]

Painting the Exterior

During the renovation of the exterior of 219 North Delaware into the Summer White House in the spring of 1945, the home was bathed in white to match the Executive Mansion in Washington, D.C. While photographic evidence proves the house was once gray with dark (black) trim, there is some evidence to suggest that the frantic painting in 1945 may have been the first time the home was painted a bright white. A caption from a May 21, 1945, Kansas City Star photograph stated that "neighbors of the Harry S. Truman home at 219 North Delaware street in Independence today were satisfied the house will be white [emphasis added] this summer, for painters got to work this morning."[65] The photograph (See Figure 18) reveals a stark contrast between the former worn gray and the new bright white paint.

While most individuals interviewed could not remember the house as any different color before 1945, nearly all agreed that if the color were indeed changed, the previous color was probably a light gray or off-white.[66]

In the spring of 1945, a five-man crew supervised by Bob Snyder of Independence spent nearly seven weeks painting the exterior. During this time they had "literally 'poured' the paint on," using nearly one hundred gallons of white paint. Kentucky green paint was used on the trim at the windows and doors. The white latticed rose arbor was also given a fresh coat of paint and its rose vines were rearranged on the pergola.[67]

Four years later the Summer White House was painted again, but by only one man. The painter in the spring of 1949 was John H. Moler. Beset with many labor disputes during his administration, the President came under attack from painters unions when it was learned that Moler did not belong to a union. The head of local Painters District Council No. 3 of the Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators and Paperhangers of America wrote a letter to the White House protesting the employment of Moler. Hired by Mrs. Truman at no cost to the Federal Government, Moler was employed because of his skills as a painter regardless of his union or nonunion membership. The

letter apprarently was never answered.[68]

Rear Porches

Photographs from as early as 1930 reveal that the rear (east) porch was covered and extended the entire length of the east and south sides of the 1867 structure (See Figures 23, 24, and 25). A series of Sanborn fire insurance maps beginning in 1907, however, show the south side of the rear porch was first built sometime between 1907 and 1916 (See Sanborn maps in Appendix). Construction probably took place when the first floor bathroom was built (1907-1910).

In 1950, the President had the rear (east) porch refloored, extended on brick tiers to the east six feet, and screened-in. The Independence carpenter who was paid by the Trumans to extend and screen the porch was William E. "Bill" Gragg. Gragg remembers that he did the work at the same time the Trumans moved out of the Executive Mansion into Blair House, January 1949.[69] It is more likely, however, that the work was done in the spring of 1950, while the Trumans were still living in Blair House. First, a number of photographs taken by George P. Wallace on June 5, 1950, focus specifically on the screened porch. Taken from every angle, collectively

FIGURE 23

Truman Library Photo Archives, 82-321-3

Margaret Truman and Historic Rear Porch (1)

Circa 1930

Margaret Truman, age six, stands in the Wallace backyard. Behind her is the 1867 wing and rear porches. Note the ballustrade and latticework.

Source: Negative taken from the Truman home, 1982.

FIGURE 24

Truman Library Photo Archives, 82-321-4

Margaret Truman and Historic Rear Porch (2)

Circa 1930

Margaret Truman, age six, stands in the Wallace backyard. With the 1867 wing in the background, the appearance of the historic rear porch is evident.

Source: Negative taken from the Truman Home, 1982.

FIGURE 25

Truman Library Photo Archives, 83-88-4

Old Porch and Pergola

Circa 1940

Vegetation nearly obscures the rear porch (pre-1950 extension and screened enclosure). The rose arbor/pergola appears at the right.

the photographs suggest that the porch was a novelty. Second, a press article discussing expenditures at the Truman home reported that the construction on the back porch was done in April 1950.[70] Third, the President's daughter agreed that the work would not have been done in the winter, but more likely in April 1950[71] (See Unaccessioned Photographs--Figures 26--and Figure 27).

The ceiling fan, an integral and seemingly original component of the rear porch, was a gift to the President from family friends, the Brantons and Shaws, following Mr. Truman's appendix and gall bladder operation in June 1954. Instead of sending flowers like countless other individuals, they decided that a better gift would be a ceiling fan to help circulate the summer air. (The President did not believe in air conditioning). The fan was one of three purchased from a drugstore in North Kansas City. Antiques that had previously been reconditioned, the fan was one of three which hung from 15-foot pipes in the store.[72] The fan was most likely installed in July 1954 when the President returned home to recuperate.

The rear porch was Bess Truman's favorite place in her home. She and her husband spent countless hours relaxing and reading there. Her Tuesday Bridge Club frequently met there during good weather.[73] According to one person who recalls the

FIGURES 26

Truman Library Photo Archives, Unaccessioned Photographs. [Note: These are among a collection of photographs and other materials which have not been cleared by Mrs. Margaret Truman Daniel for official release to the public].

Rear Porch Enclosure and Pergola

June 5, 1950

These photographs reveal the new rear porch extension and enclosure from various angles, the porch furniture and the adjacent rose arbor.

Source: George P. Wallace, photographer.

FIGURES 26

FIGURES 26

FIGURE 27

Truman Library Photo Archives, 67-388

1950 View Looking Southeast

May 2, 1950

Taken from an album showing improvements around the Independence Square area, the photograph shows the November 1949 fence and April 1950 rear porch extension in place. Placement of telephone poles and various signs in the neighborhood are also apparent.

Source: Albert Schoenbreg, photographer.

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house from the turn of the century to the present, the rear porch was always "shaded by grapevines."[74]

Transforming the Gates-Wallace House Into the 'Summer White House', 1945

[1]"Roosevelt's Death," Life (April 23, 1945), p. 19, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence.

[2]"Truman Sworn In In The White House; He Becomes 33rd President," Life (April 23, 1945), pp. 28-9, Mid Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence.

[3]Ibid., p. 28.

[4]"Presidential Home Town Abode To Get Some External Repairs," Examiner (May 3, 1945), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence, Mo.

[5]"New 'Hyde Park' of the West," Examiner (April 13, 1945), p. 4, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence, Mo.

[6]Conway H. Thompson, Thompson and Oddo Tree Surgery Co., North Kansas City, Mo., to Harry S Truman, letter, May 22, 1945. Truman's response to Thompson on May 25 read: "I don't think the place at home will need any landscaping." And, Rose A. Conway to Richard C. LeBre, Reliable Tree Service, Dundee, Illinois, letter, January 10, 1946. The response stated that care of the trees is "in the hands of local people and is being properly handled." See folder-The President's Home In Independence, Missouri, President's Personal File 1-G, HSTL.

[7]"Presidential Home Town Abode To Get Some External Repairs," Examiner (May 3, 1945), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence, Mo.

[8]"Dressing Up For Company?" Kansas City Star (May 21, 1945), p. 1; "Harry's On His Way Home, to Just Rest and Visit A Bit," Kansas City Star (no date, circa June 1945), folder-Truman, Harry S Oct.-Dec. 1945 (misfiled), Research Room Vertical File, HSTL; and Robert Sanders, Interview, Independence,

Mo., June 30, 1983.

Another title for the house was given by the Democratic Committee's Women's Division which issued a press release on the First Family on April 13, 1945. They called the house "The Gates Victorian Mansion." See Bess Furman, "Trumans Give Up 5-Room Residence," New York Times (April 14, 1945), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1945, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[9]"First Lady and Family Arrive Home," Examiner (June 4, 1945), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1945, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[10]"Margaret Truman's Irish Setter Is First At Summer White House," Examiner (June 2, 1945), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence, Mo.

[11]Sue Gentry, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 22, 1983.

[12]"Truman Visits At Home; Returns to Washington," Examiner (July 2, 1945), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1945, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

Flagpole

[13]"Flag Pole Gift For Truman Yard: Through Efforts of City and Amer. Legion & Several Individuals, Standard Is Being Erected on Lawn," Examiner (June 25, 1945), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence, Mo. Newspaper accounts differ on the height of the standard from 20 feet to 30 feet.

[14]"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, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[15]Ibid.; and, "City Is Scrubbed Up and Shined For Visit of Its Favorite Son," Examiner (June 26, 1945), p. 1. The newspaper reported that the city was awash with American flags in honor of the presidential homecoming.

[16]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. The President's daughter stated that the flagpole seen today is original. Evidence of a concrete footing nearby can also be seen.

[17]Harry S Truman did find time to get away from the White House for short vacations on the East Coast. He frequently sailed on the presidential yacht, S.S. Williamsburg.

[18]"Lights Go On For Yule Season In the Truman Family Home Here," Examiner (December 18, 1950), p. 1; "Lights Go On Again Soon At Home of Nation's 'First Family'," Examiner (December 6, 1951), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence, Mo.; and, Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 14, 1983.

[19]Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," pp. 37-8.

[20]"Truman's Home No San Clemente," Kansas City Times (September 6, 1973), P. 3D, folder-Harry S. Truman Heritage District, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[21]Robert Sanders, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 30, 1983. Gragg, due to serious health problems, was unavailable for an interview.

[22]Margaret Truman, Souvenir: Margaret Truman's Own Story (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1956), pp. 209-10. Miss Truman also planted a flower garden which never quite materialized.

[23]Margaret Truman, Harry S. Truman (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1973), pp. 448-9.

[24]Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 36.

[25]Margaret Truman, Letters from Father: The Truman Family's Personal Correspondence (New York: Arbor House, 1981), p. 150.

[26]Ibid., p. 111.

[27]Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 16.

[28]Margaret Truman, Letters from Father, p. 151.

[29]Burton Linoleum Company to Mrs. Harry S. Truman (c/o Mrs. Geor. Wallace), June 1, 1949, receipt, HSTL. The bill

amounted to $130.45. The company did not charge for 8 hours of time spent patching the floor or for other labor costs.

[30]Tucker's (Independence square) to Mrs. Harry Truman, June 1, 1948, receipt, HSTL. The bill was $215.83.

[31]Ibid., June 30, 1949. The bill was $746.20.

[32]Ibid., March 25, 1950. The bill was $566.90.

[33]C. E. Sharp Plumbing, 110 W. Kansas, Independence, August 31, 1951, receipt, HSTL. The bill was $125.78.

[34]"Xmas in America," The Modern Motorman (Sydney, Australia), (December 1949), pp. 4-5, folder-Truman, Harry S Oct.-Dec. 1949, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL. Concerning the door wreath, the December 20, 1948, Examiner reported: "The traditional cedar wreath, which the ladies of the family usually fashion themselves, will appear on the big front door for the Yule festivities." See "President Truman Home Wednesday," p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence, Mo.

[35]"President Ends Christmas Visit," Examiner (December 26, 1950), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence, Mo.; and photograph, Kansas City Star (December 25, 1949), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S Oct.-Dec. 1949, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[36]An article in 1951 stated that the annual Christmas message to the nation was "usually pre-recorded." See "Grim and Tired President Is Home For Holiday Visit," Examiner (December 24, 1951), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence, Mo.

[37]"President Back To Work After A Restful Day," Examiner (December 26, 1951), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence, Mo.

[38]"Truman In Startling Victory: Truman Neighborhood Scene of Excitement Throughout Night," Examiner (November 3, 1948), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S Oct.-Dec. 1948, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[39]Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 37.

[40]"President's Home Visit Curtailed," Examiner (June 26, 1950), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1950, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

United States Secret Service

[41]Public Law 82-79 (July 16, 1951), which gave the Secret Service permanent authority, for the first time legally provided for the protection of the President, his immediate family, the President-elect, and the Vice-President upon his request. Secret Service protection of all past presidents had been upon their request. Excerpts from the History of the United States Secret Service, 1865-1975, reprinted from the Service Star (Department of the Treasury, U.S. Secret Service, 1975), p. 32.

[42]Sue Gentry, "A Quiet Transition To Private Life As The Trumans Return Home," Examiner (January 22, 1953), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence, Mo. The two agents were James F. McDermott and Arleigh J. Wade.

[43]Interview with U.S. Secret Service officials, Washington, D.C., August 11-12, 1983. When Truman left office, all records on him were destroyed.

[44]"Harry Truman's Missouri," Life (July 1945), p. 83, folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1945, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[45]Major Charles G. Heitzeberg, Asst. Sec., General Staff, War Department, to Gen. Harry H. Vaughan, memo, October 8, 1945, folder-The President's Home In Independence, Mo., President's Personal File 1-G, HSTL.

Security Booth

[46]"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, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[47]Sue Gentry, "A Quiet Transition To Private Life As The Trumans Return Home," Examiner (January 22, 1953), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S January 1953, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[48]Sue Gentry, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 22, 1983.

[49]Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 31.

[50]Helen Worden Erskine, "Truman In Retirement," Collier's (February 4, 1955), p. 21, folder-Truman, Harry S Jan.-March 1955, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[51]Robert Sanders, Interview, Independence, June 30, 1983.

Wrought Iron Picket Fence

[52]"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, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[53]"A Holiday and Ovation Tonight For Mr. Truman," Examiner (November 3, 1948), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S Oct.-Dec. 1948, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[54]"Vacationing Motorists Pause At Truman Home By Dozens Daily," (July 8, 1949), p. 1, and "Tourists Swarm By Summer White House," (August 22, 1949), Examiner, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence, Mo.

[55]Henry P. Chiles, Oral History Interview, Independence, Mo., November 1, 1961 and August 14, 1962, by J.R. Fuchs, HSTL, p. 57.

[56]Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 33.

[57]"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, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[58]Robert H. Ferrell, editor, Off The Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), p. 167. The letter from Truman was dated October 29, 1949.

[59]"Fencing-Up the Summer White House," Examiner (November 23, 1949), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North

Branch, Independence, Mo.

[60]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.

[61]Merle Miller, Plain Speaking: An Oral Biography of Harry S. Truman (New York: Berkley Publishing Corporation, 1973), p. 397; and Harry S Truman, Mr. Citizen (New York: Popular Library, 1953), p. 25. Mr. Truman was in error when he stated in this second source that the fence was erected in 1947, but here he related one of his favorite stories about the fence: "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.'"

[62]Sue Gentry, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 22, 1983.

[63]Robert Sanders, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 30, 1983. Sanders is the individual who painted the fence.

[64]Memorandum, February 17, 1977, Independence/Truman Detail to Washington Office, Secret Service Files, Division of Property, folder-Correspondence 1977, Washington, D.C.

Painting the Exterior

[65]"Dressing Up For Company," Kansas City Star (May 21, 1945), p. 1.

[66]Interviews, Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace and Mrs. H.H. (Ardis) Haukenberry, June 14, 1983; and Robert Sanders, June 30, 1983, Independence, Mo.

[67]"Harry's On His Way Home, to Just Rest and Visit A Bit," Kansas City Star (no date, circa June 1945), folder-Truman, Harry S Oct.-Dec. 1945, (misfiled), Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[68]Clyde A. Balding to Harry S Truman, letter, May 9, 1949, folder-The President's Home In Independence, Missouri, President's Personal File 1-G, HSTL.

Rear Porches

[69]Robert Sanders, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 30,

1983. Sanders obtained this information through Gragg's wife. Gragg, due to serious health problems, was unavailable for an interview.

[70]"Truman's Home No San Clemente," Kansas City Times (September 6, 1973), p. 3D, folder-Harry S. Truman Heritage District, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL. There is no indication of any Federal funds used for this project.

[71]Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," pp. 34-5.

[72]Mrs. Mary Shaw (William Coleman) Branton, Interview, Independence, Mo., July 20, 1983.

[73]Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace and Mrs. H.H. (Ardis) Haukenberry, Interviews, Independence, Mo., June 14, 1983.

[74]Mary Paxton Keeley, Oral History Interview, Columbia, Mo., July 12, 1966, by J.R. Fuchs, HSTL, p. 52.