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Additional Research and Related Needs at the Harry S Truman National Historic Site

A great deal has been accomplished in the last fifteen years since the completion of Ron Cockrell's historic resource study, *The Trumans of Independence* (1985), and the National Park Service's (NPS) acquisition and management of the two Wallace houses, the Noland house, and the Truman farm. Continued NPS efforts to preserve, protect, interpret, and to generally manage the valuable cultural resources in the Truman National Historic Site would be enhanced by considering the following recommendations. Some of these suggested recommendations reiterate those presented in the Cockrell study, but need repeating since the newly acquired properties would benefit from these suggestions as well. Other recommendations are new. The recommendations briefly described below are not listed in any particular order of priority.

1. The need for a **park historian** continues and is, perhaps, even more critical with the acquisition of new properties by the National Park Service since 1990. A park historian could support the needs of the curatorial, interpretative, and resource management activities of the park.

2. Several additional **oral history interviews** need to be conducted. Although many individuals with significant knowledge of the Truman, Noland, and Wallace families have died a number of individuals are known who are knowledgeable about these families, their activities, and their properties. Additionally, oral interviews with individuals familiar with the management of the properties in the Truman National Historic Site would be especially helpful in the completion of an administrative history of the park. A few of the many individuals who should be interviewed include:

John Southern (Ozark, Missouri, additional interviews), nephew of Ardis Haukenberry and grandnephew of Ethel and Nellie Noland;

Robert A. Brown (Macon, Georgia?), great grandson of the A. T. Slack family, which occupied the Noland house from possibly the late 1860s to 1885. (Brown may know the location of photos and other information about the Noland house when it was occupied by the Slacks.);

Mary Huber Buntin, daughter of Brownie Huber, hired hand on the Truman farm;

Virginia Colgan Brunner (Hermitage, Tennessee), relative of the Trumans and knowledgeable about the Truman farm after Mary Jane and Martha left it;

Robert Hornbuckle, uncle of Roy Hornbuckle, Colgan family, relative of the Trumans and knowledgeable about the Truman farm in the 1940s and 1950s;

James D. Turnbaugh, journalist at the *Kansas City Star* and, then, editor/publisher of the *Jackson County Advocate*, who has

written and published articles on the Truman family for forty years;

Robert Bray, archeologist who conducted work on the Truman farm in 1983 for the Truman Farm Home Foundation, as well as other individuals who worked on the restoration of the farmhouse;

Bob Lockwood, Secret Service agent who looked after Bess Truman, knowledgeable about the Noland and Wallace properties as well as the larger Delaware Street neighborhood;

Mary Shaw Branton, knowledgeable about the Wallace families;

Selected individuals associated with the work of the Truman Farm Home Foundation and NPS management of the national historic site.

3. Several **National Park Service studies** should be prepared for the Harry S Truman National Historic Site. The park historian might complete these studies or help oversee their preparation by private contractors. These studies include:

- Historic structures reports, including an architectural data section, for the Wallace, Noland properties, and the Truman farm;
- Cultural landscape reports for the Wallace, Noland, and Truman farm properties;
- Historic furnishings reports for the Wallace and Noland houses;
- Administrative history for the Truman National Historic Site;
- Archeological survey of the Wallace, Noland, and Truman farm properties;

4. Additional research on the **early developmental history of the Noland house** needs to be pursued. Considerable effort has already been made to ascertain exactly when the original structure was constructed and when additions and alterations were made before the Noland family moved into the house in 1900. Since property transactions do not provide conclusive information and Independence newspapers for the later decades in the 1800s no longer exist, it has been speculated that historic photographs might provide the only and most useful documentation of the property's changes, at least since the late 1860s or 1870s. Former ministers of the Watson Memorial Methodist Church (Howard Woodruff and Milton Parks) have been contacted to learn if they have knowledge and photos of the church, which stood directly south of the Noland house until around 1904. An effort has been made to locate descendents of the original Slack family, Anthony T. and Maria Moore Slack, who occupied the house from the late 1860s to 1885, also to learn if old photos of the Slack family home may still exist. This line of inquiry has traced the children and grandchildren of the original Slack owners to Herrin, Illinois, where Lulu Slack and Columbus Brown and their children lived for many years (but visited their parents in Independence every summer. Also, Marie Slack lived with Lulu and Columbus Brown in Herrin, from 1924 until her death). No historic photos of the Slack home in Independence have yet been uncovered, however Slack family photos may still exist in the Herrin area. Also a grandchild of the Herrin Slack family, in Macon, Georgia, may have useful information about the Slack home in Independence. A record of Noland house changes will

become increasingly faint as time passes. Knowledge of such additions and alterations would benefit future NPS interpretation and restoration/ rehabilitation of the Noland house.

5. Additional **archeological survey work** at the Truman farm is particularly important. Robert Bray's "Archaeological Survey and Testing at the Truman Farm Home and Grounds," completed in 1983, raised many questions, which remain unanswered about the existence and exact location of earlier structures on the Young-Truman farm that were extant during Truman's years on the farm. Historic photographs alone cannot determine the location, for example, of the Harriet and Solomon Young farmhouse, destroyed by fire in the early 1890s. Uncertainty still remains about the age, location, and evolution of barns and other outbuildings that once stood on the Young-Truman farm, even after thorough historical research has been done on the property. A team of individuals comprised of an archeologist, historian, and perhaps a landscape architect, who are familiar with historic western Missouri farming practices, is needed to adequately and effectively uncover additional information about the arrangement of buildings and landscape features at the farm over time.

The Noland house might also benefit from archeological survey work that focuses on below ground evidence suggesting the evolution of the Noland house. Historical research alone has not conclusively determined the precise construction date of the original structure on the Noland property and the sequence and ages of the early additions. Independence newspapers for that period, which might shed light on the properties physical development, no longer exist. Again, it is imperative that the archeologist engaged in this project work in tandem with a historian so that each specialist can explore and add to the discoveries of the other as the project progresses.

6. A thorough **organization of historical research material** in the Truman NHS headquarters needs to be completed so this valuable information can be used to augment the interpretation and management of park cultural resources. The existing workload of the present park staff has not made it possible to undertake this large and time-consuming task. Once organized, a method might be devised for permitting park personnel to access this material without the possibility of its loss. For example, material related to a particular person, event, or historical theme might be placed in separate three-ring binders that could be checked out for a specified time period.

7. Additional **educational and interpretative material,** such as brochures, booklets, and a computer WEB page, which presents the history of the Noland, Wallace, and Truman farm properties, should be created for park visitors. These educational materials would present selected information contained in this historic resource study and in the park's historical files. The National Park Service might participate with the City of Independence and/or a "friends" of the park group in collaborative efforts to produce a publication that places the history of the park properties in the broader context of the Delaware-Maple streets neighborhood (i.e. the Truman National Historic Landmark District) and Independence historical developments. A walking tour brochure is only one possible product of such a collaborative effort.

Additional Research and Related Needs

8. Future **restoration/rehabilitation work** completed on the Noland, Wallace, and Truman farm properties should make use of the most current historical information about the physical development of these properties during their period of significance. Historically accurate and authentic materials, design, and workmanship, as recommended in the Secretary of Interior's Standards for such work, should be used for all exterior restoration/ rehabilitation work. Knowledge of the landscaping around theses properties should also be applied to re-create historically appropriate settings for the buildings. (In the case of the Frank and Natalie Wallace house, for example, this might involve re-creating the jungle-like setting that once enclosed the rear and side yards of the house during Truman's residence at 219 North Delaware Street, which provided essential privacy during his presidency.)