CHAPTER TWELVE

AN ACTIVE RETIREMENT AT THE TRUMAN HOME

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Activities, Events, and Changes, 1953-1955

Harry and Bess Truman quickly settled into a normal, routine life much like the way they lived before they were both catapulted to the pinnacle of national politics. A common sight in Independence during the 1950s and early 1960s was that of Harry Truman performing his daily early morning constitutional up and down the sidewalks of the surrounding neighborhood. An early riser, the former President awoke around 6:00 every morning. He would leave his wife still sleeping in their bedroom, walk through the passageway into his daughter's childhood room, and then into the small, north bedroom. It was this room that the President used to dress, and where, in later years, he would sometimes sleep on the low-lying, twin bed. Before leaving the house for his walk, Mr. Truman would take a stick with a nail in the bottom and patrol the grounds picking up litter. Returning from his walk, he would read the morning paper, write, and wait until breakfast at 8:00.[1]

Even though Bess Truman ran the household, Harry Truman helped her whenever he was home from his office at the Federal Reserve building in Kansas City. He had his own share of daily "chores." One of the chores the former President never wanted to do, but that his wife coaxed him to do, was to mow the lawn. An incident was one of Harry Truman's favorite stories:

> 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 to the grounds and trees and 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.[2]

Letters and gifts to the couple came in a never-ending stream. Two years after their homecoming, Bess Truman was reported still "occupied with fitting the mementoes and possessions acquired in Washington into the Victorian decor and family heirlooms. Gifts still flow in; Some are kept, others not...."[3] Bess Truman also resumed regular meetings of her Tuesday Bridge Club which usually met on the home's rear porch. The group of neighborhood ladies met once every other Tuesday to play bridge. This was the only regular entertaining conducted at the home for the couple went out "fairly often" for social engagements[4] (For period photographs, see Figures 29, 30, and 31).

FIGURE 29

Truman Library Photo Archives, 66-3727

1953 Retirement (1)

Mr. Truman sitting in the living room reading The Legislative Struggle. Note the Persian rug, original fabric on the chair which is now covered, and wallpaper patterns.

Source: From the album, Mr. Citizen.

FIGURE 30

Truman Library Photo Archives, 66-3728

1953 Retirement (2)

Harry S Truman plays his daughter's piano, which during the presidential years appeared in the White House, in the parlor/music room of the former Summer White House.

Source: From the album, Mr. Citizen.

66-3728

The only time I've played the piano since coming home was one night in June when it was too hot to do anything else.

FIGURE 31

Truman Library Photo Archives, 66-3729

1953 Retirement (3)

Harry and Bess Truman read in the living room. Note the Persian rug and uncovered sofa and chair.

Source: From the album, Mr. Citizen.

[See also Figure 21 for the same period photograph of the back porch].

We do a lot of reading nights, just the two of us. I'm interested most in history, but Mrs. Truman likes a good mystery. Our lights are usually off by 11 o'clock.

Home for less than six months, the Trumans left for Washington to visit with old friends. Typical of their low-key, average lifestyle, the couple made the trip in their own car. The large black sedan pulled out of the driveway at 219 North Delaware at 7 a.m., June 19, 1953, with the former President behind the wheel. They scheduled three days in which to make the trip. The couple caused such a commotion along the way, especially at the hotels, they never made such a trip again.[5]

This public adulation never abated; it was a fact with which the Trumans lived and which intensified their own need for privacy. Even at their beloved 219 North Delaware, their actions were observed. In the summer of 1954, for example, Bess Truman had a garden umbrella, table, and chairs assembled in the backyard. One afternoon she sat there to read, but so many tourists gathered at the fence to stare at her that she quickly retreated into the house.[6]

Serious illness first interrupted the tranquillity of retirement in June 1954 when the 70-year-old President suffered a severe gall bladder and appendicitis attack. Mr. Truman returned home from the hospital following major surgery on July 9. An air conditioner was the gift from Mrs. Truman to keep

her husband from suffering in the hot Missouri summer. It was installed in the first floor guest bedroom where Harry Truman took up temporary quarters during his recuperation.[7]

During his hospital stay, Harry S Truman approved the City of Independence's proposal to locate his presidential library in Slover Park, less than a mile from his home.[8] In a July 22, 1954, informal ceremony on the home's screened-in rear porch, the President accepted a check from the president of the Independence Chamber of Commerce, one of the first donations for the construction of the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum.[9]

The reception following the groundbreaking for the Truman Library was held at 219 North Delaware on May 8, 1955, President Truman's 71st birthday. The Truman family hosted the combination groundbreaking-birthday dinner for nearly 150 out-of-town dignitaries. As the guests entered through the front door, Bess Truman stood in the vestibule to greet them with Harry Truman immediately inside the foyer. Margaret Truman stood in the middle of the central hallway directing the guests to the dining room by way of the parlor/music room and library.

The 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 snapdragons, yellow gladioli, and carnations." The meal was prepared with additional hired help by the Truman's cook, Miss Vietta Garr, in the Truman kitchen. Mother and daughter worked unpretentiously refilling trays and glasses for the distinguished guests who were all seated in tables and chairs on the rear lawn.[10]

"Person To Person": The Nation Sees The Trumans' Home, 1955

Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) television cameras 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 and interviewer for Murrow who was on assignment for CBS News in London. The focus was on Harry and Bess Truman in retirement. Broadcast live from the home, the segment marked the first time the 30-minute program's producers devoted their entire program to one family home, and the first time ever that "such a telecast had been conducted in the home of a president or a former president."[11] 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. 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 telephone poles adjacent to the home on Truman Road capable of transmitting 500-watt beams to the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company building in downtown Kansas City. Half of the carriage house/barn was converted into a control center.

The entire first floor, with the exception of the bedroom, was flooded with television lights. 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.[12]

The residence had undergone "much housecleaning and furbishing" before the broadcast. Mrs. Truman and her maid/cook, Vietta Garr, did "a little grumbling... about the complexity of wires and equipment" strewn throughout the house and the cigarette ashes on the floors.[13]

According to the couples' 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."[14] The conversation between daughter and parents ranged from the weather to politics to baseball. The cameras proceeded from the rear porch to the kitchen where Vietta Garr was baking brownies. Then they shifted back to the porch from where the Trumans 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 Truman pointed out a painting by Sir Winston Churchill done at Marrakech and an original from 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 Mrs. Truman responded, "We had to have some room in here today." While in the library, the icon from the Mosque of St. Sophia given to the President by the Queen of Romania was featured. The icon was propped up on the stereo/phonograph against the bookshelves.

From the 1955 view of the interior of the Truman home compared to its present appearance, there are no startling changes. It reflects most of the "modernization" or improvements which had begun in 1953. Over the span of 28 years, the furnishings and interior decoration have remained

nearly the same.[15] (See Figures 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, and 38).

Activities, Events, and Changes, 1956-1970

A second large reception was held at the Truman home following the April 21, 1956, wedding of Mary Margaret Truman and E. Clifton Daniel, Jr. The wedding took place at the Trinity Episcopal Church in Independence where Harry and Bess Truman were married 37 years before. Invited guests were given the run of the house as wedding gifts were displayed on the beds in the second floor bedrooms[16] (See Figure 39).

June 1957, saw Harry and Bess Truman become grandparents when the first of their four grandsons was born. A nursery corner was arranged in the second floor master bedroom which stood ready anytime the Daniel family came to visit.[17]

A third and final reception was held at the Truman home on July 6, 1957, following the dedication of the Harry S. Truman Library. The dinner was the same as that which was served at the 1954 groundbreaking reception. The house was decorated with red roses, and pink roses served as the centerpiece on the dining room table. Among the 400 selected guests for the

"Person To Person" with Edward R. Murrow (Guest Host, Miss Mary Margaret Truman). Photographs from the May 27, 1955, television film.

Truman Library Photo Archives, reel to reel film

FIGURE 32: Rear (east) screened porch.*

FIGURE 33: Cook Vietta Garr in the kitchen.*

FIGURE 34: Dining room.*

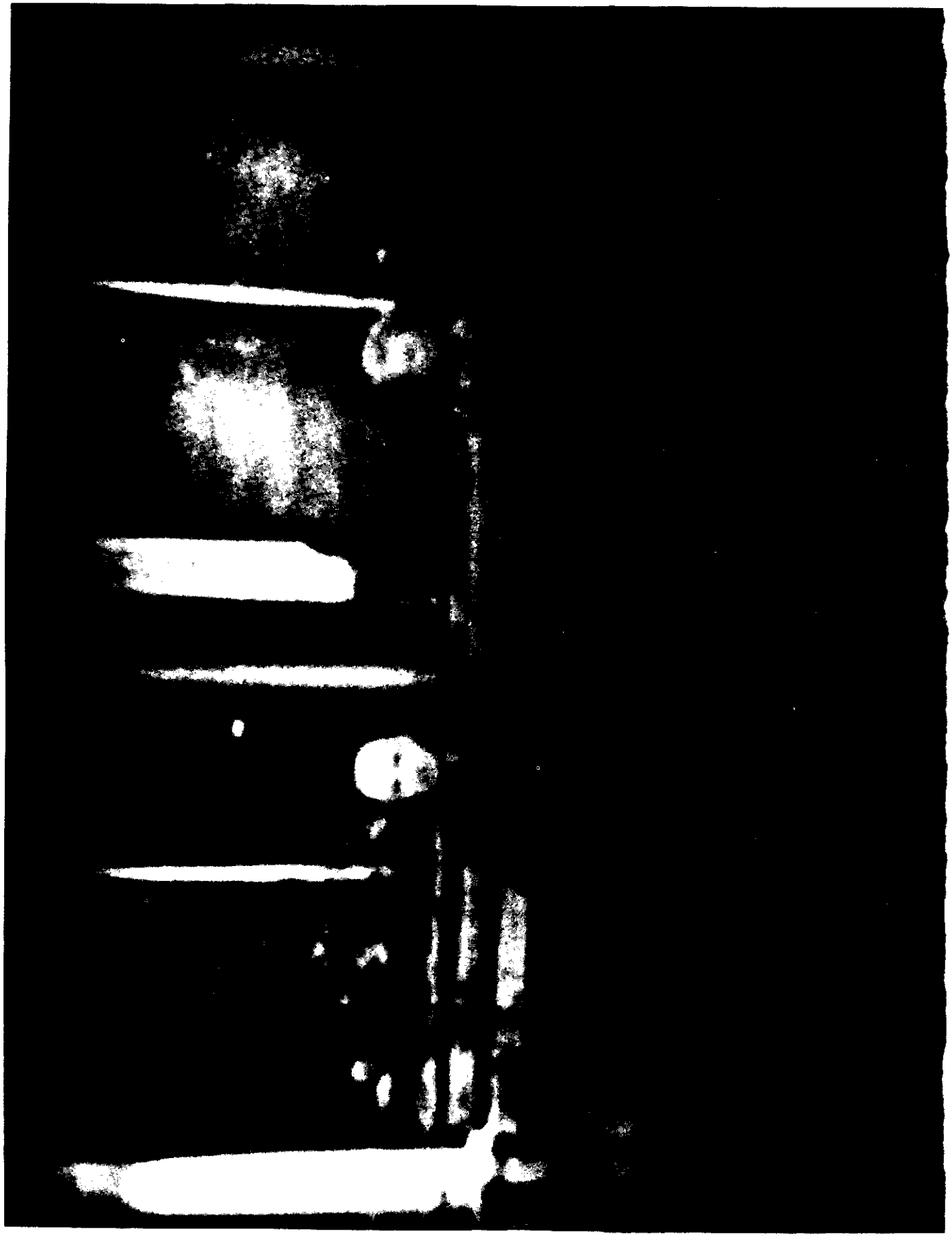
FIGURE 35: Living room (Truman Library, 64-1053).

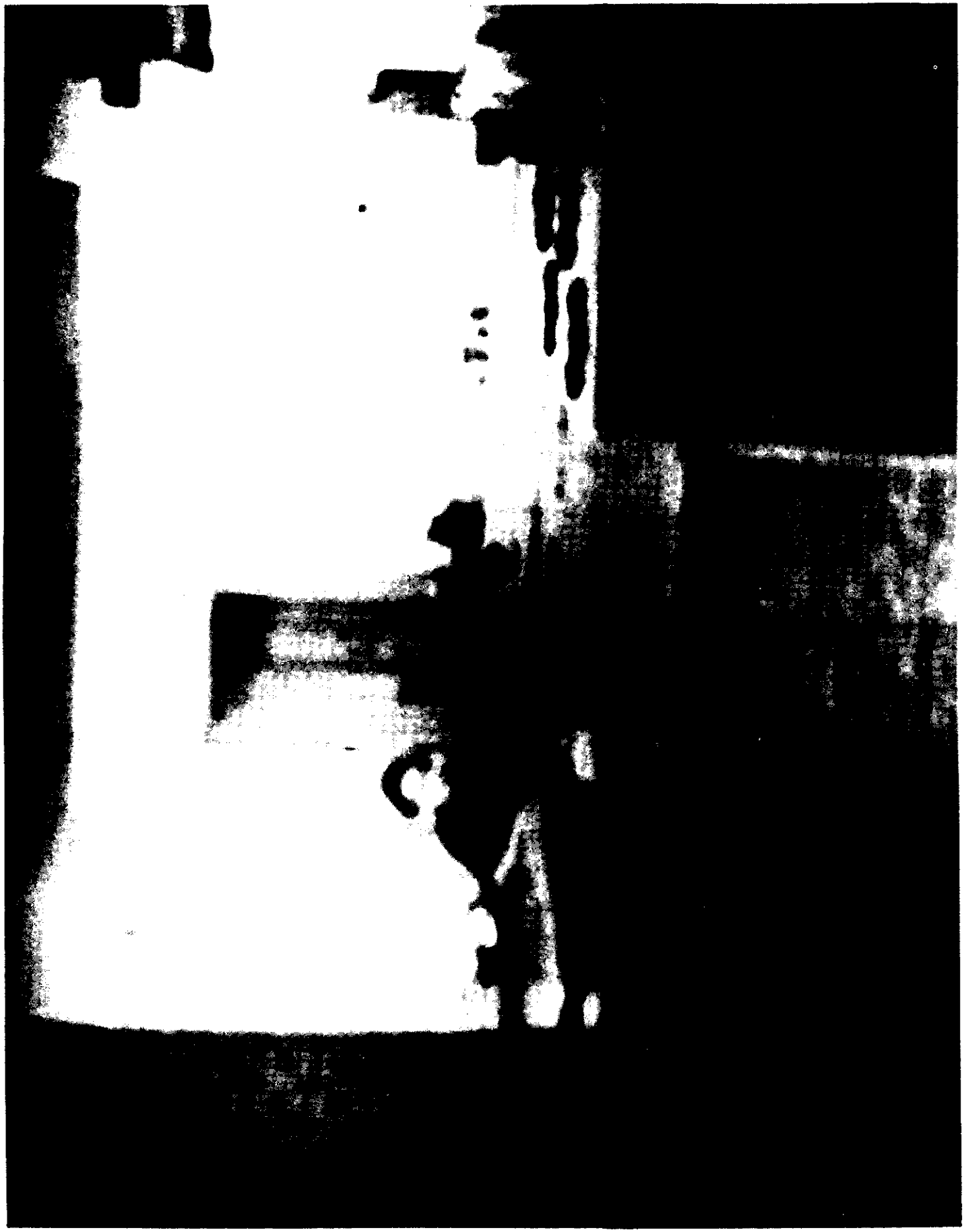
FIGURE 36: First floor central hall.*

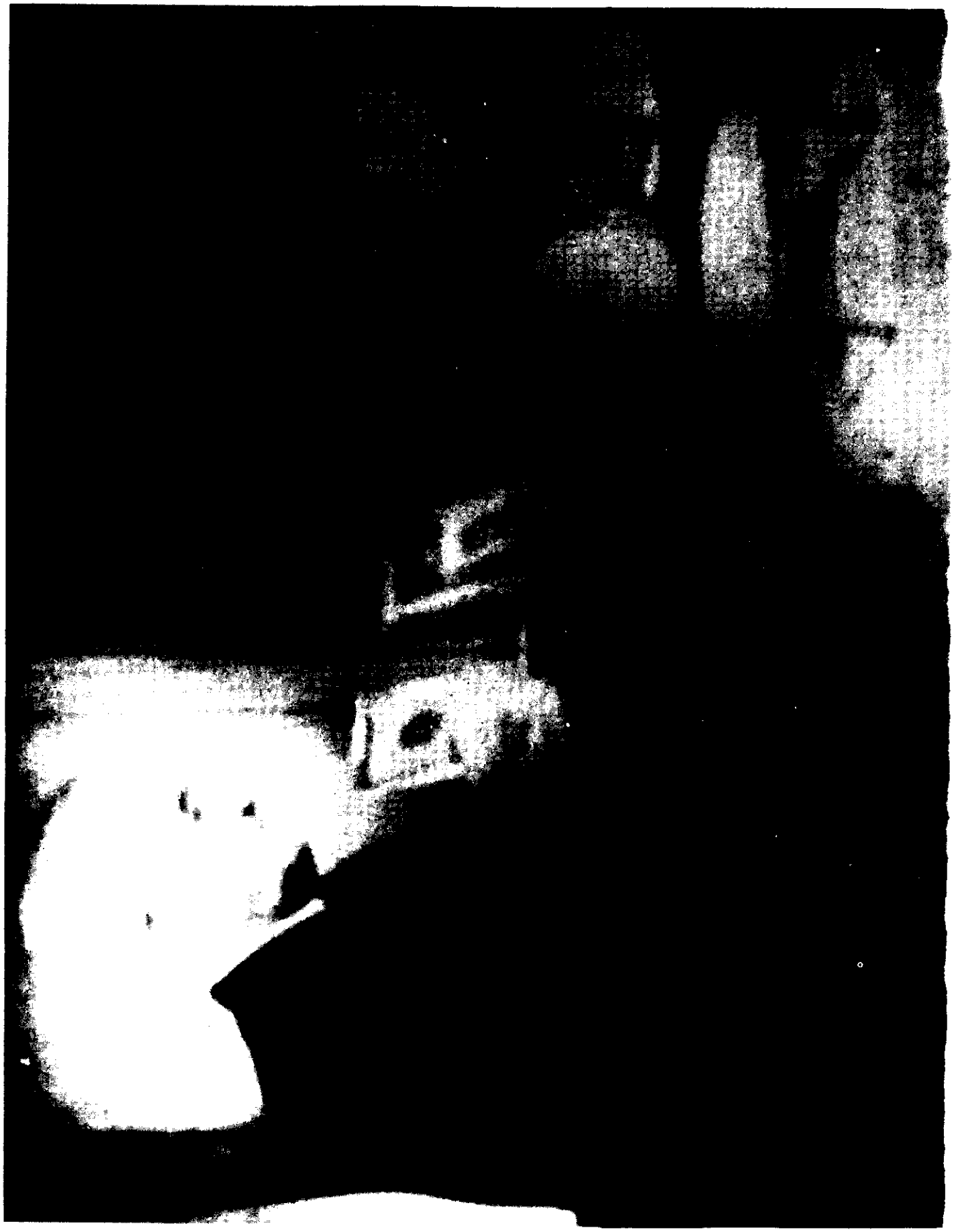
FIGURE 37: Parlor/music room.*

FIGURE 38: Library (Truman Library, 64-1050).

[*Note: The poor quality of this early television film has resulted in the unfocused photographic prints].







CBS

FIGURE 39

Truman Library Photo Archives, 66-1628

Margaret Truman's Wedding Day

April 21, 1956

The curious gather outside the Truman home on the day of Margaret Truman Daniel's wedding. Note the screen doors at the front entrance and the presence of the television antenna braced by the chimney.

Source: Bert Landfried, photographer.

dedication and reception were former President Herbert 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.[18]

By 1956, a television antenna was installed on the roof of the Truman home to improve reception on a black-and-white television set, a gift from their daughter who also gave them the color TV presently seen in the music room. Harry Truman, however, rarely watched television, not only because "it hurt his eyes," but because he preferred to read books and newspapers to keep abreast of current events. The former President did watch special broadcasts like presidential speeches and news conferences. Bess Truman enjoyed watching baseball games and was an avid fan of the Kansas City Athletics. After the death of her husband, Mrs. Truman spent much more of her time watching TV.[19]

Only during this retirement period did the Trumans realize financial stability. Harry Truman had never been a wealthy man. His salary as County Judge, Senator ($10,000 a year), Vice President, and President was never really sufficient to care for his family, participate in the political process, and

fulfill all his engagements as a public servant. In the early 1940s, the Truman farm in Grandview had to be sold because of a mortgage foreclosure. The sale of publishing rights to his memoirs, Year of Decisions (1955) and Years of Trial and Hope (1956) finally provided the couple financial stability. Truman had devoted his own time and money raising funds to build the Truman Library. Out of his own pocket, he maintained a clerical staff of three to handle his voluminous correspondence. Coupled with repairs and renovations on their home, the Trumans, while living comfortably, were by no means "wealthy." Indeed, economizing on their modernization project was a priority for Harry and Bess Truman.[20] A Federal pension for the former President began on August 28, 1958, when legislation granting former presidents an annual pension of $75,000, was approved. Two-thirds of the sum was targeted for clerical help while $25,000 was paid directly to Mr. Truman from the U.S. Treasury.[21]

In the early 1960s, Harry Truman worked with film director Merle Miller taping 141 interviews concerning his presidency and government in general. For a day, the film crew was allowed inside 219 North Delaware--only the second time this had been permitted--to film the Trumans at 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,[22] although a portion was purchased by Screen Gems and some footage was broadcast.

Serious illness struck the President again on October 13, 1964, following an accident at his home. Truman was in the second floor bathroom when he slipped on a mat and fell forward on his right side. He 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 eighty-year-old former President was discovered unconscious on the bathroom floor by Mrs. Arletta Brown, a maid, who called for an ambulance.[23]

President Truman never regained his good health following the accident. Trips to his office at the Truman Library became rare as did his customary neighborhood walks. His health further deteriorated as a result of a July 30, 1966, colitis attack which confined him to his home. His recuperation was slow. The couple stayed in Independence for two years without leaving until March 16, 1967, when they vacationed two weeks in Key West, Florida. Mrs. Truman remarked, "It's the longest I have stayed home since 1934."[24]

A major component of the President's health problems

involved vertigo which kept him out of the public eye at 219 North Delaware. In mid 1967, he was reported in the press to read a book each day while sitting in his overstuffed chair in the small library room. His personal secretary, Miss Rose Conway, came to the house each weekday morning for dictation of correspondence. While Harry Truman had the afternoons free to read and take catnaps, Bess Truman kept busy with household chores and "weekly trips to the bookstore and public library."[25]

During this time period of ill health, the Trumans remained very much interested in the community and especially their immediate 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 Truman, 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."[26]

In May 1968, a reporter analyzed the method that local residents used to determine what the Trumans 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.[27]

On October 11, 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson paid his sixth visit during his presidency to 219 North Delaware. Johnson and Truman were good friends, both personally as well as politically. In tribute to Harry S Truman's role in helping realize the birth of the United Nations, President Johnson signed a bill designating October 24 an annual "U.N. Day" in the United States. Johnson also signed a proclamation praising Mr. Truman for his participation in helping create the international organization. Johnson's 24-minute visit and signing ceremony took place in the living room of 219 North Delaware[28] (See Appendix for two declarations).

One of Harry S Truman's last acts to commemorate the past

was a 1970 meeting at his home with members of his administration. April 12, 1970, marked the 25th anniversary of his succession to the presidency. Kept brief in deference to Truman's frail health, former Ambassador W. Averell Harriman, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Chief Justice Earl Warren, Treasury Secretary John W. Snyder, and White House Counsel Charles S. Murphy gathered to reminisce with the former President.[29]

On December 7, 1970, the Trumans purchased a Sears window air conditioning unit. Minor roof repair was done at the same time.[30] A new air conditioner was purchased from a different firm on July 22, 1972. The bill included "install[ing] and haul[ing] off old unit."[31]

(For period photographs, see Figures 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, and 48.)

Gas Yard Lamp

The gas light which stands near the front gate entrance is a relatively recent addition to the property. The lamp, which illuminates the front (north) yard, was viewed by the Trumans as an added "safety precaution."[32] The black old fashioned

FIGURE 40

Truman Library Photo Archives, 68-670

Living Room Fireplace Detail

Circa 1968

Unidentified man with Harry S Truman in front of the living room fireplace.

FIGURE 41

Truman Library Photo Archives, 72-3488

Living Room Detail

July 6, 1968

Left to Right: Harry S Truman, Laura Hare Truman, and John Ross Truman (nephew) following their wedding.

Source: Noland Papers.

FIGURE 42

Truman Library Photo Archives, 70-1288

Back Porch Decor

May 5, 1969

Mr. Hale with former President and Mrs. Harry S Truman on the rear porch of their home.

FIGURE 43

Truman Library Photo Archives, 70-1244

Southeast Living Room Detail

May 8, 1969

Harry S and Bess Wallace Truman on the former President's birthday.

Source: John A. (Jack) Smith, photographer.

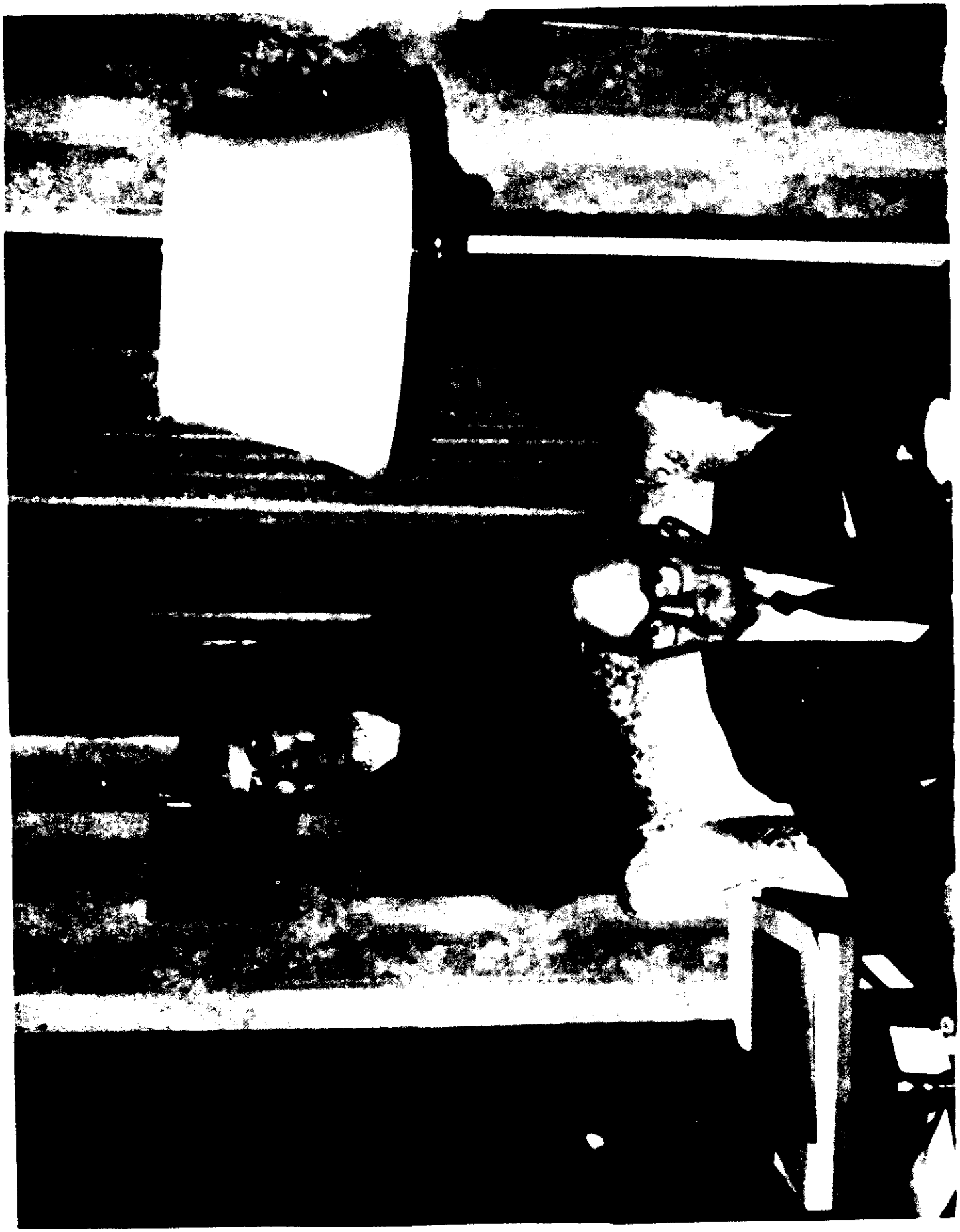


FIGURE 44

Truman Library Photo Archives, 70-1245

Southwest Living Room Detail

May 8, 1969

Mrs. Bess Wallace Truman sits in a chair amidst flowers and a cake on her husband's birthday.

Source: John A. (Jack) Smith, photographer.

FIGURE 45

Truman Library Photo Archives, 72-4048

Library Room Detail

December 3, 1971

Paul Burns, Chief of the Secret Service Truman Protective Division, presents Harry S Truman with a new Secret Service badge.

FIGURES 46, 47, and 48

Truman Library Photo Archives, 71-857, 71-859, and 71-860

Truman Home From All Angles

December 1, 1970

These photographs were all taken by archivists at the Truman Library on the same day after a visit to the house. Figure 48 reveals the absence of the rose arbor/pergola.

style gas lamp was presented to the Trumans in 1964 by Hadco Products, Incorporated, of Littlestown, Pennsylvania. Shipped to the Truman Library, Independence Gas Service Company workmen transported it to the residence and installed it free of charge on June 24, 1964.[33]

Called the "Gettysburg," this style of gas light was installed in the early 1960s in historic downtown Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and at the nearby Dwight D. Eisenhower farm. The Gettysburg is a replica of the mid-19th century handcrafted fixtures indigenous to New England. Made of cast aluminum, the light features solid brass accents.[34]

It was Bess Truman's decision to have the light installed. The lamps were a popular fad in Independence in the early 1960s, and Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace had already had a gas light installed on her property at 605 West Truman Road.[35]

The six-foot lamppost stands on a concrete base. The trench for the gas line was dug to the northeast corner of the property. Painter Robert Sanders recalls the day the yard lamp was installed. He remembers that Mrs. Truman, like a typical housewife faced with escalating utility bills, complained once she realized that the gas to operate the light would cost extra each month. She expressed her dismay at having to pay the

increased gas bills.[36]

Pergola

The rose arbor, or "pergola" as the family called it, was built soon after 1924 to accent Mrs. Madge Wallace's rose garden. The pergola never sported any of the grapevines which enveloped the nearby rear porch with green, seedless grapes. It did, however, have rose vines. The original pergola was claimed by a windstorm before the presidential period and was rebuilt by order of Bess Truman. The reconstructed pergola was the July 24, 1944, site of the open-yard reception following Harry Truman's acceptance of the vice-presidential nomination. This structure was also claimed by a severe storm. A second reconstruction was not undertaken and the damaged pergola was carried away. The date for the removal of the pergola is unknown, but it did come before 1970[37] (See Figure 49).

Sundial

A concrete stand in the north side yard next to Truman Road, immediately north of the bird bath in the center of the pergola, once accommodated a sundial.[38] When the National Park

Service took possession of the property in December 1982, the sundial itself was missing. Margaret Truman's book, Souvenir, bears the sundial's inscription in its preface:

> My Face Marks The Sunny Hours.
> What Can You Say of Yours?[39]

Since Margaret Truman's early childhood, the sundial has stood in this approximate position in the yard. It was formerly in the center of four of Mrs. Madge Wallace's rose beds which were separated by grass walkways. Immediately prior to World War II, the rose beds were covered by sod and the sundial was moved for a short time when a badminton course was set up for Margaret and her aunt and uncles to use.[40]

Robert Sanders Painting Company

In the early summer of 1953, a family-run painting business was hired to paint the house. This same company continued to paint and maintain the structure until Mrs. Truman's death. The family company was run by Robert Sanders of Independence. Sanders and his fellow painters painted the house six times since 1953. Regular painting took place every five to six years and each time the job was done it took almost

FIGURE 49

Truman Library Photo Archives, 84-6-2

Pergola

Date Unknown

This photograph was taken from a slide found in the Truman home after Bess Truman's death. It is one of the few photographs which reveal the pergola and back stairs.

Source: Color slide taken from the Truman home, 1982.

30 days to complete. The last time the house was painted when Mr. Truman was alive was in June 1969.[41]

Regular maintenance work was included in the agreement. This maintenance usually consisted of trips once or twice a year to touch up areas which had begun to peel early and washing down the walls of the front and side porches where dirt accumulated and dulled the finish. Regular maintenance activity was especially concentrated on the north and west (front) facades which the passing tourists could readily see. Robert Sanders and his employees took immense pride in their work on the President's home and wanted it to appear at its best at all times. With the failing health of Mrs. Truman since 1973, no painting or maintenance retouching has been done for the last four to five years.

The first time the painting company worked at 219 North Delaware in 1953, Sanders signed a contract with Mr. Truman, but thereafter the agreements were verbal. Sanders described the condition of the exterior paint at that time as "in bad shape." He used 84 gallons of primer and 84 gallons of regular white Pittsburgh Paint. The barn was also primed and painted. While the structure obviously needed some immediate repairs, the Trumans could not afford them, but wanted it painted "to look presentable."

Green enamel paint was again used as trim on the doors and storm sashes. The color that Sanders used was called "Kentucky green." According to Sanders, this color was long used on the house, but from close examination of the trim areas, he determined that the original color used was black and that the original primer was yellow ocher.

The iron picket fence erected by the Secret Service in November 1949, was also painted twice by Sanders. Because the fence is the property of the Federal Government, the Trumans did not pay Sanders to paint it, but rather the General Services Administration did.[42]

Replacing the Roof

The decorative slate roof which was installed on the 1885 Gates mansion had a long tradition of leaking. In the mid-1930s, the 50-year-old roof required extensive maintenance. Local sheet metal workers repaired or replaced sections of the flat metal decking and relaid new felt underlayment. Damaged guttering was also replaced at this time. The roofing contractors dealt with Judge Truman, not the home's owner, Mrs. Madge Wallace.[43]

The slate roof was predominantly gray with a ribbon-like pattern of green slate decorating the bottom and top sections. By mid-century, however, the green had long since been bleached by the sun to a dull tan. The heavy slate, normally square in shape, was clip-cornered and laid in colorful, decorative patterns. Other slate tile colors which adorned the roof were red, black, and purple. Cut nails were used in the 1885 construction, not the customary copper variety.[44]

A contract to conduct regular maintenance to repair leaks was held by the Hawkins Roofing Company from the presidential period until 1962. Mrs. Truman usually led workmen from room to room showing them where the water seepage had caused damage to the home's interior. In 1962, because the Trumans believed the roofing company had been negligent in its contractual obligations, they awarded a new roof maintenance contract to the Western Roofing Company of Kansas City. The Trumans chose the Western Roofing Company because of their trust in Tom Manson, a former Hawkins salesman, and now president of his own roofing company.

The general condition of the roof, even during the presidential period, was "very deteriorated." Most of the large slate tiles were cracked and broken from the many years

of harsh weather and constant patching.[45]

In 1969, as a result of winter ice damage and a severe July hail storm, the eighty-year-old slate was beyond repair. Water damage to the interior ceilings and walls was extensive. Although the couple's homeowner's insurance coverage would pay for a new roof and the inside repairs, Mrs. Truman, considering her husband's frail health, stated that the repairs to the inside of the house would involve "too much noise and mess." She approved the installation of a new roof, but decided that she did not want the inside work done. Some of the interior water damage from this period is visible today.[46]

Tom Manson met with the Trumans in their home in mid-July to discuss the options on replacing the old roof. Manson recommended that another slate roof be put on the house exactly like the original. The shipment of slate, he explained, would have to be ordered from the eastern United States and would take approximately six weeks' delivery time. Manson recalls how Bess Truman was "a real ramrod" to get things done right away. He tried to convince her to replace the old roof with new slate, but she was unwilling to wait six weeks for the shipment, or "to be bothered with all the mess."

Manson explained that asphalt shingles were an alternative

solution to slate. Although the insurance company would pay all costs, there was a considerable price difference between slate and asphalt shingles. Slate was more expensive especially with shipping costs. Slate was also a heavier load for the old wooden rafters to bear. Mr. Truman, according to Manson, was inclined to go along with his recommendation to replace the old slate with a new slate covering to match the original. The final decision, however, went to "the Boss"; Mrs. Truman chose to have an asphalt shingle roof installed.

The next decision made was what type of asphalt shingle to use. Manson showed the couple samples of various types of shingles available on the market. The Trumans were concerned primarily with keeping the appearance of their house the same as before. They wanted to match the color of the new roof as closely as possible to the color of the old gray slate. Manson and the Trumans spent considerable time discussing how best to match the color of the old slate and looked at many different kinds and colors of shingles before they arrived at their final choice.

The Trumans chose a new type of shingle on the market. They selected a gray fiberglass-asphalt shingle with new fire-retardant properties.[47] The order for the re-roofing job was signed on July 14, 1969, at a cost of $4,820.65, billed to

the Commercial Union Insurance Company of Kansas City. The job was completed on September 11, 1969.[48]

Before the new shingles were put in place, minor repair work was done on the flat metal roof decks. The felt underlayment, rotted and missing in many places, was replaced. During the removal of the old slate, the work crew left the gate on Truman Road open one afternoon. In short order, about 40 tourists swarmed into the yard and were picking up the souvenirs which littered the ground. Salvageable slate tiles came only from the lower gables above the porches. Most all of the tiles from the main roof were too badly broken to save. Manson managed to salvage about 200 slate tiles, mounted them on plaques, and distributed them to friends and clients as a promotional technique.[49]

The house has never been provided with lightning rod protection. Upon seeing a picture of the Trumans' home in May 1949, an engineer for the New England Lightning Rod Company in Vermont, wrote the President and offered to provide it. A response from Charles G. Ross, Secretary to the President, stated that Mr. Truman was "not in the market for lightning rod equipment at this time."[50]

Activities, Events, and Changes, 1953-1955

[1]Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 14, 1983.

[2]Harry S Truman, Mr. Citizen (New York: Popular Library, 1960), p. 59.

[3]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.

[4]"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-Juine 1959, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[5]"Trumans Driving To Washington," Examiner (June 19, 1953), p.1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence.

[6]Helen Worden Erskine, "Truman In Retirement," p. 20.

[7]"'Back Home' Is Best Tonic For Mr. Truman's Recuperation," Examiner (July 9, 1954), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence.

[8]"Truman Library To Be Built In Independence," Examiner (July 7, 1954), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence.

[9]Ibid., "C. of C. Check For Library To Mr. Truman," Examiner (July 22, 1954), p. 1.

[10]"Missouri Hospitality At Its Best At Truman Home Reception," Examiner (May 9, 1955), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence.

"Person To Person": The Nation Sees The Truman's Home, 1955

[11]"Nation Eavesdrops As Truman Family Visits on TV," Examiner (May 28, 1955), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1955, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[12]Sue 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, Mid-Continent Public Library,

North Branch, Independence.

[13]Margaret Truman, Souvenir: Margaret Truman's Own Story (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956), p. 350.

[14]"'Open House' To Nation," Kansas City Star (May 27, 1955), folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1955, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[15]"Person To Person", CBS-TV, May 27, 1955, Independence, Missouri. The film is in the archives of the Truman Library. The only obvious change is the absence of the television set in the music room. The Trumans did have at least one television set, however. Mrs. Truman remarked during the program that she had seen some good T.V. shows recently, but no wrestling matches--her favorite sport next to baseball.

Activities, Events, and Changes, 1956-1970

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

[17]"Modest and Retiring Bess Truman Was Powerful Influence Behind the Scenes," Examiner (July 3, 1957), p. 12D, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence, Mo.

[18]"Reception at Home To Follow Dedication," Examiner (July 5, 1957), p. 1, folder-Truman,Harry S July-Sept. 1957, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[19]Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 45.

[20]Robert Sanders, June 30, 1983, and Robert Nickell, June 29, 1983, Interviews, Independence, Mo.

[21]"Truman Retains Staff," Kansas City Times (September 5, 1958), folder-Biographical Information--HST, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL. Previous to the legislation, Truman paid his personal secretary, an administrative assistant, and a stenographer out of his own pocket.

[22]Merle Miller, "HST: Backstage With A Star Performer," Show Magazine (no date, circa May 1964), p. 76, folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1964, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL. Bess Truman refused to take part in the filming, but did finally agree to accompany her husband to the front door as he began his morning walk. She was quoted as saying, "I have no desire to have my voice recorded for posterity."

[23]"Ribs Cracked, Head Cut in Accident--Truman Rests Well In Hospital," Examiner (October 4, 1964), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S Oct.-Dec. 1964, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[24]Sue Gentry, "Trumans Plan Florida Vacation," Examiner (February 28, 1967), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S Jan.-March 1968, (misfiled), Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[25]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, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[26]"Petition Opposing Delaware Rezoning Signed by Trumans," Examiner (September 20, 1967), p. 1, folder-Homes--HST, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL. The attorney was James E. May, now a Jackson County Judge. The zoning change allowing limited apartments in the area came about around 1950.

[27]Margaret Richards, "Truman at 84 Stronger, Feeling Better," St. Louis Post-Dispatch (May 6, 1968), folder-Truman, Harry S April-June 1968, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[28]"L.B.J. Tribute To Truman," Kansas City Times (October 12, 1968), p.1, folder-Truman, Harry S Oct.-Dec. 1968, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL. The visit was Johnson's thirteenth since 1960.

[29]Felix Belair, Jr., "Truman Greets Guests 25 Years After He Took Over Presidency," New York Times (April 12, 1970), folder-Truman, Harry S 1970, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[30]McDaniel Sheet Metal and Roofing (9136 Wilson, Independence), December 7, 1970, receipt, HSTL. The air conditioner cost $168.93 and the roof repair was $25.

[31]Charlie Pendelton's Appliance and TV Center (124 S. Main, Independence), July 22, 1972, receipt, HSTL. The bill was $245.14.

Gas Yard Lamp

[32]Mrs. H.H. (Ardis) Haukenberry, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 14, 1983.

[33]Mrs. Elizabeth Safly, Librarian, Harry S. Truman

Library, Telephone Conversation, July 11, 1983. Mrs. Safly obtained this information from the Gas Service Company in Independence.

[34]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. On file in MWR Cultural Resources Management.

[35]Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," pp. 46-7.

[36]Robert Sanders, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 30, 1983.

Pergola

[37]Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," pp. 25; 35.

Sundial

[38]Robert E. Lockwood, Interview, Independence, Mo., July 1, 1983.

[39]Margaret Truman, Souvenir (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1956), preface; and, Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman."

[40]Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," pp. 24; 47.

Robert Sanders Painting Company

[41]Robert Sanders, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 30, 1983; and, "Bess and Harry's 50 Golden Years," Detroit News (June 26, 1969), p. 2D, folder-Truman, Harry S 1969, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL. The last source stated that the painters were at work that week painting the house white.

[42]Ibid. Sanders recalls having cut the wire to the closed circuit TV camera while trimming weeds away from the fence. The action brought an immediate response from Secret Service agents in the command post.

Replacing the Roof

[43]Leo Zaner, Jr., Telephone Conversation, July 12, 1983. A Kansas City sheet metal worker, Zaner's grandfather, Andrew Zaner, assisted in the construction activity in the mid to late 1930s on the roof of the Wallace house. He died in 1940.

[44]Joseph Mance, Telephone Conversation, June 28, 1983. Mance worked on the house from 1955 to 1962 as an employee for Hawkins.

[45]Tom Manson, Telephone Conversation, June 28, 1983.

[46]Rufus Burrus, Interview, Independence, Mo., July 22,1983.

[47]Tom Manson, Telephone Conversation, June 28, 1983; and, Interview, July 5.

[48]Tom Manson, Telephone Conversation, July 7, 1983.

[49]Ibid.; and, Interview, July 5, 1983. Additional slate tiles were discovered in the basement by National Park Service personnel.

[50]W.C. Morrill, District Engineer, New England Lightning Rod Company, Waterbury Center, Vt., to Harry S Truman, letter, May 30, 1949, folder-The President's Home In Independence, Missouri, file-President's Personal File 1-G, HSTL; and, Ibid., Charles G. Ross to W.C. Morrill, letter, June 16, 1949.