HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

Historic Structures Report

by:

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a division of
Solomon Claybaugh Young Architects Inc.
20 West 9th Street Kansas City, Missouri 64105

for:

Office of Planning & Resource Preservation
Division of Cultural Resources Management
National Park Service
United States Department of the Interior
Omaha, Nebraska

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I. Building Chronology -- Truman Home (HS-01)

The Truman Home (HS-01) and Truman Carriage House (HS-02), 219 North Delaware Street, Independence, Missouri, are on lots 2 and 3 of James F. Moore's Addition. Moore's Addition was platted on September 29, 1847. Soon after the 1849 town incorporation, Moore's Addition was included in Independence.[1] (See Appendix E (e), Map of Independence, 1877.)

James F. Moore, an Independence merchant, purchased approximately forty acres and a portion of Town Lot 38 from Cornelius Davy on August 3, 1839, for $5,000.00.[2] A year prior to the 1849 incorporation of Independence, Moore, through power of attorney, sold off his property, lot by lot.[3]

On August 28, 1848, lots 2 through 6, 8 and 16 through 18 of James F. Moore's Addition were sold to William B. Hay. The nine lots were purchased for $800.00.[4]

In August of 1850, shortly after Hay's business failed, Jackson County Clerk Samuel A. Lucas "issued a writ of fieri facias against William Hay to compensate Hay's creditors."[5] The writ authorized Sheriff George W. Buchanan to advertise Hay's property in advance of selling it at public auction. On September 11, 1850, lots 2 and 3 of Moore's Addition were sold to Independence Mayor Jonathan R. Palmer for $220.00.[6]

Like Hay, Jonathan Palmer suffered from debts. Three weeks after the auction, on October 2, Palmer mortgaged all his property to John B. Slaughter for a $6,000.00 bond. After Palmer defaulted on the bond, Slaughter, a merchant and Palmer's successor as mayor, received legal title to lots 2 through 5 of Moore's Addition. After the Slaughter family moved to St. Louis, they sold their property to James T. Thorton and Francis Hord for $500.00 on February 2, 1857.[7]

Through public auctions and trustee's deeds, lots 2 and 3 changed hands a number of times because of debt-plagued property owners.

James T. and Mary H. Thorton, on November 29, 1859, deeded lots 2 and 3 to Peter Gastel for $350.00. In debt, the Gastels were forced into a three party trustee's deed, with William Chrisman as middleman. Chrisman had paid the Gastels one dollar for lots 2 and 3 to hold in trust for one year (until November 20, 1861). If the debt went unpaid, Chrisman was authorized to sell lots 2 and 3 at public auction.[8]

Interrupted by the events of the Civil War, William Chrisman was prevented from carrying out the provisions of the 1860s trustee's deed, until September 26, 1866, when lots 2 and 3 were sold at auction to James G. English for $425.00.[9]

Then, through a series of complex and shrewd business transactions, George P. Gates (the grandfather of Bess Wallace Truman), a recent

settler from Illinois, paid $700.00 for both lots (2 and 3), on June 20, 1867.[10] To accommodate his family, there is evidence that in the same year, Gates built a two-story, rectangular structure with a small rear addition.[11] (See Fig. 1.1 and Building Chronology Drawings.)

Resembling the massing of a two-story American I-House, the 1867 structure is shown with a medium-hip roof. Recent investigation at the west end of the old attic (301) revealed extant framing of a hip roof with painted fascia board and remnants of a built-in sheet metal gutter. Thus, the east wall of Truman dressing room (209) and hall (208) was originally an exterior wall. The smaller kitchen wing (kitchen 113, pantry 112, butler's pantry 111) is shown with a shallow-pitched, gable roof. A September, 1986 physical investigation revealed that the kitchen wing (113) was balloon framed at the floor joists, north wall. In addition, there is evidence of an intermediate kitchen partition. Presumably, the kitchen wing was constructed as a one-story or one-and-one-half story addition with the roof altered to its existing height and configuration in the remodeling of 1885. (See Fig. 1.2.)

As a prominent and successful Independence businessman who had made his fortune from "Queen of the Pantry Flour," George P. Gates decided to construct a sizable "addition" to his home at 219 North Delaware. (See Fig. 1.3 and Appendix E (f), 1886 map.) Designed by builder and architect James W. Adams for $8,000.00, the house was the most expensive residence built in Independence in 1885.[12] (See Fig. 1.4.) Adams'

two-and-one-half story frame Victorian "addition" to the existing 1867 structure included at the first floor level: living room (104), bedroom (105), vestibule (101), and portions of the central hall (103) and dining room (110).

The second floor level included: master bedroom (204), Truman bedroom (205), storage room (213), alcove (201), and portions of the central hall (202) and bedroom (210).

The 1867 wing (which was damged by a fire that occurred after 1885) remained a kitchen area (113) on the first floor. In all probability, its second floor space (213) was converted into a sewing room/sitting room during Bess Truman's childhood and early married life. It later became a storage area sometime after Elizabeth Gates' death in 1924.[13]

Porches included at the first floor elevation: 104B, 114A, B and C, 101A, and a porch which is now occupied by bathroom 106 and porch 107A. (See Fig. 1.5.)

Recent findings that show physical evidence of the two different periods of construction previously discussed (1867 and 1885) involve the investigation of building materials and techniques, and conclusions drawn from a paint analysis.

Based upon the most recent assumptions of the building's chronology,

several sections of exterior walls of the Truman home were removed and studied. It was found that the east wall of the kitchen wing (113) is constructed of brick nogging without sheathing and uses poplar siding. Samplings from other wall portions, i.e. thin flat studs with sheathing using pine siding, reveal a later period of construction. This sample was taken from the 1885 section of the Truman home. (For further information, see Physical Investigation Report, Truman Home, July, 1984.)

Framing systems and stratigraphies of exterior paint layers also vary with construction dates. While the 1867 portion of the home uses a let-in system of framing, the 1885 portion does not. In addition, the oldest extant siding appears to be on the 1867 structure. The stratigraphies found in samples from the 1867 portion show the greatest number of paint layers -- approximately twenty-three. Paint samples extracted from the 1885 section verify that date.

After marrying David Wallace on June 13, 1883, Margaret (Madge) Gates (George Gates' oldest daughter), claimed 219 Delaware as their address for an unknown period during the late 1880s. Then in 1904, one year after David Wallace committed suicide, Madge and her four children (Bess, Frank, George and Fred) permanently moved into the Gates' mansion.[14]

With this new arrangement, Madge could care for her aging parents. George P. and Elizabeth moved to the first floor bedroom where the

southeast porch (106) was converted into a bathroom. (See Fig. 1.6.) This occurred between 1907 and 1910.[15] In addition, a southeast section of porch was added to kitchen porches 114A and 114B, and a sleeping porch (206) was included at the second-story level.[16]

For almost a century, the home at 219 North Delaware basically remained the same. Only minor alterations were made to fit the needs of the extended family that shared the home. After Bess Wallace and Harry Truman were married in 1919, a year after the death of George Gates, they, too, established their residence at 219 Delaware.[17]

In 1924, after the birth of President and Mrs. Truman's daughter, Mary Margaret, a passageway (206A) was built connecting the Truman's bedroom (205) with the bedroom (210) of their new child.[18] A portion of the second floor sleeping porch was used for the passageway. Also constructed during the 1920s was a backyard pergola (HS-04).[19] (See Fig. 1.7.)

For more than a decade---from the time that Harry Truman won the 1934 Democratic nomination for the United States Senate until 1945 when he became the thirty-third President of the United States---the house at 219 North Delaware was neglected. Although minor in nature, there were several household repairs accomplished, yet by the spring of 1945, the property was in need of major renovation.[20] (See Figs. 1.8 and 1.9.)

Concerned about the appearance of her family home, Bess Truman made arrangements to begin exterior renovation of "The Summer White House" as it was then called. (See Figs. 1.10 and 1.11.) Work at 219 North Delaware included replacing rotted millwork and slate shingles, covering the worn, grey exterior with white paint, and trim areas with Kentucky green.[21] The second floor bath (211) was also remodeled with a new blue porcelain tub, stool, and sink.

The only physical change to the Truman home during the presidential years was the rear porch construction (114A and B). In April 1950, this porch was refloored and extended to the east by six additional feet, supported by brick piers, and screened-in (114C).[22] Based on evidence from paint trim samples, it appears that the last porch extension may have been partially constructed with reused materials from the earlier rear east porch.[23]

In January, 1953, one month after the death of Madge Gates Wallace, Harry and Bess Truman left Washington D.C. as private citizens. The former first family then returned to 219 North Delaware and purchased the home in July.[24] That same year, the Trumans began to make repairs and conduct interior changes to their home. This "modernization" included: wallpapering first and second floor rooms; construction of attic storage space; construction of cabinets in the east wall of Mrs. Truman's dressing room; wall-to-wall carpeting throughout the first floor (except the kitchen); and extensive interior painting.[25] In

addition, shelves were constructed in the library (109) sometime during the 1950s.

In 1954, the old cement floor in the basement's utility area was excavated. Originally, this area was elevated four inches from the remainder of the basement. To permit an increase in headroom and to repair plumbing, an additional four inches was excavated for the base of the new concrete floor.[26]

During the 1970s and 1980s, a few minor alterations were made to the Truman home. The original slate roof was replaced with grey fiberglass asphalt shingles in July, 1969.[27] The rotted front steps (non-original) were replaced, and the rotted balusters on the north side were also replaced, c. 1974.[28] In addition, the damaged pergola which had been reconstructed in 1944, was removed, c. 1970.[29] In December, 1981, the main chimney was tuckpointed.[30]

On February 23, 1972, 219 North Delaware was designated a National Historic Landmark by the United States Department of the Interior and listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Following the death of Mr. Truman, the City of Independence, with the full support of his widow, established the Harry S. Truman Heritage District. (More commonly known as the Harry S. Truman Historic District.)[31]

Following the death of Mrs. Bess Truman on October 18, 1982, the

dictates of her will left the property to "The United States of America to be held and operated by it under the direction of the Archivist of the United States, in conjunction with the Harry S. Truman Library."[32]

Secretary of the Interior James G. Watt signed Designation Order No. 3088 declaring 219 North Delaware the Harry S Truman National Historic Site. Under the auspices of the National Park Service, the property became the Twenty-seventh Presidential Site in the National Park System, on December 12, 1982.[33]

Notes to Chapter One

1. Ron Cockrell, Historic Structures Report: History and Significance. Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri (Omaha: National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, 1984), 11. Hereafter cited as "HSR."

2. Ibid., 10.

3. Ibid., 11.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., 12.

6. Ibid. It has been suggested that because of the increase in value of lots 2 and 3 (coupled with the fact that with his indebtedness, Hay also lost his home), a structure could have been present on the site as early as 1848. Although the theory speculates that the east wing (the kitchen wing) of the Truman home was built prior to 1850 (and later incorporated into the Gates' mansion), recent findings suggest otherwise. The following items have been observed and strongly indicate that the east wing was built concurrently or as an addition to the 1867 structure: 1) the sill beam of the 1867 main house is located to the east edge of the east foundation 2) the wall between the kitchen and dining room has brick nogging 3) the floor in the kitchen wing expands beyond the first joist. In addition, it was found that the earliest paint sample taken from the east wall of the kitchen wing dates 1867.

7. Ibid., 14.

8. Ron Cockrell, Historic Resource Study: The Trumans of Independence, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri (Omaha: National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, 1985), 16. Hereafter cited as "HRS."

9. HSR., 16-17.

10. Ibid., 18.

11. HRS., 24. George P. and Elizabeth E. Gates probably came to Independence from Illinois in the spring of 1867, or according to a local historian, perhaps George P. Gates came alone to the area to investigate the property. His family (in 1866 in Illinois, Elizabeth had a baby, Myra) could have joined him at a later date. In addition, it is also known that Gates' father and mother were living in Independence in 1866, so it is possible that George P. Gates resided with his parents until their home was built.

It is also important to note that A. Ruger, the artist of Bird's Eye View of Independence came to the area in 1867. The date of publication was not more than one year after the artwork was finished. From this information, one can conclude that when Ruger came to Independence, the

1867 Gates' home was underway or already completed. For information on Ruger see: John W. Reps, Views and Viewmakers in Urban America 1825-195. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1984.

12. HSR., 30-31.

13. Ibid., 93.

14. Ibid., 47-48.

15. Ibid., 48.

16. Ibid., 152.

17. Ibid., 74.

18. Ibid., 76.

19. Ibid., 88.

20. Ibid., 115.

21. Ibid., 116.

22. Ibid., 132, 152.

23. Marie Carden, "Paint Analysis and Recommendations for the Harry S Truman Home National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri" (North Atlantic Historic Preservation Center, National Park Service, Boston, MA, May, 1986, photocopied), 12. It is important to note that at the time of this writing, the information in this reference concerning the kitchen wing and porch is in error.

24. HSR., 178.

25. Ibid., 185-88.

26. Ibid., 198.

27. Ibid., 266.

28. Ibid., 287.

29. Ibid., 258.

30. Ibid., 288.

31. Ibid., 292.

32. Ibid., 295.

33. Ibid.

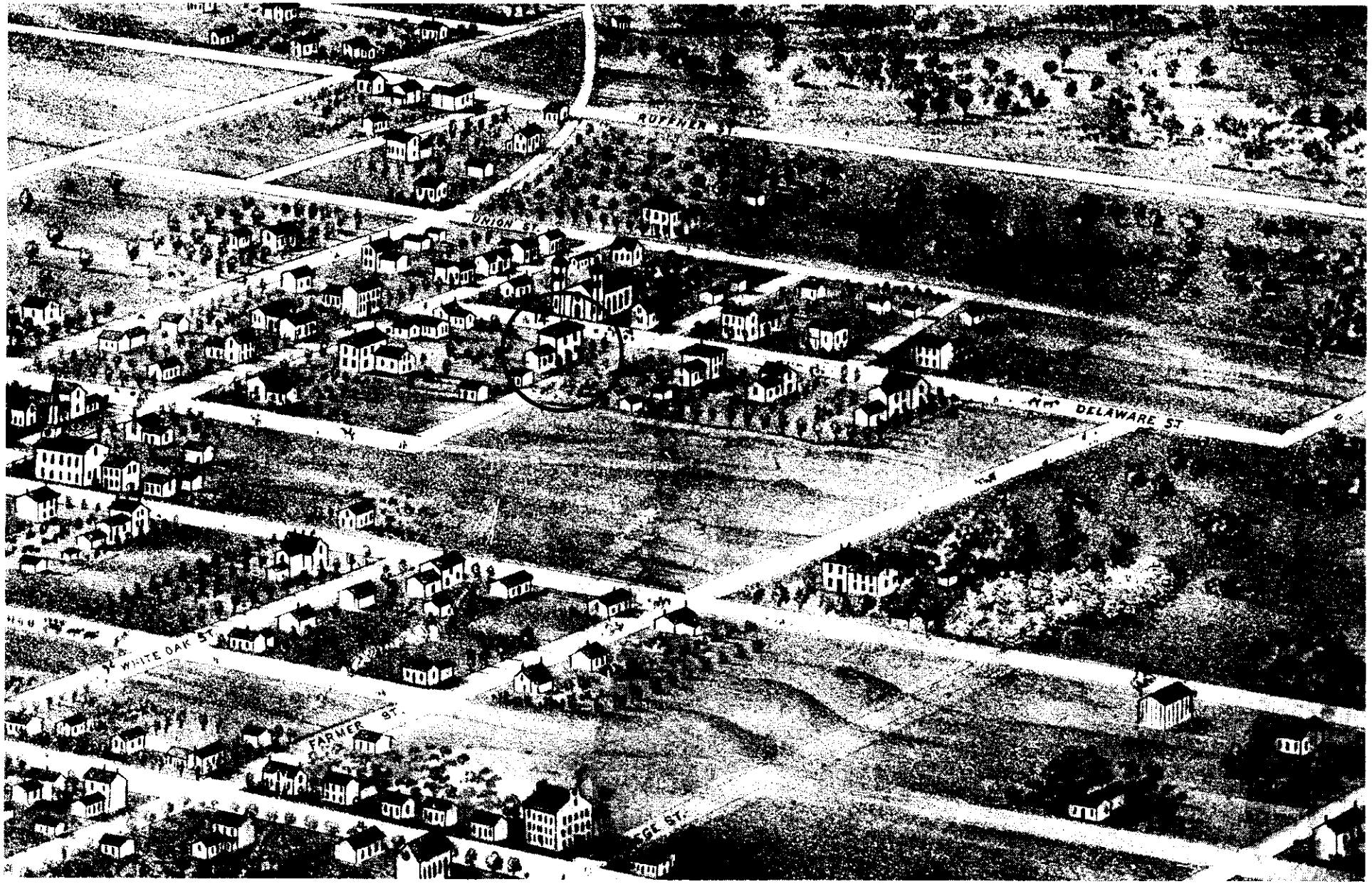

Fig. 1.1 Bird's Eye View of Independence. A. Ruger, 1868. Detail. Credit: Jackson County Historical Society

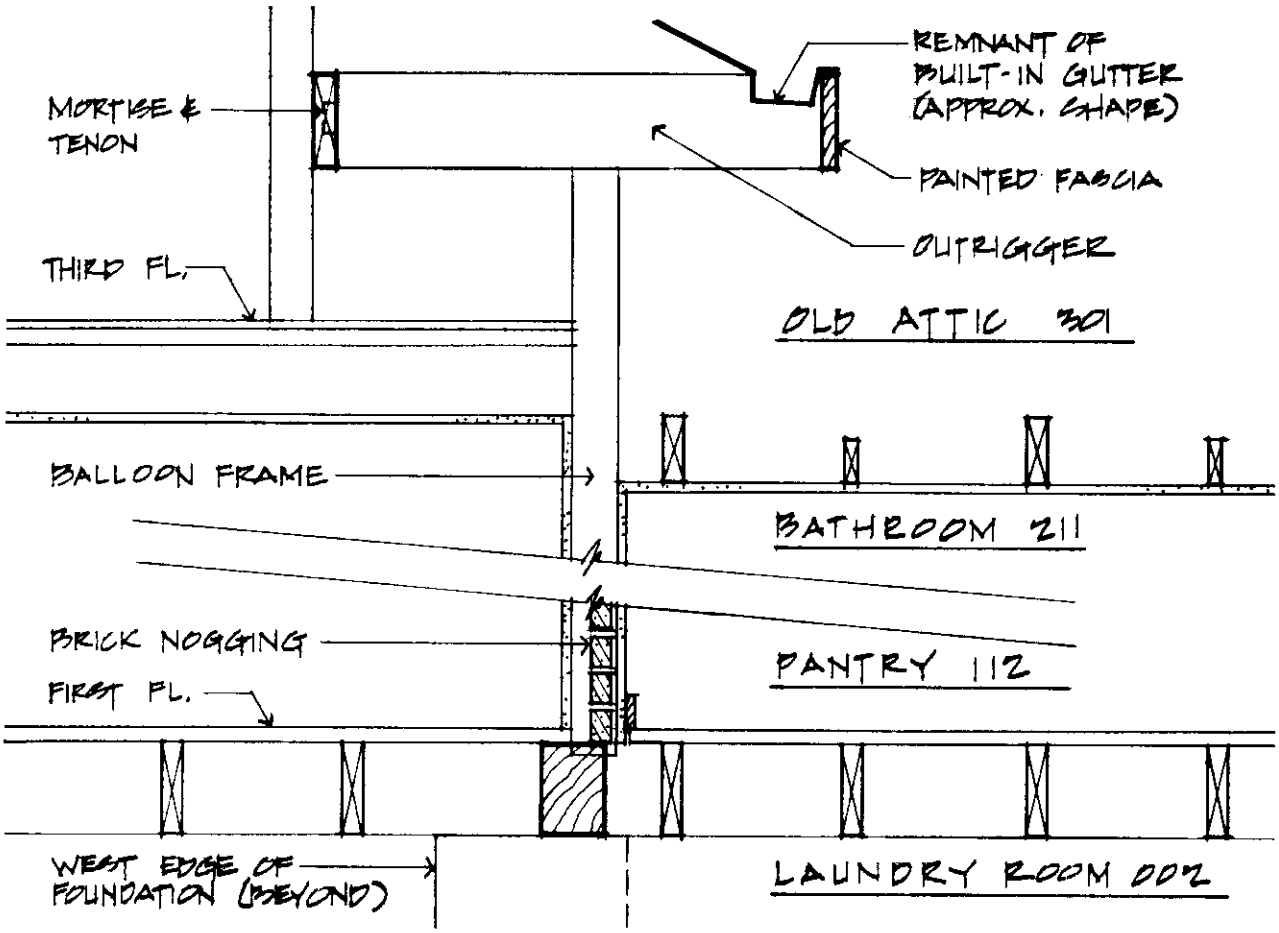

Fig. 1.2 Truman Home. Construction detail of connection between main house and kitchen wing. Credit: Doug Wasama

RESIDENCE OF GEO. P. GATES.

Fig. 1.3 Residence of George P. Gates. Independence Sentinel, Independence, Missouri, January 2, 1886. Credit: Harry S Truman Library (HSTL)

Fig. 1.4 Truman Home, c. 1900. West elevation (looking east). One of a series of the earliest extant photographs of the structure. Note the absence of the roof line decorative grillwork as shown in the 1886 Independence Sentinel. Credit: HSTL

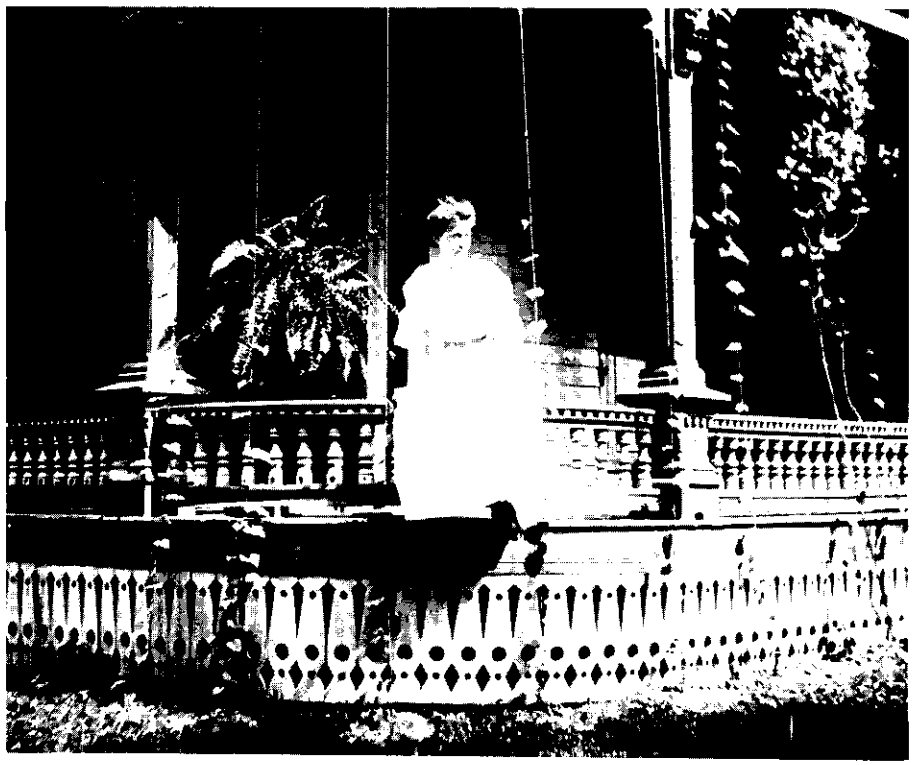

Fig. 1.5 Truman Home, c. 1905. Porch, northwest elevation (looking southeast). Bess Wallace Truman sitting on the original porch balustrade. Credit: HSTL

Fig. 1.6 Truman Home, c. 1900. Southeast elevation (looking northeast). Two unidentified men standing in front of the rear porch that was converted to a bathroom c. 1907-1910. Credit: HSTL

Fig. 1.7 Truman Home, c. 1940. East elevation (looking west). The 1920s pergola is pictured to the right of the rear porch. Credit: HSTL

Fig. 1.8 Truman Home, July 11, 1944. West elevation (looking east). Before 1945 renovation. Credit: HSTL

Fig. 1.9 Truman Home, July 22, 1944. West elevation (looking southeast). Detail showing condition of home prior to 1945 renovation. Credit: HSTL

Fig. 1.10 Truman Home, May 21, 1945. West elevation (looking southeast). Workers begin renovation. Credit: HSTL

Fig. 1.11 Truman Home, June 27, 1945. West elevation (looking east). After 1945 renovation. Credit: HSTL

Truman Road
HS-01
Delaware Street