CHAPTER FOURTEEN

SPECIAL TOPICS

* The Heating System: Wood, Coal, and Gas
* Gas
* Water
* Electricity
* Neighborhood of North Delaware Street
* Sidewalks
* History of Truman Road
* Telephone
* Carriage House/Barn
* Domestic Help
* Moving From 219 North Delaware
* Animals at 219 North Delaware

The Heating System: Wood, Coal, and Gas

<Note: For purposes of clarity, room designations have been included. Technical assistance for this section was provided by Midwest Regional Historical Architect Francis O. Krupka, National Park Service>.

The original heating system (circa 1867-1907/10) for what is now the Truman home involved the use of the three, extant fireplaces in addition to an as yet undetermined number of stoves (including a wood-burning kitchen range). These were followed by a centralized heating system using, in succession wood, coal, and gas as fuels.[1] Metal floor and wall grills at the heating duct openings which appear throughout the house indicate the extent of this central heating system.

1867-1907:

The original (i.e. 1867-1884) configuration of the home is unknown in its entirety, but several items may be assumed. First, the kitchen range would have existed from the first. Second, the fireplace that is now in the parlor/music room, in all probability, originally faced what is now the library and was the principal heat source for the first floor. (See Building Chronology Drawings, NPS No. 492/80004, Sheets 1-4/4). On the second floor, a second fireplace in what is now the

Truman dressing room (Room 209) would have provided the only heat source on that level.

With the 1885 construction enlarging the house, additional fireplaces were installed in the living room (Room 104) and the west, front bedroom (Room 204) immediately above it, both serviced by a twin-flued chimney stack. It would have been at this point in time that the fireplaces which originally serviced Rooms 109 and 209 were re-oriented to service Rooms 108 and 207, the configuration that currently exists.

The three fireplaces of the 1885 home (i.e., in the living room, the parlor/music room on the first floor and the west, front bedroom on the second floor) were installed and relied on for the purpose of providing heat. The fireplace in the living room received the most constant use. According to Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace:

> We caught the chimney on fire once! We decided to make a fire in it one day and the chimney hadn't been cleaned out. The sparks commenced coming out of the roof. Yes, they [the Trumans] used it! This house was cold. It was always cold in here until they got that double [gas] furnace in down there in the basement, then it began to get heated up.[2]

Before the 1920s, to ensure that the living room remained warm, solid green portieres covered the three entrance doorways

into the spacious room, blocking out the cold drafts from the central hall (Room 103).[3] The portieres hung from rods suspended from brass rings which are still in evidence today at the tops of each doorway opening. Margaret Truman stated that during her childhood, the portieres were heavy dark red velvet, tied back by cords. They were no longer used to retain heat, but were merely ornamental.[4]

1907-1910:

The exact date for the installation of the central heating system is unknown, nor are the dates when the transitions from wood to coal, and from coal to gas occurred. It is known that major alterations were made in the period 1907-1910.

City records indicate that electric power was available in the area of the Truman home in the late 1880s.[4] The changes to the home indicated on the 1907 Sanborn Map (which could indicate changes to the home dating back to the 1885 construction period), imply that power was available to the house. It is probable that the central heating plant was installed sometime in the years 1885-1910.

The original controls for the central heating plant, still

extant in the central hall (Room 103) alcove under the stair, were mechanical, indicating that the installation predated the installation of electric service to the house. It is likely that electric controls for the central furnace were not installed until later, considerably after the 1910 construction period which provided electric service to the house.

One of Harry Truman's household chores in the early mornings was to go down to the basement, clean and carry out the old ashes, and stoke the furnace with new coals. In his book, Mr. Citizen, published in 1953, Mr. Truman described his household activities since January 1953:

> When I get up at about five to five-thirty in the morning, I go downstairs and do a round of work in the house. In the wintertime, this used to include [indicating anytime between 1919 and 1952] tending the furnace and carrying out the ashes--that is, until gas was put in and made me give it up.[5]

Dates for the transitions from the wood-burning to the coal-burning era, and, from the coal-burning to the gas-burning eras are not known. According to Margaret Truman, the coal furnace was converted directly to gas:

> ...they put in the modern gas inside the old furnace. They didn't put in a gas furnace. They put the gas inside the old furnace.... They put the blower in at the same time so that it would heat up the whole house.... I don't know if it was

before the 40s or not, but it was before Mother and Dad moved back.[6]

The Heating System

[1]Charles E. Anderson, Interview at 219 North Delaware, June 20, 1983.

1867-1907:

[2]Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview at 219 North Delaware, July 20, 1983. The Trumans continued to use this fireplace even after the house was converted to gas heat.

[3]Ibid. The portieres have not been used since the gas furnace was installed.

[4]"Electric Light," Ordinance No. 55, Charter and Revised Ordinances of the City of Independence, Missouri, Revised by B.A. Bartlett and A.M. Ott (Independence: Sentinel Printing and Publishing Company, 1898), pp. 250-1, Office of the City Clerk.

1907-1910:

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

[6]Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 44.

Gas

On June 28, 1881, Caldwell Yeaman was given a 25-year concession by the Independence Board of Aldermen to build and operate a gas works "for the purpose of supplying Independence and suburbs and the inhabitants thereof with gas." Yeaman was instructed to lay conductors or gas mains "under and along" and down the "center or one side only" of the towns' streets and alleys. The ordinance specified that the gas works "shall be of a capacity of at least thirty five thousand cubic feet of gas per diem, of not less at any time than thirteen candle power." Construction was set for two months following the passage of the ordinance and operations would then begin within six months at which time 1.5 miles of gas mains had to be installed. Yeaman also agreed to supply the iron lamp posts to light the streets.[1]

As progress on the gas works continued, the Board of Aldermen dictated on November 14, 1882, that the new gas company erect 26 lamp posts throughout the city and "supply a good and sufficient quantity of gas for each post subject to the same conditions and restrictions" contained in the 1881 enabling ordinance. In the Delaware Street neighborhood, a post was requested for Rock Street (now Maple Avenue) between Pleasant and Delaware while another was ordered for Delaware Street at the alley south of Farmers (now Farmer) Street.[2] On

February 28, 1883, the Board of Aldermen asked the "Independence Gas and Coke Company" to erect and maintain 10 additional gas lamp posts "like those already in use."[3]

This gas system, gas manufactured from coal, was in operation in Independence by the completion of the major addition to the Gates house in 1885 and used in the structure. By 1887, however, the city turned to another form of fuel, natural gas. On March 7, 1887, a 20-year franchise was awarded to a group of men from Polk County, Iowa, "to lay mains and service pipes in the City of Independence, Missouri, to supply said City and its citizens with natural gas." They were given the right to prospect for natural gas in the city and provide consumers with the requisite fixtures and service pipes. Construction of the system would begin three months after the "discovery of sufficient natural gas to furnish said city and the laying of the same on the principal Streets of said City shall be completed within one year thereafter."[4]

With natural gas available in Independence by the early 1880s, it is unknown when the Gates house made the transition from coal gas to natural gas.

Gas

[1]"An Ordinance Concerning Gas Works," Record Book of Ordinances, City of Independence, Missouri, Book B, pp. 28-31, Office of the City Clerk.

[2]Ibid., "An Ordinance Authorizing the Erection of 26 Gas Posts," pp. 48-9.

[3]Ibid., "An Ordinance for the Erection of Ten Additional Gas Posts," p. 52.

[4]Ibid., Ordinance No. 148, pp. 243-5.

Water

Along with gas, an internal water system was installed in the Gates house when the 14-room addition was built in 1885.[1] The home's initial water supply came from the vein of a spring which lies beneath the property. A cistern which stored the spring water still remains underneath the rear porch of the house near the kitchen entrance. George P. Gates believed that he had access to the same "very fine spring water" that flowed above ground in nearby Fairmont Park. He was proud of the fact that he could use the pure water for his family.

The cistern system was still in use when the Trumans were married in 1919 and when their daughter Margaret was born in 1924. But, by 1926, with the encroachment of new housing in the area, the family began to suspect that the spring was being contaminated.[2] During the summer of 1926, Mr. Truman cautioned his wife not to allow Margaret to drink from the cistern, "You'd better have that cistern water analyzed and not let the young lady have any but boiled."[3] Soon after when it was proven to be contaminated, the cistern was closed.[4]

A city operated water system was available as early as the mid-1880s. In a spring 1883, special election, Independence voters approved the building of a waterworks for a city water supply and to extinguish fires.[5] An April 4, 1883, city

ordinance granted the "Independence Water Company" the "authority to establish, construct, maintain, and operate" such a waterworks. The ordinance gave the city the right to locate water mains and pipes as well as fire hydrants. The city permitted the new company two months to begin construction, and one year to lay at least six miles of water mains and to begin operations.[6] Because of apparent construction delays, the city extended the first day of operation to September 1, 1884.[7]

On March 18, 1884, the Board of Aldermen approved an ordinance specifying the location of the water mains and fire hydrants. This initial bill saw water service provided throughout the Delaware Street neighborhood. Water mains were placed down the centers of the streets, including North Delaware. Hydrants near the Gates house were as follows:

> No. 32--corner of Maple Ave. and Delaware Street.
> No. 33--on Delaware at alley South of Bagby's.
> No. 34--on corner of Delaware and Farmer Streets.[8]

The date for the establishment of a city sewerage system is uncertain, although a special "Sewer Fund" tax assessment first appeared in the Assessor's Book of Real Estate for James F. Moore's addition in 1901.[9] Another sewer assessment came in 1914.[10]

When the two Wallace brothers' bungalows were built on Lot 1 of the Gates property in 1915 and 1916, drainage and sewer pipes were buried on the north side of Blue Avenue (now Truman Road).[11] In fact, in the general warranty deeds granting the parcels to the Wallace brothers, George P. and Elizabeth E. Gates "reserve[d] the right to maintain and use the sewer that is now constructed across the... real estate."[12]

When the house stood empty during the time that Mrs. Madge Wallace and the Truman family lived in Washington, D.C., George P. Wallace (605 W. Truman Road) made sure that all the water pipes in the "big house" were drained during the winter months to guard against damage to the plumbing.

As for the home's two bathrooms, the bathroom on the second floor probably dates to the 1867 structure. The first floor bathroom was added onto the bedroom in the early part of the century (1907-1910) when the elderly Mr. and Mrs. Gates took up quarters on the first floor.[13] The 1907 Sanborn Map shows no evidence of a privy on the property (See Appendix).

Water

[1]"The Building Boom," The (Independence) Sentinel (January 2, 1886), p. 4, HSTL and Jackson County Historical Society.

[2]Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview, Independence,

Mo., June 14, 1983.

[3]Robert H. Ferrell, Dear Bess (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1983), p. 322. The letter from Ft. Riley, Kansas, was dated July 15, 1926.

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

[5]Ordinance No. 48, Record Book of Ordinances, City of Independence, Missouri, Book B, p. 62, Office of the City Clerk.

[6]"An ordinance to provide a supply of water and extinguishment of fires," No. 57, Charter and Revised Ordinances of the City of Independence, Missouri, Revised by B.A. Bartlett and A.M. Ott (Independence: Sentinel Printing and Publishing Company, 1898), p. 262, Office of the City Clerk.

[7]Ordinance No. 63, Record Book of Ordinances, City of Independence, Missouri, Book B, p. 134, Office of the City Clerk.

[8]Ibid., Ordinance No. 44, pp. 112-4.

[9]Assessor's Book of Real Estate, Independence, Missouri, for the Year 1901, p. 97, City of Independence, Limestone Storage Facility, 16400 West Truman Road.

[10]Ibid., 1914, p. 111.

[11]Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 14, 1983. Mrs. Wallace remembers the day of her wedding, October 24, 1916, getting stuck in the Gates's car over a soft spot where the pipes had been recently buried.

[12]General Warranty Deeds: George P. and Elizabeth E. Gates to Frank G. Wallace (March 15, 1915; Land Deed Record Book 334, Page 354) and George P. Wallace (August 22, 1916; Land Deed Record Book 339, Page 360), Jackson County Courthouse, Office of Deeds, Independence, Mo.

[13]Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 14, 1983. Mrs. Wallace is of the firm belief that the Gates bathroom and bedroom were added after the Madge Wallace family moved in. The Sanborn maps show a change was indeed made between 1907 and 1916. Since Mrs. Wallace's memory of the Gates house begins in 1910, it is logical that the construction took place between 1907 and 1910.

Electricity

Electricity was present in the Gates mansion probably long before the second decade of the 20th century. It was available in Independence in the last two decades of the 19th century.[1]

On September 6, 1887, the city granted to I.N. Rogers, A.W. Jones, and their associates, the "right to establish, maintain, and operate an electric light plant in the city." The concession ordinance specified that the men could erect and maintain poles no shorter than 30 feet high on any of the towns' streets and alleys. In addition, electric power was to be available within six months of the ordinance's passage, or March 1888.[2]

While most of the gas piping to the overhead lighting system in the Gates house was disconnected when the lights were converted to electric power, much of the gas tubing remains intact behind the walls and ceilings. As a testimony to a prevalent local mistrust of electricity in those earlier days, the chandelier in the parlor/music room was never converted from gas.[3]

Electricity

[1]Patrick O'Brien, Historic Preservation Officer, City of Independence, Telephone Conversation, September 29, 1983.

[2]"Electric Light," Ordinance No. 55, Charter and Revised Ordinances of the City of Independence, Missouri, Revised by B.A. Bartlett and A.M. Ott (Independence: Sentinel Printing and Publishing Company, 18908), pp. 250-1, Office of the City Clerk.

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

Neighborhood of North Delaware Street

James F. Moore's addition to the town of Independence was platted on June 10, 1846.[1] Delaware Street came into existence when John F. McCauley's addition, to the immediate north of Moore's addition, was platted on January 28, 1852. Delaware Street in McCauley's addition measured 49 1/2 feet in width.[2]

Delaware Street was officially extended into the middle of Moore's Addition after James T. Thornton deeded to the city on May 14, 1858, "so much of the West Side of Lot Number three... as lies in Delaware Street as extended from McCauley's addition... to Rock [now Maple] Street."[3] Therefore, Delaware Street was extended south across Tanyard, or Tan Yard, (now Truman) Road to Maple Avenue, taking an unspecified amount of land from Lots 3 (the Gates/Wallace/Truman property) and 4 (all the houses on the west side of Delaware directly across from the Truman home).

"Delaware," as the sixth west base line from the Independence "square," was formalized as a street name for the existing "Delaware and Mabelle Streets their lines, if extended," by the city in 1910.[4] "Maple Avenue," formerly known as "Rock Street," was changed by the city through an April 27, 1883, ordinance.[5]

The neighborhood in 1868, a year after George P. Gates purchased Lots 2 and 3, featured a small Methodist Church across Delaware southwest of the Gates property. The church, later called the Watson Memorial Methodist Church, was an integral feature of the neighborhood until 1966 (See Figure 52). In 1966, the congregation voted to merge with the Christ Methodist Church in Independence and sold the building to the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS). The RLDS then razed the church, but retained the office building addition to the north which is now the Center Stake Building at 200 North Delaware.[6]

Directly west on Delaware across from the Gates house was the A.T. Slack Mansion. It, like the Gates Mansion, was built in 1885 by Architect James M. Adams. The Slack Mansion, no longer extant, was two and one-half stories with ten rooms. It, too, had gas and water systems, and cost $7,000 to construct[7] (See Figure 53).

On the same block to the east of the Gates house stood the Independence High School on North Pleasant Street. It was completed several years before the graduation of the class of 1901, among whom were Harry S Truman and Bess Wallace. An older building adjacent to the new high school on the north was

FIGURE 52

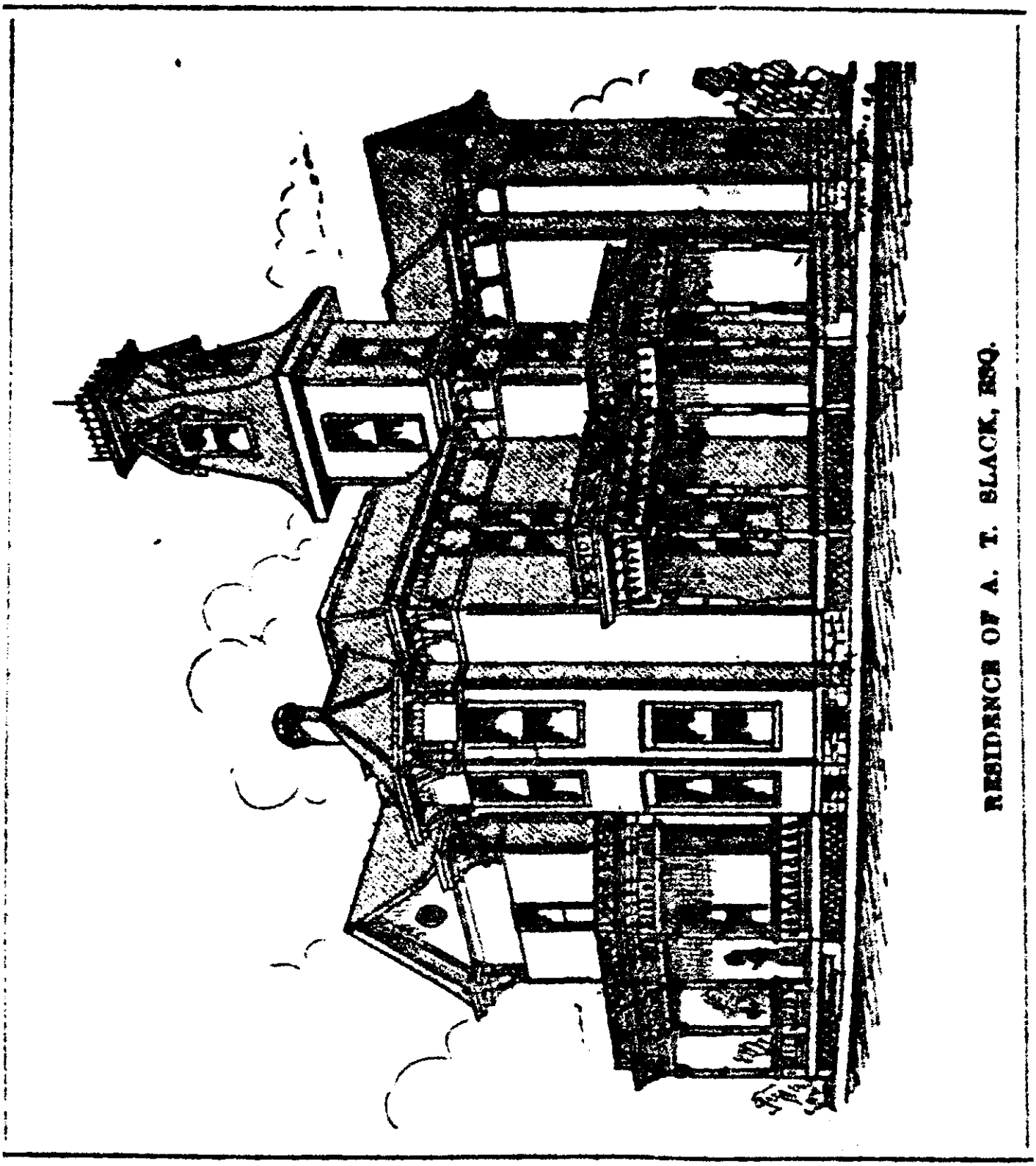
Truman Library Photo Archives, 67-3878

Aerial View Showing Wallace House in Relation to Methodist Church

September 12, 1945

An aerial view taken for a promotional brochure funded by the Independence Chamber of Commerce, the photograph reveals the Watson Memorial Methodist Church which dates to around the time George P. Gates built his first home in 1867. The church was razed in 1966.

Source: The Independence Examiner.



(The Independence Sentinel, January 2, 1886)
Harry S. Truman Library and Jackson County Historical Society

the library, a place where the future President spent much of his time. A fire in 1939 destroyed the Independence High School. It was soon rebuilt, however, but as a junior high school named after Professor W.L.C. Palmer.

Another high school was constructed and opened in 1918 at 709 West Maple Avenue, across the street from the Watson Memorial Methodist Church. William Chrisman High School was attended by Margaret Truman.[10] It stood empty when the new building by the same name was built, but was purchased in the 1970s by Park College of Parkville, Missouri.

Around 1900 the neighborhood of North Delaware Street was dotted by imposing Victorian structures. The flavor of the neighborhood was transitional with the small town of Independence to the east and open farmland to the west.[11] Elizabeth Paxton Forsling, who was born in Independence in 1889 and lived on Delaware Street during her childhood, wrote about this period at the turn of the century. In a series of articles titled "Remembering Delaware Street," she wrote:

> Delaware Street started at Maple and went about eight blocks north. It had an imposing entrance for on the corner was one of those beautiful "wine glass elms".
>
> The houses along Delaware Street were mostly Victorian, with large comfortable rooms, high ceilings, and windows with wooden shutters closed

> in the summer against the blazing sun. ...the rooms were surrounded with expansive lawns, trees, shrubbery, and at the back vegetable and flower gardens were often found. Also, there were barns and carriage houses, sometimes a wash house and a wood shed. Most people had their own horses and a cow or two.
>
> From the garden sun-ripened vegetables were picked the morning they were to appear on the table. Nearby in Kansas City the finest meats were available. The black rich earth of Jackson County was a land of milk and honey. The people believed the important thing was to put the finest meals and the most appetizing food that could be produced on the table.
>
> The garden and yards along Delaware Street were lovely indeed. Spring brought the bridal wreath, the iris, the snowballs, and all the early bulbs, followed by a profusion of early summer flowers, and in the Fall, the late blooming blossoms flamed up to match the splendor of the autumn leaves.
>
> The porches of the houses on Delaware Street, [were] where the people sat in the evening, their voices were a part of the evening. Friendly voices of good will between neighbors, an intimate connection of the life of the street.[12]

Also in the evenings, children--including the Paxtons and the Wallaces--would play "Run Sheep Run" in the street. Horsedrawn carriages traversing Delaware Street would go around the games, or "pull off to the side and catch a ball or two."[13]

The home south of the alley at 211 North Delaware was built in 1914[14] by Charles Harding, a lumberman. The cream colored, two-story stucco building has been occupied by a succession of families and is now divided into a duplex.[15] During the late 1920s and early 1930s, the home figured large

in the childhood of Margaret Truman. The house at 211 North Delaware was then occupied by a family named Ogden with several daughters who were Margaret's playmates. The Ogden sleeping porch was across the alley from the Wallace sleeping porch where Margaret was required to take her afternoon nap. The girls hooked up "an elaborate and cumbersome network of strings and wires" to exchange messages and small objects. The ingenious system was not foolproof, however. The treetops often interferred with the pulley system and the items would fall into the alley, necessitating sneaking out of the house to retrieve them without being caught.[16]

During the presidential period, the families on North Delaware Street were very much aware of being in the national spotlight. The Summer White House was the city's number one attraction and, at the start of the post-war tourist boom in 1948, the most common question asked in Independence was "Where is the Truman house?"[17] To facilitate the visitor's access to the famous house and neighborhood, the city erected seven enameled black and yellow directional signs on September 23, 1949, followed shortly afterward by 40 more signs.[18]

Neighborhood of North Delaware Street

[1]"James F. Moore's Addition To The town of Independence," George W. Rhoades, Surveyor, June 10, 1846, Jackson County Historical Society.

[2]John F. McCauley's Addition To The City of Independence," Lot Coffman, C.S., January 28, 1852, Jackson County Historical Society.

[3]Deed, James T. Thornton to the City of Independence, May 14, 1858, Jackson County Land Deed Record Book 29, Page 316. Assuming an equal amount was taken from each lot, 24 3/4 feet was taken from Lot 3. Lands Division, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, Omaha, Ne.

[4]"Section 777, Names of Streets," Revised Ordinances of Independence, Missouri, 1910, Compiled, Arranged and Indexed by Allen C. Southern and John H. Hardin (Independence: The Examiner Printing Company, 1911), p. 253, Office of the City Clerk.

[5]"An Ordinance Changing the Name of Rock Street," approved April 27, 1883, Record Book of Ordinances, City of Independence, Missouri, Book B, p. 60, Office of the City Clerk.

[6]Sue Gentry, Oral History Interview, Independence, Mo., August 30, 1971, by Dr. Philip C. Brooks, HSTL, p. 15. Additional information was provided by Pat O'Brien, Historic Preservation Officer, City of Independence.

[7]"The Building Boom," The Sentinel (January 2, 1886), pp. 4; 10, HSTL and Jackson County Historical Society.

[8]Assessor's Book of Real Estate, Independence, Missouri, for Year 1907; 1908; 1909; and 1926, City of Independence, Limestone Storage Facility, 16400 West Truman Road.

[9]Mrs. H.H. (Ardis) Haukenberry did not recall the presence of the Slack Mansion when her family moved into 216 North Delaware.

[10]Sue Gentry, Oral History Interview, Independence, Mo., August 30, 1971, by Dr. Philip C. Brooks, HSTL, p. 15.

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

[12]Elizabeth Paxton Forsling, "Remembering Delaware Street," Jackson County Historical Society Journal, Vol. III, No. 8 (May 1962), pp. 7-8; 10, supplement to Sue Gentry, Oral History Interview, HSTL.

[13]Ibid., p. 10.

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

[15]Sue Gentry, "Young Dramatists Give A Special Performance to Families," Examiner (December 31, 1980), p. 6B, folder-Harry S. Truman Heritage District, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL. The column reported that the house was featured on the inside cover of the Dec.-Jan. issue of Modern Maturity. The home is owned by Mrs. C.H. Allen who lives to the immediate south at 616 West Maple Avenue.

[16]Margaret Truman, Souvenir: Margaret Truman's Own Story (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1956), p. 30.

[17]"Summer White House First Stop For Tourists Arriving Here Daily," Examiner (July 23, 1948), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence.

[18]Ibid., "Signs Mark Route To Truman's Home," Examiner (September 24, 1949), p. 1. Funded by the Independence Chamber of Commerce, the first signs were placed at 23rd and Noland; Noland and Pacific; Maple and Noland; Maple and Pleasant; College and Noland; Highway 24 and Noland; and Maple and Main.

Sidewalks

In the early 1880s, the Independence Board of Aldermen began a beautification initiative designed to integrate the immediate annexed areas surrounding the original "Old Town" and Independence Square district. They began with a vigorous legislative campaign directing property owners along major thoroughfares to build sidewalks on their lots. One of the first city ordinances calling for the construction of sidewalks was approved on October 8, 1883, and involved Delaware, Pleasant, Hickman, and Temple Streets. Sidewalks for Delaware were to be built on both sides of the street as property owners were required to "build second class sidewalks in front and alongside of their respective lots within thirty days from the passage of this Ordinance."

Building specifications for second class sidewalks as provided by the Board of Aldermen were:

> pine or oak timber, two inches thick, by five foot long, laid on three stringers 2x4, of oak or pine timber, and securely fastened to same. The stringers to be nailed together by a cleat on each side of joint, not less than two feet long. Where said walk is over any place that is below grade of the street, it shall be supported on stringers nailed securely to upright post 4x4 inches, and not further apart than six feet.[1]

If property owners failed to construct the sidewalks

within the allotted 30 days, the city hired carpenters to build them and then either sent a bill to the property owner or issued a special tax bill against their lot(s).

Sidewalks on Blue Avenue (now Truman Road) appeared as early as 1887 when similar legislation called for the construction of a plank sidewalk on the north side of Blue Avenue from Ruffner (now River Street) to Delaware. Approved by the aldermen on March 14, 1887, the specifications were as follows:

> 3 planks 2 inches thick and 8 inches wide, to be laid lengthwise; to be laid on stringers 2 by 4 inches; said material to be of pine, white or burr oak, to be securely spiked on said stringers or sleepers; said stringers or sleepers to be not exceeding 3 feet apart, and to be securely fastened in 2x4 posts of pine or oak, and said walk shall be as near as practicable on the grade of the street.[2]

The transition from wood to stone or concrete sidewalks probably came around the turn of the century, although specific dates are not known. The earliest historical photographs of the Gates house reveal the presence of the decorative hexagonal limestone block sidewalk, a reconstruction of which can be seen today.

An additional beautification measure was the city-mandated program to keep weeds along streets and sidewalks under

control. An ordinance approved on July 13, 1885, declared that it was the "duty of all persons owning Real Estate fronting on any of the streets of the City of Independence, Missouri, to keep the grass and weeds in the street or streets opposite said property to the middle centre [sic] of said street or streets and alleys cuty down and removed from the same."[3]

[1]"An Ordinance Requiring Sidewalks to be Built on Delaware, Pleasant, Hickman and Temple Streets," No. 25, Approved 8 October 1883, Record of Ordinances, Book B, Independence, Missouri, p. 9, Office of the City Clerk.

[2]Ibid., "An Ordinance to build a sidewalk on the north side of Blue avenue, or boulevard, and Tan Yard Rd.," No. 150, p. 247.

[3]Ibid., "An Ordinance to Cut Weeds," No. 95, p. 169.

History of Truman Road

When James F. Moore's addition was platted on June 10, 1846, the street now known as Truman Road was then called "Tanyard Road."[1] On an 1868 map (See Appendix), although the designation of Tanyard Road is not given, the street covered the two-block length of Moore's addition and did not connect to any other east-west road.[2]

By 1886, it had been renamed "Blue Avenue",[3] and the name was standardized by the city in 1910.[4] By 1931, it was changed to "Van Horn Road,"[5] after Col. Robert Thompson Van Horn who was the owner and editor of the Kansas City Journal-Post and the sixth mayor of Kansas City (1861-65 and 1865-69). At the turn of the century, the street was nothing more than a narrow dirt country road lined by trees. It was later graveled, then paved by the 1940s.[6]

Since 1915, Independence politicians and planners wanted to make Van Horn Road a major thoroughfare. The Bureau of Public Roads, however, would not permit the Missouri Highway Department to use Federal funds for the project because Independence Mayor Roger Sermon refused the government's demand to make Van Horn a one-way street. Van Horn, according to one city official, was "like a strangulated vein; you had to go all

around the business district virtually to get through anywhere."[7]

Despite the ban on using Federal funds, they city announced in January 1946 that Van Horn Road would be opened through Independence at a 42-foot width and connect with county roads outside the city limits. To widen the road to a uniform width, condemnation proceedings would take the needed land. It was revealed that all the land would be taken from the north side of Van Horn,[8] an important detail since the President's home was on the south side.

Kansas City preceded Independence in the move to change the name of Van Horn to "Truman Road." Fifteenth Street, a major Kansas City east-west thoroughfare, connected to Independence's Van Horn Road on the later city's western boundary. On February 11, 1946, Kansas City Councilman Sheridan E. Ferrell, upon the request of 88 property owners along Fifteenth Street, proposed to the Kansas City City Council that the street be designated "Truman Road." Independence Mayor Sermon, bowing to local critics, stated that his city would approve the name change only when Kansas City changed Fifteenth Street.[9]

After three years of deliberation, the Kansas City City

Council passed Ferrell's ordinance on November 22, 1948, only three weeks after President Truman won the 1948 presidential election. One week later, the Independence City Council followed suit. Both cities made the birth of "Truman Road" effective on Inauguration Day, January 20, 1949.[10]

President Truman did not oppose the name change, but he reportedly "felt bad... because he knew and respected Colonel Van Horn" who died in 1916.[11] While the President frequently declined to have public facilities carry his name, the Truman family had negative feelings about the selection of 15th Street/Van Horn Road to be called "Truman Road." They thought that one of the major county roads such as Blue Ridge Boulevard would have been more appropriate for the name change.[12]

The city of Independence soon discovered that the opening and widening of Truman Road, first proposed in 1946, was impossible without Federal funds. Mayor Sermon remained obdurate in his refusal to the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) to make it one-way eastbound into the city. The stalemate was broken only upon Sermon's death in 1950. His successor, Robert P. Weatherford, Jr., agreed to the BPR's stipulation. Two weeks later, President Truman received a call from Thomas H. MacDonald, BPR Chief Engineer, who asked Truman if he objected to the BPR appropriating the funds to the Missouri Highway

Department. Truman called Mayor Weatherford who explained, "Even though the road runs along the north side of your home, it is a technical strangulation in the traffic pattern of this city."

Two days later, BPR Chief Engineer MacDonald called the mayor and said that the funds for the Truman Road project had been approved. In reference to his talks with the White House, MacDonald stated that the President "said it was all right with him, he just didn't want anybody to think that he was the one that was pushing it."[13]

Construction on Truman Road did not begin until early 1953 after the passage of a city bond issue.[14] During the construction, the Examiner reported:

> Truman Road across the street from the [Truman] family home is a sorry sight since a row of fine old trees and shrubbery have been uprooted and the yards graded down in the process of widening the thoroughfare. The Trumans are now using the alley on the south side of their home as a drive entrance.
>
> Mrs. Truman said she was sorry to see the trees gone and of course she felt more sorry for the neighbors across the street than for herself, but that she realized it was all in the spirit of progress.[15]

Sewer lines were also installed on both sides of the

street, and a large part of the lawn of the property on the northwest corner of Truman Road and Delaware was taken. Mounds of dirt were piled up against the iron fence on the north side of the Truman home. Mr. Truman made "regular inspection tours" of the project while Mrs. Truman, "like all neighbor women, fought the dust which also covered her yard, entrance walks and porches."[16]

Dedication ceremonies for the completed project were held December 16, 1953. The former President cut the ribbon and made a speech formally dedicating Truman Road.[17]

Ironically, Harry Truman was nearly injured as a result of the traffic change-over to one-way traffic. On a morning stroll on February 10, 1954, he was almost struck by a car which had turned the wrong way onto Truman Road while he was crossing the street.[18]

On June 19, 1961, the Independence City Council unanimously voted to return Truman Road to two-way traffic. The action was taken due to a petition from uptown merchants who claimed the one-way thoroughfare had an adverse effect on their businesses.[19] Truman Road remains a two-way thoroughfare to this date.

History of Truman Road

[1]"James F. Moore's Addition To The town of Independence," original plat map, June 10, 1846, George W. Rhoades, Surveyor, Office of Land Planning and Zoning, City of Independence, Mo.

[2]"Bird's Eye View of the City of Independence, Jackson County Missouri, 1868," drawn by A. Ruger, Jackson County Historical Society.

[3]Atlas of the Environs of Kansas City in Jackson County Missouri. From Official Records and Actual Surveys (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, C.E., 1886), Jackson County Historical Society.

[4]Revised Ordinances of Independence, Missouri, 1910, Compiled, Arranged, and Indexed by Allen C. Southern and John H. Hardin (Independence: The Examiner Printing Company, 1911), p. 253, Office of the City Clerk. The ordinance read: "That Blue Avenue, Spring Branch and County Road and their line, if extended, be made the second north base line and named Blue Avenue."

[5]Revised Ordinances of Independence, Missouri, 1931, Compiled, Arranged, and Indexed by Roger T. Sermon, John F. Thice, and James S. Craig (Independence: Lambert Moon Printing Company, 1932), pp. 220-1, Office of the City Clerk.

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

[7]Robert P. Weatherford, Jr., Oral History Interview, Independence, Mo., June 11, 1976, by J.R. Fuchs, HSTL, pp. 33-4.

[8]"Van Horn Road To Be Opened at 42 Foot Width," Examiner (January 12, 1946), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence, Mo.

[9]Ibid., "Protest A Change To Truman Road," Examiner (February 16, 1946), p. 1.

[10]Ibid., "Van Horn Road Is Truman Road In Independence," Examiner (November 30, 1948), p. 1; and The Truman Road Story, sponsored by Women's Truman Democratic Club of Missouri, Inc., (Kansas City, Kansas: Lane Printing Co., 1952), p. 7, folder-Jackson County History, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[11]Charles S. Stevenson, "Mayor Van Horn Never Given Credit For 'Saving' City," Jackson County Historical Society Journal (April-May-June 1983), p. 10, White House Scrapbooks (misfiled), HSTL.

[12]Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 41.

[13]Robert P. Weatherford, Jr., Oral History Interview, Independence, Mo., June 11, 1976, by J.R. Fuchs, HSTL, pp. 35-6.

[14]"Open Truman Rd.Bids On Feb. 27," Examiner (February 10, 1953), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S Jan.-March 1953, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[15]"Former President Truman Makes His Birthday Just 'Routine Day'," Examiner (May 8, 1953), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence.

[16]"Truman Home Isolated By Work On Road," Examiner (December 15, 1953), p. 6, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence.

[17]"Truman Road Is Dedicated With A Ribbon-Cutting and Luncheon," Examiner (December 16, 1953), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence.

[18]"Mr. Truman Almost A Victim Of One-Way Traffic Change-Over," Examiner (February 10, 1954), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence.

[19]"City Asks For 2-Way Truman Rd., Examiner (June 20, 1961), p. 1; and, Robert P. Weatherford, Jr., Oral History Interview, Independence, Mo., June 11, 1976, by J.R. Fuchs, HSTL, p. 37. The city lost further Bureau of Public Roads funds because of the breached contract.

Telephone

Telephone service first came to the North Delaware Street neighborhood in 1896.[1] Jackson County was served by a dual system, the Bell Telephone Company and the Independence Home Telephone Company. The later became the second telephone company in Independence when the city granted a concession to J.S. Haley to erect telephone poles and wires on May 2, 1903.[2] Each company was independent of the other and, therefore, incapable of connecting with the other's system. During the Trumans' courtship, Harry Truman would call "64", the number of the Gates house on North Delaware Street, on the Home system from his Grandview farm.[3] There is evidence, however, that the Gates house had both Home and Bell telephone service.[4]

Neither the Bell nor Home system was especially reliable in their infant days. Customers had to go through an operator and endure long waits after which it was not uncommon to get the wrong number or be cut-off. Direct dialing did not come until after World War I.[5] By that time, Bell Telephone Company had become dominant in Jackson County. By March 1918, 219 North Delaware was served only by the Bell system.[6]

According to Margaret Truman, from her earliest recollections (late 1920s), only two telephones were present in her

family home through the presidential period. The telephones, both of which were the upright post variety, were located beneath the first floor stairs and in the Trumans' second floor bedroom. The upstairs telephone number was 1523J while the number downstairs was 1523W. Although different, "it didn't make any difference with the W and the J because if you answered one you could hear everything that was said on the other one.... They both rang; when you called one, they both rang."[7]

When the First Lady, daughter Margaret, and Mrs. Madge Wallace returned to Independence for the summer in early June 1945, the President was unable to call them as he would later come frequently to do. The telephone there had apparently been changed to a new, unlisted number. In a June 7 letter, he sheepishly explained to Mrs. Truman, "I lost the phone number you gave me by putting it where I could find it."[8]

During the Truman presidency, to guard against any chance of illegal telephonic eavesdropping, a special telephone was installed next to the telephone adjacent to the stairway. Providing a direct link either to the White House or any other place in the world, the special telephone operated with a "scrambler" which ensured that no third party listening in could understand the conversation. On one occasion, President

Truman called his family during the Potsdam Conference using the "scrambler" telephone system.[9]

With the return of the Secret Service in December 1965, additional telephones were installed.[10] A phone was put in the library and the kitchen. The kitchen phone was equipped with a jack which permitted it to be plugged into a similar jack on the back porch in the summertime, or taken upstairs and used in the Trumans' bedroom where the old telephone had been removed. After President Truman's death, the telephone by the stairs was removed and another telephone with a long cord was put in the first floor bedroom for Mrs. Truman's use.[11]

Telephone

[1]Elizabeth Paxton Forsling, "Remembering Delaware Street," Jackson County Historical Society Journal, Vol. III, No. 8 (May 1962), p. 11, as appended to Sue Gentry, Oral History Interview, August 30, 1971, by Dr. Philip C. Brooks, HSTL. Mrs. Forsling was a childhood friend of Mrs. Bess Wallace Truman and sister of Mary Paxton Keeley.

[2]"Independence Home Telephone Company," Ordinance No. 1769, Revised Ordinances of Independence, Missouri, 1910, Compiled, Arranged, and Indexed by Allen C. Southern and John H. Hardin (Independence: The Examiner Printing Company, 1911), p. 300, Office of the City Clerk.

[3]Robert H. Ferrell, Dear Bess: The Letters From Harry to Bess Truman, 1910 to 1959 (New York: W.W. Norton and

Company, 1983), pp. 45; 119. The letter from Harry Truman to Bess Wallace was dated March 12, 1913.

[4]Ibid., p. 86. In a letter to Bess Wallace dated June 18, 1912, Harry Truman wrote that while he was in Kansas City, he tried to call her seven times--six times on the Home and once on the Bell systems.

[5]Ibid., p. 45.

[6]Ibid., p. 252. The letter from Mr. Truman was dated March 21, 1918. Truman had called his fiancee at 5 a.m. that day from the Rock Island Railroad depot in the Armourdale District of Kansas City, Kansas. He was on a troop train en route from Fort Lawton, Oklahoma, to New York City, and then on to the Western Front in France. He related how he had to search frantically for a Bell phone. Apologizing for the early hour, he wrote: "I am sorry to have disturbed your mother but I hope she'll forgive me this time."

[7]Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 46.

[8]Ibid., p. 515.

[9]"Smithsonian World: Transcript of Margaret Truman's Tour of the Truman Home in Independence, Missouri, and Interview with David McCullough on November 19, 1983," Typewritten transcript, p. 46.

[10]Robert W. Phillips, "Truman Trips Recalled By Personal Aide," Kansas City Star (October 1, 1973), p. 1, folder-Westwood, Mike, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[11]Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 46.

Carriage House/Barn

The carriage house, which measures 32.7 by 24.3 feet, has always been known to the Gates/Wallace/Truman family as "the barn." Its construction date is unknown, but its heavy timber construction suggests that the barn served as a support building for the original Gates house.[1]

Photographs of Bess Wallace and her family on the rear lawn in 1904 reveal the barn in the background. A wooden ramp leads from the gravel drive into the barn's interior and two large, sliding barn doors are on the north (front) facade. The color of the barn appears to be light gray with dark trim, colors which match those of the main house at this time period (See Figures 54, 55, and 56).

In the first decade of the century, the barn housed George P. Gates's carriage. Whether a horse was kept there is not known.

By 1914, the barn had been converted into a garage to shelter the Gates automobile. Another vehicle it sheltered was the 1911 Stafford that Harry Truman purchased in 1914. Driving from his Grandview farm to see Bess Wallace, Truman parked it in the barn next to Mr. Gates's automobile.[2] The second garage

FIGURE 54

Truman Library Photo Archives, 82-59-76

Barn, Trellis, and Outbuilding

Circa 1904

Evidence of a small outbuilding to the east of the barn can be seen. The existence of an outbuilding is verified by the 1907 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (See Appendix). The picket fence surrounding the garden and grazing area is also visible. From Left to Right: Bess Wallace, Nellie Noland, Frank Wallace, Ethel Noland, Fred Wallace (child), and Will Boger.

FIGURE 55

Truman Library Photo Archives, 82-59-99

Backyard/Barn Detail (1)

Circa 1904

Bess Wallace stands in the backyard of 219 North Delaware.

FIGURE 56

Truman Library Photo Archives, 66-277

Backyard/Barn Detail (2)

Circa 1904

Group on lawn of the Gates house, Left to Right: Fred Wallace, Ethel Noland, Nellie Noland, Frank Wallace, Bess Wallace (eating watermelon), George Wallace, and Will Boger.

Source: Noland Papers.

building immediately east of the barn was built in 1922 for Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace's Essex.[3]

In early October 1939, the barn received a new roof, installed by someone other than the family's handyman.[4]

During the presidential era, when the Secret Service was charged with protecting the First Family, the west side of the barn, which was used as a garage by both the Truman and two Wallace families, was converted into what originally was intended to be a temporary operating station. The Secret Service continued to use the barn even when the small security booth was built adjacent to the barn in late 1945.[6]

In the 1950s when the property underwent modernization, the renovation of the old barn was proposed to the Trumans. The deterioration of the long neglected structure concerned the couple. In the mid-1950s, carpenter Charles E. Anderson offered to work on the barn. He proposed raising the structure off its stone foundation and repair or replace it with concrete. He also offered to replace the sections of rotted wood. In their discussions, both Mr. and Mrs. Truman stressed their preference of preserving the original appearance of the structure in any improvement work done. With the renovations in the house taking top priority, carpentry work on the barn

was cancelled. Mr. Truman informed Anderson that he could not afford it.[7]

Anderson did do a small amount of work on the barn, however. On January 9, 1956, he installed the weathervane atop the cupola.[8] On April 30, 1956, some repairs were done on the weathervane.[9]

A fire took place at some unknown time in the barn. Evidence of charred timbers can be seen in the interior southwest corner. The second level loft, full of cut wood boards and packing crates from the White House, is accessible only by crude boards nailed into an inside wall. Two windows on the west wall have been boarded-up.

Carriage House/Barn

[1]Although the 1868 "Bird's Eye View Map of Independence" does not show the barn, it could have been built shortly afterwards or in the 1870s. The Sentinel article discussing the construction of the Gates mansion does not mention the barn.

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

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

[4]Robert Ferrell, Dear Bess (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1983), p. 424. The letter, from Washington, D.C., was dated October 9, 1939. Truman wrote: "Glad you roofed the barn. Hope Frank didn't take it too hard." Frank Wallace was not the likely person who would do this work. However,

according to Margaret Truman's Souvenir, the family's handyman at this time is referred to as "old Frank."

[5]Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 34.

[6]Bess Furman, "Independent Lady From Independence," New York Times Magazine (June 9, 1946), pp. 20; 47.

[7]Charles E. Anderson, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 20, 1983.

[8]Invoice, Anderson to Harry S Truman, January 9, 1956, folder-Truman, Harry S, Misc. Work, Personal Work Files of Charles E. Anderson, Holden, Mo. No material costs were included.

[9]Ibid., invoice, April 30, 1956.

Domestic Help

Like most of their neighbors, the Gates always had domestic servants, all of whom were Afro-Americans. Black women did all the cooking and cleaning work at the house. The common practice was for the cook to come to the house before each meal, prepare the food, and then go back to her own home taking all the left-overs with her. This arrangement kept the cost of having a cook minimal.[1] The large force of black domestics lived in three segregated areas of Independence. Those who worked in the Delaware Street area lived in the section known as "The Neck." The Neck was adjacent to McCauley Park (at the termination of North Delaware Street and the present location of the Truman Library) and the commuter train station to Sugar Creek and Kansas City.[2]

Miss Vietta Garr, who was also black, began working for Madge Wallace in 1929 and stayed with the family until she retired in the early 1970s. Vietta Garr went with the Trumans and Madge Wallace when they moved to Washington, but quit her job for a short time when the family went back to Washington in late 1944. She was rehired in the summer of 1945 and went with the family to the White House in the fall.[3]

When the Trumans came back to Independence in 1953, they

found themselves the "subject of gossip" and hard to obtain domestic help. Mr. Truman wrote in Mr. Citizen:

> We found it difficult to get domestic help--help that would, as my mother used to say, "keep their mouths shut when they ought to."
>
> We are of the old fashioned cult that believes in home privacy, and we would much rather do the things that need to be done in the home ourselves than have someone around who will go out and gossip about it.
>
> Most of the people who worked for us before we went to the White House were no longer physically able to do steady work when we returned home. But we got along reasonably well. We have two or three people come in once or twice a week to clean up and help Mrs. Truman get things arranged so that the house runs almost exactly as it used to.[4]

A 1961 article revealed the small scope of the domestic staff and the former President's own household chores:

> The Trumans live in comfort but no elegance. They prefer it that way. They prefer their privacy to a large domestic staff. Thus, they have only one regular in help--a cook--and the occasional use of a gardener.
>
> In the division of labor at the Truman home, the former President lugs out ashes, hauls in firewood, helps with the dishes, moves furniture when the "boss" decides on a new arrangement and, because he rises earlier than anybody, frequently makes his own breakfast.[5]

After the death of Mr. Truman, when Bess Wallace Truman lived at 219 North Delaware alone, the domestic staff remained

small, supplemented only by nurses who came regularly to check on the former First Lady. In 1978, Mrs. Truman had the full-time services of a companion, Mrs. Valerie LaMere, who helped her care for the household and pay the bills.[6]

Domestic Help

[1]Mary Paxton Keeley, Oral History Interview, Columbia, Mo., July 12, 1966, by J.R. Fuchs, HSTL, pp. 49-50.

[2]Elizabeth Paxton Forsling, "Remembering Delaware Street," Jackson County Historical Society Journal, Vol. III, No. 8 (May 1962), p. 11, appended to Sue Gentry, Oral History Interview, Independence, Mo., August 30, 1971, by Dr. Philip C. Brooks, HSTL.

[3]"Truman's Cook Is Doubtful," New York Sun (June 1, 1945); "First Lady Back to White House," Examiner (September 26, 1945), p. 1; and "Mrs. Truman Attends Services For Family Cook," Kansas City Star (January 6, 1974), p. 8B, folder-Truman, Harry S Family Cook (Miss Vietta Garr), Research Room Vertical File, HSTL. Vietta Garr died December 31, 1973, having served the Truman family as cook and maid for nearly half a century. She died after suffering critical burns November 1, 1973, at her home when her dress caught fire from a kitchen stove burner.

[4]Harry S Truman, Mr. Citizen (New York: Popular Library, 1953), p. 56.

[5]Saul Pett, "To Harry Truman Folksy Living Is a Joy," Kansas City Star (August 27, 1961), p. 10F, folder-Truman, Harry S July-Sept. 1961, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL.

[6]"Bess Truman: A Life Portrait; Phase V: Living Alone," Examiner (October 18, 1982), p. 6B.

Moving From 219 North Delaware?

The question of the Trumans moving from their home either to a permanent location in Independence, Washington, D.C., or elsewhere has surfaced a number of times.

Upon the death of George Porterfield Gates in June 1918, Bess Wallace mentioned in a letter to her fiance fighting in France that she was considering moving to a smaller house. Harry Truman responded, "I do wish I could be there to help you decide whether you'd stay in a huge house or a small one. It wouldn't take me two minutes to decide."[1]

During their first year of marriage, Truman attempted to buy a house for himself and his new bride. Fifteen years later he wrote, "My 1920 experience buying a house almost made a coward out of me...."[2]

In 1935, the Trumans discussed the possibility of building their own house in Washington to escape the inconvenience of apartment living. Truman wrote to his wife:

> I'd like very much to build the house and we'll look it over when I get home. But you know a house said to cost $8,500 will cost $10,500 and it is necessary to have a lot clear--and one where we'd want to be will cost $2,500 anyway. So you can see how it piles up. There would be at least $2,000 or $2,500 in furniture too.[3]

In the last weeks of the Truman Presidency, family lawyer Rufus Burrus believed that the family might want to relocate into a more modern, spacious home. Burrus and an Independence realtor, apparently acting without the consent of the President, found a large home on a sizeable piece of land on the "northern edge of town." He informed the President that it could be purchased at a bargain price. Truman said that 219 North Delaware was "a comfortable place to be," and, in response to buying the other residence, said, "No. It sure is a good price, but I've got all the property that I can care take of right now."[4]

The Trumans did return to the house on North Delaware to live together nearly 20 years in retirement. Speculation about moving to the East was rampant, especially during the spring of 1953. Press reports ranged from Harry and Bess Truman searching for a Park Avenue apartment in New York City to bidding for a 54-acre estate in Connecticut. The former President consistently denied the reports.[5]

Moving From 219 North Delaware?

[1]Robert H. Ferrell, Dear Bess (New York: W.W. Norton

and Company, 1983), p. 267. The letter was postmarked in France, July 31, 1918.

[2]Ibid., p. 371. The letter was postmarked Washington, D.C., July 12, 1935.

[3]Ibid.

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

[5]Robert Conway, "Trumans Eye A 500G Conn. Estate," New York Daily News (March 19, 1953); and, "Truman Denies Seeking A Home on Park Ave.," New York World-Telegram (March 18, 1953), folder-Homes--HST, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL. The reports were fueled by the belief that the couple wanted to be near their daughter whose singing career centered in the New York area. Also, it was believed Mr. Truman wanted to consult with Henry S. Luce, publisher of Time, Life, and Fortune magazines, to which Truman had sold the rights to his memoirs.

Animals at 219 North Delaware

Before her marriage, Bess Wallace had a dog named "Gypsy" which was allowed free roam of the neighborhood. Of unknown breed, the dog was long legged and tan colored.[1] Bess Wallace also had calico chickens, a number of which died from the cool spring weather of 1911.[2] The animals probably were housed in one of the small outbuildings which appear on the 1907 Sanborn Map.

As late as the 1910s, the Gates had one milk cow which was kept in a shed on the property. Lot 1, where the Wallace brothers' homes were later built, partially served as a pasture area for the cow. George Wallace, whose duty it was to milk the cow, unaffectionately referred to it as "Susie Damn."[3] City personal property tax records for the mid to late 1890s reveal George P. Gates not only owned a cow, but he had a horse as well.[4]

An ordinance "restraining all kinds of stock from running at large within the city limits" was passed by the Board of Aldermen on August 25, 1884. Cattle, horses, mules, donkeys, sheep, and goats were listed as public nuisances and prohibited from roaming at large. If observed running free, the animal's owner could be fined from $5 to $10, and the City Marshall was

directed to impround the animal until the fine was satisfied.[5]

Before she was 10 years old, Margaret Truman had two ill-fated episodes with pets. On one cold winter night, the girl left her goldfish bowl on the rear porch next to the cistern. The following morning the unfortunate goldfish was frozen solid in its bowl. Margaret also had a "little white dog" which her mother continuously admonished her to take care of or she would give it away. Bess Truman's warnings went unheeded and the dog was soon given to a family on a nearby farm.[6]

"Mike," an Irish Setter and the official White House pet, was an April 1945 gift to Margaret Truman from Robert "Tom" Hannegan, former Chairman of the Democratic National Committee and Postmaster General during the Truman administration. Mike arrived in Independence for the first time on June 2, 1945, to "a new gleaming white kennel with his name lettered above the door" on the rear lawn.[7] Mike was shipped back to Washington, D.C., and his White House enclosure after only two months; he consistently slipped out of his harness and roamed free throughout the Independence neighborhood.[8] Mike never returned. The spirited dog was given away to a man in Virginia who raised bird dogs.

Many different kinds of animals have made 219 North Delaware their unauthorized home. Squirrels fleeing from dogs frequently darted behind the fragile porch skirting to escape. The resulting damage required continuous latticework maintenance. Birds of all kinds have taken up residence in the attic as did a raccoon in the 1960s. The raccoon made a shambles out of two century-old featherbeds before it was discovered and evicted.[9] Mrs. Truman demanded that the Secret Service men take the raccoon alive. The directive caused the agents much grief as the animal became quite vicious during its pursuit.[10] The family waged a continuous war with pigeons who enjoyed building nests under the eaves. Men were hired periodically to shoot the pests and remove their nests.[11]

George P. Wallace claimed that he once saw a snake in his northwest second floor bedroom (the Truman dressing room). The reptile apparently slithered up from a hole in the floorboards.[12]

Animals at 219 North Delaware

[1]Mrs. H.H. (Ardis) Haukenberry, Interview, Independence,

Mo., June 14, 1983.

[2]Robert H. Ferrell, Dear Bess (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1983), pp. 31; 35. The letters are dated May 3 and 17, 1911.

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

[4]Assessor's Book of Real Estate, Independence, Missouri, for Year 1894; 1895; 1896; 1897; and 1898, City of Independence, Limestone Storage Facility, 16400 West Truman Road. City tax records exist as early as 1894 only.

[5]"An Ordinance Restraining all kinds of stock from running at large within the city limits," No. 64, approved August 25, 1884, Record Book of Ordinances, City of Independence, Book B, pp. 136-7, Office of the City Clerk.

[6]Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 30.

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

[8]Ibid., "First Lady Off For White House," Examiner (August 8, 1945), p. 1. See also, Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 30.

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

[10]Mrs. Elizabeth Safly, Research Room Librarian, Harry S. Truman Library.

[11]Robert Sanders, Interview, Independence, Missouri, June 30, 1983.

[12]Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview at 219 North Delaware, July 20, 1983.