Natchez Trace Parkway

The John Gordon House

Cultural Landscape Report

June 2013

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National Park Service

Southeast Region

Cultural Resources Division



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Cultural Landscape Report

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Foreword

We are pleased to make available this cultural landscape report, part of our ongoing effort to provide comprehensive documentation for the landscapes and historic structures of National Park Service (NPS) units in the Southeast Region (SER). A number of individuals and institutions contributed to the successful completion of this work. We would particularly like to thank the staff at Natchez Trace Parkway for their assistance throughout the process. We hope this study will be a useful tool for park management in continuing efforts to preserve the cultural landscape and to others interested in the significance of the park's many cultural resources.

Dan Scheidt, Chief
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Introduction

Management Summary

The Natchez Trace Parkway, authorized by Congress on May 18, 1938, is a 444-mile linear park that stretches from Nashville, Tennessee, to Natchez, Mississippi, through exceptional scenery and 10,000 years of North American history. The parkway commemorates the historic Natchez Trace, a series of pathways used by American Indians, "Kaintucks," settlers, and future presidents.

The National Park Service (NPS) acquired the John Gordon property as part of the Natchez Trace Parkway (NATR) Section 1-D right-of-way in 1973. The John Gordon House is the one of the earliest brick houses in Middle Tennessee. It is one of two surviving structures along the Natchez Trace, whose most frequent travelers in the late 1700s through the mid-1820s were boatmen returning to Middle Tennessee from the Natchez and New Orleans markets. The John Gordon Ferry site, located on the north bank of the Duck River, carried travelers using the Natchez Trace across the river. The ferry operated from 1803 until 1896, when Hickman and Maury counties built a bridge across the Duck River.

On April 18, 1974, the house and sixty-eight acres were listed in the National Register of Historic Places. A 1977 amendment reduced the acreage from sixty-eight acres to ten. The property is significant under Criterion B (Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past) and Criterion C (Embodies distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values). The only contributing resource listed in the nomination is the house.



Figure 1. Natchez Trace Parkway (NATR image)

Cultural landscapes are settings man has created in the natural world. They reveal fundamental ties between people and the land because of the need to grow food, give form to our settlements, meet requirements for recreation, and find suitable places to bury our dead. Landscapes are intertwined patterns of things both natural and constructed: plants and fences, waterways and buildings. They range from formal gardens to historic cotton fields, military parade grounds to community settlements. They are special places—expressions of human manipulation and adaptation of the land.

The purpose of this cultural landscape report (CLR) is to document the physical development of the John Gordon property beginning with the establishment of the John Gordon Ferry in 1802 to the present. A site history is followed by a description of the current condition of the property and an analysis of historical significance and integrity. This includes an evaluation of the historic and contemporary landscape characteristics, such as changes in spatial organization, circulation, and vegetation. With an understanding of the historic fabric, character-defining features of the cultural landscape are identified. The report then presents treatment issues and recommendations to direct the active management of the cultural landscape.

A Development Concept Plan was completed for the site in 1983. A General Management Plan (GMP) for the Natchez Trace Parkway was completed in 1987. In 2011, an effort began with the Tennessee Land Trust to seek viewshed

protection for seven square miles of the Duck River valley.

Historical Summary

In 1802, John Gordon formed a partnership with the Chickasaw chief General William Colbert in a business enterprise in which they were to take over the buildings and boats built by troops at the Duck River cantonment and operate a ferry along with a stand or inn. Apparently, the partnership with Colbert did not work well, and Gordon lost money in the early stages of the venture. Gordon claimed that he complied with all the stipulations while Colbert did not. After the Chickasaw surrendered all lands north of the Duck River to the United States in 1805, the Tennessee legislature passed an act in 1806 giving John Gordon pre-emptive right to 640 acres at Gordon's Ferry. An additional 640-acre-tract, through which the Natchez Trace passed to the ferry and on which Gordon later built the two-story, brick house, was granted to him on June 17, 1809.

Sometime between 1808 and 1812, Gordon moved his family and slaves from Nashville to the Duck River. John Gordon's role as trader, farmer, innkeeper, and ferryman was interrupted by the Creek Indian War, which began in 1813 when a faction of Creeks known as Red Sticks sought to return their society to a traditional way of life. Andrew Jackson enlisted John Gordon to command a company of mounted spies, which Gordon did beginning on September 24, 1813. Gordon and his spies fought in a series of hard battles, beginning with Talladega on November 9, 1813, and ending with the decisive Battle of Horseshoe Bend on March 27, 1814.

John Gordon returned home. Besides operating his farm, he seems to have continued his previous trading ventures and was in Pensacola again in 1818 on mercantile business when Andrew Jackson again sought him out to lead a company of spies in a campaign against the Seminole Indians.

John Gordon's ferry and farm continued to do well enough during this time for the construction of a brick house while he was away. Gordon returned from the Seminole campaigns to the new brick house in 1818. John Gordon died of pneumonia on June 16, 1819.

After the death of John Gordon, his estate was divided among his heirs. His wife, Dolly Cross Gordon, continued to live in the house until her death in 1859. During this time, she farmed the land with the help of her sons and slaves, producing cotton, cattle, and hogs. Stories about her letting passing Indians sleep on her porch have always been part of local legend.

At Dolly Cross Gordon's death in 1859, the house and land on which it stood were purchased by her grandson, Richard Cross Gordon. He graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1861 and served in the Confederate Army. After the Civil War, he returned to farming and was also a local politician. Although he cultivated the land, he resided at Cross Bridges, Tennessee, about five miles away and probably never moved to the John Gordon property. During this time, the operation of the ferry continued.

On January 27, 1879, Richard Cross Gordon conveyed the John Gordon property in trust to George W. Stockard as security against various debts. In 1883, a small tract of land was transferred from Hickman to Maury County, enabling the two counties to share the cost of a new steel bridge over the Duck River. The change shifted a portion of the Gordon property from Hickman to Maury County. Three months later, the Hickman-Maury Turnpike Company was incorporated with authority to build a toll road from Sawdust, Tennessee, to Gordon's Ferry. The completion of the bridge, appropriately named County Line Bridge, occurred in 1896.[1]

By 1896, George Stockard had died. The house, with possibly 155 or 160 acres, may have been acquired by G. P. Mayberry and his wife, Ethel, at this time or earlier. It is not clear from deeds when Mayberry acquired the property, nor whether Stockard ever took ownership, although he held the property in trust for years. It was Mayberry and his wife who on August 31, 1896, sold it to A. Hooten.

1 Dawson Phelps, "Gordon's Ferry: A Study of the Historic Sites in the Vicinity of the Natchez Trace Crossing of the Duck River, Tennessee" (Natchez Trace Parkway, 1945, mimeographed), 3, 17; Douglas Edward Leach, "John Gordon of Gordon's Ferry" (Natchez Trace Parkway, 1959, mimeographed), 69; Joseph K. Oppermann, *Draft John Gordon House Historic Structure Report* (Atlanta, GA: Southeast Regional Office, 2011), 33-34.

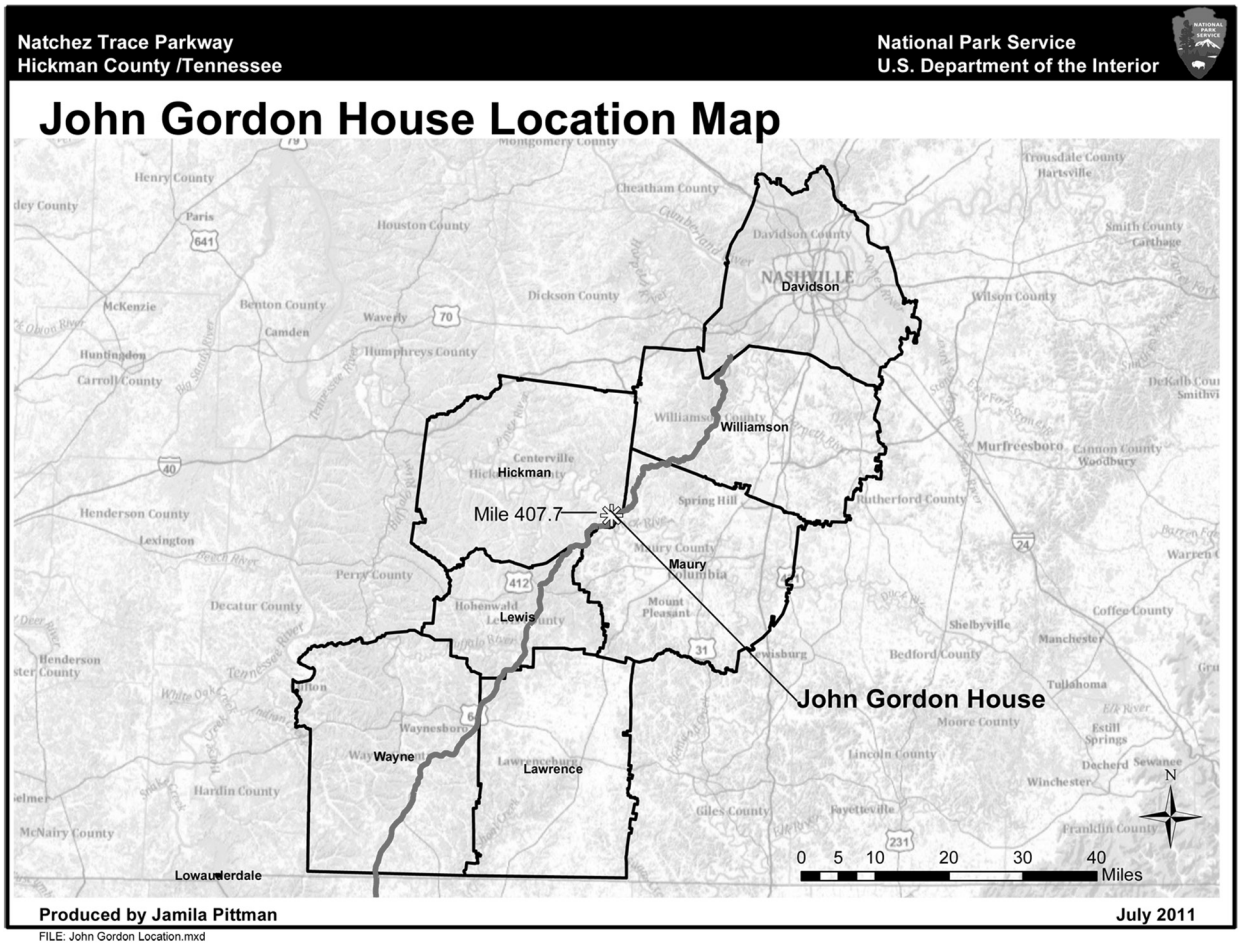


Figure 2. The John Gordon House location map. (NPS image)

It is also not known whether the Hootens lived in the house. On October 27, 1904, Hooten sold the house and 107 acres to W. C. Jewell and his son, Richard S. Jewell, who held it jointly until W. C. Jewell's death on December 8, 1918. The Jewells apparently also bought 130 acres on the Duck River from T. H. Ervin and his wife on February 23, 1909. During their ownership, the Jewells are believed to have built, modified, or enlarged an existing rear ell, to have built or rebuilt the front porch, and to have built several outbuildings.[2]

The state of Tennessee acquired the right-of-way for Section 1-D of the Natchez Trace Parkway beginning in 1966. A 72-acre tract was acquired from the Jewell family for the John Gordon House development in 1969. The NPS acquired the John Gordon House in 1973 from the state of Tennessee, along with the other properties in Section 1-D.[3]

The NPS restored the house in 1978 to its approximate 1818 exterior appearance, removing a two-story rear addition and two-story front portico. The demolition of several outbuildings dating to the early twentieth century occurred at this time. An earlier, one-story framing system was left standing, but it too was taken down in 1995. Efforts to determine the specific construction date and configuration of the front porch were unsuccessful.

A Development Concept Plan, completed in 1983, guided visitor services. To access the site, the NPS constructed a visitor parking lot and comfort station/picnic shelter in 1986 just off the Natchez Trace Parkway. The park added hiking trails down to the Duck River in 1993.[4]

2 Oppermann, 35-36; Phelps, "Gordon's Ferry, 12; Leach, 75.

3 1974 National Register Nomination.

4 Personal communication, Ron Bishop; Superintendent's Annual Report, 1986.

Study Boundary

The John Gordon House and Ferry site are located in section 1-D of the Natchez Trace Parkway just east of the Gordon Ferry Bridge at mile marker 407.7. The property is located in Maury and Hickman counties, about 40 miles south of Nashville, midway between Centerville and Columbia, Tennessee. The approximate 45.2-acre site consists of the 1818 house and grounds, a modern comfort station/ picnic shelter with a 14-car parking area and an information kiosk, and a trail down to the Duck River where waysides interpret the old Natchez Trace and the John Gordon Ferry. The house stands on high ground overlooking the floodplain of the Duck River. The historic landscape associated with the John Gordon property includes the original structure, the grounds surrounding it, a cemetery, and the belowground remains of the John Gordon Ferry/stand and cantonment site. No original outbuildings survive aboveground.

Scope of Work and Methodology

The cultural landscapes branch of the Southeast Region Cultural Resources Division (SER-CRD) completed the study. SER-CRD staff performed archival research, prepared the site history, documented existing conditions, and prepared comparative analyses, integrity evaluations, and treatment recommendations. The site history, existing conditions, and analysis and evaluation sections identify the historical values associated with the landscape, document extant landscape characteristics and features, and define the significance and integrity of the landscape. Treatment recommendations enable the park to better manage its cultural landscape.

Research was conducted during April 2009 at the Natchez Trace archives in Tupelo, Mississippi. Existing conditions documentation was undertaken during two site visits, one in April 2009 and one in August 2011 at the John Gordon House. During the second site visit, SER-CRD staff met with key park staff to discuss management issues and treatment concerns regarding the cultural landscape. During both site visits, SER-CRD staff ground-truthed and annotated base maps and completed digital photography as part of the existing conditions survey.

SER-CRD staff completed comparative analyses and integrity evaluations by comparing historical information—taken from the written site history and historic maps and photographs—to existing conditions data in order to understand how the landscape changed over time. The landscape characteristics and associated features, values, and associations that make a landscape historically significant were identified. Integrity evaluations used the seven aspects of historic integrity as described in *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports* and standards set by the National Register of Historic Places.

Appropriate treatment recommendations were developed from the condition assessments and the results of the comparative analyses and integrity evaluations. Recommendations responded to existing issues and offered suggestions that would preserve and enhance the park's historic landscape character, as well as improve interpretation efforts.

Primary resources consulted include histories of Maury and Hickman counties; several studies by Dawson Phelps; Octavia Zollicoffer Bond, *The Family Chronicle and Kinship Book of Maclin, Clack, Cocke, Carter, Taylor, Cross, Gordon, and other related American lineages*; and Douglas Edward Leach, "John Gordon of Gordon's Ferry."

There has been no evaluation of the landscape features at the John Gordon House. Michael Emrick completed a preliminary historic structure report in 1988. A comprehensive historic structure report by Joseph K. Oppermann-Architect was completed in 2012. Other park planning documents consulted include the *Natchez Trace Parkway Administrative History*, *Design Guidelines Natchez Trace Parkway*, and numerous archeological studies conducted between 1975 and 2000.

In addition to park planning documents, M.W. Myers, *The Cultural Geography of the Natchez Trace Area to 1861*; Stephen V. Ash, *Middle Tennessee Society Transformed;* Michael H. Bureman, "An Historical Overview of the Natchez Trace"; William C. Davis, *A Way Through the Wilderness: The Natchez Trace and the Civilization of the Southern Frontier; David L. Winters, Tennessee Farming, Tennessee Farmers;* Lisa Tolbert, *Constructing Townscapes: Space and Society in Antebellum*

Tennessee were key sources consulted, as well as numerous NPS reports.

Summary of Findings

The period of significance for the John Gordon House cultural landscape is 1818. This period corresponds with the construction date of the house and reflects the height of travel along the Natchez Trace when boatmen returning from Natchez and New Orleans passed near the house after the John Gordon Ferry crossing of the Duck River. No aboveground buildings survive from any other period of occupation.

The dwelling house is the centerpiece of the John Gordon homestead cultural landscape. It is the one of the oldest structures surviving along the historic Natchez Trace and was one of the earliest brick houses in Tennessee. The exterior of the house has been restored to its construction date of 1818. Efforts to determine if a front porch was original to the house were inconclusive, and the house is currently without a front porch, steps, or railings.

The John Gordon Ferry, located on the north bank of the Duck River slightly above the base of the hill east of Fattybread Branch, was in use until 1896, at which time the County Line Bridge was constructed. The spatial relationship of the house, the Natchez Trace, the ferry site, and the river were restored when old TN 50 was relocated north of the house, but the NPS converted a portion of the road trace to an asphalt path. In its present configuration, there is little association between the house and the river, and the cantonment site is only mentioned on a wayside. It appears that many visitors walk down to the house and never take advantage of the trail down to the river.

Also missing is the spatial relationship of the dwelling house and its surrounding landscape features. The NPS removed the outbuildings and other landscape features dating to the twentieth century in the 1970s.

Little is known about the cultural vegetation of the site. It appears from historic photographs that large specimen trees dominated the landscape. Only one of these trees survives. A few heirloom bulbs persist in the landscape.

The site retains integrity of location. The site suffers from a loss of the associated landscape features around the house and lacks a coherent connection to the cantonment/stand site, ferry, and river, affecting integrity of setting, design, feeling, and association. The house lacks most of the architectural features added after 1819, but it retains its form, floor plan, and significant interior elements from the time of original construction.

The overarching treatment recommended for the historic landscape is preservation of all identified historic resources. Rehabilitation/restoration is recommended for the John Gordon House, as outlined in the 2012 historic structure report. Restoration is recommended for the historic road trace in front of the house, which at one time intersected a portion of the Natchez Trace east of the house. Additional archeology is recommended in the area surrounding and north of the dwelling house to determine the location of the original outbuildings, circulation patterns, and fence lines associated with the John Gordon House, as their location would enhance interpretation of the historic spatial patterns of the landscape. Additional excavation is also needed for the ferry and cantonment site, whose probable locations were found by shovel test in 1985. An effort to further link the river and the remainder of the site by construction of canoe steps along the Duck River should be considered.

Site History

Native American Occupation

Mississippian is the term used by archeologists to describe the diverse pre-European contact societies of American Indians who eventually inhabited the fertile river valleys of the Tennessee, Cumberland, and Mississippi Rivers. From approximately A.D. 700 to the arrival of the first European explorers during the sixteenth century, the mound-building Mississippians thrived, sustained primarily by agriculture. The cultivation of maize or corn allowed them to produce food surpluses, which eventually led to a more centralized society. European contact, beginning with the Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto on the west coast of Florida in 1539, brought diseases that ravaged the Mississippian Indians. As their populations plummeted, the surviving Mississippians began uniting into new tribes, dominated by the Creek, the Chickasaw, the Choctaw, and the Seminole. The Cherokee, who occupied the hill and mountain country of western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee, eventually became the largest tribe in the southeast.[1]

The tribal identities of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century occupants of Tennessee are disputed. By the eighteenth century, the only native peoples living permanently in Tennessee were the Cherokee. The Chickasaw controlled western Tennessee, but there is no archeological or historical evidence that they used the area for more than hunting. The Shawnee and Creek briefly occupied small areas in the state, but little archeological evidence has been found.[2]

The Chickamauga

After a peace treaty between Cherokee and white settlers in 1777, followers of chief Dragging Canoe, all of whom opposed the peace, separated from the tribe and relocated to East Tennessee. This secessionist group of Cherokees, known as Chickamaugas, were joined by groups of Shawnee and Creek. The Chickamauga engaged in numerous raids with the intention of driving encroaching white settlers out of Indian hunting grounds. A short period of peace took place in the aftermath of the American Revolution, during which time they moved west of Lookout Mountain to the north of the Tennessee River, using Nickajack Cave as their stronghold.



Figure 3. A Creek chieftan (ushistoryimages.com)

1 National Park Service, *Lower Mississippi Delta Region* (Denver: National Park Service, Denver Service Center, 1998), 15-16.

2 http://mcclungmuseum.utk.edu/permanent/native/historic.shtml

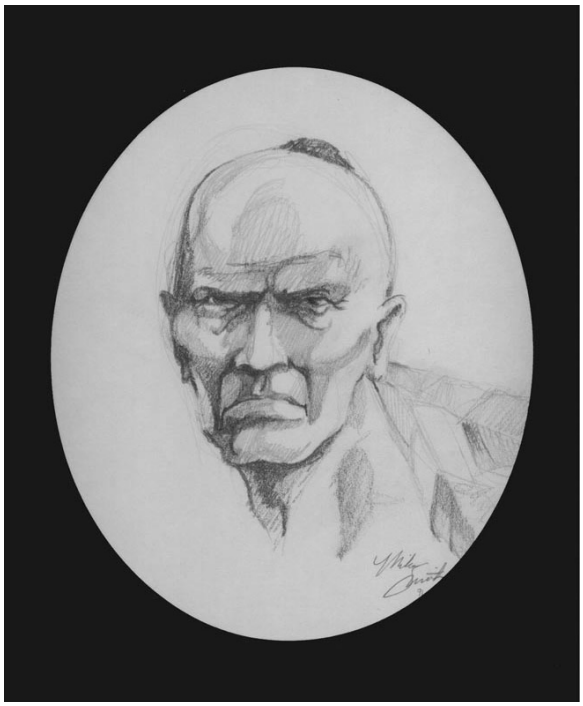


Figure 4. Dragging Canoe (Courtesy Mike Smith)



Figure 5. Chickasaw Indian bust. (Library of Congress LC-USZ60-680)

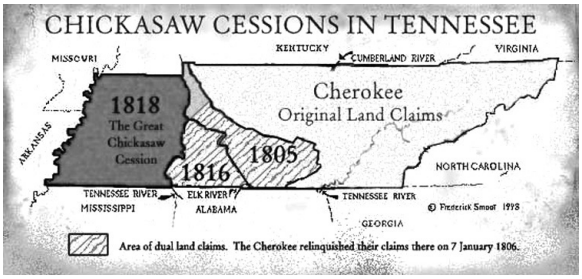


Figure 6. Chickasaw Land Cessions map. (tngenweb.org/maps/index)

During the years 1790 through 1795, there were constant hostilities in the Nashville area, but Territorial Governor William Blount continued with peace negotiations. When Indians killed the sons of Colonel Anthony Bledsoe, as well as Major General George Winchester, in 1794, Blount turned to military action, appointing Major James Ore to lead an expedition. They singled out two Chickamauga villages, Nickajack and Running Water on the Tennessee River, as the point of attack. The army quickly destroyed both villages, leaving seventy dead.[3]

The Chickasaw

While the Chickasaw Indians lived primarily in northern Mississippi during historic times, their extensive land claims included parts of northern Alabama, West and parts of Middle Tennessee, and western Kentucky. Those Tennessee and Kentucky claims were primarily for hunting grounds, which they shared with the Cherokee. The 1786 Treaty of Hopewell between the United States government and the Chickasaw first established the bounds of the Chickasaw Nation.

Their claim included some parts of the Elk and Duck Rivers through western Middle Tennessee. Between 1805 and 1818, three major treaties contained Chickasaw cessions. The 1805 and 1816 Cession limited Chickasaw claims, and the 1818 Cession extinguished major Chickasaw claims in Tennessee.[4]

3 Leach, 19-21; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nickajack_Expedition; Edward Albright, *Early History of Middle Tennessee*, http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~tnsumner/early38.htm.

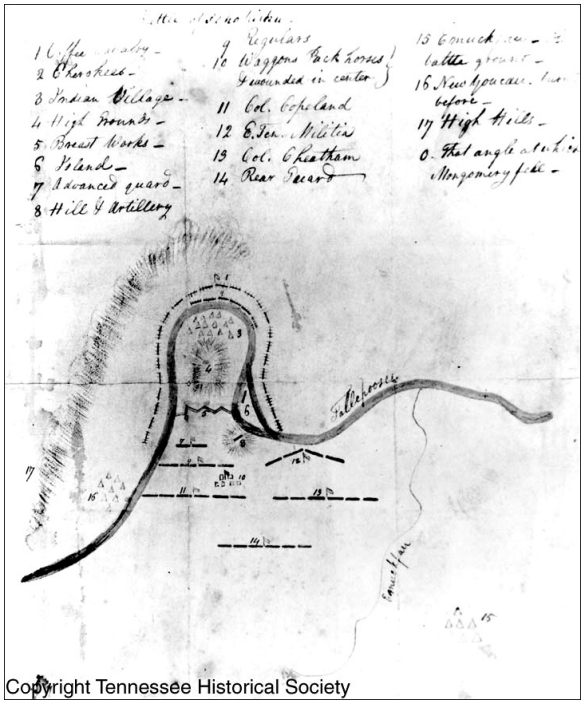
4 Dawson Phelps, "Boundaries Crossed by the Natchez Trace: A Study in the History of the Old Southwest" (Natchez Trace Parkway, 1949, mimeographed), 2, 39, 49; Frederick Smoot, "The Chickasaw and their Cessions," http://www.tngenweb.org/tnfirst/chicksaw/index.html.

The Creek Indian War

The Creek Indian War began in 1813 when a faction of Upper Creeks known as Red Sticks sought to return their society to a traditional way of life. Their revolt was brought on in large part by Anglo encroachment and broken treaties. They attacked Fort Mims, Alabama, a temporary stockade near the confluence of the Tombigbee and Alabama rivers, and killed 500 settlers. The Tennessee legislature authorized Governor Blount to raise a militia, and a campaign against the Creeks led by Andrew Jackson began.

In March of 1814, Andrew Jackson and his Tennessee militia attacked and killed 800 of 1,000 revolting Red Sticks at Horseshoe Bend, Alabama (Horseshoe Bend National Military Park). He then forced upon the Indians a treaty whereby they surrendered to the United States over twenty million acres of their traditional land. Over the next decade, Jackson led the way in the Indian removal campaign, helping to negotiate nine of the eleven major treaties to remove Indians.[5]

5 Leach, 26-30; William C. Davis, *A Way Through the Wilderness: The Natchez Trace and the Civilization of the Southern Frontier* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), 315-17; http://www.nps.gov/hobe/historyculture/index.htm.



Copyright Tennessee Historical Society

Figure 7. The Battle of Horseshoe Bend. (Courtesy Tennessee Historical Society)

Under this kind of pressure, American Indian tribes—specifically the Creek, Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw—realized that they could not defeat the Americans in war, so they adopted a strategy of appeasement. They hoped that by giving up most of their land, they could keep at least a part of it, but a series of treaties forced the tribes to leave their native lands and travel the "Trail of Tears" to land west of the Mississippi River in what is now Oklahoma. With the exception of a small number of Seminoles still resisting removal in Florida, by the 1840s, from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, no Indian tribes retained land in the American South.[6]

Mero District and the Central Basin (1778-1860)

The State of Tennessee had its origins as part of the North Carolina colony. After early exploration, white settlers moved westward, beginning with the establishment of the Watauga Settlement in western North Carolina around 1770. In the 1770s and 1780s, thousands moved across the Blue Ridge Mountains to establish homesteads in the wilderness beyond. Settlers pushed further into the area now known as Middle Tennessee.

North Carolina adopted the United States Constitution in 1789 and joined the Federal Union. North Carolina ceded its western lands to the United States in 1790, and Congress created the Southwest Territory, which included all land owned by the United States south of the Ohio River, in the same year. The territorial government under Governor William Blount lasted six years, at which time it was admitted to the Union as the state of Tennessee.[7]

6 Davis, 280-303; http://www.nps.gov/history/seac/outline/09-beyond/index.htm; Oppermann, 10.

7 http://www.tngenweb.org/tnletters/territories/sw-terr.html; http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=1236; All the land south of the Ohio River suggests a much larger territory than modern-day Tennessee. Even though Kentucky was south of the Ohio River, it was still a part of Virginia when the Southwest Territory was organized in 1790, and it would stay part of Virginia until it became a state in 1792. The land south of modern-day Tennessee was either still claimed by Georgia or disputed with Spain. Part of it would be organized in 1798 as the Mississippi Territory, two years after the Southwest Territory had passed from existence.

Colonial Middle Tennessee

In 1778, James Robertson of the Watauga settlement scouted the area with eight men. French fur traders had been in the area since the late 1600s. Around 1710, Charles Charleville operated a trading post near a salt lick just north of town, later known as the French Lick. French-Canadian Timothy Demonbreun began hunting in the area in the 1760s and was here when the first settlers arrived from western North Carolina.

The following year Robertson returned with a group of close to 250, mostly men and boys, to establish a permanent settlement. They arrived on Christmas Day 1779. Robertson's partner, Colonel John Donelson, brought the families and provisions over 1,000 miles by boat down the Holston and Tennessee Rivers and up the Ohio and Cumberland Rivers to the Cumberland Bluffs, arriving April 24, 1780. Within a week, the Cumberland Compact, the first civil government in Middle Tennessee, was signed by 256 men. They named the settlement Nashborough for General Francis Nash of North Carolina.

The site was on a high bluff overlooking a navigable river, with a salt spring and a fresh water spring. Its major disadvantage in 1780 was its distance of more than 200 miles west of the Watauga-Hoston settlements of eastern Tennessee. In 1784, the name of the settlement was changed to Nashville, probably as a result of anti-British sentiments following the Revolutionary War.[8]

8 http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=964; M. W. Myers, "The Cultural Geography of the Natchez Trace Area to 1861" (Natchez Trace Parkway, 1960, mimeographed), 69.

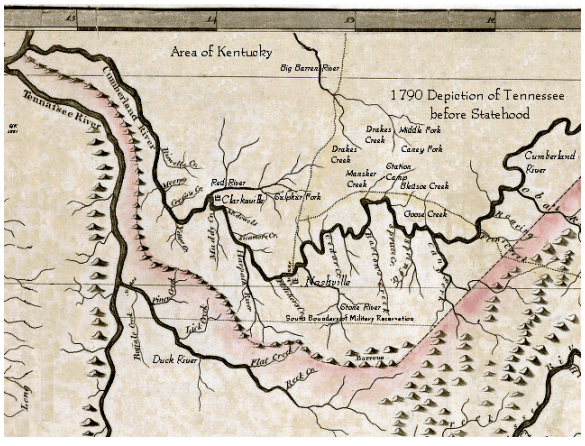


Figure 8. Middle Tennessee before 1790 (usgwarchives.org/maps/)

In 1783, as part of the Treaty of Nashborough, the Chickasaw ceded to North Carolina an area including land in the bend of the Cumberland River and extending south to the Duck River Ridge. The Chickasaw shared hunting rights on this land with the Cherokee and other tribes. This land cession attracted many more people to the Cumberland area. Davidson County was formed in 1783 out of Washington County. The Cherokee confirmed the Duck River Ridge boundary in 1785. The Chickasaw remained friendly, but Indian attacks, mainly by Creeks, were prevalent from 1785 to 1790.[9]

In 1788, North Carolina established a Superior Court district to serve the Cumberland frontier from Nashville south to the crest of the Duck River Ridge. The district was named in honor of the Spanish governor of Louisiana, Esteban Rodrigues Miro, who had served with Spanish troops assisting the Americans during the Revolutionary War. Tensions between the Spanish colonial government and the new nation were high at the time of the establishment of the Mero District. The naming of the new district is credited to James Robertson, who was scheming to establish a good relationship with Miro in order to gain the Spanish governor's assistance in halting attacks from Creeks and Chickamaugas on the Cumberland settlements, and to open the Mississippi River to Cumberland travelers. Robertson and his allies persuaded the North Carolina legislature to name the new district Mero, inadvertently misspelling the name.[10]

In the census of 1791, the Mero District (Davidson, Sumner, and Tennessee counties) had a population of 7,042 out of the territory's total population of 35,691. 1,161 of these were enslaved people, over half residing in Davidson County.

Tennessee acquired statehood in 1796. The establishment of Williamson County in 1799 from the southern part of Davidson County showed that

9 Myers, 70-72; William Robertson Garrett and Albert Virgil Goodpasture, *History of Tennessee, its People and its Institutions* (Nashville, TN: The Brandon Co., 1900), 98-99; Dawson Phelps, "Boundaries Crossed by the Natchez Trace," 50.

10 http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=909; Dawson Phelps, "A Preliminary Report on Stands and Travel Accommodations on the Natchez Trace" (Natchez Trace Parkway, 1948, mimeographed), 65; Chickamaugas were a secessionist group of Cherokees.

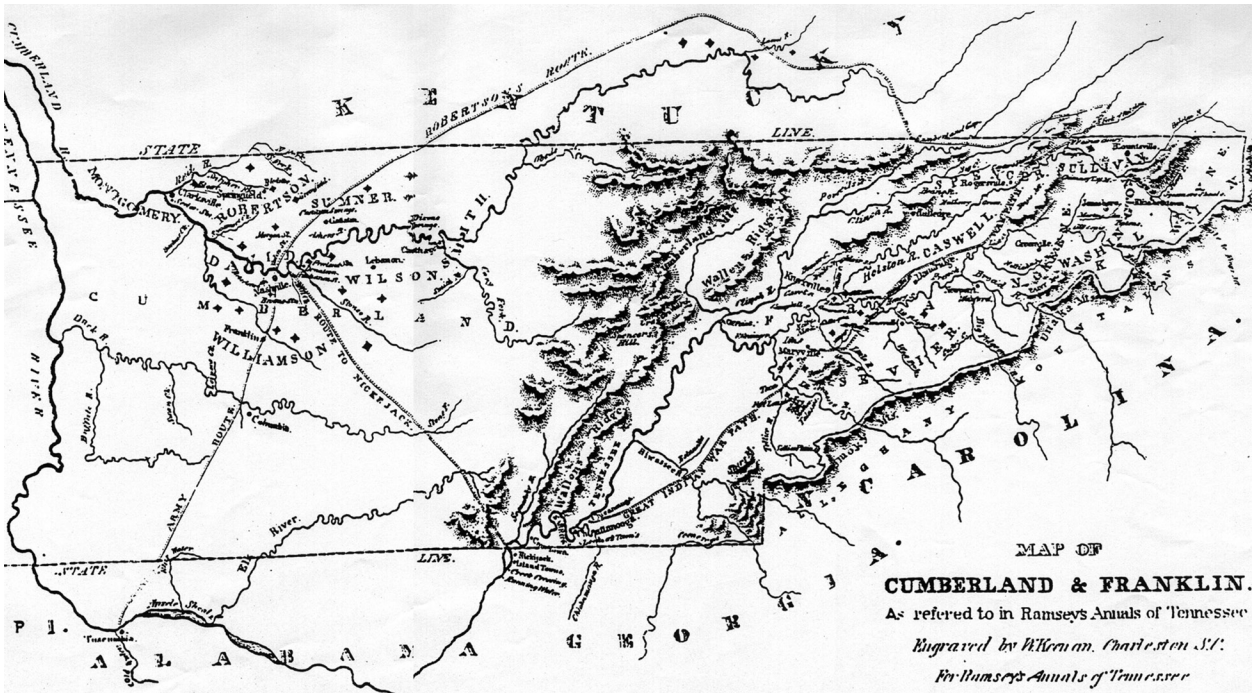


Figure 9. Map showing Williamson County, c. 1799. (*from Ramsey's Annals of Tennessee*)

settlers were moving south to the Duck River Ridge Indian boundary. According to the census of 1800, the Mero District's population had increased to 32,183, approximately one-third of the population of the state of Tennessee. One-fourth of the district's population was enslaved, twice as many as the other two districts of Tennessee combined.[11]

An economy based on corn, livestock, tobacco, and cotton developed in Middle Tennessee with farms that averaged 100 acres. Corn was used primarily for food and later whiskey manufacture. *De Bow's Review*, a popular agricultural journal in the antebellum south, described the importance of corn to early Tennesseans:

> Of all crops, corn is best adapted to the conditions of a pioneer people; and if idolatry is at all justified, Ceres should have had a temple … among the pioneers of Tennessee. Without the grain the pioneer settlements could not have been formed or maintained. It is the most certain crop—requires the least preparation of ground—is most congenial to virgin soil—needs not only the least amount of labor in its culture, but comes to maturity in the shortest time.

Settlers also grew a variety of vegetables in small garden patches and occasionally small grains. They adopted the American Indian practice of planting the three sisters— beans, pumpkins, and squash— between the rows of corn. Tobacco was a cash crop sent down the Cumberland and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans. By 1800, cotton was becoming an export crop.[12]

An early iron industry also developed in Middle Tennessee. Both James Robertson and John Sevier had blast furnaces and forges in Middle Tennessee before 1800. These early forges and furnaces were the beginning of an industry that lasted over a century.[13]

Antebellum Middle Tennessee

On July 23, 1805, the Chickasaw surrendered all lands north of the Duck River to the United States under a treaty negotiated by James Robertson and Silas Dinsmoor. According to the treaty, the southern boundary of the land cession followed the Duck River to the Natchez Trace and continued southward to the ridge between the Duck and the Buffalo rivers and included Gordon's Ferry. In 1807, settlers who quickly moved into this

11 Myers, 73-75.

12 David L. Winters, *Tennessee Farming, Tennessee Farmers* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994) 21, 53-65; Lisa Tolbert, *Constructing Townscapes: Space and Society in Antebellum Tennessee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 6.

13 Myers, 78.

area petitioned for a new county (Maury) "to be bounded on the West by the great road leading from Nashville to Natchez" and on the east by a line drawn so as to pass a point twenty-eight miles due east of John Gordon's Ferry on the Duck River. Columbia, the county seat, was established at this time. Caroline Nicholson, whose family settled at Bear Creek in Maury County, remembered her mother describing how "our father cleared the cane, as high as the house" when he built their first dwelling in the early 1800s.

By 1810, the population of Middle Tennessee had reached 160,000, surpassing that of East Tennessee (101,000). The slave population had also increased to over 35,000, compared to just 9,376 in East Tennessee. In addition to Davidson, Sumner, Robertson, Montgomery, Smith, Wilson, and Williamson counties, twelve new counties were created in Middle Tennessee before 1810. The new county of Maury to the south had a population of over 10,000 in 1810, over one-fourth counted as enslaved. In contrast, Dickson and Hickman counties, largely Highland Rim counties with more difficult topography, had populations of only 4,506 and 2,583 in 1810.[14]

Agriculture in Middle Tennessee expanded from 1800 to 1810, with cotton playing a greater role. Traveling in this area in 1802, the French botanist André Michaux commented that in place of fifty bushels of wheat per acre or twenty-five bushels of corn, farmers could clear 350 pounds of cotton per acre.

By 1820, the older Central Basin counties of Davidson, Williamson, and Maury each had populations of over 20,000. Maury had the largest population of any Middle Tennessee county (22,141). In contrast, two Highland Rim counties, Dickson and Hickman, had only 5,190 and 6,080 respectively. The Central Basin counties also had the largest number of enslaved people, ranging from 6,420 (Maury) to 7,899 (Davidson). [15]

By 1840, the population of Nashville had risen to 6,929. Columbia, the Maury County seat, had a population of around 1,500 and was described in 1833 as "one of the most flourishing towns of Middle Tennessee." Cotton was of central importance in the fertile Central Basin counties, followed by corn, tobacco, and wheat. One author describes the factors that made cotton a desirable cash crop:

> The settlement of the state occurred at a time when the demand for cotton was growing rapidly. Mechanization of cloth making in England in the eighteenth century created a market for enormous amounts of raw cotton, far more than could be supplied by existing sources. The establishment of textile industries elsewhere in Europe and eventually in the United States reinforced and sustained the demand for cotton fiber well into the nineteenth century. Areas in Tennessee with climate and soil conditions suitable for the cultivation of cotton enthusiastically responded to this expanding market and its attractive profits.

Rearing livestock, including fine turf horses, became an important part of the economy. According to one Maury County settler, some land was bought just to fatten hogs, which were then driven to Georgia or South Carolina.

During the 1830s, a number of turnpikes were built from Nashville to outlying towns in an effort to hold or expand the cotton and tobacco economy. By 1841, macadamized toll roads led south to Franklin and Columbia, southeast to Murfreesboro and Shelbyville, west to Charlotte, and northeast to Gallatin and Nolensville. A contrast developed between towns connected by paved turnpikes and a more geographically isolated countryside. This network of turnpikes probably delayed the building of railroads in Middle Tennessee for some years. By 1859, Nashville had railroad service north to Louisville and east to Chattanooga, while other links were in the construction phase.[16]

From 1840 to 1860, cotton production continued to increase in Middle Tennessee. A greater amount of the state's cotton, however, was being produced in West Tennessee (85% by 1860), and production of cotton was declining in many Middle Tennessee counties. There was an increasing interest in a more diversified economy, including wheat, tobacco, and livestock, which were more suited to

14 Myers, 120, 126, plate III; Tolbert, 18.

15 Francois André Michaux, *Travels to the Westward of the Allegany Mountains* (London: W. Flint, 1805), 93; Myers, 128, 153.

16 Myers, 197, 205; Winters, 53-66; Tolbert, 60.

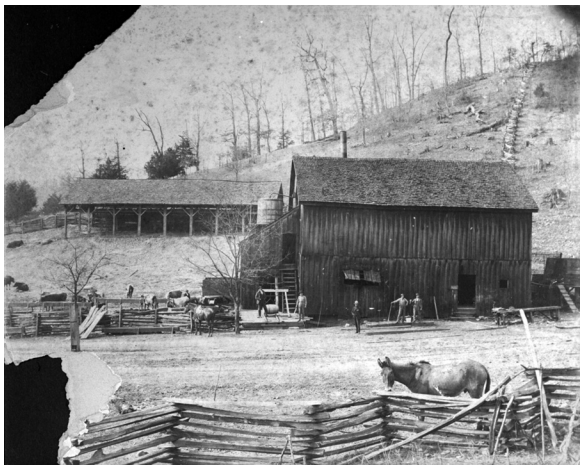


Figure 10. Farmstead in Maury County, c. 1890. (Courtesy Tennessee State Library and Archives 9931)

the shorter growing season of Middle Tennessee. Moreover, the soils of the Central Basin benefited from the shift to livestock, hay, pasture, and wheat, while soils in Alabama and Mississippi were being worn out by the monoculture of cotton. A denser and wealthier farm population developed around the better soils and topography of the Central Basin counties, often referred to as the "garden" of Tennessee. The farmers of the heartland worked on the average 104 improved acres. Only 2 farmers out of every 100 had holdings of 500 or more total acres, improved and unimproved.

Nashville became an important center for hog, cattle, sheep, and mule production. The widely acknowledged preference of Georgia buyers for Tennessee livestock prompted one newspaper to recommend that drovers bring documents certifying that their animals came from Tennessee. As the Cotton Belt expanded into Alabama and Mississippi, livestock "drives" to supply plantations there with meat probably used the Natchez Trace to reach northern Alabama and Mississippi.

As Middle Tennessee became less dependent on cotton, the Old Natchez District became more dependent, as Mississippi planters bought more land and more enslaved people to plant more cotton. Nashville's location closer to the North and East also aided the development of industry in the area, including iron furnaces, cotton goods factories, sawmills, gristmills, and tanneries. The chief industrial county outside of Davidson was Maury, reporting 497 men working in small factories and workshops.[17]

Origins of the Natchez Trace

Between Natchez and the settlement at Nashville lay 450 miles of wilderness, connected by a network of ancient Indian paths. Following wildlife migration trails, the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and others used narrow tracks and moved in single file, rather than carve great highways through the untouched forests. The merchants of Natchez, and later Nashville, recognized the economic importance of establishing regular trade with the Choctaw and the Chickasaw. Because the area lacked convenient waterways to serve the trade routes, merchants had to depend on the Indian trails.

One such trail was the Chickasaw Trace, which ran from the Indian towns in the present-day Nashville area to the Chickasaw towns near Tupelo, Mississippi. There it intersected another trail that connected the Choctaw and the Natchez tribes. The southern part of this trail appeared on French maps as early as 1733 as the "Path to the Choctaw Nation." Joining these major through trails were many cross trails.[18]

Kaintucks

Explorers and traders who used these trails passed the information on that overland travel between Nashville and Natchez was possible. Settlers in the Ohio Valley regions of Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Kentucky began using the old Indian trails soon after the American Revolution. Unable to transport their bulky products over the Allegheny Mountains, they floated their freight down the rivers to markets in Natchez and New Orleans. The boatmen—called "Kaintucks" no matter where they came from—could not return against the river current and sold both cargo and boats when they reached their destination. Some bought horses and rode, but most walked the Natchez Trace back to Nashville. In 1797, Joseph Bullen, the missionary to

17 Myers, 208, 212, 231; Stephen V. Ash, *Middle Tennessee Society Transformed* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 10; Winters, 53-65.

18 Michael H. Bureman, "An Historical Overview of the Natchez Trace" (Natchez Trace Parkway, 1985, photocopy), 41.



Figure 11. Flatboat on the Ohio. (steamboattimes.com)

the Chickasaw, reported that a thousand boatmen were passing through the Chickasaw Nation every year from Natchez to their homes in the North.[19]

During the years prior to Spain's withdrawal from Natchez in 1798, few people other than returning boatmen made the trip over the Natchez Trace. After Spain reluctantly accepted treaty obligations with the United States, the Mississippi Territory was formed in 1798, opening up the land to rapid settlement. Nashville was no longer the southwestern-most outpost of the United States, replaced by Natchez. The only practicable route between the two towns passed through the lands of two Indian nations.[20]

Post Road

By 1800, regularly scheduled mail service had been initiated between Natchez and Nashville. At this time, the trail crossed three clearly defined boundaries. The Lower Choctaw boundary separated the Natchez District from the lands of the Choctaw Nation. Line Creek, separating the Choctaw and Chickasaw, was an unusual instance of a precise boundary accepted by adjoining tribes. Duck River Ridge marked the early limit of the Middle Tennessee settlements, ceded by the Chickasaw in 1783.[21]

The northern portion of the road was the very rough and swampy Chickasaw Trace. The slow passage of the mail and the strategic importance of the Old Natchez District in case of a war with Spain forced the United States government to respond to demands for improved communication between Natchez and Nashville. The Postmaster General described the need for an improved road:

> The public is considerably interested in preserving proper communication of that distant frontier which is exposed both to the Spaniards and the Indians and is quite separated by the intervening possessions of the latter from the settled parts of the United States. The whole of the produce raised in Kentucky and Tennessee for exportation is conveyed by boats down the Mississippi and the boats with the produce are generally disposed of at New Orleans, it being found very expensive & difficult to navigate them back against the rapid stream of that river; the boatmen after the sale of their boats and cargo return by the above mentioned route to their respective homes. Badness of the road is a great discouragement to such undertakings. It appears to me that the accommodations of the citizens of those states in their foreign trade would be of itself a sufficient motive for employing the trail. But besides the accommodation of the government & the citizens of those states & the Mississippi Territory, many other persons whose trade or other pursuits call them to that country would be materially benefited.

In 1801, the president, acting on the requests of the Secretary of State and the Postmaster General, instructed the army to clear out a road between Nashville and Natchez. General James Wilkinson, the commander of all the American forces in the West, was in charge of the work. After gaining consent from the Chickasaw and the Choctaw that a wagon road could be cut through their land, he ordered a survey of the proposed route.

The establishment of temporary bases or cantonments for the soldiers occurred on Duck River Ridge and the Duck River in Tennessee, the Tennessee River in Alabama, and Grindstone Ford in Mississippi. The road stretched from the Davidson County line, a few miles south of Nashville, to Bayou Pierre, fifty miles north of

19 Dawson Phelps, "Mount Locust: A Restudy of Its History" (Natchez Trace Parkway, 1955, mimeographed), 11-15.

20 The Treaty of San Lorenzo of 1795 established the 31st parallel as the southern boundary of the United States, but it did not take effect until 1798.

21 Dawson Phelps, "Boundaries Crossed by the Natchez Trace: A Study in the History of the Old Southwest" (Natchez Trace Parkway, 1949, mimeographed), 50.



Figure 12. Stands along the Natchez Trace. (www.tngenweb.org/maps)

Natchez. Ferries provided transport over the Duck and Tennessee Rivers.[22]

The Chickasaw and Choctaw did not originally consent to accommodations being built along the road. After treaty negotiations in 1805, the tribes permitted the establishment of inns or stands, which were often quite primitive. The Chickasaw allowed three stands to be built north of the Tennessee River. One of these three was Gordon's Stand, just north of the ferry that John Gordon operated across the Duck River. Eventually, the road lost some of its wilderness character, and the crude stands of the early days gave way to better equipped establishments. Most of the stands were located on farms or plantations where food for both men and horses was available.[23]

In 1806, $6,000 was appropriated to improve the condition and alignment of the road, although only $3,000 was spent. A new alignment cut some fifty miles off the previous route. Since no funds were appropriated for maintenance and upkeep, however, these improvements were of a temporary nature. The governor of Tennessee described the road in an 1811 address:

> The road leading from West Tennessee to Natchez, which was regularly stipulated for by the general government, and designed for the use and convenience of travelers, is in very bad order; it requires much work to put it in repair, and to keep it up for the convenience of those who travel it to and from market.[24]

The large numbers of boatmen and others using the Natchez Trace during it apex continued to erode the integrity of the road. By 1810, it was reported that 8,000-10,000 boatmen walked or rode the Natchez Trace. Matters came to a head during the War of 1812, when the British invaded Louisiana in 1814. A special congressional committee recommended a direct appropriation for repair and maintenance of the road, but Andrew Jackson's victory at New Orleans ended the war before Congress could take any formal action. No further money was spent on the road until 1817, when a $4,000 appropriation was made to cut a road from Reynoldsburg, Tennessee, through the Chickasaw Nation to intercept the Natchez road below the Chickasaw villages. Although other routes opened up from 1810 to 1820, for most of that time the Natchez Trace remained the official designated postal route between Nashville and Natchez and ultimately, Washington, D.C. and New Orleans.[25]

Urban development in northwestern Alabama, some distance east of the Natchez Trace crossing of the Tennessee River, was partly responsible for a major change in the postal route from Nashville to Natchez. Andrew Jackson wanted a Military Road from Columbia, Tennessee, to New Orleans by way of Madisonville, Louisiana. An entirely new road was built and opened in 1820. It replaced the Natchez Trace as the designated postal route from Columbia, Tennessee, to Florence, Alabama, returning to the Trace at Colbert's Stand below Florence.

22 Dawson Phelps, "The Natchez Trace in Williamson and Davidson Counties, Tenn." (Natchez Trace Parkway, 1946, mimeographed), 5; Dawson Phelps, "The Natchez Trace in Tennessee History" (Natchez Trace Parkway, 1954, mimeographed), 7; Dawson Phelps, "The Natchez Trace—Indian Trail to Parkway," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 21 (September 1962), 206.

23 Myers, 119.

24 Bureman, 68; Dawson Phelps, "The Natchez Trace—Indian Trail to Parkway," 207.

25 Myers, 147.

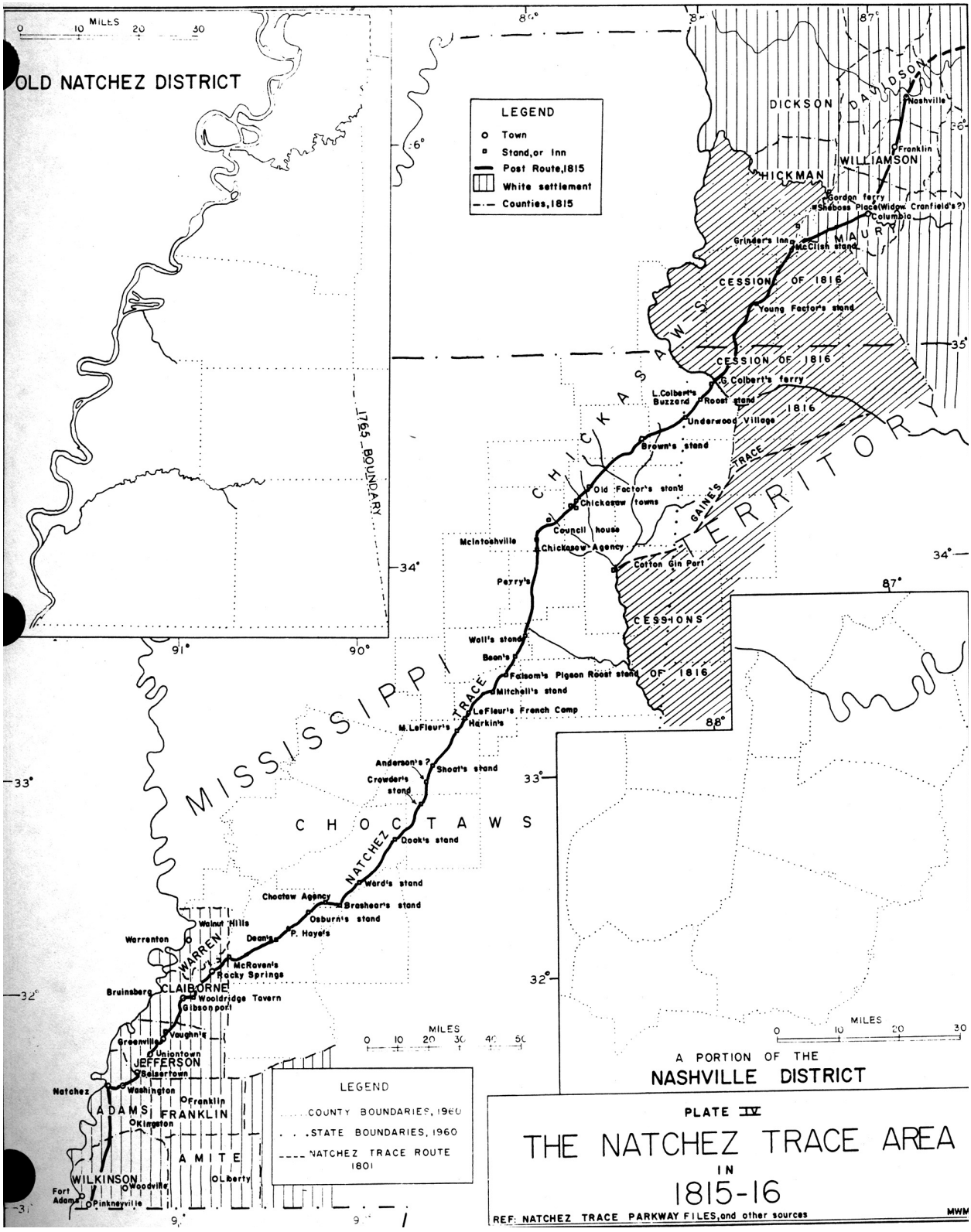


Figure 13. 1815 map of the Natchez Trace. (NPS image)

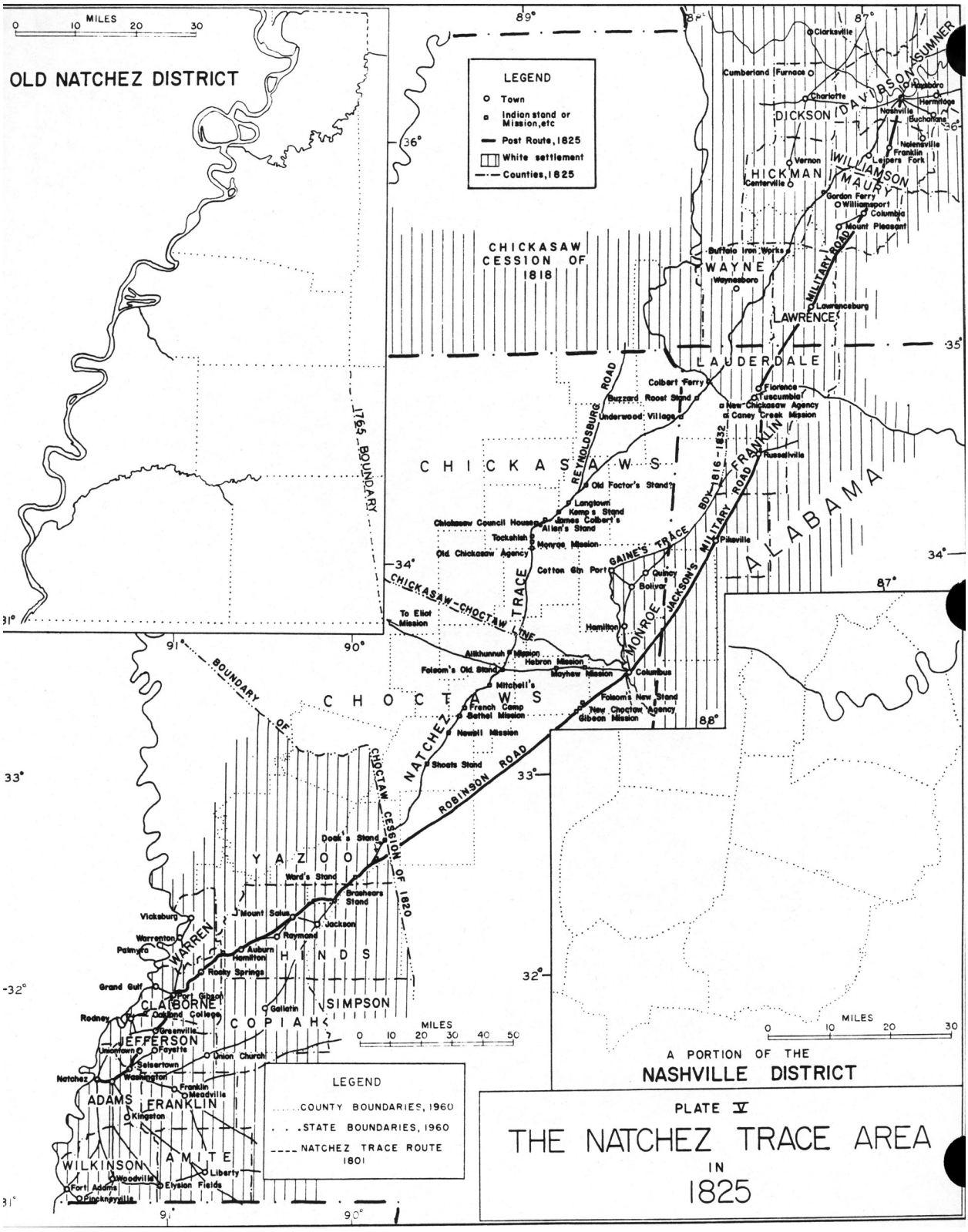


Figure 14. 1825 map of the Natchez Trace. (NPS image)

As the country between Nashville and Natchez was settled and new towns were established, new roads paralleling the Natchez Trace were opened to serve these communities. The Natchez Trace retained its designation as a Post Road until 1834. During this time, efforts continued to locate a more timely mail route to ensure the best possible communications between Washington, D.C. and New Orleans. Changes in the Nashville-Natchez mail route, however, did not involve a change in the location of the Natchez Trace.[26]

Decline of the Natchez Trace

The most dramatic decline in the use of the Natchez Trace was a result of the rise of steamboat traffic after 1811 on the Mississippi, Ohio, and Tennessee Rivers. The ability of the steamboat to move upriver with considerable ease made the trip from New Orleans/Natchez to Nashville and beyond much faster than travel over the Natchez Trace, and steamboats eventually carried most of the boatmen back to the Ohio River Valley. The *General Jackson*, engaged in trade on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, was the first steamboat to reach Nashville, arriving in March 1819. The *Rifleman* began regular service from Nashville to New Orleans later that year.[27]

By the mid-1820s, the Natchez Trace had lost its importance as a trunk highway, as new roads were built. Its decline as a major link between the Lower Mississippi and Nashville continued, as population and economic growth, particularly within the former Indian lands, led to an increased demand for a better local and regional transportation and communication network aligned on an east/west axis. The Natchez Trace, as a general north-south route, ran counter to the transportation needs of the day.[28]

In Middle Tennessee, turnpikes were being built from Nashville in an attempt to hold or expand the cotton and tobacco trade. By 1841, macadamized toll turnpikes led to Franklin, Columbia, Murfreesboro, Shelbyville, Charlotte, Gallatin, and Nolensville, while another extended north almost to the Kentucky line. By the late 1840s, a macadamized road ran through and beyond Hillsboro for twenty-eight miles to the Duck River Ridge and probably corresponded closely to the Natchez Trace. By 1860, a network of these roads surrounded Nashville.[29]

During the first twenty years of the nineteenth century, the Natchez Trace was a significant national road. At its peak, the Natchez Trace was the only improved and direct road between the Cumberland District in Tennessee and the Lower South. By the 1840s, the Natchez Trace was no longer used as a through road from Nashville to Natchez, but sections were still being used for local transportation. This ancient north/south transportation corridor eventually became a series of local roads and byways.[30]

The Natchez Trace in Tennessee

In 1781, James Robertson sought an alliance with the Chickasaw as a means to help the Cumberland Settlement defend against Creek and Cherokee attacks. Travel to and from the Chickasaw Nation was over the Chickasaw Trace, although sometimes goods and gifts were transported by water, in which case the return was over the Chickasaw Trace. Before the Natchez Trace was improved as a federal road, boatmen returning from Natchez or New Orleans walked intertwining Indian trails located in the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations.

The work on the Nashville part of the road was directly supervised by Lieutenant Colonel Thomas S. Butler. Since that part of the road between Nashville and the Duck River Ridge was under the jurisdiction of the state of Tennessee, it was opened up only after negotiations with local authorities. Federal troops finished the road in Tennessee in 1802.

In Tennessee during the early 1800s, Natchez Road or "the road cut by Federal troops" were likely more commonly heard or seen in recorded deeds or court records in Davidson and Williamson counties. In January 1805, the Williamson County court authorized the maintenance of "the road opened up by the Federal troops" and it appeared

26 Bureman, 68, 83-87; Myers, 137; Phelps, "The Natchez Trace in Williamson and Davidson Counties, Tenn.," 18.
27 Winters, 83.
28 Bureman, 87-89.
29 Myers, 197, 204.
30 Phelps, "The Natchez Trace—Indian Trail to Parkway," 204-205; Myers, 202.

regularly in the road minutes over the next twenty years.[31]

Tennessee militia used the Trace on at least three occasions. In 1803, the Secretary of War ordered troops to Natchez as a precaution during the transfer of Louisiana. In 1813, John Coffee led the cavalry to rendezvous with Andrew Jackson and the militia infantrymen who arrived in Natchez on boats during the War of 1812. When Jackson received orders to dismiss his militiamen instead, he defiantly walked up the Natchez Trace with his men in a display of toughness that led to his knickname "Old Hickory." Following the battle of New Orleans in 1815, Tennesseans, including Jackson, returned up the Trace to their homes.

After 1820, the road was increasingly referred to as the Natchez Trace in Davidson and Williamson and also the newer counties of Maury, Hickman, Lawrence, and Wayne. By 1850, Natchez Trace was in common usage. A curious variant "Notchy Trace" was adopted into the folk language of Tennessee and can still be heard in remote sections of Williamson, Maury, and Hickman counties.[32]

Commemoration of the Natchez Trace (1905-1933)

In 1905, Mrs. Egbert Jones and the Mississippi Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) began a grassroots effort to place granite markers in every county through which the historic Natchez Trace ran. Little was done until 1908, when the marker program became an official project of the society. In 1909, they erected a stone monument in Natchez overlooking the Mississippi River. Over the next twenty-five years, similar monuments were placed in almost every county through which the Natchez Trace passed in Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee. This effort generated widespread interest in the historic Natchez Trace.[33]

A regional Good Roads movement, championed by the Natchez Chamber of Commerce in 1916, continued the effort of the Mississippi DAR to commemorate the historic Natchez Trace as a highway for modern automobile use. The new organization was stymied by state highway commissions, which were not convinced that a road should be improved just to commemorate its history when there was not enough money to build trunk highways. Moreover, America's eventual entry into World War I and the economic depression that followed the war delayed any success at securing funding for such a venture.[34]

In 1933, Mississippi Congressman Jeff Busby began a campaign to gather support for legislation to survey and pave the historic Natchez Trace. The Natchez Trace Military Highway Association, later reorganized as the Natchez Trace Association, was created in 1934 as an advocacy group for the memorialization of the Natchez Trace and the construction of a parkway along its route.

In February 1934, assured of popular support from Alabama and Tennessee, Congressman Bubsy introduced two bills regarding the Natchez Trace: one for a survey of the Natchez Trace and the second an appropriation for its subsequent construction. Similar legislation was introduced into the Senate by Senator Hubert D. Stephens of Mississippi.[35]

Creation of the Natchez Trace Parkway (1934-Present)

The vision to commemorate the historic Natchez Trace through a national parkway began in 1934, when Congress appropriated $50,000 for a survey of the "Old Indian Trail" known as the "Natchez Trace," with a view toward constructing a national road to be known as the "Natchez Trace Parkway." Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, however, reported the measure to be "not in accord" with President Roosevelt's program and recommended a veto. After discussions with the congressional delegations from Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee, the president agreed to withhold his veto and directed the survey be financed by an allotment from the 1935 National Park Service (NPS) Roads and Trails appropriation. Under this authority, the old road was located and flagged in its entire length, in as near as practicable to

31 Phelps, "The Natchez Trace in Williamson and Davidson Counties," 8, 16-19.

32 Natchez Trace, http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/imagegallery.php?EntryID=N016; Phelps, "The Natchez Trace in Tennessee History," 10-13.

33 Dawson Phelps, "Administrative History of the Natchez Trace Parkway" (Tupelo, MS: Natchez Trace Parkway, 1965-76), II-1.

34 Phelps, "Administrative History," II-2.

35 Phelps, "Administrative History," III-1-3, IV-1; HAER No. MS-15, "Natchez Trace Parkway," 20-23.



Figure 15. Old Trace, Jefferson County, MS, 1930s. (NPS image)

its original route. Two reports were prepared and submitted to Washington, one covering the history of the road and the methods followed in locating the Old Trace and the other discussing the possible route of the Parkway and preliminary cost estimates.[36]

The most useful information in locating the Natchez Trace came from original township maps based on surveys made by the General Land Office from 1810 to 1834 in Alabama and Mississippi. Supplemented by field notes, these maps provided sufficient data to show a road extending from Natchez through Mississippi and Alabama to the southern Tennessee line. No such maps existed in Tennessee, so the location from the Tennessee line to Nashville was largely based on oral tradition. Early research turned up a map of the Natchez Trace prepared by General Wilkinson, but it proved impossible to identify the road and its meandering course over a distance of 450 miles using this map.

In the Old Natchez District, where "metes and bounds" surveys were used before township lines were surveyed, a road or series of roads was identified and then checked on the ground. Where township plats were available, it was possible to identify local roads as part of the Old Trace. Where roads had been abandoned, it was often possible to identify the route by existing remains. Where all evidence had disappeared, a determination was made of the most likely route.[37]

The survey revealed that it was impossible to identify a definitive old Natchez Trace, as there were at least three old trails, each of which with some validity might be regarded as the correct road. Nonetheless, after an immense amount of information had been assembled, Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) engineers, advised by NPS historians, flagged the approximate route and entered the results onto a map.

On March 14, 1935, a group of experts inspected the project and recommended a policy on location and development if construction of the parkway should be authorized. The planners included Hillory O. Tolson, Thomas C. Vint, Verne E. Chatelain, Edward S. Zimmer, Olaf T. Hagen, and Randall B. Truett of the NPS, Howard J. Spellman and Frank L. Brownell of the BPR, and Harvard professor and city planner John Nolen. The major goal was not to preserve or restore the historic Natchez Trace but to memorialize it with a new parkway.[38]

In 1935, a Public Works Administration project with a $1.5 million budget was set up to initiate the construction of the Parkway in Mississippi. The funding included a survey and the establishment of a rough grade and minor drainage structures on a limited section of the route. The parkway was divided into more than fifty construction sections. Sections situated in Tennessee were designated on official maps with the number "1," in Alabama with the number "2," and in Mississippi with the number "3."

In 1937, Congress appropriated another $1.5 million for the Natchez Trace Parkway and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Celebrations in Mississippi in 1937 heralded a sense of progress for supporters of the proposed road from Natchez to Nashville. On September 16, Mississippi Governor Hugh

36 Phelps, "Administrative History," III-3-4, V-1.

37 Phelps, "Administrative History," V-1, VII-2.

38 Phelps, "Administrative History," V-2.

White participated in the groundbreaking for the first of two initial grading, drainage, bridge, and culvert projects along the proposed route near Madisonville. In October, a gathering at Brandon Hall Plantation outside Natchez dedicated the work begun on the parkway's southern section.

In 1938, Public Law 75-530 established the Natchez Trace Parkway and assigned its administration to the NPS with a direct appropriation of $1.5 million. By June, the work of landscaping a section of the parkway near Natchez was nearing completion. Although the road remained unpaved, local newspapers reported that "the scenic beauty already developed on the parkway is attracting attention."

The celebratory atmosphere in Mississippi was not present in Tennessee and Alabama. In Tennessee, resistance by landowners to the construction of the parkway through their properties caused delays. Condemnation by the state was necessary to move ahead with a section just north of the Tennessee-Alabama line, as indeed was the case in Mississippi in the Ridgeland vicinity and the Adams-Jefferson County sections. Progress in Alabama lagged, as even the governor took the position that there was little interest in the state.[39]

Further appropriations were made in 1939, 1940, and 1941 totaling $3,550,000. Land was acquired by the highway departments of the three cooperating states (Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee), and title was then transferred to the federal government. In Mississippi, the funds were concentrated between Jackson and Tupelo, with the exception of the twelve miles of section 3-W near Natchez.

Construction of the parkway road by private contract, under supervision of the NPS and the BPR, began in the summer of 1937, and in the four years through 1941, rough grade and drainage construction had been completed on ninety-five miles of parkway in Mississippi and nine miles in Tennessee. Construction was halted by the United States' entry into World War II in 1941. By the mid-1940s, only about thirty-six miles of roadway, all in Mississippi, had an all-weather surface treatment that allowed for public use.

39 HAER No. MS-15, 38 -42.



Figure 16. Natchez Trace Parkway, Section 3-W, 1939. (NPS image)

Construction resumed in the fall of 1947. During the interim, a change in the basic design of the road occurred. Originally, it was planned to construct grade separations at railroads and major highways only, with minor roads crossing at grade. The new plan called for eventual grade separation of all public road crossings.[40]

Construction through 1952 consisted of grading, drainage, gravel base, bridges, and bituminous paving. The NPS assumed maintenance of paved sections. In the period 1935-53, approximately $17.2 million had been appropriated for surveys and construction. An official BPR report in 1956 conceded that funding interruptions plagued parkway progress from the beginning. Of the 450 miles included in the project, only 114 miles were fully completed, including 80 miles in Mississippi, 6 miles in Alabama, and 28 miles in Tennessee. A number of other sections were in various stages of completion, but the rights-of-ways had not

40 1938 Annual Narrative, NATR Archives; Malcolm Gardner, "Natchez Trace Parkway, Current Information," June 7, 1957, NATR Archives; Phelps, "Administrative History," IX-3; HAER No. MS-15, 47-48.



Figure 17. Natchez Trace Parkway, Section 3-O, 1947. (NPS image)

even been acquired for some sections. This rather bleak situation reflected a larger NPS dilemma nationwide, for which Director Conrad Wirth proposed a monumental ten-year effort called Mission 66.

An ambitious Mission 66 program called for the construction of recreational and park-related facilities, as well as continued progress of road construction. By the end of 1966, a total of 269 miles of paved parkway was complete at a total cost of $77 million, including numerous picnic areas, comfort stations, campgrounds, roadside exhibits, and administrative/service buildings. Mount Locust, a plantation site 15 miles outside of Natchez, was opened to the public in 1957, and the Tupelo Visitor Center opened in 1962. Another major accomplishment was the completion of the mile-long Tennessee River Bridge in 1962.[41]

After 1966, the pace of construction slowed down considerably. By the end of 1975, 319 miles of parkway had been completed at an approximate cost of $86 million. $30 million was appropriated in 1977 for new construction and overlay of any existing parkway road in need of resurfacing, the largest paving project ever undertaken by the NPS. In 1979, Congress appropriated $19 million for construction and planning in FY 1979 with an additional $24 million funded for FY 1980. By 1987, the parkway was complete except for the two terminus sections into Natchez and Nashville and a section near Jackson.[42] In May 2005, a 15-mile section in Jackson and an 8-mile southern terminus section in Natchez completed the Natchez Trace Parkway.

John Gordon House and Ferry

John Gordon Era (1802-1819)

John Gordon was born on July 15, 1763, near Fredericksburg, Virginia. He headed west after the American Revolution, settling in Nashville in the 1780s. Nashville was described at that time as a "recently founded place, and contains only two houses which, in true, merit that name; the rest are only huts that formerly served as a sort of fortification against Indian attacks."[43]

On August 5, 1793, John Gordon bought town lot #30 at a sheriff's sale. He sold it a little over a year later to his new father-in-law, Richard Cross, for three times his initial investment. Gordon married Cross' daughter, Dolly, on July 15, 1794. On July 11, 1795, Gordon was appointed Justice of the Peace in Davidson County and became the first postmaster of Nashville in 1796. A compendium of Gordon family history states that "at one time Gordon lived on Cedar Street, near the grounds now occupied by the Capitol, and owned Capitol Hill, which he was said he have sold for a horse and saddle."

He gave up the job of postmaster later that year because he was "about to leave Nashville." During this time, he began to acquire the land two miles southwest of Nashville that became his family farm until his move to Maury County. The botanist André Michaux came through Nashville in 1795 and mentions "Captain Gordon" as one of the people he visited.[44]

John Gordon's participation in numerous retaliatory raids against deadly Indian attacks soon gave him a reputation as a fearless Indian fighter. He was appointed a Lieutenant in the Davidson County militia in 1792 and in 1793, Governor William Blount issued a proclamation:

> Know ye that reposing special trust and confidence in the patriotism, valor, conduct and fidelity of John Gordon, of the County of Davidson, I do hereby appoint him a Captain of Mounted Infantry to form a part of the regiment of said county, and do hereby authorize and empower him to execute and fulfill the duties of a Captain of Mounted Infantry in the said regiment.

John Gordon was one of the scout parties or spies sent out to detect Creek and Cherokee raids. A spinoff group of Cherokees, known as

41 Phelps, "Administrative History," IX-4-6; HAER No. MS-15, 71-74.

42 Phelps, "Administrative History," IX-6-8.

43 Samuel Cole Williams, ed., *Early Travels in the Tennessee Country*, 1540-1800 (Johnson City, TN: 1928), 285.

44 Leach, 6; Davidson County Register Book D, 67-77; Octavia Zollicoffer Bond, *The Family Chronicle and Kinship Book of Maclin, Clack, Cocke, Carter, Taylor, Cross, Gordon, and other related American lineages* (Nashville, TN, c. 1928), 58, 180; Oppermann, 18.

Chickamaugas, were intent on driving white settlers out of Indian hunting grounds. In September 1794, Gordon was part of an expedition that destroyed the Indian towns of Nickajack and Running Water on the Tennessee River and ended Chickamauga attacks on the Cumberland settlements.

Gordon went on a very different kind of mission in 1795, when he delivered goods sent as presents by President Washington to the Chickasaw near present-day Memphis. Gordon was also involved in supplying rations and forage for troops, forming "John Gordon & Company" in 1794.[45]

Establishment of the Ferry. In 1802, John Gordon formed a partnership with the Chickasaw chief General William Colbert in a business enterprise in which they were to take over the buildings and boats built by the troops at the Duck River cantonment and operate a ferry along with a stand or inn. Duck River was about forty-five miles from Nashville and was fordable only in the driest seasons, so a ferry was likely to be profitable. Since the location was in Chickasaw territory, it could be used as a trading post with the Indians as well as a stand for travelers along the Natchez Trace.

It seems Gordon's agreement with Colbert was verbal and was put into writing by Gordon in 1804. Apparently, the partnership with Colbert did not work well, and Gordon lost money in the early stages of the venture. Gordon claimed that he complied with all the stipulations while Colbert did not. A portion of a surviving abstract reads:

> A Bargain between Wm Colbert and John Gordon for Duck River.
>
> First Colbert was to put Gordon in possession of the place with all the Houses & Craft as the Federal troops delivered them 2ndly Said Colbert was to furnish a Negroe man and afford protection to all property taken to Duck river by said Gordon for the use of that place & in case of Spoilation or accident Colbert is to ber his proportionale part & the said Gordon is privilaged to Clear and Cultivate what land he thought proper for the use of the place & to Enjoy the same privilage his life time & his son John after him in Conjuction with Colberts son Jamison.

45 Leach 6-21, 42; Oppermann, 18-19.

Gordon was still living in Nashville, but as early as 1802, Williamson County, in which the property then lay, was specifying Gordon's militia company as a category of taxables. Gordon hired a factor or clerk to help him operate the ferry and stand. Thomas Hart Benton, the future senator from Missouri, was Gordon's factor for a time, starting around 1804.[46]

After the Chickasaw surrendered all lands north of the Duck River to the United States in 1805, the Tennessee legislature passed an act in 1806 giving John Gordon pre-emptive right to 640 acres at Gordon's Ferry because "he did make an establishment at the crossing of the Duck River for the purpose of affording necessary conveniences for travelers on the route from Nashville to Natchez." After the land was surveyed, it seems likely that grant number 505 of September 16, 1808 for 640 acres was made in accordance with the 1806 act.

An additional 640-acre-tract, through which the Natchez Trace passed to the ferry and on which Gordon later built the two-story, brick house, was granted to him on June 17, 1809 (grant 1108). He received by grant another 214 acres on the north side of the Duck River and 160 acres on the Elk River (grants 506 and 507). Thus, between 1808 and 1809, Gordon acquired almost 1,500 acres of land on the north side of the Duck River, which included the ferry and cantonment sites and about a mile of the Natchez Trace.[47]

Sometime between 1808 and 1812, Gordon moved his family and slaves from Nashville to the Duck River. The 1890 obituary of Gordon's son Bolling states that Bolling "removed with this father to Duck River" in 1812. Descendant Lucille Gordon Frierson recalled:

> It was in 1812 when Mrs. Gordon was only 33 years old that Capt. John Gordon moved with his family to his plantation at/and a trading post at the crossing of Duck River by the famous Natchez Trace.

46 Leach, 47-48; Bond, 178; Myers, 120; Phelps, "Gordon's Ferry, 15.

47 Phelps, "Gordon's Ferry," 16-17; Leach, 68-69; Bond, 187-88; Allen H. Cooper and John W. Walker, *Excavations at the Historic Locus on 40-Hi-151 (Or T-HK-29) on the Natchez Trace Parkway in Hickman County, Tennessee* (Tallahassee, FL: Southeast Archeological Center, 1984), 3; Map Study 1944.

Although little is known of John Gordon's activities during this time, he placed an advertisement to rent the Duck River stand and ferry in 1811:

> TO RENT.
>
> About sixty acres of good land near Nashville, for the ensuing year, also the stand and ferry on Duck river where the Natchez road crosses the same, likewise the buildings in Nashville, where Timothy Demumbruen kept Tavern.[48]

It appears that Gordon was in financial difficulties. He lost a portion of his Davidson County farm at public auction in 1812 and was on the verge of losing the Maury County property, as described by an advertisement placed in the newspaper in 1812. The property was offered

> for cash at the court house in the town of Columbia, on Saturday the 3d of October next, all the right, title, claim and interest of John Gordon to 640 acres of land, lying on the north side of Duck river, an known by the name of Gordon's Ferry, grant No. 505, and dated 10th September, 1808, or so much thereof as lies in the county of Maury, taken in execution to satisfy a judgment that Lewis Austin for the benefit of F. [E.] S. Hall, obtained against said Gordon.

It is unclear what factors intervened to prevent the sheriff's sale, but it seems likely that Gordon moved his family to Duck River at this time. It is unknown where they were living, as the present John Gordon House was not built until 1818. By 1812, John and Dolly had seven children— John, Fielding, William, Bolling, Powhatan, Mary Ann, and Dorothy. Another child, Anna, died in childhood.[49]

Creek Indian War. John Gordon's role as trader, farmer, innkeeper, and ferryman was interrupted by the Creek Indian War, which began in 1813 when a faction of Creeks known as Red Sticks sought to return their society to a traditional way of life. Their attack upon Fort Mims, a temporary stockade near the confluence of the Tombigbee and Alabama rivers north of Mobile, killed 500 settlers.

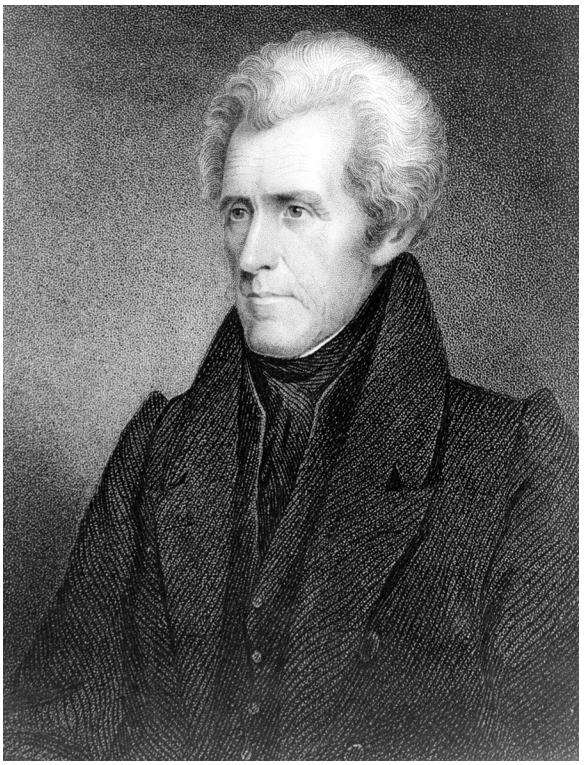


Figure 18. Andrew Jackson. (www.loc.gov/pictures/item/96523440/)

A campaign against the Creeks led by Andrew Jackson began.[50]

Jackson enlisted John Gordon to command a company of mounted spies, which Gordon did beginning on September 24, 1813. Gordon and his spies fought in a series of hard battles, beginning with Talladega on November 9, 1813, and ending with the decisive Battle of Horseshoe Bend on March 27, 1814. Although Gordon was mustered out on May 10, 1814, Jackson sent him on a special mission to the Spanish governor of Pensacola:

> I have had no time as yet to take a view of the surrounding country. I will have a good account of it on the return of Capt. Gordon who I have sent with a letter to the Governor of Pensacola, who will make correct observations on the country through which he passes, I expect his return in about ten days.

John Gordon returned home without participating in the capture of Pensacola or in the subsequent Battle of New Orleans. Little is known about

48 Bond, 153, 275; Oppermann, 24; Leach, 62.
49 Leach, 62-63; Bond, 144-45.
50 Leach, 26-30; Davis, 314; W. Jerome D. Spence and David L. Spence, *A History of Hickman County, Tennessee* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Pub. Co., 1900), 121.

Gordon's activities after his return from Pensacola. He was engaged in operating a cotton gin, which was located on Dunlap Creek between Duck River and Shady Grove. Besides operating his farm, he seems to have continued his previous trading ventures and was in Pensacola again in 1818 on mercantile business when Jackson again sought him out to lead a company of spies in a campaign against the Seminole Indians. Jackson commented that he "wrote to Captain Gordon to join me at Ft. Scott and take command of the spy company."[51]

Construction of the John Gordon House. With the building of the Military Road from Columbia, Tennessee, through Florence, Alabama, between 1817 and 1820, the stands in the area were no longer on the main postal route, and many fell into disuse. John Gordon's ferry and farm continued to do well enough during this time for the construction of a brick house in 1818. Gordon wrote his wife, Dolly, in March 1818:

> Dear Dolly: I hardly know what to write under present circumstances, as my mind is divided between duty, inclination and interest. I have received in Pensacola a letter from General Jackson requesting me to accompany him on an expedition against the Seminoles in East Florida. The knowledge I have received while in Pensacola seems to make to make it necessary that I should go on, therefore have concluded to do so, relying on your care and presence at home. I would recommend you to go on with the building if possible, and will try to keep you in funds.

By the Chickasaw Treaty of October 19, 1818, the government agreed to liquidate William Colbert's debt of $1,115 to John Gordon. Such a sum would certainly have helped offset some of the expenses for the house.

Gordon returned from the Seminole campaigns to the new brick house in 1818. Another daughter, Louisa Pocahontas, was born on February 21, 1819. John Gordon died of pneumonia on June 16, 1819. His obituary in the local newspaper read:

> DIED – At his residence in Murray [Maury] county, on Wednesday last, Capt. John Gordon, one of the earliest settlers of this country. The deceased was a man of considerable enterprise, great integrity and undaunted bravery. His services during the frequent and bloody Indian wars which depredated this state while a frontier, gained him great popularity, and confidence among the then settlers. His conduct in the last war with the Creeks, secured to him the applause of every officer engaged in it. Capt. Gordon was the man, who, at fort Strother, when Genl. Jackson, exclaimed – "If only two men will remain with me, I will never abandon this post," replied faciciously [sic], "you have one, general, let us look if we can find another."

He was described in Ramsey's Annals of Tennessee:

> Captain Gordon was a brave and active officer, distinguished through life for a never failing presence of mind, as well as for the purest integrity and independence of principle; he had much energy both of mind and body, and was in all, or nearly all the expeditions from Tennessee, which were carried on against the Indians or other enemies of the country, and in all of them was conspicuous for these qualities. He now sleeps with the men of other times, but his repose is guarded by the affectionate recollections of all who knew him.

John Gordon was buried in the family cemetery on the hill between the new brick house and the Duck River. About 1855, he was moved to Rose Hill Cemetery in Columbia, Tennessee.[52]

Dolly Cross Gordon Era (1819-1859)

Dorothea Cross was born in Amelia County, Virginia, on July 15, 1779, the daughter of Anna Maclin Cross and Richard Cross. She married John Gordon in 1794. They had eleven children. She claimed lineage from Pocahontas and gave that name to one daughter and the name of Powhatan to one son. After the death of John Gordon, his estate was divided among his heirs, who also acquired from the state title to an additional 23 ¾ acres on the Duck River adjacent to the Gordon

51 Leach, 37-39; Phelps, "Gordon's Ferry,"21-23; Spence, 124.

52 Bond, 159-200; Myers, 140; Leach, 64-72; J.G.M. Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Charleston, SC: J. Russell, 1853), 607-08.



Figure 19. Dolly Cross Gordon, 1819. (Courtesy Maury County Archives)

property, probably constituting some sort of rectification.

Dolly Cross Gordon continued to live in the house until her death in 1859. During this time, she farmed the land with the help of her sons and slaves, producing cotton, cattle, and hogs. Stories about her letting passing Indians sleep on her front porch have always been part of local legend and were recounted in the Family Chronicle:

> It often happened that parties belonging to the intervening tribes passed to and fro along the Natchez Trace in front of her gate. Sometimes a troop of thirty or forty warriors would stop and demand food and shelter for the night. Not being denied of course, after having been fed they would stretch themselves on the floor of the front porch and lie there, wrapped in their blankets, until morning.

The following description is of her son Powhatan's marriage to Caroline Coleman in 1836:

> When Powhatan Gordon married Caroline Coleman in 1836 at her home across the river from Williamsport, many young couples from in and around Columbia rode on horseback to attend, spent the night after the ceremony, and next day attended the affair at Mrs. John Gordon's where Dick Jewell now lives on Fatty Bread Creek. Many tables of bountiful food were served and it constituted a great social event in those early days.

Several of her grandchildren and nieces lived with her throughout the years, including three granddaughters, whose mother Mary Ann Gordon died in 1845. They were enumerated during the 1850 census, along with her son Andrew. At this time Dolly Gordon valued her real estate at $3,500.

Dolly Cross Gordon died on December 5, 1859. She was remembered as a strong woman even at eighty years:

> Considering her appearance of great age, she was astonishingly active to the day of her death, riding horseback over the rough roads and by-paths wherever she cared to go, fording Duck River at Gordon's Ferry or at Williamsport three miles further up the stream, whenever it suited her convenience to visit friends or relatives on the further side. She often rode her good roan pacer the fifteen miles to Columbia to visit her grandchildren at the Columbia Institute, of which was had become a patron as soon as it opened in 1836 . . . . At other times, the condition of the roads permitting, she preferred to use the carriage of her son, Maj. Bolling Gordon, or her own gig, though horseback was her usual choice.[53]

John Gordon, Jr. John Gordon, Jr., her eldest son, lived at his farm in Maury County, which was part of his inheritance from his father, John Gordon. It was on the opposite side of the Natchez Trace from his mother's property and "Cottage Hill," the property of his brother Bolling Gordon. John Gordon, Jr. lived here with his wife, Polly Compton Gordon, until they moved to Missouri in 1840.[54]

53 Bond, 145-157; Leach, 10, 74-77; Hickman County Census 1840-1880; Spence, 124; William Bruce Turner, *History of Maury County, Tennessee* (Nashville, TN: The Parthenon Press, 1955), 66. .

54 Bond, 214-16, 250.

Bolling Gordon. Her fourth son, Bolling Gordon, was a prominent planter and politician who became a member of the Tennessee General Assembly. He inherited not only his share of his father's estate, but also most of the property of Richard C. Cross, his mother's half-brother. Located in Hickman County about a mile northeast of his mother's house, Bolling Gordon's farm and house, known as "Cottage Hill," were created out of his father's estate. By 1830, his plantation was being worked by twenty-five slaves. By 1840, the number of slaves had risen to thirty-nine, and by 1850, Bolling valued his real estate at $8,000. Spence's *History of Hickman County* noted that the "large number of surrounding buildings were the quarters of his numerous slaves." The 1860 and 1880 censuses show that Andrew Gordon was living in Hickman County with his brother Bolling. The Family Chronicle describes "Cottage Hill":

> The delicious viands and fragrant flowers of these repasts were not more luxuriously attractive than the waxed halls, dainty bed chambers, well-trained maids, broad, graveled walks, and lovely garden with its arbors and summer house over-run with roses and honeysuckle . . . . On approaching the eminence on which it was situated, by way of the Natchez Trace road, it was easy to fancy oneself to be nearing a village . . . . The road was screened from the lawn that surrounded the house by a tall, thickset cedar hedge. Among the fifty or more slaves on the estate were some who were experts in building, weaving, spinning, dyeing, knitting, sewing, . . . Others were qualified to carry on the business of the dairy, the poultry yard, the orchards and the vegetable garden, the latter blooming with every flower suited to the climate, all of which was carried on and produced as much for the pleasure of others as for the owners of this typical ante-bellum home.

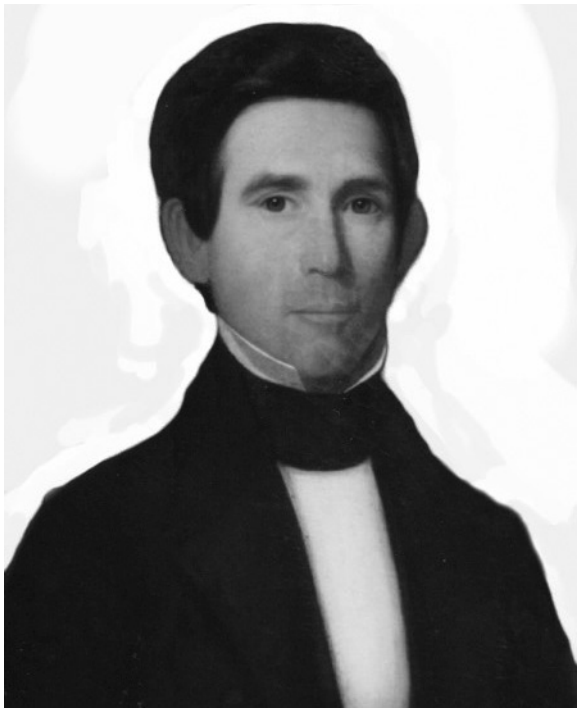


Figure 20. Bolling Gordon. (Courtesy Maury County Archives)

Bolling Gordon died in 1880. Cottage Hill burned in 1940, at that time owned by Curley Church.[55]

Richard Cross Gordon Era (1859-1879)

At Dolly Cross Gordon's death in 1859, the house and land on which it stood were purchased by her grandson, Richard Cross Gordon (Bolling's son). He was born at Cottage Hill and attended school in Nashville while living there with his aunt. He graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1861 and served in the Confederate

55 Bond, 263-275; Phelps, "Gordon's Ferry," 25-29; Leach, 78-79; Hickman County Census 1840-1880; Spence, 48.



Figure 21. Cottage Hill. (Courtesy Maury County Archives)



Figure 22. Cottage Hill. (NATR 5399)

Army until 1864, when he was discharged for physical disability. After the Civil War, he returned to farming and was also a local politician. Although he cultivated the land, he resided at Cross Bridges, Tennessee, about five miles away and probably never moved to the John Gordon property. During this time, the operation of the ferry continued, although no details are known.

On January 27, 1879, Richard Cross Gordon conveyed the John Gordon property in trust to George W. Stockard as security against various debts. Stockard had been Bolling Gordon's overseer for many years and was a merchant in nearby Williamsport. The transaction included "lands lying partly in Hickman and partly in Maury County." Richard Cross Gordon was still listed as the owner of the property in 1883.[56]

Closing of the John Gordon Ferry

As the region grew and new towns developed near Gordon's Ferry, the character of travel over the Natchez Trace changed, becoming almost entirely local. There was no bridge over the Duck River, so the ferry continued to be the principal means of crossing.

In 1883, a small tract of land was transferred from Hickman to Maury County, enabling the two counties to share the cost of a new steel bridge over the Duck River. The change shifted a portion of the Gordon property from Hickman to Maury County. Three months later, the Hickman-Maury Turnpike Company was incorporated with authority to build a toll road from Sawdust, Tennessee, to Gordon's Ferry. The completion of the bridge, appropriately named County Line Bridge, occurred in 1896.[57]

Twentieth-century Occupation of the John Gordon House

By 1896, George Stockard had died. The house, with possibly 155 or 160 acres, may have been acquired by G. P. Mayberry and his wife, Ethel, at this time or earlier. It is not clear from deeds when Mayberry acquired the property, nor whether Stockard ever took ownership, although he held the property in trust for years. It was Mayberry and his wife who on August 31, 1896, sold it to A. Hooten.

It is also not known whether the Hootens lived in the house. On October 27, 1904, Hooten sold the house and 107 acres to W. C. Jewell and his son, Richard S. Jewell, who held it jointly until W. C. Jewell's death on December 8, 1918. The Jewells apparently also bought 130 acres on the Duck River from T. H. Ervin and his wife on February 23, 1909. During their ownership, the Jewells are believed to have built, modified, or enlarged an existing rear ell, to have built or rebuilt the front porch, and to have built several outbuildings.[58]

The Gordon House Controversy

In 1945, NPS historian Dawson Phelps completed a study of the ferry, cantonment site, and house and their relationship to the Natchez Trace. He recommended acquisition of the property by the NPS as part of Section 1-D of the Natchez Trace Parkway, declaring:

> No historical site in Tennessee, with the possible exception of Nashville, had a longer or more intimate association with the Natchez Trace than did Gordon's Ferry. At no place on the entire length of the Trace through the state can as large a concentration of material remains be seen. At no place is it possible more easily to visualize the problems attendant on the history of the Trace; its construction, development, and use.

Superintendent Malcolm Gardner forwarded the report to the Regional Director. An interesting exchange of letters ensued between the Region

56 Phelps, "Gordon's Ferry," 12, 29; Opperman, 33; Leach, 74; Dawson A. Phelps to R. S. Jewell, December 19, 1944, NATR archives.

57 Phelps, "Gordon's Ferry," 3; Oppermann, 33.

58 Oppermann 34-36; Phelps, "Gordon's Ferry," 12; Leach, 75.



Figure 23. Undated photograph of the house. (NATR 7095)

One Regional Office and the Director's Office over the significance of the John Gordon House to the Natchez Trace saga. Regional Director Thomas J. Allen wrote NPS Director Newton B. Drury:

> The report has been reviewed in this office, and while interesting, it is primarily a saga of John Gordon's activities rather than a study of the historical significance of Gordons Ferry as related to the old Natchez Trace.
>
> Landscape architect Zimmer implies that the Gordon House, though postdating the period of principal interest, is needed to provide a definite historical atmosphere and bolster the historical significance of the Natchez Trace in that vicinity. The impression gained leads us to believe that it may be advisable, following archeological investigation and further study, to remove the existing structure (Gordon House of 1818) and direct attention in the interpretative program to the more authentic remains that may be found in the archeological research. In any event, it seems there is a great deal to be learned before the interpretive requirements can be determined and the needs of future development can be presented in plan.
>
> We firmly believe that any program of interpretation for this area, as well as all other areas along the Trace, should be limited to facts and events having a direct relationship to the use of the old Trace and should not endeavor to present the complete history of the general locality.

NPS Director Drury replied:

> The Gordon House of 1818 dates from the period of principal interest of the Natchez Trace (1790-1830). Both John Gordon and the Gordon House are directly associated with the old Natchez Trace and its history. Therefore, the house should not be removed or destroyed.
>
> You have raised the point that only facts and events directly related to the old Trace should be considered in the interpretive program. Do you not agree that what is directly related to any area depends upon a broad knowledge of its background?

Regional Director Allen responded:

> We can agree almost entirely with your memorandum of August 20 as regards the general thought of the interpretive program for Natchez Trace Parkway, and according to your decision we will, therefore, not remove or destroy the Gordon House near Gordon's Ferry on Section 1-C of the parkway location.
>
> We see three things involved in the study of this location; namely, Gordon's Ferry, the John Gordon story, and the Gordon House. The first two we are convinced have important significance in our planning and to the Trace story. We will take the same attitude toward the Gordon House in view of your decision but suggest you seal the name of the Gordon House in an envelope and perhaps two or three years from now you may agree that it falls in your own description as being "sheer incident of no fundamental importance."

Director Drury restated his argument:

> The historians are wondering why you regard the house as unimportant historically. John Gordon was in the ferry business. Therefore, he settled at this site. The house was built during the heyday of travel on the Trace and was used by him in connection with his ferry operations. It is a material object which reflects the culture of the Tennessee frontier during the second decade of the nineteenth century. By culture is meant the way of life and physical resources of the people living there at the time.
>
> The Gordon House, moreover, is one of the three houses not standing which are known to date from the period of the most significant use of the Trace, and is probably the best preserved and most substantial. Like the Colbert Chimney at the Tennessee River and the Mound Place near Natchez, it was actually a part of the old Trace and is illustrative of the principal use of the Trace—transportation.[59]

59 Phelps, "Gordon's Ferry," 29; Thomas J. Allen, Regional Director to Director, August 7, 1945; Newton B. Drury, Director to Regional Director, Region One, August 20, 1945; Thomas J. Allen, Regional Director to Director, National Park Service, August 30, 1945; Newton B. Drury, Director to Regional Director, Region One, September 18, 1945, NATR archives.

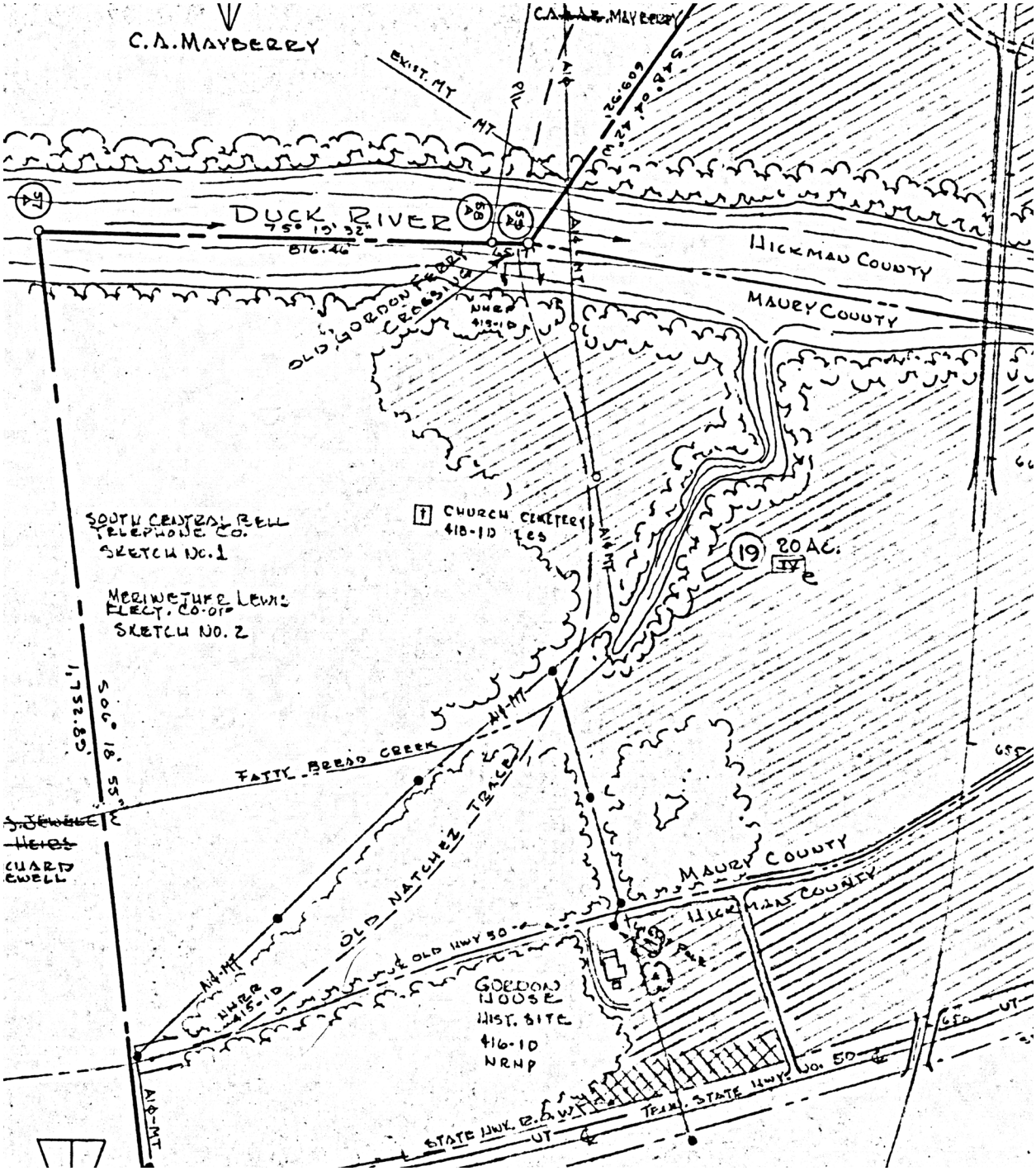


Figure 24. Section 1-D showing the site before development. (Denver Service Center etic 604/60046)



Figure 25. John Gordon House before restoration, 1976. (SER image)



Figure 26. John Gordon House after restoration, 1978. (NATR 12186)

By 1959, Tennessee Highway 50 (TN 50), which ran in front of the John Gordon House, had been relocated to its north. The state of Tennessee acquired the right-of-way for Section 1-D beginning in 1966. A 72-acre tract south of relocated TN 50 was acquired from the Jewell family for the John Gordon House development in 1969.[60]

National Park Service Era (1973-Present)

The NPS acquired the John Gordon House in 1973 from the state of Tennessee, along with the other properties in Section 1-D. In 1974, initial stabilization of the house occurred. On April 18, 1974, the house and sixty-eight acres were listed in the National Register of Historic Places. A 1977 amendment reduced the acreage from sixty-eight acres to ten.

Apparently, some of the original uncertainty about whether the house should be restored remained

60 National Register Nomination.



Figure 27. John Gordon House after steps and landings added, 1997. (HAER MS-15-78 196902)

even after acquisition. Historical architect John C. Garner, Jr. wrote the Southeast Regional Director in 1976:

> As these subsequent changes were made, the original architectural character of the house was progressively impaired. Because of this impairment, there is some question at this time as to whether the structure or the complex merits preservation in its present form due to the subsequent loss of integrity. Additionally, the question arises as to whether the structure as originally built would merit preservation by the National Park Service. The structure was typical of its period of its style of architecture which was fairly common in this country. Gordon, himself, does not appear to have been historically significant except locally. Finally, the house appears to have had little connection with the ferry operation on the Trace.

Natchez Trace Superintendent Jack Ogle responded that "it is important and in the national interest to preserve and maintain what few vestiges of structures associated with the Old Trace [that] still remain." He also reminded the Regional Director that commitments had been made to the Tennessee State Historic Preservation Office and the former owners and descendants.[61]

The NPS restored the house in 1978 to its approximate 1818 appearance, removing a two-story rear addition and two-story front portico.

61 John C. Garner, Jr. to Regional Director, Southeast Region, September 30, 1976; Len Brown to Kirk Cordell, December 2, 1988, NATR archives.

The demolition of several outbuildings dating to the early twentieth century occurred at this time. An earlier, one-story framing system was left standing, but it too was taken down in 1995. Efforts to determine the specific construction date and configuration of the original porch were unsuccessful. To provide access to the house, two sets of front steps with railings and landings were constructed in 1995. The park removed these in 2009, as serious problems resulted from their installation.

A Development Concept Plan, completed in 1983, guided visitor services. To access the site, the NPS constructed a visitor parking lot and comfort station/picnic shelter in 1986 just off the Natchez Trace Parkway. Crews completed the asphalt path between the house and the comfort station/picnic shelter in 1988. The park added hiking trails down to the Duck River in 1993.[62]



Figure 28. Parking lot and comfort station/picnic shelter, 1990. (NATR 849)

62 Personal communication, Ron Bishop; Superintendent's Annual Report, 1986, 1988, NATR archives; Oppermann, 58.

Landscape Characteristics and Features

Landscape characteristics include tangible and intangible aspects of the cultural landscape. These aspects individually and collectively give a landscape its historic character. Landscape characteristics range from large-scale patterns to site details and materials. The following chapter discusses the cultural landscape of the John Gordon House by landscape characteristics.

Spatial Organization

The Natchez Trace

Historical accounts describe the Natchez Trace as descending the ridgeline and crossing the Duck River at Gordon's Ferry. It crossed Fattybread Branch south of the Gordon House and continued down to the river.

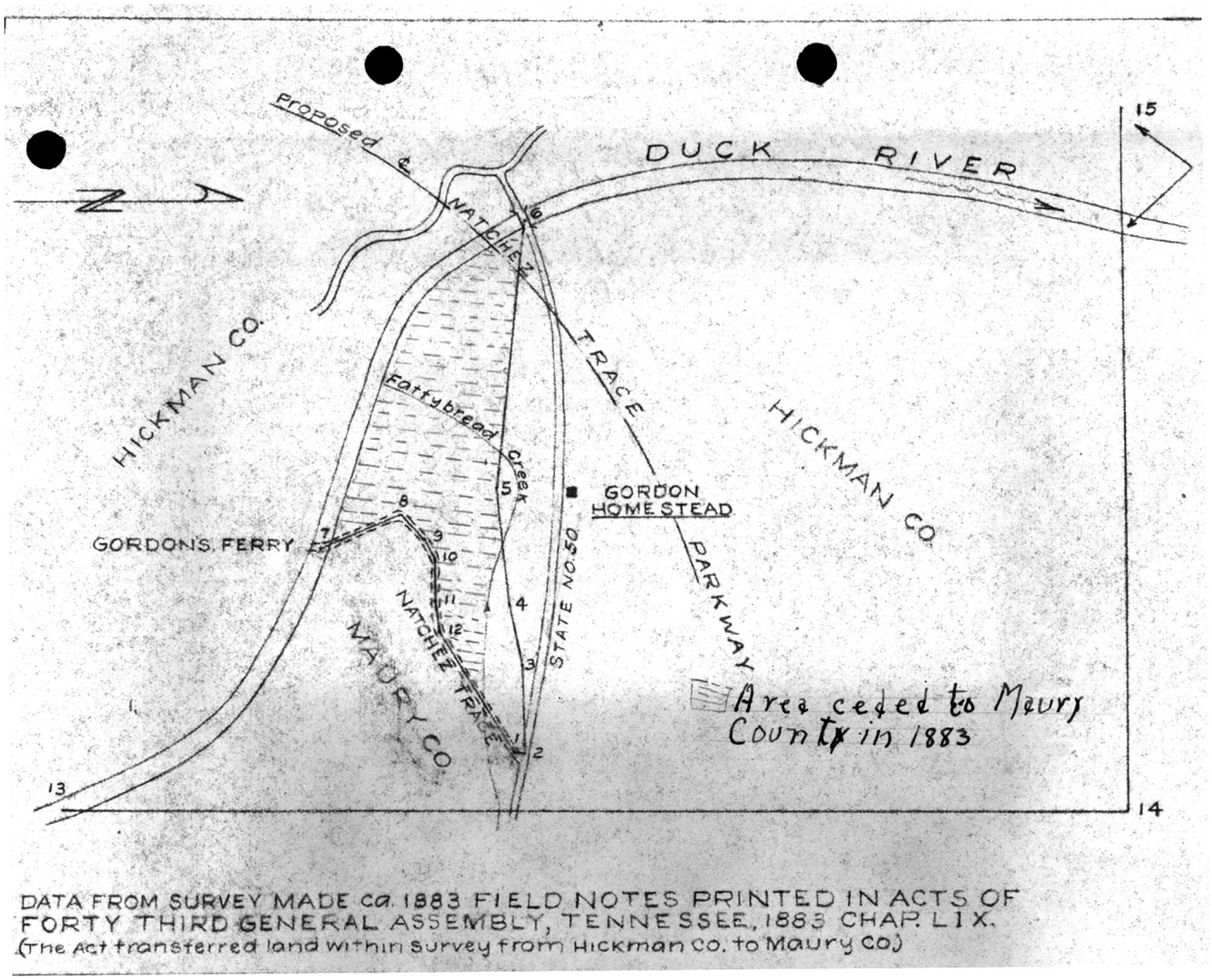


Figure 29. Plat of land ceded to Maury County in 1883. (NATR 8065)



Figure 30. Natchez Trace, 1945. (NATR image)



Figure 31. Natchez Trace, 1945. (NATR image)

The Natchez Trace in the area just north of the Duck River was named as part of the boundary when Maury County was formed in 1807. The document stated:

> that all the section of the county lying within the following described bounds, shall be and is hereby made and constituted a new and distinct county by the name of Maury, … Beginning at the above described point, it being the southwest corner of Williamson County; thence to the Columbian road; thence south with said road as it meanders to a point where the Indian boundary leaves the same.

By reference to the map of Tennessee, before the creation of Lewis County, it appears that the county line followed the Natchez Trace from the vicinity of Chartersville on what became TN 50 to the Duck River and beyond.

In 1883, the county line was relocated when a small tract of land that coincided with a good bridge site over the Duck River was transferred from Hickman to Maury County. Relocating the county line allowed the two counties to share the cost of the steel bridge, which was built in 1896. It was located .3 mile east of the ferry crossing.

Remains of the original Natchez Trace can be found southeast of the Gordon House, where it crossed the Duck River and a nearby creek, Fattybread Branch. In a 1945 report it was noted that deep ruts marked the location of the Trace for about 300 yards just to the east of Fattybread Branch where the ridge separated that creek from the Duck River.

An archeological investigation conducted in 1985 noted that the apparent road cut of the Old Trace ford across Fattybread Branch was clearly visible on the west part of the pasture just southeast of the Gordon House. It continued south across Fattybread Branch and into the woods along the lower slope of the hill, where it visibly terminated at the adjoining grassy field between the hill and the river, reappearing after turning southeast along the base of the hill. Slightly above the base of the hill, a narrow, level shelf resembling an old road was noted, indicating the location of the John Gordon Ferry crossing.[1]

Natchez Trace Parkway

Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) engineers and NPS landscape architects collaborated to design a roadway that merged quietly with the surrounding landscape, so that motorists felt a sense of connectedness with the road and the scenery. How to achieve this was a matter of some disagreement. NPS landscape architects promoted the use of longer vertical curves between grade differences, as opposed to sharp fluctuations that gave the impression that sections of the road were disconnected from one another.

BPR engineers thought that aesthetic considerations were overly emphasized by NPS

1 Dawson Phelps, "Gordon's Ferry," 2-4; Thomason and Associates, *A Re-evaluation of the National Register-listed Natchez Trace in Tennessee* (Nashville: Tennessee Department of Transportation, 1999), 111; James Atkinson, "The Search for and Apparent Discovery of the Duck River Cantonment/Colbert-Gordon Stand Site, Maury County, Tennessee, Natchez Trace Parkway (Southeast Archeological Center, 1985, photocopy), 5-7.

landscape architects. BPR personnel preferred a straight line for road construction, while the NPS preferred a curved road profile and felt that the alignment should be based on landscape features alone. To resolve the tangent versus curvature conflict, the NPS requested noted planner John Nolen's assistance. Nolen sided with the NPS, concluding that curved roads would be more pleasant than tangent roads. He pointed out that recreation was favored "by conformity of the roadway not only to topography, but also to scenic features, especially trees and other vegetation, and pleasant views."[2]

The John Gordon House

The John Gordon homestead consisted of approximately 640 acres of rolling land located north and east of the Duck River. Gordon acquired title to this acreage in 1809. The house was built in 1818 and faced south towards Fattybread Branch and the Duck River beyond. The Natchez Trace ran northeast to southwest past the house to the Gordon's Ferry crossing at the Duck River.[3]

Landscape of Work

A landscape of work was one of the earliest and most basic forms of historic residential landscape architecture in the South. It functioned primarily to accommodate the essential activities of rural living: gardening, slaughtering, cooking and other kinds of food processing, washing and laundering, storage, etc.[4]

Major components would have included the main house, outbuildings, outdoor activity areas, a well, a vegetable garden, slave quarters, agricultural fields and woodlots, and sometimes a small orchard. These components were typically clustered and linked by a network of paths, fences, and functional site lines arranged according to a simple but not always rigid geometry of straight lines and rectangles. Such a geometric layout helped bring a sense of order to a landscape surrounded by wilderness. Because of open range laws that allowed livestock to graze freely without containment, farmers had to build fences to protect their cultivated fields.[5]



Figure 32. Typical work yard, 1900. (Courtesy Tennessee State Library and Archives)

There is little documentation about the spatial layout of the John Gordon work yard. The only reference known to date is from a Gordon family descendant description of the kitchen being "in the yard." R. S. Jewells' daughter, Elizabeth Jewell Baker, described a detached kitchen as being on the west side of the house.

John Gordon mentioned an orchard in his letter of 1818, on a ridge just south of the house:

> As to farming, you are to be governed by circumstances. I did think of putting the Briley field in cotton, but of that you will be the best judge. My orchard and vines will be worthy of your attention.

A portion of the ridge became a cemetery, where his family originally buried John Gordon.[6]

Gordon also mentioned one of his fields being put into cotton. Although field patterns are unknown, cotton was of central importance in the fertile Central Basin counties, followed by corn, tobacco, and wheat. After John Gordon's death, it was said that Dolly Gordon managed the business of the farm "without an overseer save her negro factotum, Lewis, producing fine cotton crops and raising much stock and cattle." [7]

2 HAER No. MS-15, 79-81.
3 Thomason, 111-113.
4 Historic Preservation Division (HPD), *Georgia's Living Places: Historic Houses in Their Landscaped Settings* (Atlanta: Georgia Department of Natural Resources, 1991), I-39.
5 HPD, I-39; Winters, 22.
6 Phelps, "John Gordon's Ferry," 7, 24; Leach, 67, 72; Bond 152-55; Field notes, 1976.
7 Winters 5, 48-65, 137; Bond, 148-49.

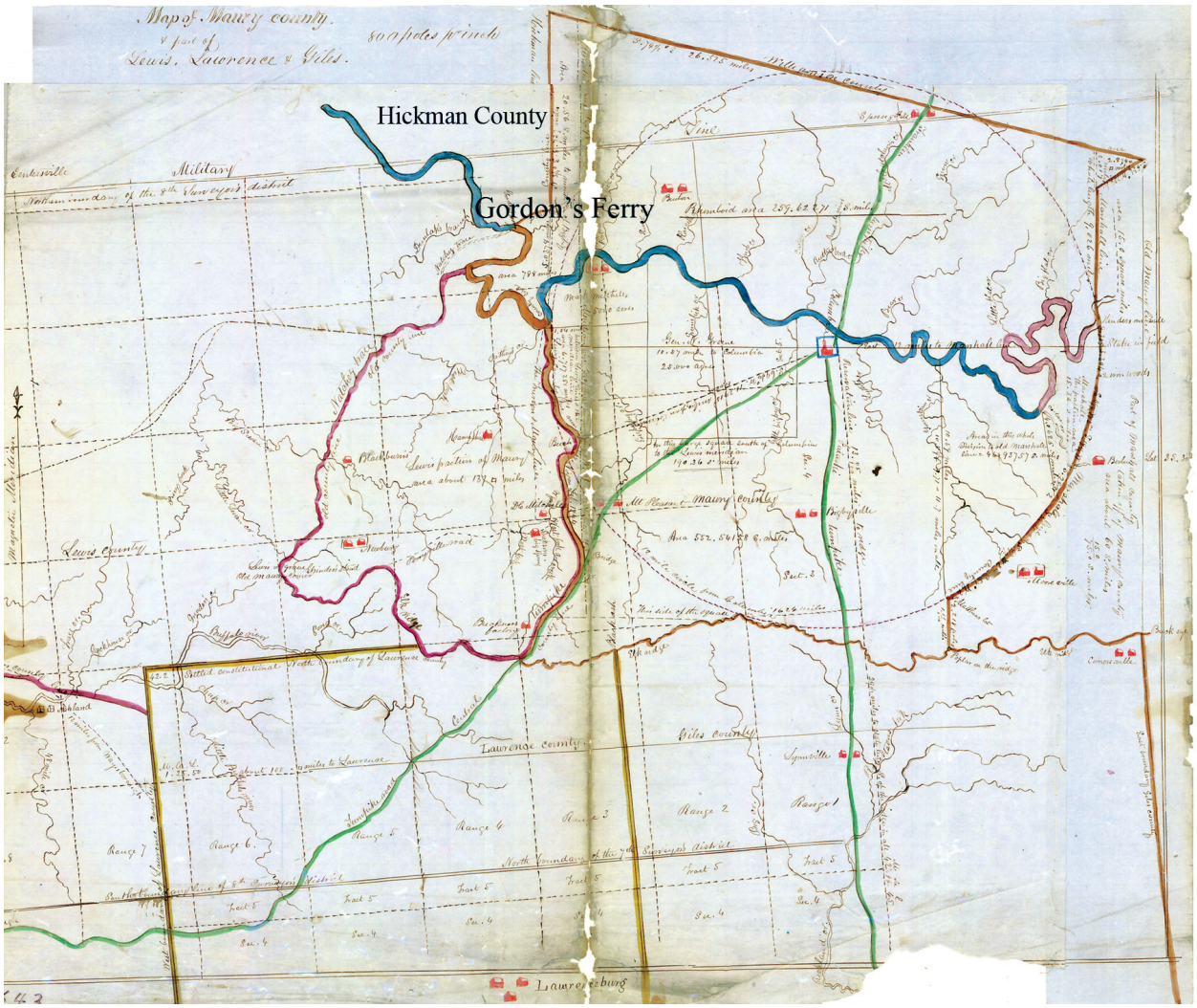


Figure 33. 1851 map of Maury County (Courtesy Tennessee State Library and Archives 2543)

The John Gordon property shows up on two nineteenth-century maps of Maury County. An 1851 map of Maury County calls out the location of the ferry. An 1878 map of Maury County shows George W. Stockard as the owner of land near Fattybread Branch. The John Gordon House sat in Hickman County, just across the county line. Stockard was Bolling Gordon's overseer and eventually acquired the Gordon property, which transected the county line, from Richard Cross Gordon. The Churches also owned land adjacent to Fattybread Branch. (see Figure 34)

Twentieth-century Spatial Organization

Most of what is known about twentieth-century spatial patterns comes from historic photographs and maps. After the construction of the state highway system in the 1920s, the house sat just north of TN 50, whose alignment intersected a portion of the Natchez Trace east of the house. After the NPS acquired the property, TN 50 was moved north of the house because its original location separated the house from portions of the Natchez Trace, the ferry, and the cantonment site. (see Figure 35)

A c. 1910 image shows the presence of an old stone retaining wall along the south edge of the front yard. It ran parallel to the road in an east-west direction with a white picket fence on top of the low stone wall. Access to the property was through a swinging gate at the top of the stone slab steps. Although not visible in the photograph, a stone slab walk probably continued north to the front porch of the house. The extensive use of stone slabs on the property, not only in the retaining wall, but also

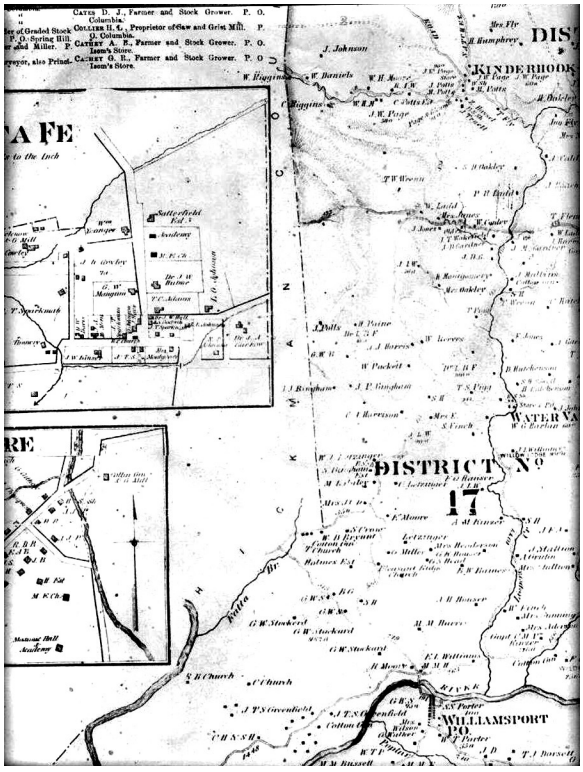


Figure 34. 1878 map of Maury County, District 17. (www.tngenweb.org/maury/map)

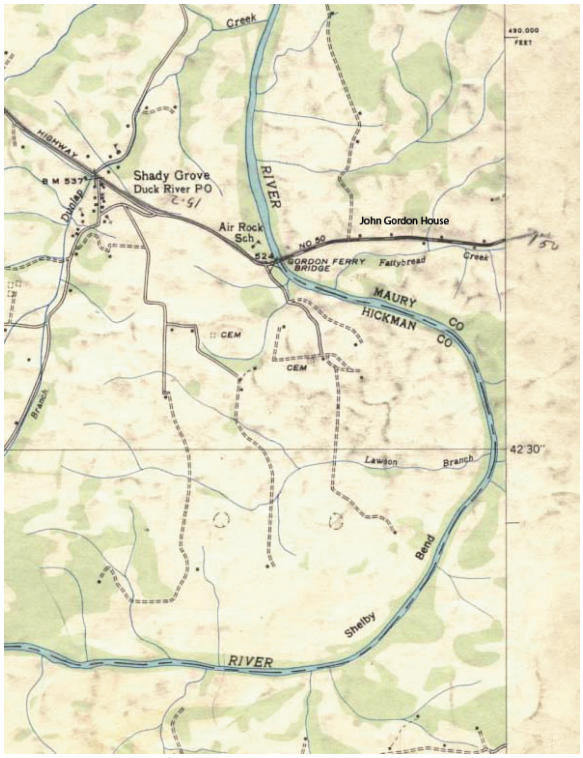


Figure 35. 1927 USGS topographic map showing old TN 50 alignment. (Courtesy Hodges Library, University of Tennessee Knoxville)



Figure 36. Stone retaining wall and fence, c. 1910. (SER image)



Figure 37. Ornamental wire fence and gate, front and east façades, 1944. (NATR 5485)

in the house foundation, suggests that a slab stone walk would also have been present.[8]

At some point before 1944, the Jewells replaced the picket fence with an ornamental post-and-wire fence with a wire gate. The site was documented in 1944 by NPS historian Dawson Phelps and in 1945 by archeologist Jesse Jennings. These images show an ornamental wire fence running parallel along the perimeter of the front yard and turning north. The portion of the fence adjacent to the driveway was partially collapsed and gave way to a rickety board fence (see Figure ??). The other side (west) of the front yard contained a well and a clothes line.

The rear of the property was given over to an agricultural landscape, and a combination of hogwire and board fences enclosed fields under cultivation or in pasture. Crops can be

8 Shawn Bonath, "The Gordon House: An Analysis of Structural Remains" (Southeast Archeological Center, 1977, photocopy), 6, 14; according to Mr. Ellis Baker, the image shows Elizabeth Jewell Baker's sister being held by her grandmother, flanked by her grandfather, Mrs. R. S. Jewell, Mr. R. S. Jewell.



Figure 38. Front yard with well and clothes line, front and west façades, 1944. (NATR 5484)



Figure 39. Field plowed right up to the house, 1959. (NATR 10088)

seen growing very close to the house in images from 1944, 1958, and 1959. Natchez Trace Superintendent Malcolm Gardner stated in 1948: "Both areas are located on the farm of Mr. Dick Jewell; part is under cultivation and the rest in pasture."[9]

A number of outbuildings, including a barn, granary, chicken house, woodshed, smokehouse, and privy stood north of the John Gordon House. The smokehouse, woodshed, privy, and chicken house were clustered in a group north of but near the house. The barn and granary faced each other across the driveway/farm road at the rear of the property. An abandoned single crib barn was located near a wooded area northeast of the house. A soil resistivity test conducted in 1983 confirmed that these outbuildings dated to the twentieth century.[10]

9 Malcolm Gardner, Superintendent to Regional Director, Region One, July 6, 1948, NATR archives.

10 Ron Bishop, "Completion Report Narrative, Preservation of John Gordon House," August 23, 1979, 1; Rochelle A. Marrinan, "Soil Resistivity Survey and Test Excavation Gordon House, Natchez Trace Parkway" (Southeast Archeological Center, 1983, photocopy), 10.



Figure 40. Agricultural fields and fences, 1959. (NATR 10092)

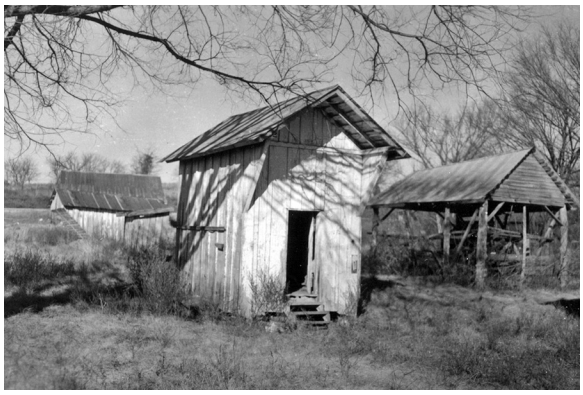


Figure 41. Clustering of smokehouse, woodshed, and chicken house, 1959. (NATR 10078)



Figure 42. Clustering of privy, chicken house, and granary. (NATR 10084)



Figure 43. Clustering of smokehouse, privy, chicken house, and granary. (NATR 10089)

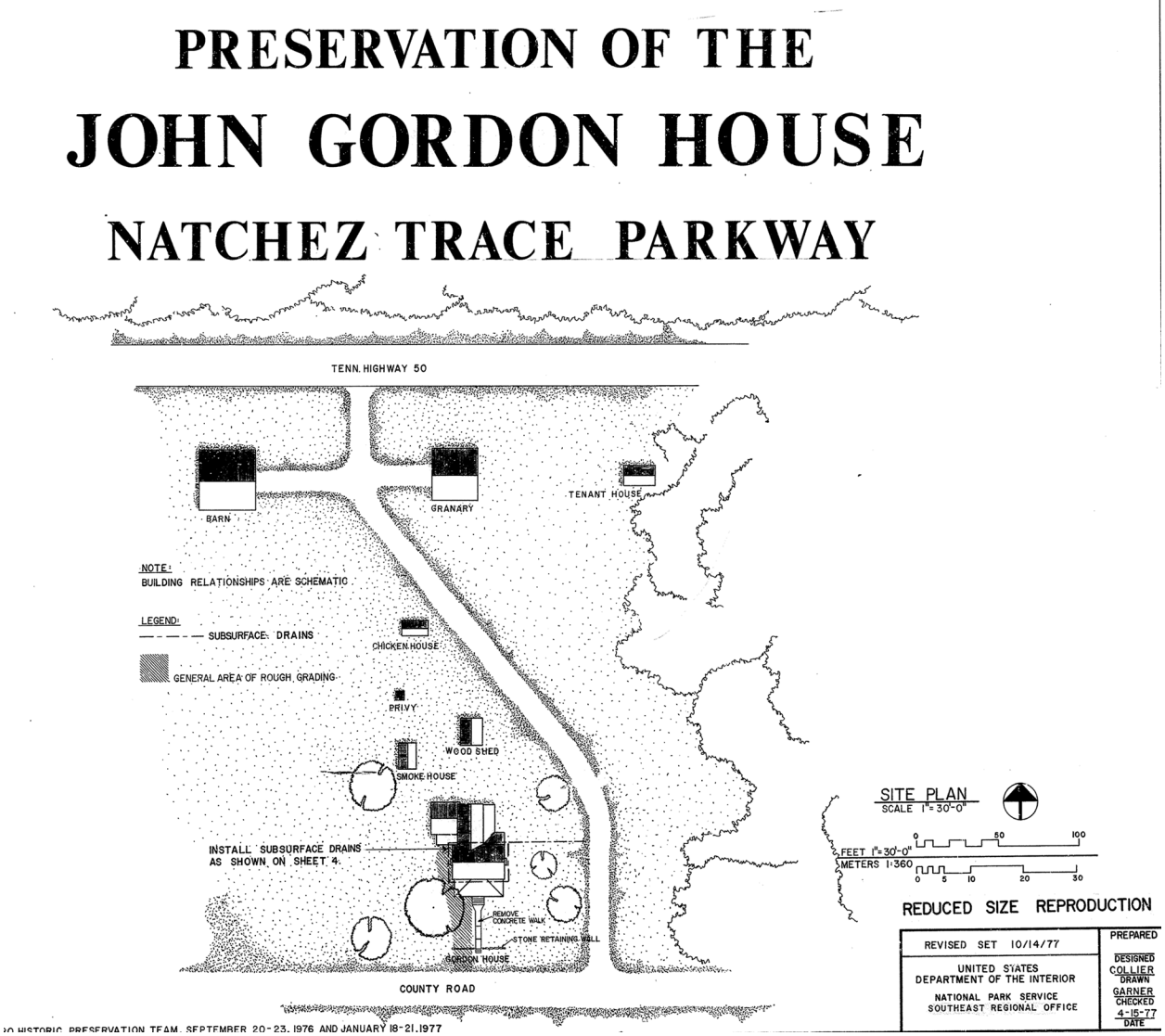


Figure 44. Site plan showing clustering of outbuildings, 1977. (Denver Service Center etic 604/80000)

Around 1947, the Jewells replaced the double-gallery front porch with a full-height porch supported by four square paneled wood columns. A 1948 photograph documents these changes as well as the porch resting on a high block foundation with center cement steps leading down to a stepped walk of the same material.[11]



Figure 45. Changes to front porch, 1948. (NATR 6671)

Beginning in the 1950s, the front of the property took on a more manicured look. It is unknown when the ornamental wire fence along the front of the property was taken down. The map of lands to be acquired for the Natchez Trace Parkway by the Tennessee Department of Highways shows the agricultural fence lines present in the 1960s. It also

11 Oppermann, 40-41.

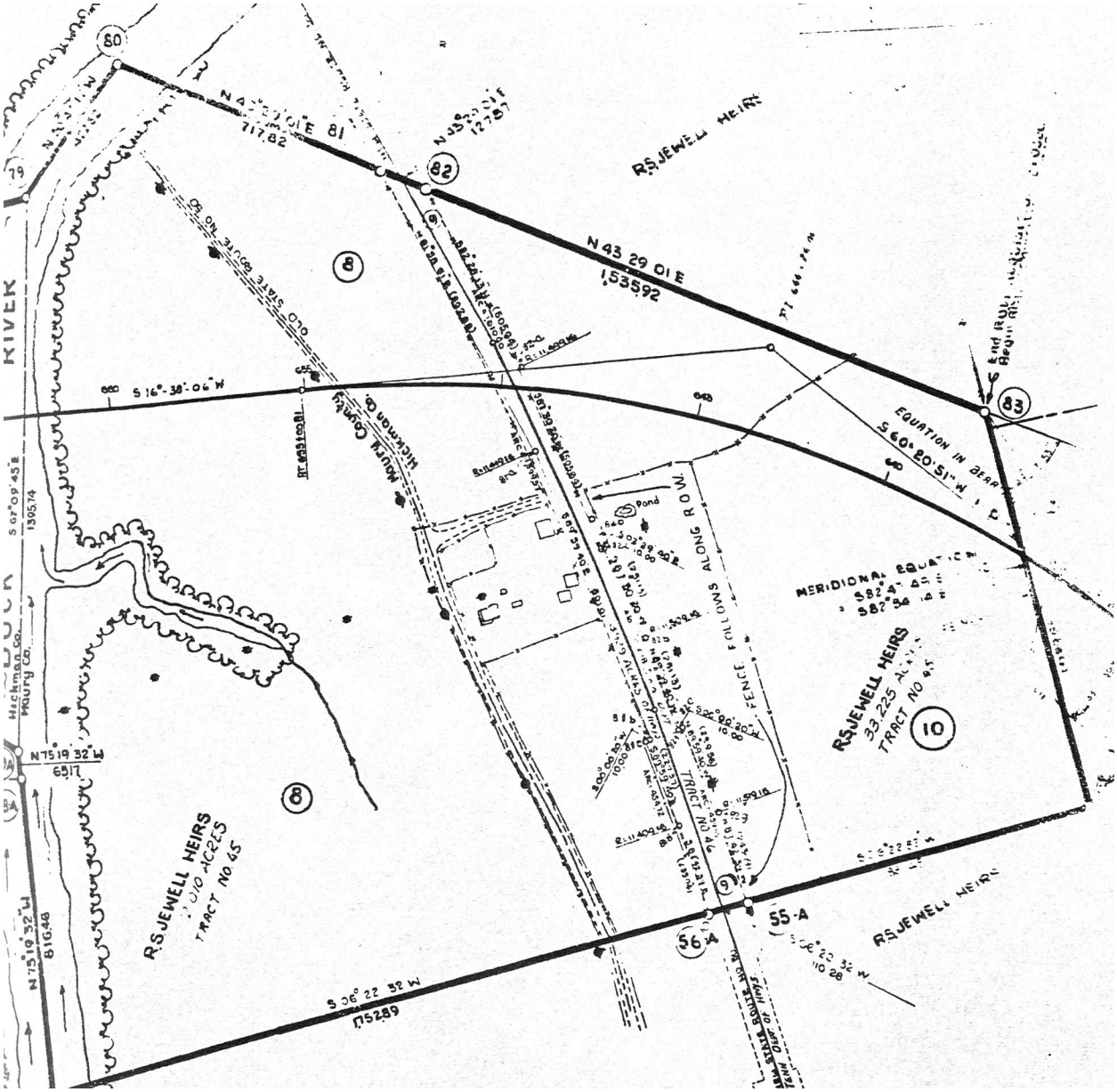


Figure 46. Map showing fence lines, outbuildings, and TN 50, 1964. (NPS map)

shows the outbuildings and the relocation of TN 50 north of the property.

In 1978, the NPS completed the restoration of the house to its 1818 date of construction. At this time historical architect Todd Rainwater prepared measured drawings of the frame outbuildings dating from the early twentieth century prior to their removal.[12]

The John Gordon Ferry

The ferry site was also a 640–acre parcel, which Gordon operated as a trading post, stand, and ferry in partnership with William Colbert beginning in 1802. John Gordon set up "an Establishment at the crossing of Duck River for the purpose of affording the necessary convenience to travelers on the route from Nashville to the Natchez." Gordon made "many valuable improvements on the place"

However, the enterprise had problems. Because the land was still in Indian Territory in 1802, Colbert was the original grantee. Colbert and Gordon made an agreement whereby Gordon would run the

12 Completion Report, 1-11.

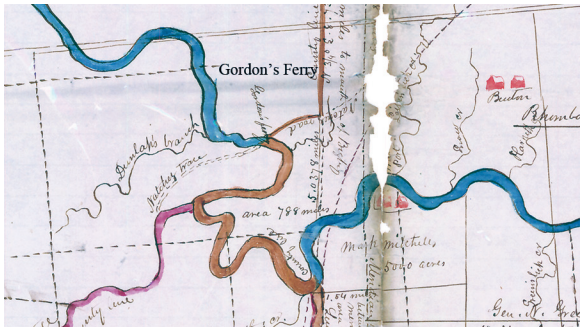


Figure 47. 1851 map detail. (Courtesy Tennessee State Library and Archives 2543)

operation and had the right to clear and cultivate the land while Colbert was to provide protection for the operation as well as to cover a share of the expenses. Gordon was soon complaining that Colbert was not fulfilling his obligations. His arguments succeeded and, in 1806, the state legislature granted the 640-acre tract directly to Gordon.[13]

The ferry site, located on the north bank of the Duck River, carried travelers using the Natchez Trace across the river. The ferry operated from 1803 until 1896, when Maury and Hickman counties built a bridge across the Duck River. Its location was marked on an 1851 map of Maury County.

In 1945, Natchez Trace historian Dawson Phelps visited the site. He described the location:

> The ferry landing on the north bank of Duck River is marked by low banks. It is directly across from the deep erosions which mark the Trace location on the south side. Just to the east of Fatty Bread Creek where the ridge separates that stream from Duck River, deep ruts mark the location for perhaps three hundred yards. Fatty Bread Creek at this point runs through a deep ditch. A narrow sunken approach dug out from the north bank marks the traditional site of the Trace crossing.

SEAC archeologist James R. Atkinson confirmed this location when he conducted archeology at the site in 1985. He noted a narrow, level shelf resembling an old road located slightly above the base of the hill east of Fattybread Branch and concluded that the probable location of the ferry would have been a depression in the low, natural levee, which was also described by Phelps.[14]

Duck River Cantonment/John Gordon Stand

Southeast of the Gordon House is the possible site of the Duck River Cantonment, a temporary military supply depot and base of operation that may have been built by Colonel Thomas S. Butler in 1801 when it was determined that the U.S. Army would build a road from the Tennessee River Divide (then the boundary between the United States and the Chickasaw Nation) southward to what is now Colbert Ferry on the Tennessee River. After construction of the road ended, the buildings became part of the John Gordon Ferry operation, which also included a stand.

The buildings were, by General James Wilkinson's instructions, "delivered to General William Colbert, or any person nominated by him to receive them." Control of the property passed to Colbert's partner, John Gordon, who described the buildings as "the houses and appendant craft . . . erected on the banks of the Duck River where it is crossed by the Natchez Road, and intended as a place of deposit to the troops engaged in opening the aforesaid road." Historic documents do not describe the buildings, but there could have been one or more storehouses, boats, and possibly a dock.[15]

Efforts by the Park Service to find the site in the 1940s focused on a hill beside the river east of Fattybread Branch. There, historian Dawson Phelps found an earthwork, which he thought might be military in origin and thus part of the cantonment. The earthworks ran about 200 feet east and west, just north of and below the crest of the ridge between the Duck River and Fattybread Branch. At the western end of the ridge, the earthworks turned south at a right angle and extended for about 100 feet.[16]

13 Leach, 47-48.

14 Phelps, "Gordon's Ferry," 4, 33; Thomason and Associates, 112; Overview and Assessment, 306-07; Leach, 45-49; Atkinson, 7.

15 Phelps, "Gordon's Ferry," 7; National Park Service, *Development Concept Plan Gordon House/ Duck River Historic Area* (Denver: Denver Service Center, 1983), 19; Leach, 45-46; Atkinson, 7; Oppermann, 22.

16 Phelps, "Gordon's Ferry, 9; Malcolm Gardner to Mrs. Hinton Frierson, February 7, 1945, Natchez Trace archives; Overview and Assessment, 306-07.



Figure 48. Earthworks north side of ridge between Duck River and Fatty Bread Creek, 1945. (NATR image)

In 1948, Rogers W. Young of the NPS History Division in Washington carried out extensive research at the National Archives and the Library of Congress in an effort to determine the location, number, type and physical layout of the buildings associated with the cantonment. The research showed that the Duck River Cantonment would have been a temporary station of detail for troops regularly assigned to the permanent post of Southwest Point, Tennessee, which was the nearest Army establishment in the vicinity during that period.

The research failed to answer questions about the physical configuration of the site. Missing from the files, however, were nearly all of General Wilkinson's original letters to the War Department, an invaluable source of information on the establishment of the camp. Subsequently, Natchez Trace archeologist John Cotter and historian Phelps undertook a "surface archeological reconnaissance of the reputed site in order to get information needed for the further planning for the development, or non-development of the site." The reputed site referred to the traditional site on the high hill east of Fattybread Branch where a low earthwork encircled part of the hill top.

After making a cut in the embankment, they discovered only a few bricks aboveground as well as one brick under the surface. Cotter concluded that he saw no direct evidence of the cantonment. He suggested that a brick structure once sat on the hill but that it probably post-dated the cantonment.[17]

Location of the Duck River Cantonment/Stand Site

Until the 1980s, no further effort was made to locate the specific site of the cantonment/stand. In 1980, the University of Alabama conducted extensive testing of a prehistoric site in the Duck River floodplain along Duck River and Fattybread Branch, but they encountered no historic material in that area. In the summer of 1984, the University of Tennessee carried out surface and sub-surface work on the same site, as well as the terrace where the Gordon House stands. Despite large-scale investigations of these prehistoric sites, no evidence of the army depot/stand was discovered. In March 1985, maintenance crews cleared the heavily vegetated slope extending eastward from the Gordon House. Surface inspection of this area eliminated it as the possible site of the cantonment.

SEAC archeologist James Atkinson who, in his report and in other documents, referred to the "Duck River Cantonment/Colbert-Gordon Stand Site," located what appears to be the depot and Gordon's establishment. In April 1985, Atkinson and two crew members from SEAC conducted a survey along a section of an old road bed believed to the historic Natchez Trace approach to north side of the Duck River, looking for evidence of the site. Since the site had not been found on the upland hills and terraces where surface evidence would have been present, Atkinson felt that it was likely concealed by post-occupation deposition. The Duck River floodplain west of Fattybread Branch, having already been eliminated by previous investigations, resulted in only two high potential areas remaining, with one having more potential than the other based on the following statement by John Gordon:

> That some time in the spring of the year 1802 the buildings erected on the banks of the Duck River where it is crossed by the Natchez Road, and intended as a place of deposit to the troops

17 Rogers W. Young, "Memorandum Relating to Documentary Evidence Existing in Selective Washington Depositories Concerning the So-called Wilkinson Cantonment Site, Duck River, Tenn. (Natchez Trace Parkway, June 1948, mimeographed), 1-2; Atkinson, 2-3.

> engaged in opening the aforesaid road, was ordered in a letter from Gen. Wilkinson to Col. Butler, to be delivered to Gen. William Colbert, or any person nominated by him to receive them.

The area least likely to have been the location, designated Area 1, was tested first. Area 1 lay in the flat floodplain between the Gordon House terrace and Fattybread Branch. Although no surface artifacts had been found here, it seemed possible that nineteenth and twentieth-century deposition from the creek and the adjacent hills would have buried the remains of any site present there prior to modern times. In Area 1, just below the terrace bluff, they found Indian lithic cultural items, but no materials from the cantonment era (tests A-B on Figure 49). Several other postholes yielded negative results (tests C-E).

They moved south across Fattybread Branch to Area 2, located west of the Natchez Trace along the lower slope of the hill toward the river. At a point where the Trace visibly terminated, they dug a posthole test at the edge of an adjacent field with negative results (test F).

They followed the Trace toward the river, where it seems to have followed a narrow "shelf" to a depression in the natural levee on the riverbank. Assuming that was the river crossing point, Atkinson's crew dug posthole tests on either side of the depression (tests G-L). No artifacts were found.

The crew moved west along the natural levee close to the mouth of Fattybread Branch. Here the generally narrow, natural levee expanded, creating a level elevation in the grassy woods adjacent to the field between the levee and the hill. They dug four tests in that area, with one producing a sherd of hand-painted pearlware (P.H. 1-4). When the positive shovel test was excavated, they located additional early nineteenth-century ceramic sherds and glass fragments, along with animal bones and charred floral material. Although the crew conducted no other testing, Atkinson thought it likely that the site extended into the field between the levee and the hill. Previous surface surveys of the area failed to locate the remains of the

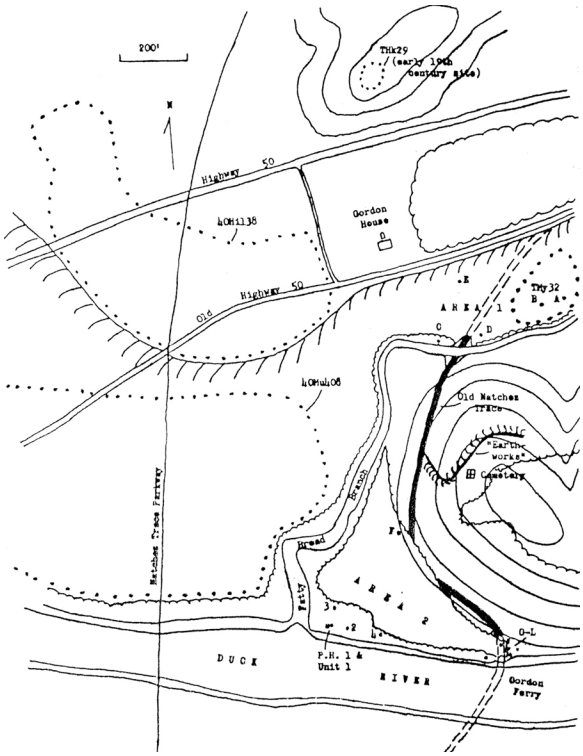


Figure 49. Atkinson survey map, 1985. (NATR image)

cantonment and stand because the site is buried beneath 50 cm of recent alluvium.[18]

Church Cemetery

A cemetery with three marked graves from 1851 is located southeast of the house near the top of a hill. According to Gordon family tradition, the hill was the site of an orchard that later became a cemetery. John Gordon was originally buried here at his death in 1819 before being moved to Rose Hill Cemetery in Columbia in 1855.

The earliest description found of the site is a survey completed in 1940 during the early years of the Works Progress Administration archeological work for the parkway. The form states that the site lies on a ridge or hill east of the junction of the Duck River and Fattybread Creek. The survey form described the site:

> In a recent grave (1857?) in a stone box a few slabs of native stone protrude. May also be a few Indian graves but not many. ... The name on the grave is Church . . . Also has what is called locally a trench encircling it. Very shallow ditch.

18 Atkinson, 3-9; Archeological Overview and Assessment, 306-07; Leach, 45; Marrianan, 4.

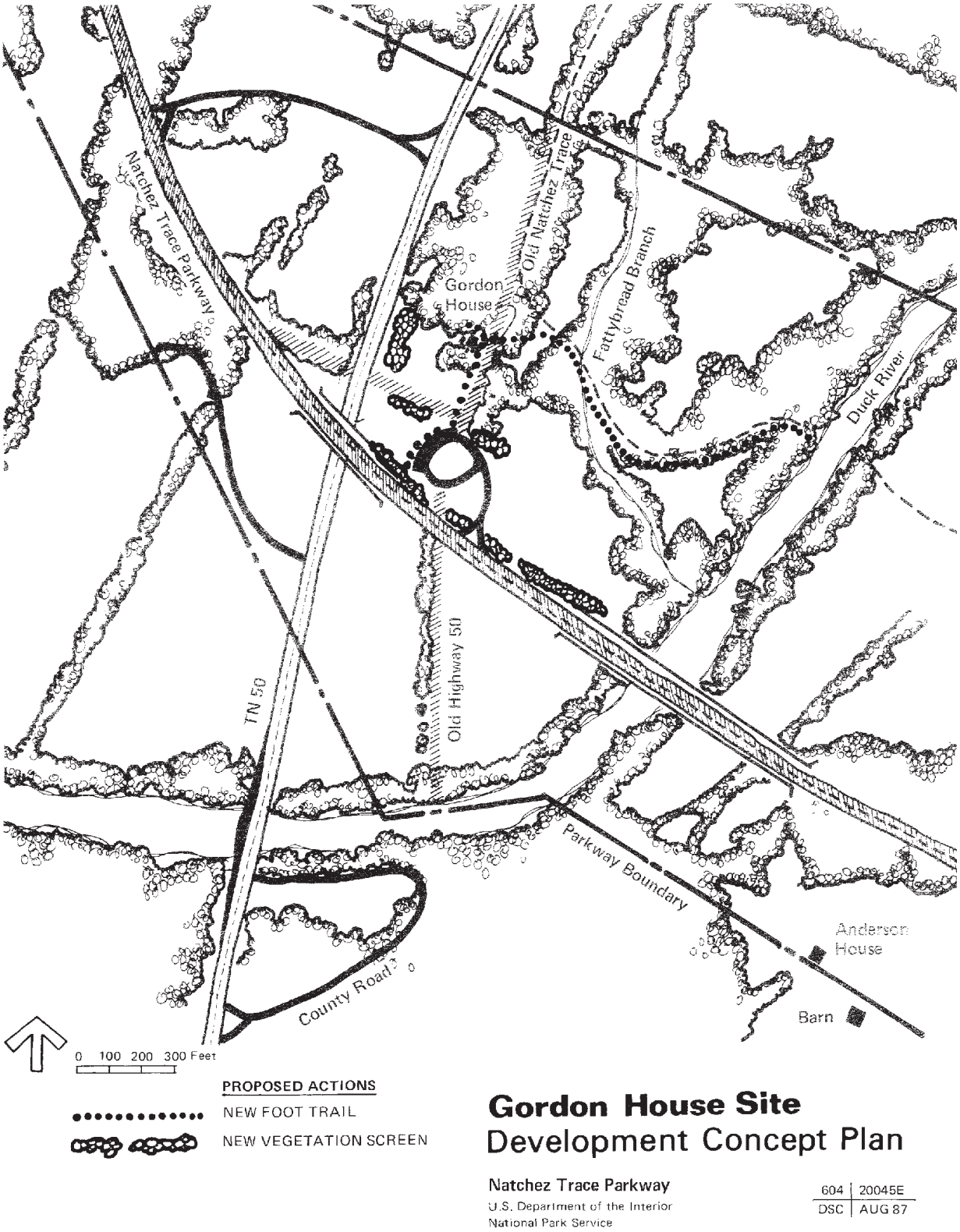


Figure 50. Development Concept Plan, 1987. (Denver Service Center etic 604/20045E)

> Is not really much of a site [Natchez Trace Parkway Archeological Survey form, SEAC accession 305].

Park historian Dawson Phelps visited the site in 1945 and found only a single stone-box grave, marked "Sacred to // the memory of Paulod C. Church // Died Oct. 4. 1851." The cemetery was last documented for the LCS in 1980 and by James Atkinson in 1985, who stated that Phelps was wrong and the inscription read: "Darilee Church, consort of J. E. Church. Born 1827, Died 1851." The LCS report agreed with Phelps.

The site was once thought to include the remains of the Duck River Cantonment due to the presence of an earthen berm on the west side of the hill. These "earthworks" were thought to relate to the road to the cemetery (see Topography below), but recently they were described as Civil War earthworks.[19]

New Construction

A Development Concept Plan, completed in 1983, guided visitor services. The NPS constructed a visitor parking area and comfort station/picnic shelter northeast of the Natchez Trace Parkway in 1986. An asphalt walk laid out over the old TN 50 roadbed in 1988 linked the parking area and the house. From the house, an unpaved foot trail constructed in 1993 led down to the ferry site via remnants of the Natchez Trace. The old crossing of the Natchez Trace over the Flattybread Branch was rehabilitated for visitor use with a footbridge. Wayside exhibits on the trail identified the Trace, mentioned the site of the army cantonment, and described Gordon's Ferry.[20]

Topography

The Natchez Trace

The Natchez Trace was an outgrowth of a series of ancient Indian paths, which clung to the ridges and followed watershed divides over the highest ground, avoiding stream crossings and swamps where possible. Francis Baily, the acclaimed English astronomer, traveled over the Chickasaw Trace in 1797. He noted that "these paths are generally carried over the highest, and consequently the worse, ground, in order to prevent swamps and other impediments from a low situation."[21]

From Natchez, a trail followed the Pontotoc Ridge and the ridge dividing the watersheds of the Big Black and Pearl Rivers to the villages of the Chickasaw. The trails continued across the Tennessee River into the limestone hills, dipping occasionally to ford streams. They crossed the Duck River and the Duck River ridge portion of the Highland Rim of Tennessee— the watershed between the Duck River and the Cumberland River drainage. Their final destination was the villages of the Cumberland.[22]

A Presbyterian missionary who traveled the Natchez Trace in 1800 described the topography of the area coming down from Nashville:

> After crossing Harper [Harpeth] River, ten miles from Nashville, the land for a few miles is hilly, but the soil of a tolerable quality.
>
> It then becomes level and barren, with scarcely any timber except post-oaks. This it continues for a distance of about 20 miles until the road falls upon Long Flat Creek, on which are bodies of good low grounds. This is a branch of Duck river, on which are very little low grounds at the place of crossing but the soil is good for the distance of five or six miles on each side, though much broken with hills.

When they reached the Duck River, they found "an exceedingly steep precipice," at the bottom of which the Duck River flowed. From the Duck River they crossed the Duck River Ridge. He described the topography:

> Our course was now over a very mountainous and hilly country; . . . The soil consisted of a light, sharp gravel. Some of these hills were so remarkably steep that we have been obliged to clamber up them, and their descent has been

19 Bond, 152; Phelps, "Gordon's Ferry," 7; Archeological Overview and Assessment, 418.

20 Superintendent's Annual Report, 1986; DCP, 18.

21 Myers, 87.

22 Dawson Phelps and Edward Hunter Ross, "The Natchez Trace: Indian Trail to Parkway," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* (21) September 1962; Bureman, 41; Myers, 91. The Duck River Ridge is part of a long ridge dividing Middle Tennessee east to west. Streams to the south flow into the Duck and Tennessee Rivers, while streams to the north flow into the Cumberland River. The divide once marked the boundary of the Chickasaw lands to the south.

> so sudden and perpendicular that we have left our horses to take care of themselves, and come down how they could.

The initial alignment of the Natchez Trace, being primarily a ridge road, was not conducive to large scale settlement and development along major portions of its corridor. Changes in alignment were necessary to meet the needs of towns that were established several miles away and eventually needed regular mail service. North of the Duck River, the Trace followed the infertile ridges of the Highland Rim, but settlers preferred the better limestone soils and undulating topography of the Central Basin.[23]

The John Gordon House

The John Gordon property is located within the Central Basin of Tennessee—an area of rolling, fertile farmland. Historically, the site sloped downward from the north towards the house and on towards the river. John Swain described the topography in his article in Everybody's Magazine in 1905:

> The Trace was a familiar road to Slater, and he gave me directions for following it through Kinderhook, once a settlement but now a deserted store, and so by Pigg Hill and ridge above John's Creek and Leatherwood, to Gordon's Ferry on Duck River. Never have my feet traveled a more grateful way than the level boulevard upon the ridges into which he directed me. Narrow and winding, but shaded and firm it was, and at frequent intervals some lover of history had nailed upon the trees boards bearing the legend: "Natchez Trace." [24]

The John Gordon House sits near the edge of a ridge overlooking the floodplain of the Duck River. Fattybread Branch flows to the south, about 400 yards from its confluence with the Duck River. Historic photographs taken before TN 50 was moved north of the house show the rolling character of the site at that time.[25]

In 1977, SEAC carried out archeological testing to determine whether or not fill had been added to the site around the house. A 1945 photograph suggested that the lower west one-half of the

23 Leach, 43; Bureman, 69; Myers, 92, 121.

24 John Swain, "The Natchez Trace," Everybody's Magazine (September 1905): 334.

25 Oppermann, 65.



Figure 51. Section of the Natchez Trace near Fattybread Branch, 1948. (NATR 6672)

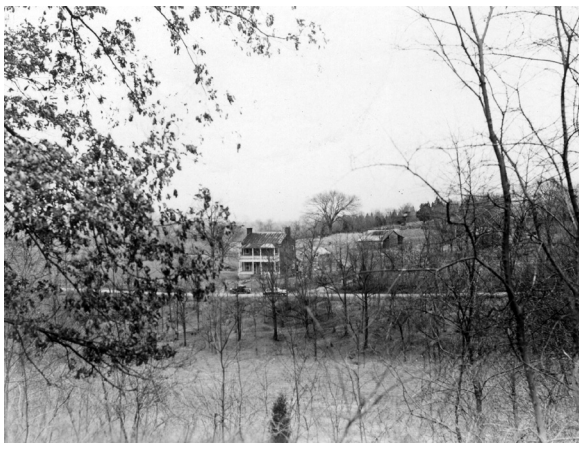


Figure 52. Rolling topography of the site, 1945. (NATR 6084)



Figure 53. John Gordon House site detail, 1945. (NATR 6084)

yard may have been filled to level the site, but the investigation found no evidence of fill. [26]

In 1977, as part of the house restoration project, the park lowered the grade at the southwest corner of the house and installed 51 linear feet of two-inch rigid PVC conduit and a catch basin at the cellar entrance. This drainage system did not adequately prevent water from getting into the basement, however, particularly via the basement door on the west side of the house during heavy rains.[27]

Construction plans for section 1-D3 of the Natchez Trace Parkway indicated that a portion of the hill directly north of the John Gordon House (north of TN 50) would be removed for fill and that the area would be further disturbed by the construction of the TN 50 access road. In 1984, archeological investigations revealed a definite early nineteenth-century domestic habitation. Based on the research results, the highway engineers changed construction plans and did not disturb the site.[28]

In 1997, it was reported that ground surface water flowed from the rear and west side of the house and drained down the basement steps. The drain at the base of the steps was inadequate to handle the runoff, and water occasionally overflowed the stairwell into the basement, eventually sinking into the dirt floor. Excessive moisture in the basement was causing slow deterioration of the wooden floor joists and other wood surfaces in the basement area.

Efforts to correct the problem in 2001 included the construction of a shallow swale on the west side of the house to carry the surface water south, away from the building; the lowering of the grade to the desired level; and the installation of two six-inch drainpipes to carry the water under the existing five-foot-wide asphalt entrance walk in front of the house. Also, a small earthen berm at the top of the basement steps was reshaped and increased in size to help redirect surface water away from the basement steps and towards the swale. Archeology conducted prior to digging the new swale discovered that soil from the original trench dug in 1977 was spread west of the house, raising the grade slightly, channeling surface water toward the grate in the cellar.[29]

The John Gordon Ferry/Cantonment/ Stand Site

The site determined in 1985 archeological investigations to be the cantonment/stand was located west of the Natchez Trace crossing of the John Gordon Ferry along a natural levee near the mouth of Fattybread Branch. It appears from the map of the site that the positive posthole test and the excavated unit were located on the narrow active floodplain of the Duck River. In March 2005, the area showed indisputable evidence of alluvial deposition. There is a low natural levee adjacent to the river, with a slough behind it. There was no ground cover vegetation and the bases of trees were deeply buried by silt and sand deposits.[30]

Church Cemetery

Prior to archeological investigations in the 1980s, the cemetery had been associated with the possible location of the cantonment site. Park historian Dawson Phelps wrote in 1945 that the military buildings, constructed in conjunction with improvements to the Natchez Trace, may have stood on the ridge just south of the Gordon Homestead. Only a single grave was found by Phelps in 1945. He described what he thought were earthworks and a road along the north crest:

> There are signs of a road along the north crest. … Extensive remains of earthworks, perhaps fortifications, are to be seen. It is not unlikely that some protection was necessary for the army buildings erected in 1801. The earthworks seem to be the remains of a wide shallow trench. It runs for about 200 feet east and west, just north of and below the crest of [the] ridge … At the western end of the ridge it turns south at a right angle and extends for about 100 feet.

26 Bonath, 16, to date this image has not been identified.

27 Michael Emrick, "Preliminary Historic Structure Report for the John Gordon House" (Tennessee Valley Authority Cultural Resources, 1988, photocopy), 13; Completion Report, 8-10.

28 Allen H. Cooper and John W. Walker, *Excavations at the Historic Locus of 40-Hi-151 on the Natchez Trace Parkway in Hickman County, Tennessee* (Tallahassee, FL: Southeast Archeological Center, 1984), ii.

29 "Gordon House Drainage Project," March 2000; Herbert L. Harper, Tennessee Historical Commission to Jill Halchin, Southeast Archeological Center, January 31, 2001, NATR archives.

30 Archeological Overview and Assessment, 306-07.

Archeologist John Cotter visited the site with Phelps in 1948 in an effort to find the cantonment. Cotter concluded that there was not any direct evidence to support its location, but they noted the presence of a historic cemetery with only one grave and an old road on the north side of the hill. He concluded that the north side of the hill was used as a cemetery prior to 1850.[31]

James Atkinson was the next to examine the site. In 1985, at the confluence of Fattybread Branch and the Duck River, his crew recovered a handful of early nineteenth-century artifacts, most likely indicating the location of the cantonment buildings (40MU489, NATR-203). Atkinson offered his observations about the so called earthworks on the hill above the cantonment site:

> With regard to the "earthworks" on the hill, it is this writer's opinion that this feature resulted from the later construction of a road which branched off from the old Trace to allow access to the top of the hill. The curving embankment has a level area bordering it on the inside, giving the entire configuration a road-like appearance. It does, in fact, connect with the old Trace.

Soil excavated in the course of grading the road into the hillside was pushed to the outside creating the "embankment" or "earthworks" referred to in previous reports as the site of the cantonment.[32]

Vegetation

Little is known about the cultural vegetation of the John Gordon House during the period up to 1860. Houses on frontier properties like this one tended to dominate the landscape, with very few foundation plantings. Often a grove of trees near the house was more typical. Historic twentieth-century photographs show a number of large canopy trees near the house with no foundation plantings. No nineteenth-century images have been found.

A vegetable garden would have been a necessity during the period up to 1860, but its location is unknown. An orchard would also have been typical, and one was mentioned by John Gordon is a letter to Dolly in 1818. Donald L. Winters describes what would have been typical in *Tennessee Farmer, Tennessee Farming:*

> Every household set aside a large plot near the house on which the family grew a variety of vegetables. The typical garden contained most of the following crops: several kinds of beans, Irish and sweet potatoes, peas, carrots, onions, beets, cabbage, squash, pumpkins, tomatoes, celery, turnips, parsnips, cucumbers, asparagus, melons, peppers, and radishes. Many farmers put in orchards that, after several years, provided apples, peaches, cherries, and plums; they sometimes planted strawberries and peanuts on the floor of the orchards and grapes along the edge of the orchards or gardens.[33]

Settlers adopted the Indian practice of planting the three sisters: beans, pumpkins, and squash between the irregular rows of corn. It is likely that most of the improved land was cultivated or used as pasture for livestock. It is unknown if any ornamental gardens existed in this early period.

31 Phelps, "Gordon's Ferry," 7-9; Atkinson, 3.
32 Phelps, "Gordon's Ferry,"7-9; Atkinson, 9; Archeological Overview and Assessment, 418-421.
33 Winters, 32.



Figure 54. Iris and vines growing on wire fence, 1948. (NATR 6671)



Figure 55. Shrubs in the front yard, 1958. (NATR 9920)

The house's location adjacent to the Natchez Trace and later to old TN 50 would have limited any ornamental gardens south of the house. Southern heirloom plants could have been grown inside or along the picket fence, but none are visible in historic photographs. North of the house, a clustering of outbuildings demarcated the landscape of work.

An unidentified vine on the wire fence that replaced the picket fence and two deciduous shrubs are the only ornamentals seen in historic images from 1944. Photographs taken after the alterations to the front porch in 1948 show iris and possibly Morning Glory vine growing along the wire fence. By the 1950s, a few shrubs can be seen, but their identity is unknown.



Figure 56. 'Twin Sisters' daffodil on front lawn, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS)



Figure 57. Star of Bethlehem on front lawn, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS)

Two heirloom bulbs, the late-blooming daffodil 'Twin Sisters' (Narcissus 'Twin Sisters') and Star of Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum umbellatum*) were found growing in the front lawn during a site visit in March 2009. Both of these would have been very common at old home sites in the South and could date to the nineteenth century.

It appears from historic photographs that trees were the dominant plant material at the site. The earliest images of the house show several small deciduous trees in front of the house inside the picket fence. Later images from the 1940s show several large deciduous trees around the house and a few smaller trees. The large tree at the southwest corner of the house was a pecan (*Carya illinoensis*) and the one located northwest of the house was an American elm (*Ulmus americana*). A pear (*Pyrus communis*) and smaller pecans stood at the southeast corner of the house. The identity of two smaller trees at the southwest corner is unknown. Red cedars (*Juniperus virginiana*) can be observed growing along the fenceline at the rear of the property in an image from 1944.

In 1958, Mrs. Barbara Baker and her family rented the property from Mrs. Richard Jewell for eight months while the Bakers were looking for another farm in the area to buy. Mrs. Baker did not recall any ornamentals other than the elm and pear trees, as no one was living there to take care of such things. They planted a vegetable garden during their time there where turnips were already planted, located near the smokehouse.[34]

Several large trees still remained near the house when acquired by the NPS in 1973. During the initial stabilization of the house and outbuildings in 1974, all trees and shrubs were cleared away from the outbuildings. A number of trees were removed from the site during the house restoration in 1978, leaving four large trees around the house that can be identified: one elm and one pecan on the west side of the house and one pear and one pecan on the east side of the house. In March 1985, maintenance crews cleared the heavily vegetated slope extending eastward from the Gordon House by bulldozer.

Images from 1990 show one elm at the northwest corner and the pear at the southeast corner of the

34 Personal conversation with Mrs. Barbara Baker, May 18, 2012.



Figure 58. Image from reunion showing elm and pear, 2003. (NATR image)



Figure 59. Trees planted to screen house, 1990. (NATR 852)

house still standing, which was confirmed in a 1998 management proposal. It was noted that a large elm was removed from the southwest corner after being damaged in a storm. It is unknown if the tree removed was actually a pecan tree or if another elm was located here.

It is unknown when the lone surviving elm was lost, but it can be seen in Gordon family reunion images from 2003. During the reunion, Gordon family descendants planted a memorial tree.

The park planted trees in 1981 on the northern margin to screen the house from visual and noise intrusions from nearby TN 50. Images from 1990 show newly planted trees between the house and the picnic shelter/comfort station and in the parking oval. [35]

In 1983, about half the site was unimproved pasture, which the NPS leased to local farmers for cattle grazing.[36]

35 Superintendent's Annual Report, 1974, 1981; Sara Amy Leach, "Draft Management Plan – Rehabilitation Proposal," 1998; Completion Report, 1979, NATR archives.

36 Atkinson, 3.

Buildings and Structures

The John Gordon House

The John Gordon House was constructed in 1818. It was a common house type but an uncommon material for frontier Tennessee. The two-story brick I-House featured end gable chimneys with three regularly spaced windows on the front elevation. The house was a variant of the hall-and-parlor plan consisting of two rooms with one serving as the more formal, public parlor and the larger room used for family living and sleeping space with access to the upper floor. The Gordon House differs from the traditional hall-and-parlor plan by having two entrances, one to each room. It seems that Gordon wanted the door to the large room evenly flanked by windows rather than spaced to create a symmetrical façade. He made no mention of a porch, rear ell, or kitchen in his letter to Dolly in 1818.[37]

Spence's *History of Hickman County* described the house in 1900:

> The brown brick building with the severely straight walls, which stands in the valley south of Bolling Gordon's old residence, was the home of Captain John Gordon. This much dilapidated and out-of-date building was for years the most elegant home in Hickman County. Here lived the most aristocratic family in the county. The name of Gordon, once so prominent in the county, is now no longer found here, and it is doubtful if even a relative can be found here. The old home is almost in ruins, and where once was grandeur, now is gloom.[38]

The Jewell family acquired the property in 1904 and began improvements. According to Jewell family history, they added a two-story front porch around 1907. Historic images show a two-story, double gallery porch supported by four chamfered posts with pilasters at both levels and picket or sawn balustrade. The two center posts created a center bay narrower than the outer bays. The center upstairs window was converted to a doorway to provide access to the upper porch, and doorway transoms may have been covered at this

37 Emrick, 9, Oppermann, 28.

38 Spence, 125.

time. The door lintels were lower, but the transoms were not visible until later photographs. Windows were two-over-two-light sash.

The Jewells may have added a rear ell, but it is more likely that they improved an existing ell, with perhaps a portion dating to the original construction of the house. NPS interviews with Elizabeth Jewell Baker (daughter of Richard S. Jewell) and her husband Ellis Baker in 1976 and 1977 indicated that a one-story ell extended north from the center of the rear elevation when the house was acquired in 1904. In 1910-15, a second floor was added to the ell and a one-and-one-half story ell built extending to the west, perpendicular to the earlier ell. Mrs. Baker also indicated that there was a kitchen on the west side, "now gone."

Later photographs show the two-story ell with perpendicular one-and-one-half story gable ell. The ca. 1910 image (see Figure 36) is the earliest image of the house and shows a frame one-and-one-half story ell at the northwestern near corner of the house. A shed roof extending west is not seen in later photographs.

A photograph taken in 1924 provides the additional detail that the porch rested on a stone pier foundation. An undated photograph (see Figure 23) shows a shed lean-to at the basement door on the west side of the house. A one-story gable wing projects from the northwest rear of the house. This was possibly a kitchen, but is placement is not traditional. Also visible in the photograph are half-glazed front doors and Victorian spool screen doors. [39]

A series of photographs taken in the 1940s show a major change made by the Jewells. 1944 images taken by NPS historian Dawson Phelps show the pier foundation replaced by a solid foundation. A one-story shed-roofed porch is visible at the northeast rear of the house.

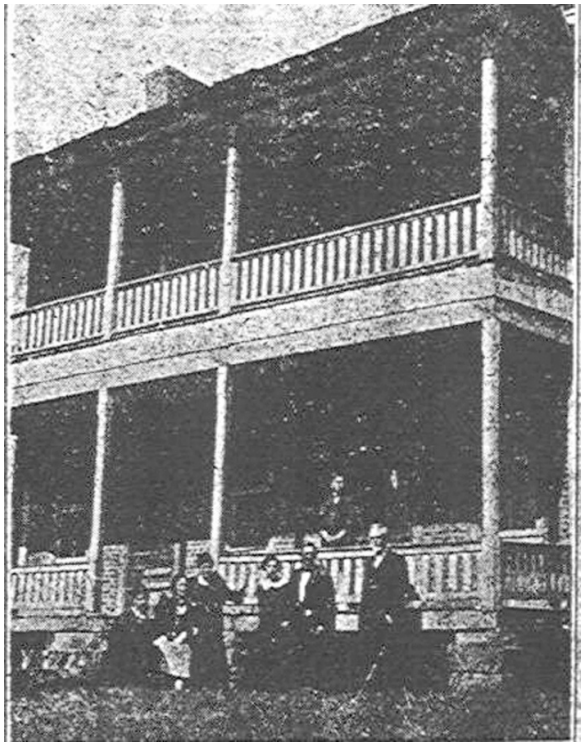


Figure 60. House with stone pier foundation, 1924. (Gordonhouse.50megs.com)

39 Oppermann, 37-39; Field Notes, 1976.



Figure 61. East façade of house showing solid foundation, 1944. (NATR 5510)



Figure 62. Rear additions, 1945. (NATR 5509)

1945 images taken by NPS archeologists Jesse Jennings and John Cotter show the same double-gallery porch, a metal roof, and the one-story gable structure at the northwest rear of the house. More importantly is the 1945 image of the back of the house documenting a large two-story frame gable ell. At its east side elevation are two bays with an entrance and window on the first floor and two bays of two-over-two-light windows on the second. Perpendicular one-story shed porches meet at the junction with the house, supported by what appear to be 4 x 4 posts.

West of the two-story ell is an attached, perpendicular one-story gable ell with flue chimney near the west wall. No chimney is visible on the two-story section. Weatherboard siding was applied continuously to the rear of these ells.

The rear of the two-story ell is a single bay with window at the first level and shuttered window above. These appear to be the only shutters on the house. A doorway at the rear of the one-story section is covered with a simple pent roof. All roofs are clad with metal panels.

Between 1947 and 1948, the Jewells removed the double-gallery porch and replaced it with a full-height porch supported by four square paneled wood columns. A concrete porch deck rests on a base of large masonry blocks. This appears to be a new foundation with larger masonry blocks than those seen in the 1944 images of the double-gallery porch, which replaced an earlier pier foundation. At mid-level, they built a balustraded balcony that extended from the center bay between the two center columns with the doorway remaining to provide access to the balcony. The two-over-two-



Figure 63. Full-height porch, 1948. (NATR 6670)



Figure 64. Front and east façades, 1959. (NATR 10085)



Figure 65. West façade, 1958. (NATR 9918)

light windows remained at both levels, as well as the screen doors at both half-glazed front doors.

Cotter's photographs from 1948 document these changes, as well as the alteration to the transom openings that may have occurred in 1907. Horizontal boards painted brick red and penciled were inserted to mask the transom opening and simulate a brick jack arch, while the actual jack arch has been scribed to look like horizontal bond, matching the surrounding brick. The ghost marks of the earlier double-gallery porch and its pilasters are clearly visible at both levels.[40]

In 1959, the house and outbuildings were photographed by park naturalist Donald M. Black. The images showed no changes to the house or outbuildings. The one-story shed porch remained at the northeast rear of the house.

The NPS acquired the property in 1973. During an initial assessment of the condition of the structure in 1974, historical architect John C. Garner, Jr. stated that the house was in relatively

40 Oppermann, 40-42.

good condition but suffered from a high moisture content in the ambient atmosphere. The house was boarded up and had no cross ventilation, and the basement became saturated after heavy rains. He recommended opening the boarded windows and fitting wood louvers over the lower sash openings so that the upper sash could be boarded over to protect the glass.

He described the brick work as being in fair to good condition with some of the joints starting to deteriorate. The joints of the stone foundation were in very bad shape with little "mortar" remaining, resulting in sagging of the stonework and moisture entry through the joints into the basement area. The interior basement walls were originally plastered, but water entry had eliminated most of that covering.

He described the two-story front porch as a modern addition in an advanced state of deterioration. He recommended its removal, after the completion of measured drawings and Section 106 compliance. Several documents from this period and later indicate that Garner and others were not familiar with the double-gallery porch erected around 1907. Garner noted the outline of an earlier one-story porch on the brick wall surface but did not mention the marks of the second floor pilasters.

The rear addition had some deterioration. He felt that it was of the same date of construction as the outbuildings and that until a revised historic structure report was completed, all structures



Figure 66. Rear façade, 1974. (NATR 11314)



Figure 67. West façade, 1974. (NATR 11315)



Figure 68. Front façade, 1977. (SER image)



Figure 69. Rear façade, 1977. (SER image)



Figure 70. East façade, 1977. (SER image)

should be preserved with the exception of the front porch. Initial stabilization work on the house in 1974 included placing temporary louvers in the windows to allow air circulation, covering the basement entrance to prevent vandalism and to keep water from running in, and treating the building with penta to prevent further deterioration.[41]

By 1976, the park felt the front porch could collapse at any time, causing structural damage to the main house or serious injury. The park requested and received permission to remove it after documentation by measured drawings. Further investigation indicated that there had been at least two earlier one-story porches, and it was difficult to determine which one was the original porch. Again, the 1907 double porch was not mentioned. Also in 1976, the park placed a temporary sheet metal roof on the main structure.[42]

The restoration of the house continued in 1977 and included the removal of the two-story, rear addition, the concrete block front porch foundation, a concrete block bulkhead at the basement entrance, and seven outbuildings. After the exterior siding of the rear wood addition had been removed, historical architect Todd Rainwater observed the wall framing of an earlier, one-story braced frame structure with studs mortised into a top plate and a hand hewn sill resting on limestone foundation piers. The framing of the second story and the ell on its west side was of balloon frame construction of a much later construction consisting of studs and rafters. The NPS team originally thought that the braced frame structure probably dated to the original construction of the main house and would not be demolished pending further research. To protect it, the park constructed a temporary roof and sidewalls over the braced frame structure.

The Southeast Archeological Center (SEAC) conducted investigations in 1977 in an effort to find a chimney of the braced framing system based on the hypothesis that the structure was the

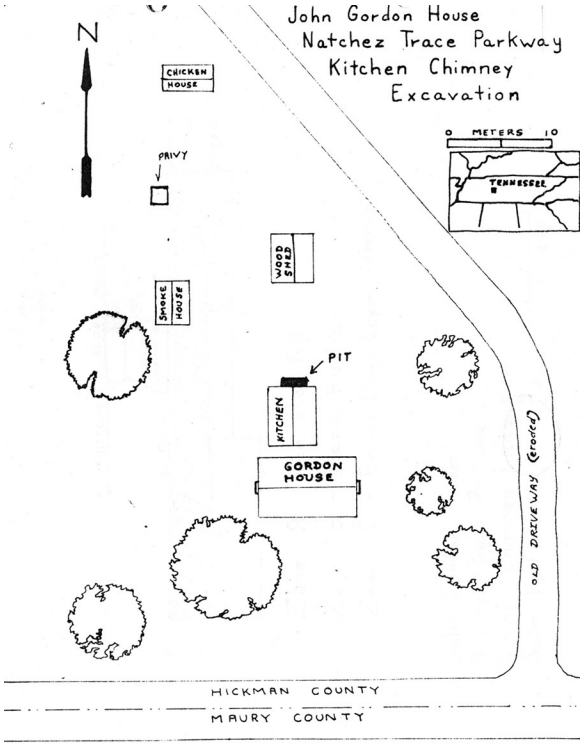


Figure 71. Site plan of chimney excavation, 1977. (NPS image)

original summer kitchen. No chimney remains were found at the rear of the structure as it was situated. Intensive use of the area, including restoration efforts, outbuilding construction, and other activities such as driveway developed greatly reduced the likelihood of the existence of any chimney remains. Another possibility is that the braced frame structure was a separate kitchen building, later moved to the back of the house. Gordon family recollections about passing Indians sleeping on the front porch stated that buttercakes were sent "from the kitchen in the yard," implying a detached building.[43]

Removal of the block foundation of the front porch in 1977 also uncovered another set of cement steps behind the 1947-48 steps. SEAC carried out additional archeology to determine if the remains of a previous porch associated with these newly discovered steps could be found. The new set of steps uncovered in the porch fill suggested a structure built sometime between 1890 and 1947.

41 John C. Garner, Jr. to Associate Regional Director, Professional Services, Southeast Region, April 10, 1974; Superintendent's Annual Report 1974, NATR archives; Oppermann, 44.

42 Section 106 Compliance Statement, May 18, 1976; Deputy Associate Regional Director to Superintendent, NATR, Superintendent's Annual Report, 1976, NATR archives; Oppermann, 47.

43 Christopher E. Hamilton, "Excavation in Search of Chimney Remains from the John Gordon House" (Southeast Archeological Center, 1978, photocopy), 2; Chief, Southeast Archeological Center to Associate Regional Director, Planning and Assistance, February 24, 1978; Todd Rainwater to John C. Garner, Trip Report – John Gordon House, Natchez Trace Parkway, October 18-21, 1977, NATR archives; Bond 154.



Figure 72. Set of steps behind 1947-48 steps and scattered stones, 1977. (Shawn Bonath/NPS)

The presence of stone slabs, although scattered, suggested that a previous stone porch foundation had existed. The stones may have been the remnants of the stone pier foundation seen in the 1924 photograph, and the earlier porch was most likely the Jewells' twentieth-century porch, but again, no mention is made of it in the report.

Determining the original cellar floor level required the removal of approximately eight inches of dirt from the two cellar rooms. The original level was found to be level with the base of the stone foundation. The eight inches of fill was apparently an accumulation of several years of rainwash.[44]

The restoration work for the main house in 1977 was extensive, although few changes occurred to the interior. A recently completed historic structure report contains a complete list as outlined in the completion report for the project. The 1947-48 porch and rear ell were demolished, leaving the earlier one-story braced framing system. The

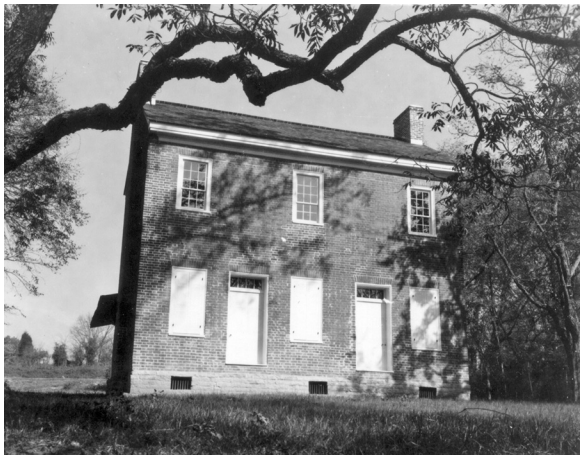


Figure 73. John Gordon House after restoration, 1978. (NATR 12185)



Figure 74. One-story braced framing system at rear of house, 1988. (SER image)

exterior of the house was painted in 1982 and 1987.[45]

Beginning in 1988, the park and the Southeast Regional Office sought to remove the framing remnant associated with the ell at the rear of the house, as it was thought to have lost most of its historic integrity. The park also needed to solve the problem of access to the house. Investigations about the size and configuration of the original front porch failed to identify exactly when a front porch was added. Since the period of significance for the house went no further than 1818, there was not enough evidence that a porch existed at that time, although there were many stories about Dolly Gordon letting passing Indians sleep on her front porch.[46]

44 Bonath, 11-15; Oppermann, 46.

45 Oppermann, 50; Emrick, 13; "Completion Report Narrative"; Superintendent's Annual Report, 1987, NATR archives.

46 Personal communication Ron Bishop, 2009; Oppermann, 52.

The 1988 historic structure report (HSR) recommended constructing simple wooden steps, handrails, and landings at each entry without any roof structure. The report based this recommendation on structures of similar style and age within the region. Although inconsistent with earlier reports, the HSR found no indication of framing for an earlier porch. Funding was also sought for a handicapped access ramp at the rear of the building to be added after the still standing wall and floor framing components were removed.[47]

A historic structure assessment report (HSAR) was completed for the house in 1992.
During the summer of 1993, the Southeast Region Field Services Crew installed a new wood shingle roof on the house, repaired window door surrounds and sills, repointed exterior masonry, and repaired wood basement door jambs. In addition, an architectural conservator performed a materials analysis of interior finishes to provide a basis for interior treatments to be scheduled later.[48]

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation concurred in the determination of no adverse effect in 1993. The removal of the framing system occurred in December 1995, after documentation by students of the Middle Tennessee State University Center for Historic Preservation (CHP). The CHP team examined the framing system, saw marks, and nails to estimate the original construction date of the ell and concluded that the ell was constructed between 1835 and 1850. They also concluded that the rear addition was likely a hodgepodge of rooms of varied construction dates.

Although not prominently stated in any of the many reports and proposals regarding the rear ell, it was acknowledged that the house was originally built with an ell of some sort to house ancillary functions. It might be assumed that later additions were constructed to house the children and grandchildren living with Dolly Gordon during her many years of occupancy. A kitchen likely would have been connected to the main house either directly or by a covered breezeway, a traditional configuration. By the time the Jewells purchased the property in 1904, these additions would likely have needed repairs or replacement.[49]

The NPS installed steps, handrails, and landings to both front entrances in 1995. An inspection report of the house in 1996 found that the installation of the wooden steps had allowed rainwater to penetrate the sill of the front doors and damaged the floor joists. Risers in the steps were not equal. Repointing techniques on the exterior walls resulted in unsightly wide joints and incorrect mortar color.

Repointing of the brick mortar in 2003 corrected earlier mistakes. Another project in 2005 repaired and repointed the foundation walls and repaired the floor joists in the cellar. The park removed the steps, handrails, and landings in 2009 and will use recommendations from a 2011 historic structure report to provide access to the house.[50]

47 Emrick, 19;Oppermann, 54.
48 Superintendents Annual Report, 1993, NATR archives; personal communication, Christina Miller Smith.
49 The Center for Historic Preservation,"The Construction History of the Gordon House Ell" (Middle Tennessee State University, May 1996, photocopy), 9; Daniel W. Brown to Shirley B. Gelineau, August 21, 1996; Superintendent's Annual Report, 1995, NATR archives; Oppermann, 56.
50 Dale Wilkerson, Contracting Officer to Chris Miller, September 19, 2003; Dale Wilkerson, Natchez Trace Parkway to Jerral Parris, Harmony Industries, September 9, 2005, NATR archives.



Figure 75. Smokehouse, 1959. (NATR 10080)



Figure 76. Hayshed/woodshed, 1959. (NATR 10082)



Figure 77. Corncrib/chicken house, 1959. (NATR 10081)

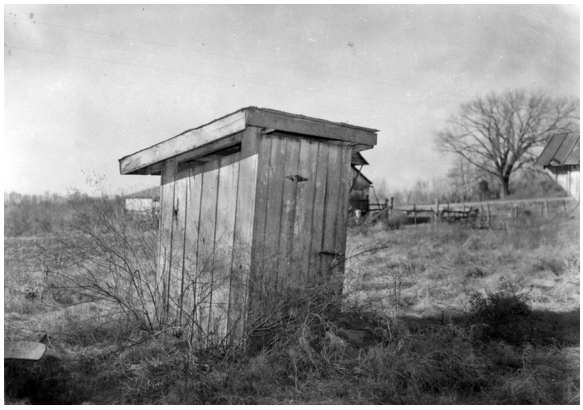


Figure 78. Privy, 1959. (NATR 10083)



Figure 79. Equipment shed/granary, 1959. (NATR 10097)



Figure 80. Barn, 1959. (NATR 10091)



Figure 81. Single crib barn, 1959. (NATR 10094)



Figure 82. Pig pen, 1959. (NATR 10095)

Outbuildings

A number of frame outbuildings dating to the early twentieth century were still standing on the property when acquired by the NPS. Their date of construction is unknown, and they were taken down in the 1970s when the house was restored to a period of 1818. The location of the original outbuildings is unknown. Settlers typically used slack times in the late fall and winter to construct new outbuildings. One year they might build a barn, shed, or smokehouse. Another year they might construct an addition to the house or a detached kitchen.[51]

51 Winters, 122.

In 1959, Donald Black documented the twentieth-century outbuildings, including:

- Smokehouse
- Hayshed (also described as woodshed)
- Corncrib (also described as chicken house)
- Privy
- Equipment shed (also described as granary)
- Barn
- Outbuilding (single crib barn)
- Pig pen

In 1974, historical architect John C. Garner, Jr. described the outbuildings as follows:

- Frame privy
- Post and frame equipment shed
- Post and frame chicken house
- Post and frame animal barn
- Two post and frame storage buildings

He described their condition as fair to poor with decay resulting from deteriorating or missing metal roofing and from normal water contact at the ground lines of all wood members. He stated that wire nails and metal roof coverings indicated that their date of construction appeared to be turn of the century and that decay was resulting from deteriorating or missing metal roofing and from normal water contact at the ground lines of all wood members. He recommended renewing all roof coverings, and, where replacement was needed, an exact match in material, design, joints, lapping, techniques, etc. should be used.



Figure 83. Woodshed, 1974. (NATR 11321)

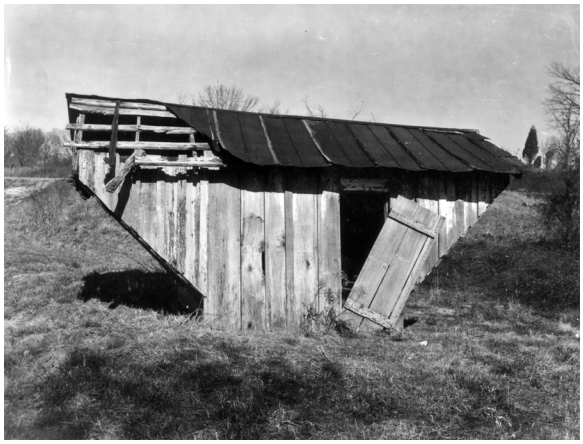


Figure 84. Chicken house, 1974. (NATR 11371)



Figure 85. Equipment shed/granary, chicken house, smokehouse, and privy, 1974. (NATR 11320)

According to the Superintendent's Annual Report, the park only made temporary repairs to the roofing of the shed equipment building. All outbuildings were treated with penta to prevent further deterioration.[52]

In 1976, Richard S. Jewells' daughter, Elizabeth Jewell Baker, and her husband, Ellis described the outbuildings as follows:

- Smokehouse
- Woodshed
- Chicken house
- Privy
- Granary
- Barn (replaced an earlier barn that burned in 1943)
- Tenant house (Single crib barn)
- Well house (on west side of house, no longer standing)
- Kitchen (on west side of house, no longer standing)

52 Superintendent's Annual Report, 1974; John C. Garner, Jr. to Associate Regional Director, Professional Services, Southeast Region, April 10, 1974, NATR archives.

NPS removed the outbuildings in 1977. The park felt that it was important to restore the John Gordon House as part of the Natchez Trace historic scene in the 1820s. The outbuildings dated to around 1900 and would be a continual maintenance expense. Measured drawings were completed prior to removal.[53]

In 1983, SEAC conducted a resistivity survey and limited testing on the grounds in anticipation of future development of a visitor contact area. The park hoped that the location of a detached kitchen and other nineteenth-century dependencies could be identified, but five days of rain complicated the results, which showed that a cluster of twentieth-century structures was located behind the house. Exact locations could not be determined because the base map was schematic. The report suggested that further testing was needed to locate earlier structures.[54]

Church Cemetery

Church Cemetery was the location of John Gordon's grave before its removal to Rose Hill Cemetery in Columbia, Tennessee in 1855. One single stone-box grave with an inscription was documented in 1945, 1980, and 1985. Other reports noted that additional graves might be present.[55]

53 Field Notes, 1976; Completion Report 1979; Superintendent, Natchez Trace Parkway to Associate Regional Director, October 7, 1976, NATR archives.
54 Marrinan, 10-11.
55 Draft Overview and Assessment, 418-421.



Figure 86. Grave, 1980. (NATR 12339)

New Construction

The NPS constructed a picnic shelter/comfort station and new parking area to accommodate ten to fifteen cars and two buses adjacent to the Natchez Trace Parkway and west of the Gordon House in 1986.[56]

Circulation

The Natchez Trace ran southeast of the John Gordon homestead passing by Fattybread Branch down to its Duck River crossing. In the 1920s, the Highway Department constructed TN 50 as part of the state road system. Its alignment took it directly in front of the house, and it intersected the remains of the Natchez Trace east of the house.

A driveway/roadway off TN 50 ran along the east side of the house and curved around the back of the woodshed and chicken house and continued to the barn and equipment shed. After the NPS acquired the property, the state highway department agreed to move TN 50 north of the house because its original location separated the

56 Superintendent's Annual Report, 1986, NATR archives.



Figure 87. 1951 USGS topographic map (Courtesy Hodges Library, University of Tennessee Knoxville)



Figure 88. Driveway off TN 50 along east side of house, 1944. (NATR 5482)

house from portions of the Natchez Trace, the ferry, and the cantonment site.

In 1945, engineers from the Tennessee Highway Department met with Natchez Trace landscape architect Melvin Josephson and Superintendent Malcolm Gardner to review the options in relocating TN 50:

> On September 21, landscape architect M. C. Josephson, PRA Senior Highway Engineer S. L. von Gossingen, and I reviewed the parkway and Highway 50 intersection on the ground at Gordons Ferry with Division Engineer H. J. Love, Right of Way Engineer O. L. Peeler, and Division Construction Engineer H. D. Long of the Tennessee Highway Department. A location south of the Duck River for Highway 50 and intersecting the parkway about Shehees Place on Section 1-D had been considered and dropped because such location would have left the most fertile and thickly settled territory unserved by good highway facilities. The terrain south of Gordons Ferry and the river is quite rough, and the Highway Department considers the general location now used as the best in the vicinity. The State plans early reconstruction of Highway 50. Location surveys are complete from Williamsport westward to Fattybread Branch and Shady Grove would probably be finished in six weeks. The State tentatively plans to move its Gordon Ferry bridge downstream about 700 feet from the present location. This would help the alignment of the relocation behind the Gordon House as desired by us. Although the Highway Department had planned to hold the highway location in front of the Gordon House, the State's representative appeared agreeable to moving this location about 200 feet north of the house. A preliminary plan and profile of such relocation had been prepared by Mr. von Gossingen and it indicated the deepest cut on such relocation would be about 11 feet. This agreement was informal and Mr. Love will study our plans further when he has location and survey data from his party.

Images from 1959 show the relocation of TN 50 north of the property. After these changes, access to the site from TN 50 was from the rear of the property. Old TN 50 was maintained as a county road until the 1980s when it was obliterated and filled during the implementation of the 1983 DCP. Also taken out was a portion of a spur road (Totty Lane) on the west side of the Gordon property. It was relocated west of TN 50.[57]

57 Malcolm Gardner to the Regional Director, September 24, 1945, NATR archives; DCP, 20, 28.

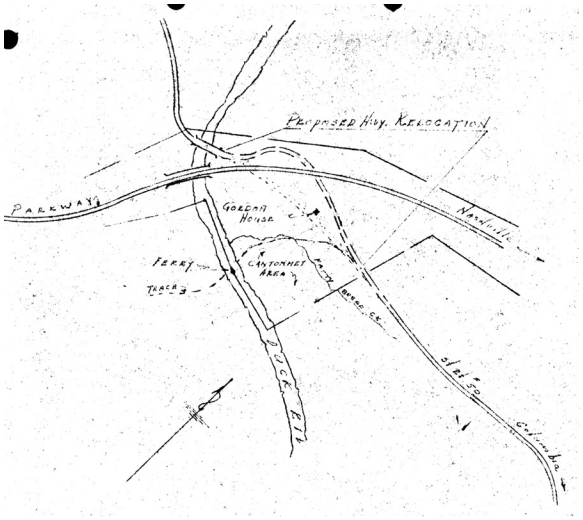


Figure 89. Sketch showing proposed relocation of TN 50, 1945. (NPS image)



Figure 90. Driveway exiting onto relocated TN 50, 1959. (NATR 10090)

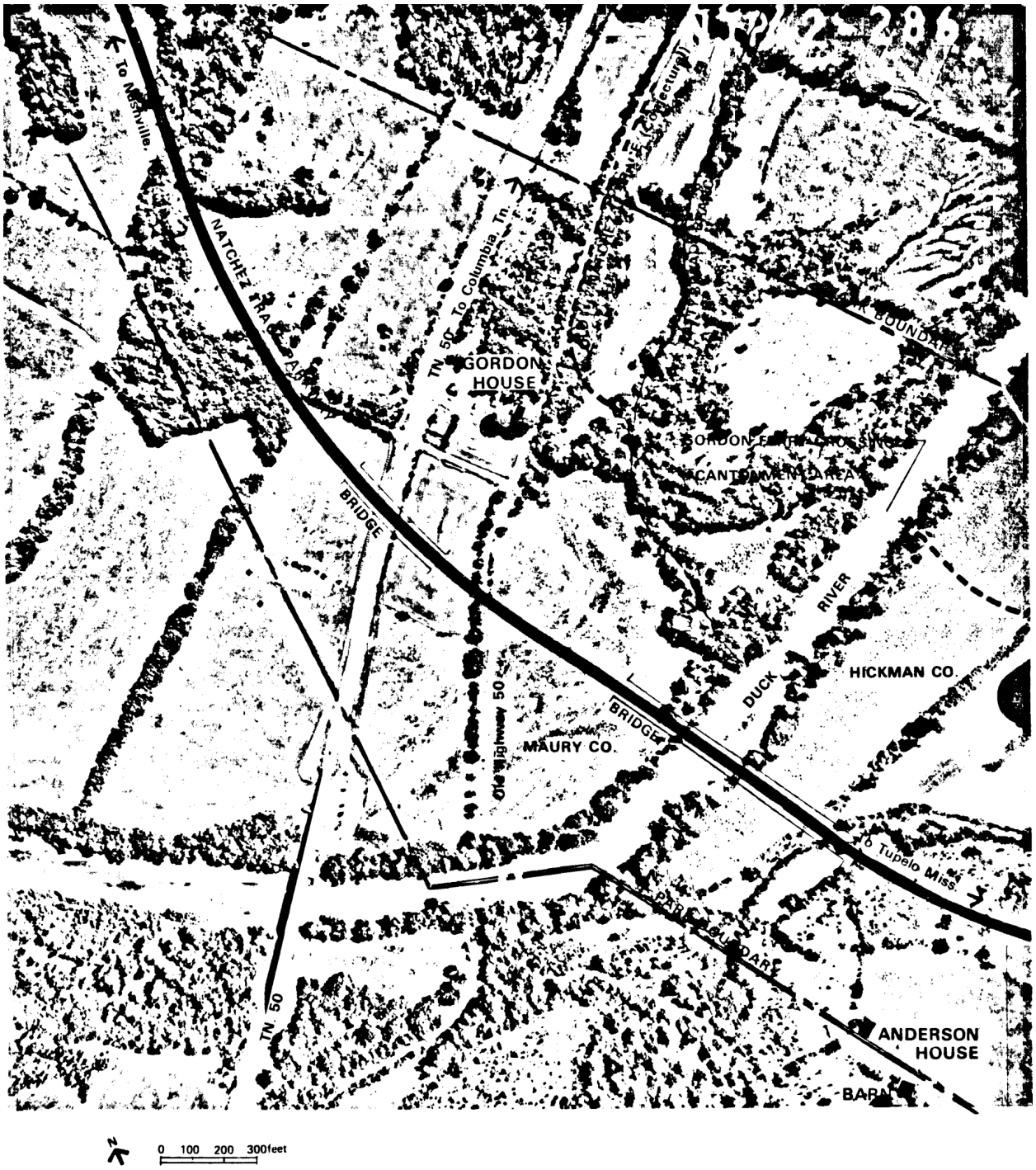


Figure 91. Existing conditions in 1983 before implementation of the DCP. (Denver Service Center etic 604/40069A)

Historically, a stone walkway led from the front porch out to the picket fence, which had a base of stacked, irregularly-shaped stone topped with a formed stone coping. At some point, the walkway was covered over with cement. The removal of the cement walkway occurred at some point after 1988, when it was documented on a site plan.[58]

The park constructed new asphalt trails (0.7) in 1988 from the parking area to the house over the filled roadbed of old TN 50. From the house, an unpaved foot trail, constructed in 1993, turned south crossing Fattybread Branch along a section of the Old Trace down to the ferry site.[59]

Views and Vistas

The location of the John Gordon House on a high spot gave the house a commanding view out over the ridge and over the floodplain of the Duck River and the Duck River valley beyond. In the 1920s, TN 50 was constructed just south of the house, cutting off its spatial relationship to the Natchez Trace, ferry site, and river. The relocation of TN 50 in the 1950s restored the historic viewshed, although by this time the spatial relationship of the house to TN 50 had become historic in its own right.

The ferry location overlooked the Duck River. An unobstructed view would have been essential for a functioning ferry operation.

Small-scale Features

Fences were a common landscape form in antebellum southern plantations. They would have been used to enclose gardens, screen work yards, protect crops and orchards, confine livestock, and define property lines. With free ranging livestock the rule, southerners constructed fences that were "hog tight and head high."

Because of soil exhaustion and the need to find virgin land, most farmers erected Virginia or worm fences, a zigzag line of split rails laid on top of one another. Worm fences were easy to build and easy to dismantle, load on a wagon, and reassemble elsewhere. These fences were perfectly suited to a land rich in timber and open space. They required no joinery or nailing, no elaborate shaping of the rails, and no digging of postholes. Most worm fences were simple stacks of eight or nine rails and stood four-and-one-half or five feet high, but some carried additional stakes and riders (eight-foot-long stakes wedged into the ground and locked over the topmost horizontal rail) and stood as high as six feet. They were greatly favored for extensive fencing projects, such as enclosing cultivated fields and defining property boundaries.[60]

Though not as common as the fence just described, there were two other types of rail fences. The first type is commonly called the stake-and-rider fence, which had one high rail supported on stakes above the other rails. This fence was built in the same fashion as the common rail fence, but it would be stacked only four or five rails high. When the entire fence was built to this height, the farmer would then drive two poles, or stakes, into the ground, one on each side of the corner joint between each panel. The stakes would be of sufficient length to be sturdy when driven into the ground yet tall enough to be two or three feet above the last rail. A small block nailed between the two posts a few inches below the top gave support for another rail to complete each panel. The fence would then contain a space of about two feet between the top, or the rider, and the four or five bottom rails. By building the fence in this manner, the farmer used fewer rails to have a fence high enough to keep the livestock from jumping it.[61]

Rails, stakes, and riders were split from durable woods such as cedar and chestnut, as well as locust, oak, and heart pine, and the fence was left unpainted. The strength and stability of the Virginia rail fence was derived from the angle at which each section or panel met the next—the sharper the angle, the stronger the fence. The principal disadvantage was its tremendous consumption of land and timber. A ten-rail stake-and-rider fence occupied a corridor ten feet wide and required more than five thousand rails per

58 Oppermann, 37; Emrick, Figure 3.
59 Superintendents Annual Report, 1988; Dan Brown to Dr. Douglas E. Leach, December 2, 1991, NATR archives.
60 Stilgoe, 190.
61 Todd Waterman, "Rail Fences: Their History and Construction," *Bittersweet* 9, no. 1 (Fall 1981): 9-10.

mile. However, ease of construction and flexibility outweighed these drawbacks.[62]

Another common fence type was the post-and-rail, which used the same split rails as the Virginia fence, but set into split or mortised posts that were sunk into the ground to form a continuous, ladder-like barrier. It required more hours to erect than worm fencing but wasted less space. Its main disadvantage was rot, as the posts set into the ground decayed within five to ten years if softwood like pine was used. In 1860, a writer in the *Southern Cultivator* noted that locust rails lasted about fifty years but that second growth pine rotted within three or four years. Although more open than Virginia rail fences, the post-and-rail successfully protected domestic yards, cultivated fields, pastures, orchards, and, to a lesser extent, churchyards, courthouse grounds, town lots, and gardens. Posts of decay-resistant locust, cedar, or chestnut with rails of resilient oak, poplar, or heart pine made for fences of considerable strength and durability. Post-and-rail fences were seldom painted but were allowed to age naturally, thus reducing upkeep and maintenance.[63]

The paled fence was essentially a post-and-rail fence with vertically positioned boards nailed along one face of its length. This type of fence was both practical and decorative. It was the best choice short of a masonry wall for protecting and dignifying gardens, workyards, town lots, grave sites, and the surroundings of public buildings. A less truly functional version of the paled fence, the picket fence, using thinner, more elaborately cut uprights, came into fashion toward the end of the eighteenth century. Pickets and pales were not synonymous in the eighteenth century, but by the mid-nineteenth century, picket had become a generic term for all fences with vertical components affixed to a post-and-rail framework.[64]

A hierarchy of fencing was common, with more decorative picket fencing used near the house and more utilitarian zigzag or board fencing used for fields, orchards, and livestock. Decorative fencing, located in front or to the side of the house, enclosed simple plantings of flowers, trees, and shrubs. More utilitarian areas within the work yard relied on the use of crude board fences to protect the kitchen garden and to enclose an assortment of outbuildings.



Figure 92. Fencing in Henry County, Tennessee, 1899. (Courtesy Tennessee State Library and Archives 8455)

Fence laws had been enacted in most southern states by 1860, at which time wire fences were being advertised in southern agricultural journals for both farm and residential use. The condition of a planter's fences was often used as a measure of his worth as a farmer. A writer for *Soil of the South* noted that "nothing fixes our estimate of a planter sooner than the character of his enclosures."[65]

After the Civil War, the cost of materials and revised concepts of private property and agricultural efficiency hastened a serious revision in the philosophy of fencing in the South. Gradually, more and more animals were fenced in, and new materials like wire appeared as alternatives to wood. Traditional wood fences did not disappear but were retained and adapted. Although built of modern milled lumber, the paled fence continued to be used for the same purposes, and the post-and-rail fence found a new role in enclosing vast fields of cattle. Even the Virginia rail fence, that great consumer of land and timber, did not completely fade from view.[66]

The John Gordon House

Given the free range laws prevalent in the nineteenth century, it seems likely that the property was fenced, but the type and configuration is unknown. During the twentieth century, a white picket fence sat atop a low stone retaining wall that ran parallel to old TN 50 in front of the house. A

62 Vanessa E. Patrick, "Partitioning the Landscape: Fences in Colonial Virginia," *The Magazine Antiques*, July 1998, 100.
63 Stilgoe, 191-92; Patrick, 100; Cothran, 68.
64 Patrick, 101; Winters, 22, 122.
65 Stilgoe, 191; Cothran, 69.
66 Patrick, 103.



Figure 93. Fencing at the John Gordon House, 1944. (NATR 5483)



Figure 94. Ornamental wire fence and gate, 1945. (NATR 5508)

swinging gate provided access to the property. The earliest documentation of the fence is 1910, but its construction date is unknown.

By the 1940s, an ornamental post-and-wire fence replaced the picket fence. Makeshift board fences were located along the east side of the house. Hogwire and board fences enclosed agricultural spaces.

In 1977, SEAC archeologists were on site to determine the belowground location of the stone retaining wall and walk, details of their construction, and a date of origin. The belowground remains of the stone retaining wall were uncovered at the south end of the concrete walk. Apparently, a trench was cut running parallel to the road and stone slabs then placed one on top of the other within the trench. The abovegrade



Figure 95. Wire and board fences enclosing fields, 1959. (NATR 10093)

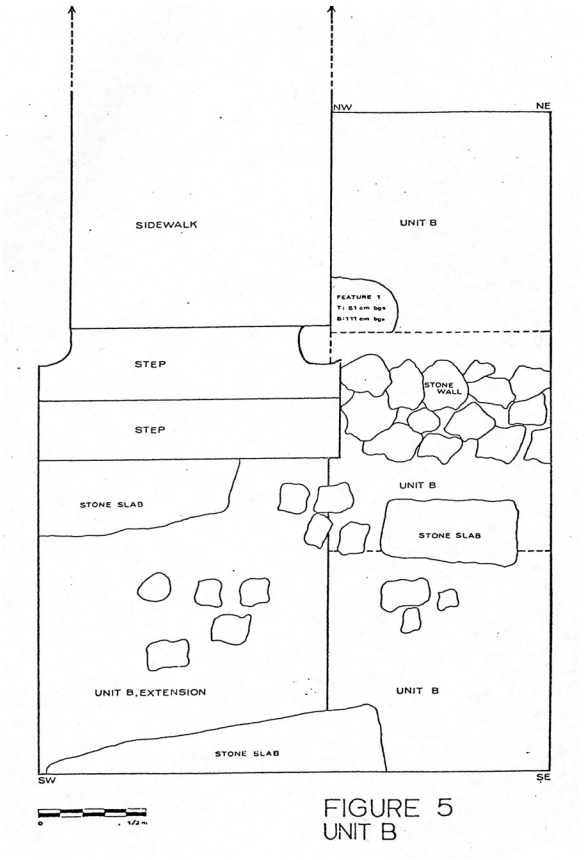


Figure 96. Map of stone wall and slabs, 1977. (Shawn Bonath/NPS)

portion of the wall was dismantled at some point after 1910 and tossed into the ditch between the wall and the road.

A post mold believed to have been associated with the picket fence and gate was also uncovered. Post molds are dark stains in the soil left from the decay of wooden posts. The concrete sidewalk that was still present in 1977 indicated that a hole was cut through the cement on either side of the second step from the road to accommodate a new post.

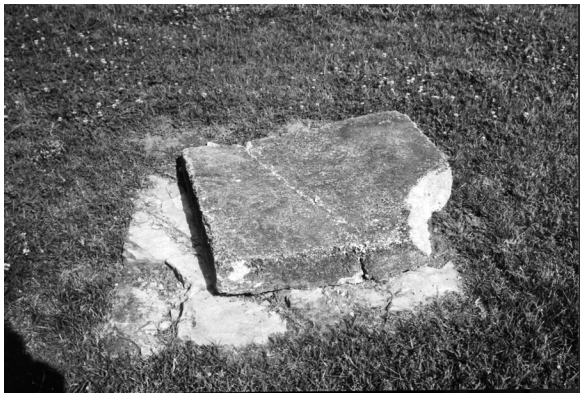


Figure 97. Well foundation, 2002. (Bob Blythe/NPS)



Figure 98. DAR marker, 1994. (NATR 1137)

This suggests that concrete was poured over the original stone slab steps, and it is probable that the stone slab walk was also covered.[67]

A well, located on the west side of the front yard, can be seen in images from the 1940s. According to Elizabeth Jewell Baker, a well house at one time covered the well (see Figure 37). It was still there in 1958 when Mrs. Barbara Baker (no relation) and her family rented the house. The NPS removed the well pump in 1977 and boarded up the well. It is unknown when the well was filled.[68]

A DAR marker was approved for the John Gordon House in 1990, and the DAR erected it in 1991.

67 Bonath, 13-15.
68 Field notes, 1976; personal communication Mrs. Barbara Baker, May 2012.

Natural Systems and Features

Geology

The Paleozoic

Most of the sediment across Middle Tennessee was deposited from the Ordovician to the Mississippian, roughly between 400 and 300 million years ago. The sediment was primarily deep ocean limestones with some shale layers. Mississippian limestones are generally thicker than those of the Ordovician, and additionally, more cherty. In the Ordovician, the Appalachian Mountains began to form and by the end of the Paleozoic (250 million years ago) were tall peaks. During the Pennsylvanian, the Cumberland Plateau formed along the edge of the Appalachians as beach and shore sediments, primarily sandstone today.

The Mesozoic

Most Mesozoic (245 million years ago) sediments were deposited in West Tennessee along the present course of the Tennessee River. The Appalachians to the east also experienced erosion at this time and were smoothed down to near their current elevation.

The Cenozoic

By the Cenozoic (66 million years ago), the sea level had dropped to its current level and the North American continent dried out. The Mississippi River as well as the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers formed and cut deep into the valleys. The Nashville Basin was pushed up from underneath by a mantle plume, forming a geologic dome surrounded by the Highland Rim.[69]

Travel Accounts

In 1767, Colonel James Smith explored the country west of the Cumberland Mountains. Ramsey's *Annals of Tennessee* described his findings:

> The extraordinary fertility of the soil upon the Lower Cumberland—the luxuriant cane-breaks upon the table-lands of its tributaries—its dark and variegated forest—its rich flora—its exuberant pasturage—in a word, the exact adaptation of the country to all the wants and purposes of a great and flourishing community, impressed the explorer with the importance of

69 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geology_of_Tennessee.

> his discovery, and of its great value to such of his countrymen as should afterwards come in and possess it.

The settlement of the Nashville area occurred thirty years later:

> When the first settlers came to the Bluff in 1779-'80, . . . the country had the appearance of one which had never before been cultivated. There was no sign of any cleared land, nor other appearance of former cultivation. Nothing was presented to the eye but one large plain of woods and cane, frequented by buffaloes, elk, deer, wolves, foxes, panthers, and other animals suited to the climate. The lands adjacent to the French Lick, which Mansco, in 1769, when he first hunted here, called an old field, was a large open space, frequented and trodden by buffaloes, whose large paths led to it from all parts of the country and there concentred. On these adjacent lands was no under-growth nor cane, as far as the water reached in time of high water. The country as far as to Elk River and beyond it, had not single permanent inhabitant, except the wild beasts of the forest; but there were traces, as everywhere else, of having been inhabited many centuries before by a numerous population.[70]

The John Gordon House and Ferry are located in the Central Basin physiographic province, a cluster of lowlands bracketed by generally barren highlands on either side (the Highland Rim). Often called the "garden" of Tennessee, it possessed clayey, calcareous soils with generous amounts of phosphate and humus, which supported dense woodlands interspersed with open areas of natural grasses. When he crossed the basin in the 1790s, Francis Baily noted that the "country all round consists of a layer of find black mould on a bed of limestone." His overnight camp was "surrounded on each side by a deep wall of woods." André Michaux described the natural qualities of the Central Basin in 1802:

> It [the soil] is usually, in point of colour, of a dark brown, without the least texture of stony substances. The forests that cover the country clearly indicate how favourable the soil is for vegetation, as most of the trees acquire a very large diameter.

He also commented on the think stands of cane (*Arundinaria* spp.), "which grow so close to each other, that at the distance of ten or twelve feet a man could not be perceived was he concealed there." Maury County settler Christopher Houston, who arrived in 1816, described leaving some trees standing when he cleared land: "This is the first time I have begun in the woods, and were it not for its being so heavily timbered, I might soon have a plantation." He recommended that "for the man who can buy improved land, even if rated high, it is far better than to begin in the woods." The region's natural systems allowed its settlers to produce an abundance of grains, cotton, and tobacco crops and to feed an assortment of livestock. The region's rich riparian assets provided both drainage and transportation outlets for the saucer-shaped basin.[71]

The Duck River

The Duck River originates in the Eastern Highland Rim and flows in a westerly direction across the

70 Ramsey, 70, 206.

71 Michaux, *Travels to the West*, 273, 257; David L. Winters, Tennessee Farming, Tennessee Farmers (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 4-5, 17-22.



Figure 99. The Duck River and floodplain, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS)



Figure 100. Fattybread Branch, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS)

Central Basin and the Western Highland Rim before emptying into the Tennessee River. The river began cutting the Highland Rim during the late Pliocene-early Pliocene due to tectonic upwarping of the Nashville Dome anticline. Alluvial deposition occurred within the meander bends (Brickhouse, Harian, Delk, Greenfield, Shelby, etc.) of this river creating a series of buried surfaces that aided in the preservation of archeological sites.[72]

The Duck River Ridge is part of a long ridge dividing Middle Tennessee east to west. Streams to the south flow into the Duck and Tennessee Rivers, while streams to the north flow into the Cumberland River. The divide once marked the boundary of the Chickasaw Indian lands to the south.

The Duck River flows along a relatively straight course below Shelby Bend. The resulting river terrace geomorphology is characterized by a narrow floodplain strip formed along the right bank of the river just below the bluffs outside of Shelby Bend. Fattybread Branch flows downstream of these bluffs.[73]

Fattybread Branch

Fattybread Branch is a deeply dissected, narrow stream in the Lower Duck River watershed. It meanders across the floodplain 4.4 miles to the Duck River. Near its mouth archeologists found the likely location of the Duck River Cantonment/ stand. The John Gordon Ferry operated just east near the base of the hill containing the lone cemetery marker. The stream's importance to the site was captured in the following description:

> Gordon's Ferry was the mecca of the far-scattered grandchildren who returned each summer with their parents to spend vacation days at the old place. At the foot of the slight eminence on which stood the residence was Fatty-bread Branch, which was not only interesting as being part of the boundary line between Hickman and Maury counties. Its cool shady banks had value as a dreamland playground for several generations of children whose laughter re-echoed through the valley which its musical windings separated from the apple orchard hills, near the base of which the branch flowed into the river.[74]

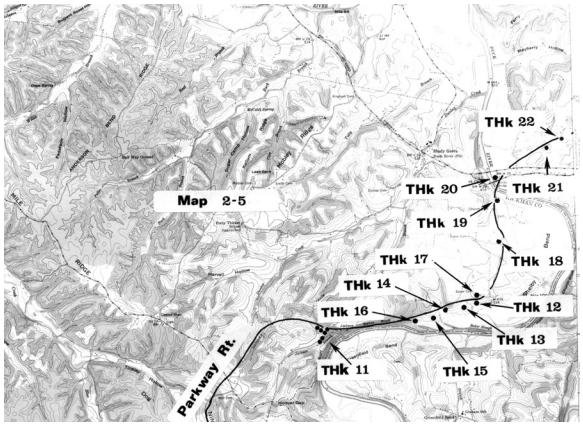


Figure 101. Sites along the Duck River surveyed by Prokopetz, 1975. (NPS image)

Archeological Resources

A number of archeological investigations prior to construction of Section 1-D in Hickman and Maury Counties found evidence of periodic prehistoric occupations with the most intense during the Late Archaic period (4400-3000 Years B.P.). Ledbetter phase occupations have been documented as the most widespread in the upper Duck with intensive occupations especially along the upper reservoir terraces. Surface surveys throughout the Duck River watershed reported extensive Late Archaic occupations but Late Archaic shell middens are not evident.[75]

In 1948, Natchez Trace archeologist John Cotter and historian Dawson Phelps located a lithic scatter, which Cotter designated as T-Mu-1. In 1975, A. Wayne Prokopetz of the Southeast Archeological Center (SEAC) surveyed the final 120 miles of the parkway. He reported nine sites in the vicinity of the Duck River. Two sites, T-Hk-20 and T-Hk-21, were located in the vicinity of the John Gordon House. T-Hk-20 was the same as Cotter's T-Mu-1 and T-Hk-21 (or 40-Hi-154) was located by small, dispersed flint scatters.

In 1978, Christopher E. Hamilton of SEAC conducted limited subsurface testing of the previously located sites on the Duck River and

72 Walter E. Klippel, *Cultural Adaptations in the Shelby Bend Archeological District* (Tallahassee, FL: Southeast Archeological Center, 1984), 448.

73 Russ Manning, *Scenic Driving Tennessee* (Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, 2002), 252; Klippel, 275.

74 Bond, 149-150.

75 Klippel, 23-24.

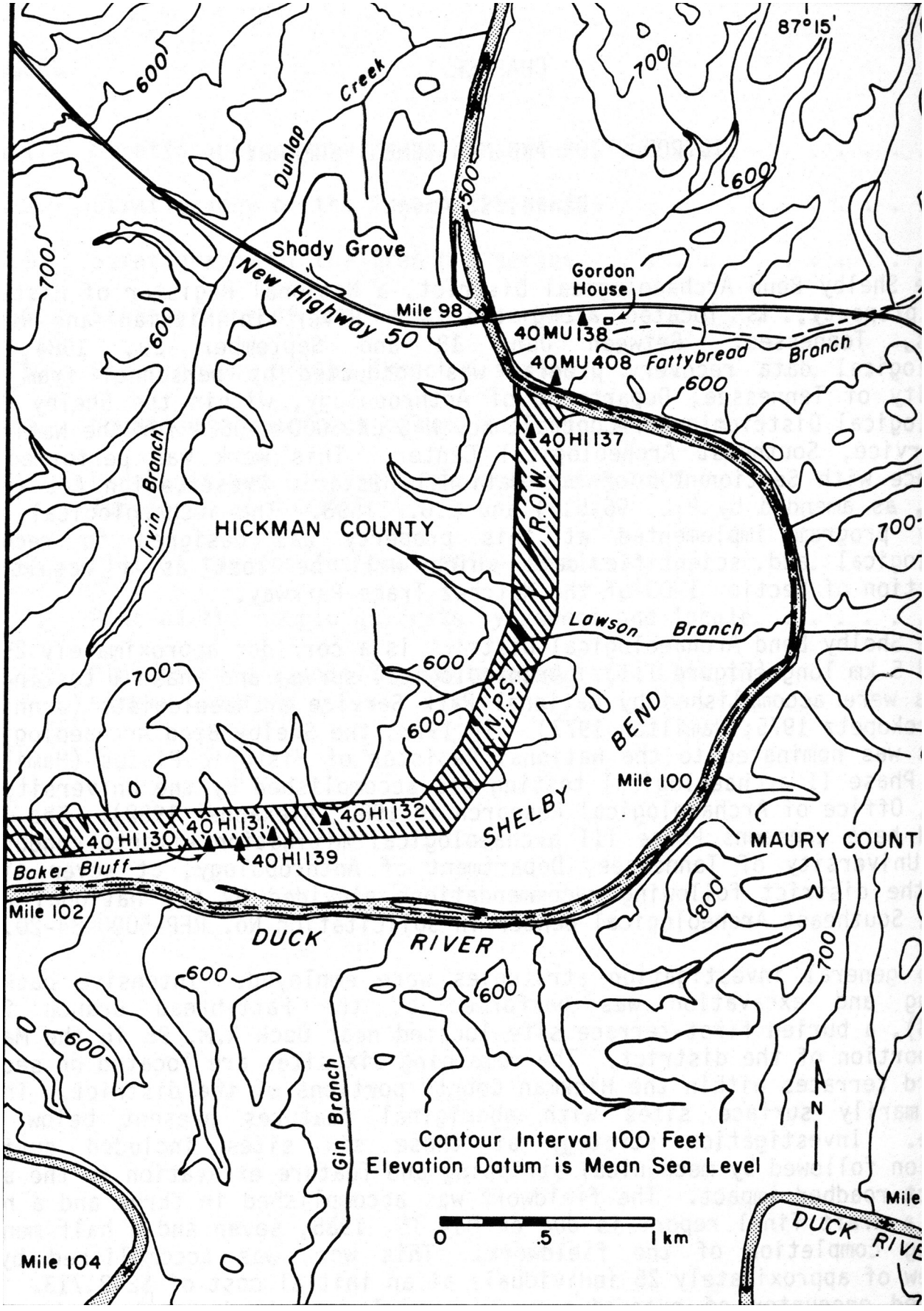


Figure 102. Shelby Bend Archeological District sites investigated by Klippel, 1984. (NPS image)

nominated the entire three-mile corridor to the National Register of Historic Places as the Shelby Bend Archeological District. Based on the presence of subsurface features, he recommended further examination of T-Hk-20.

In 1980, Lawrence S. Alexander of the University of Alabama conducted a Phase II testing program on the sites within the Shelby Bend Archeological District to determine site boundaries and depth of deposits. On the basis of his examinations, he divided T-Hk-20 into two sites: 40-Hi-138, which he described as a heavy lithic scatter dating from the Early to Late Archaic periods located on a Pleistocene terrace (between the John Gordon House and the Duck River), and 40-Mu-408, which he said was an extensive buried Middle Archaic to Early Woodland midden deposit and lithic scatter located on the floodplain of the Duck River.

In 1984, the University of Tennessee, under the direction of Walter E. Klippel, began excavation of seven Shelby Bend sites that would be affected by the construction of Section 1-D3 of the Natchez Trace Parkway. Among these sites, 40-Mu-408 contained numerous Archaic burials, while 40-Hi-138, due to long periods of cultivation, produced no significant subsurface deposits. During the same period, SEAC archeologist James R. Atkinson began controlled subsurface collection of 40-Hi-151 (T-Hk-29), T-Hk-30, and 40-Hi-138b, which were newly discovered sites located in the vicinity of the John Gordon House immediately north of TN 50. Later tests at 40-Hi-138b determined that it was a portion of 40-Hi-138.[76]

Archeologists from SEAC did further excavations at 40-Hi-151 (T-Hk-29) in 1984. The site is located on a portion of the hill directly north of the John Gordon House and east of Totty Lane and was at one time part of the original 1,500 acres of land that included the ferry and cantonment sites, almost a mile of the Natchez Trace, and the John Gordon House. The initial surface collection identified a Late Archaic lithic scatter and an early nineteenth-century historical component. The second phase identified the location of an early nineteenth-century historic feature and determined that the prehistoric component was of little archeological significance. The final phase identified the historic feature as a domestic habitation with a median date of occupation of 1808.

The report conjectured that the extremely limited amount of structural evidence for the building suggested that it could have been dismantled and moved and could be the hand-hewn framing system adjoining the John Gordon House or more likely, that it was once the detached kitchen for the house or that it was a building associated with operation of the ferry. Another explanation was that the structure, which would have contained few nails and minimal amounts of other metal or window glass, either burned or collapsed and that remaining materials were salvaged for other construction. Extensive plowing of the site and erosion would have destroyed any remaining structural evidence.[77]

The John Gordon House

During excavation of the stone retaining wall in 1977, the belowgrade portion of the wall was mapped, photographed, and then dismantled for recovery of artifacts within the laid stones. Archeologists found a British type gun flint and a cow's tooth at the base of the stone wall foundation, resting on sterile soil.[78]

76 Cooper and Walker, 4-6; Prokopetz, 59; Klippel, 3, 264, 394.

77 Cooper and Walker, 6-26.
78 Bonath, 10.



Figure 103. Archeological investigation, 2000. (Jill Halchin/ NPS)

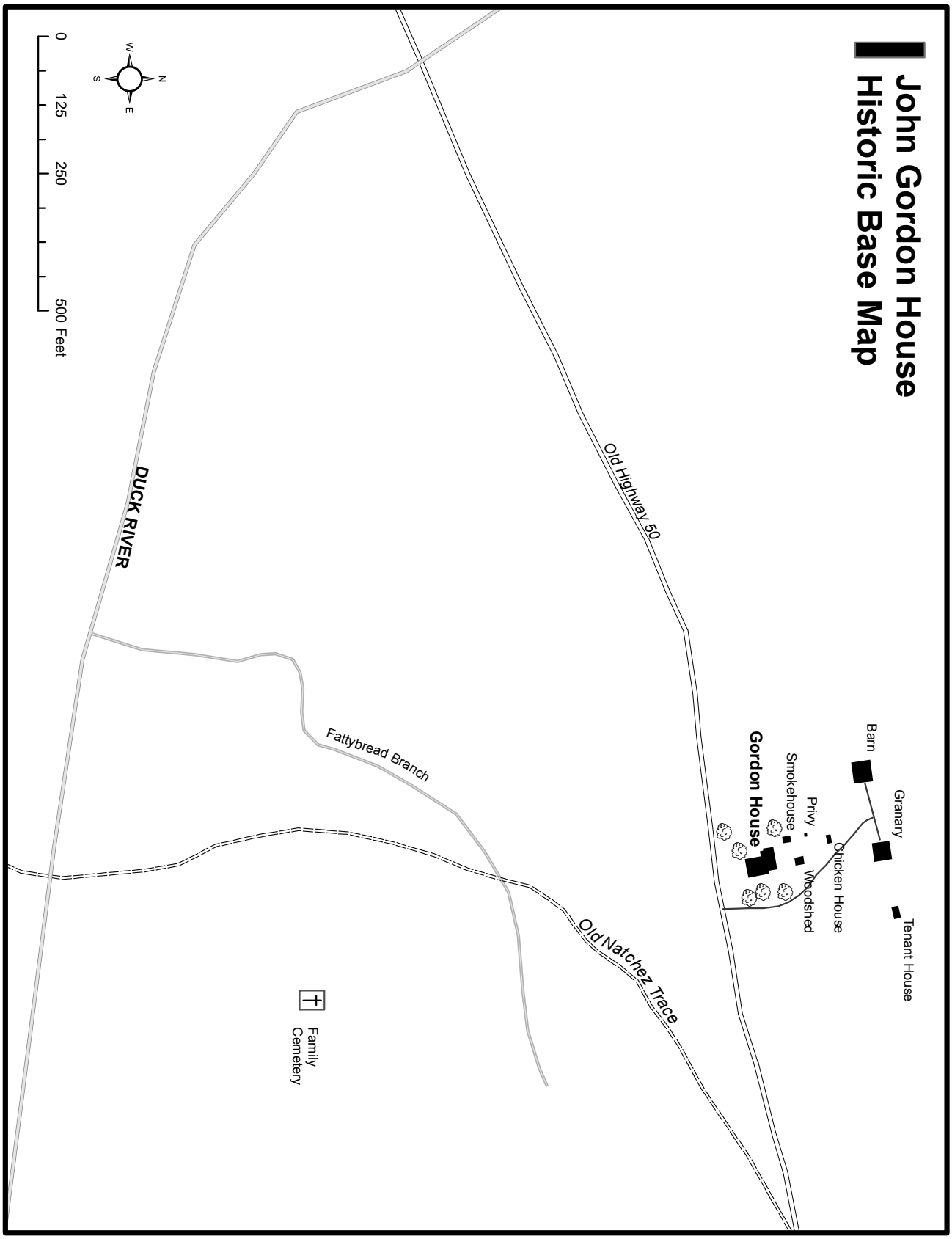
In 1983, SEAC conducted a soil resistivity survey with limited test excavation on the Gordon House property. The front yard and the northeast area were not surveyed since NPS maintenance was said to have carried out extensive bulldozing. The results, complicated by five days of rain, indicated that a cluster of twentieth-century structures was located behind the house and that earlier structures probably were located in the same area. Further testing was recommended.[79]

Prior to the addition of a swale and drain at the west end of the house in 2000, SEAC excavated a unit within the swale area but positioned to miss the drain trench and previous excavations. The investigation indicated that intact archeological resources are present, although the extent could not be assessed based on the available data. The discovery was not unexpected given the setting of the site. Near the house it appears that the prehistoric and historic are mixed in a single stratum, however, elsewhere along the ridge there may be a strictly aboriginal component.[80]

Ethnography

Middle Tennessee's cultural traditions are rich and diverse. This is a region with a complexity of history, prehistory, and converging cultural expression. Over the centuries, American Indians, Europeans, and African peoples have established and maintained their distinctive ethnic identities. These cultures also intermingled to form discreet, new cultural elements.

79 Marrinan, 10-11.
80 Jill Y. Halchin, SEAC to Director, Southeast Archeological Center, December 28, 2000.


John Gordon House
Historic Base Map
Granary
Barn
Tenant House
Chicken House
Privy
Smokehouse
Woodshed
Gordon House
Old Highway 50
DUCK RIVER
Fattybread Branch
Old Natchez Trace
Family
Cemetery
0
125
250
500 Feet
N
S
W
E

Existing Conditions

Spatial Organization

The Natchez Trace

A 1999 re-evaluation of the National Register-listed portions of the Natchez Trace in Tennessee found a section of the original roadbed visible for approximately .3 mile in a wooded area along the ridgeline north of the Duck River crossing and described it as one of the most well-defined segments of the original Natchez Trace in Tennessee, with widths of 10 to 12 feet and embankments rising to over 9 feet in height.

A mapping error in the 1975 National Register nomination of the Natchez Trace placed the crossing of the Duck River at the Gordon Ferry Bridge. In fact, the Natchez Trace continued along the south side of the Duck River opposite the Gordon Ferry location, which is .3 miles east of the present bridge site. The original roadbed on the south bank is no longer visible due to erosion and cultivation. On the north bank of the river, the original roadbed is just to the east of the probable location of Gordon's Stand and is visible along the hillside south of the John Gordon House. From there, it curves around the base of the hillside and heads north around the side of the hill, crossing Fattybread Branch and skirting an open field east of the John Gordon House, a distance of about ¼ mile north. The roadbed was noted in 1999 as being well-defined in this area with sections having embankments of 4 feet in height. To the east of the John Gordon House, the Natchez Trace continues to the east on Marlowe Road. It then crosses TN 50 and travels east following the roadbed of Fattybread Branch Road.[1]



Figure 104. Natchez Trace crossing of the Duck River at the site of Gordon's Ferry, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0124)



Figure 105. Natchez Trace roadbed visible along the hillside, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0123)

Natchez Trace Parkway

The Natchez Trace Parkway is a linear park with a modern roadway that follows the route of the historic Natchez Trace from Nashville to Natchez, a distance of 444 miles. Right-of-way averages 825 feet along its entire length, ranging from 400 to 1,000 feet. Wider areas occur at locations of historical, scientific, or recreational value. The land

1 Thomason, 111-112.



Figure 106. Natchez Trace crossing of Fattybread Branch, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0087)

or rights-of-way were acquired and conveyed to the United States by the three states through which it passes. 316 miles are in Mississippi, 33 in Alabama, and 101 in Tennessee.

At points of interest along the parkway, adequate parking areas or overlooks are provided. Where possible, vestiges of the Natchez Trace have been preserved along the parkway route and made available to the visitor by means of trails from nearby parking areas. The principles of limited access, grade separations for cross roads, long curves and easy grades, minimum sight distances of 1,200 feet, and no commercial traffic are all features of the Parkway.

Section 1-D of the Natchez Trace Parkway runs northeast to southwest near the John Gordon House. The Gordon Ferry Bridge crosses the Duck River about 2,000 feet downstream from the Gordon Ferry site.

The John Gordon House

Today, the John Gordon House sits in an open field without its complement of outbuildings, fences, walkways, or other landscape features. It faces south towards the Duck River, which passes some 400 yards to the west and moves east just 150 yards south of the front elevation of the house. Woods surround the site on three sides.

The house and associated property transect the Maury and Hickman county lines. A remnant of old TN 50 can still be seen just south of the house. A portion of this road trace has been converted to an asphalt pedestrian path leading west to the comfort station/picnic shelter and parking area. To the east, the road trace disappears into a wooded area. In front of the house, a large field stone that may be part of an early walkway sits beneath the east door opening.

A grass footpath leads south down the ridge and across an open field to a trailhead where a wooden footbridge crosses Fattybread Branch. Just beyond the bridge crossing, a .5-mile dirt path leads to the ferry site along the track of the Natchez Trace. A wooden bench overlooks Fattybread Branch near the beginning of the trailhead to the ferry. An interpretive wayside describes the use of the



Figure 107. John Gordon House, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0644)



Figure 109. Grassy path down to Fattybread Branch (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0071)



Figure 108. Pedestrial path, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0623)



Figure 110. Wooden footbridge over Fattybread Branch, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0652)



Figure 111. Bench overlooking Fattybread Branch, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0655)



Figure 112. Interpretive wayside, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0654)

Natchez Trace as the most direct route between Natchez and New Orleans in the early 1800s and mentions the cantonment site.

The John Gordon Ferry

There are no aboveground remains of the ferry site. There is currently an interpretive wayside describing John Gordon's ferry operation.

Duck River Cantonment

There are no aboveground remains of the depot site. The location is unmarked, but the cantonment is mentioned in the Natchez Trace wayside.

Church Cemetery

Today, the cemetery is unmarked and overgrown in a wooded area southeast of the house with a damaged stone-box grave from 1851 and two other marked graves that appear to be children without inscriptions. The condition of the cemetery is poor.



Figure 113. Damaged stone box grave, 2011 (Greg Smith/NATR)



Figure 114. Surviving tree, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0672)

Vegetation

A single pear survives from a group of five large trees documented around the house in 1978 and seen in historic photographs from the 1940s. A memorial tree planted by Gordon family descendants in 2003 appears to have died. The NPS planted a willow oak, a southern red oak, and four redbuds between the house and the comfort station/picnic shelter. Three of the redbuds are dead. Two ashes (likely *Fraxinus pennsylvanica*/green ash, F. *quadrangulata*/blue ash, or possibly F. *profonda*/pumpkin ash) have been planted adjacent to the comfort station/picnic shelter. Three sweetshrubs are planted along the front of the comfort station/picnic shelter. In the parking loop the NPS planted an ash, a sycamore, and several redbuds, one of which died and has been removed.

Although only one tree survives from a group documented in twentieth-century photographs, heirloom bulbs were blooming in the lawn south of the house in 2009. Those identified are the



Figure 115. Redbuds and other trees, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0674)



Figure 116. 'Twin Sisters' in the lawn, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0069)



Figure 117. Open character of landscape, c. 1988. (Bob Blythe/NPS)



Figure 118. Increase in vegetation succession, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0641)

late-blooming daffodil 'Twin Sisters' and Star-of-Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum umbellatum*). None of the iris seen in historic photographs from the 1940s have been identified at the site. Encroachment on the east and north sides of the site has overtaken much of the land that was once improved farmland.

The wooded area near the house was identified in a 2008 Natchez Trace vegetation survey as a lowland broad-leaved deciduous forest. Widespread dominants include white oak (*Quercus alba*), red oak (*Quercus rubra*), black oak (*Quercus velutina*), bitternut hickory (*Carya cordiformis)*, and shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*). Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*) often occurs in the understory, along with sassafras (*Sassafras* spp.) and hophornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana)*. The shrub layer is distinct, often with evergreens and wildflowers common. Wetter sites feature American elm (*Ulmus americana*), tuliptree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), and sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*). Numerous wildflowers are in bloom in early spring in the wooded area along the path to the ferry site.[2]

A comparison of images taken around 1988 and 2011 show an increase in vegetation succession in the understory of the wooded area east of the house. Historically, this area featured an open understory.

Buildings and Structures

The only surviving aboveground structure is the John Gordon House (LCS 001093). Constructed in 1818, it is a two-story, side-gabled brick structure resting on a stone foundation extending well below ground level to enclose a full-height basement. The house has semi-exposed brick end chimneys centered on both the east and west walls. The principal (south) elevation brickwork is laid in a Flemish bond pattern. The other three elevations are laid in a common bond pattern. The stone

2 Stephen L. Hatch and Dale A. Kruse, "The Vascular Flora of the Natchez Trace Parkway: Results of a Floristic Inventory" (College Station, TX: S. M. Tracy Herbarium, 2008), 144-46; www.worldwildlife.org/woldworld/profiles/terrestrial/na/na0404_full.html.



Figure 119. The John Gordon House, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0642)



Figure 120. Comfort station/picnic shelter, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0677)



Figure 121. Grave with illegible inscription, 2011. (Greg Smith/NATR)

foundation at all elevations is made of blocks of stone foundation formed by hand chisel. A simple gable roof of medium pitch is covered with split wood shingles. The roof eaves are finished on the north and south elevations with a dentilled cornice.

The front or south elevation is organized in a five bay configuration, arranged asymmetrically. Three windows at the first floor alternate with two doorways; at the second floor, the windows are directly above those of the first floor. The two narrow gable end elevations and the long rear or north elevation do not reflect this formal arrangement of fenestration. On the east, there are two windows directly over each other on the north side of the chimney. On the north elevation, there is a doorway off center to the east and one window at the west end. At second floor level, two windows are at the far west end, one of them immediately above the one at first floor. A single first-floor window is located on the north side of the chimney on the west elevation.

The house has two principal entry doors, both on the south elevation, each connecting with one of the two first-floor rooms. Both doorways have a paneled jamb, a three-light transom, and a six-panel Federal door. They are replicas installed during the 1977-78 restoration work. A secondary doorway on the north elevation connects with the east room. There are currently no steps or porches in place to serve any of these first-floor doorways.

The first floor windows are nine-over-nine light, single hung sashes (top sash fixed), while the second floor windows are nine-over-six light sashes of the same operation. All window sash, as well as the sills, jambs, and exterior casing are replicas installed in 1977-78. The first-floor windows have pairs of replica three-panel shutters installed during the same restoration effort. The doors and windows have flat arch brick lintels set in a voussoir pattern.

Three of the foundation walls are pierced with small openings for ventilation. Three openings are symmetrically arranged on the south elevation and do not fall directly beneath the windows. On the smaller east and west elevations, a single opening is north of the chimney directly below the window at first floor. Each opening has vertical square bars and is without any sort of frame or sash light.

The basement level is accessed via stone steps on the west side of the house. A board-and-batten door is located on the south side of the chimney. According to the LCS, the condition of the house is fair.[3]

A one-story, brick comfort station/picnic shelter of utilitarian design, built in 1986, sit some 250 yards away from the house.

3 Taken directly from Oppermann, 27, 67-69; Emrick, 7.

Church Cemetery contains a stone-box grave with a damaged top in several pieces and two graves with head and foot stones without inscriptions. The inscription on the stone-box has become illegible. The condition of the grave markers and stone-box grave is poor.

Topography

Central Basin

Most of Maury County is located in the Central Basin physiographic province. The Central Basin is an elliptical depression surrounded by the Highland Rim. It was formed by the relatively rapid erosion of an uplifted area of bedrock called the Nashville Dome during late Paleozoic times. Approximately 125 miles north-south and about 60 miles east-west, the Basin is subdivided into inner and outer sections. The inner section is generally smooth and gently rolling in contrast to the higher and more deeply dissected outer Basin. The average elevation of the inner Basin is about 600 feet above mean sea level while the average elevation of the outer basin is about 750 feet. Siliceous rocks cap the hills of the latter, reaching heights of 1,300 feet. Major drainages of the region are the westward flowing Cumberland River and the Duck and Elk Rivers flowing northwest and southwest respectively. Two major tributaries of the Cumberland River draining the inner basin are the Harpeth and Stones Rivers. Floodplains of these and other streams are similar in both sections, generally low gradient and meandering. Bedrock is primarily Ordovician limestone, shale, and dolomite in the outer Basin with the Mississippian Fort Payne formation overlying Chattanooga shale marking the contact between the Basin and the Highland Rim. The inner basin is generally covered with limestone of the Stones River formation with patches of bare platy rock and thin topsoil with glade areas supporting red cedar trees. The region

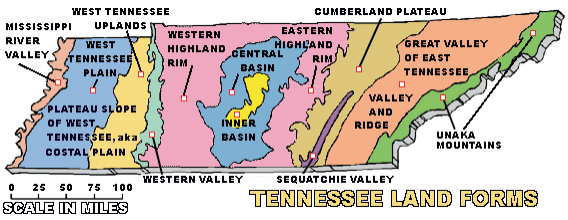


Figure 122. Tennessee Land Forms. (www.tngenweb.org/maps)

is moderate in karst development with many sinkholes and some large caves present, notably in the glade areas.

Soils of the Central Basin are for the most part high in silt content and rich in calcium derived from the parent limestone. Thick deposits of alluvium and colluvium occur in valley floors and loess covers a small part of soils throughout the region. The floodplains of both the Inner and Outer Central Basin are made up of the rich and productive Quaternary alluvium of the Armour-Lynnville-Arrington Association. Greater soil fertility exists in the Outer Basin due to the additional presence of highly phosphatic limestones. Soils of the Outer Basin floodplains and terraces that are located on or near the Hermitage, Bigby, and Leipers-Catheys Formations are extremely fertile and are considered to be some of the richest soils in Tennessee. The Inner Basin floodplains are moderately high in phosphorus content due to the water transport and deposition of soil from the Eastern Outer Central Basin, but these soils are not as rich as those of the Outer Basin. Saline groundwater discharge in some areas has resulted in the formation of salt licks and springs that were utilized during prehistoric and historic times.[4]

Western Highland Rim

Maury County's northwestern and southwestern corners are located in the Western Highland Rim, the western subdivision of the Highland Rim of the Interior Low Plateau physiographic province. Entirely surrounding the Central Basin, the Highland Rim is characterized by rolling terrain dissected by sharply incised valleys with numerous streams. Elevations range from about 700 to 1000 feet above mean sea level with the topography of the southern part generally more level than in the north. Major drainages in the region are the Duck and Buffalo Rivers (tributaries of the Tennessee River), and the westwardly flowing Cumberland River. Underlying bedrock of the region is chiefly Mississippian limestone, chert, shale, and sandstone with exposures of Devonian, Silurian, Ordovician, and Cambrian limestone, chert, and shale. The latter are exposed primarily in the drainages of the Buffalo and Duck Rivers. Karst

4 Kevin E. Smith, "Physiography of Tennessee," http://web.archive.org/web/20071106142349/http://www.mtsu.edu/~kesmith/TNARCHNET/physio.html.

development features such as caves and sinkholes are present on the northernmost counties of the region.
The well-drained upland and imperfectly drained bottomland soils are predominately sandy clay and gravelly silt loams. Terraces near the bottomlands consist mainly of cherty silt loams and silt loams. Hickman County lies almost entirely in the western part of the Highland Rim. A small area in the southeast part of the county, near Shady Grove, lies in the Outer Nashville Basin. The average upland elevation is about 950 feet above mean sea level in the southeastern half of the county. Elevation decreases somewhat to the northwest. In most areas local relief consists of narrow, rolling ridges and steeply dissected hillsides. A few, broad, undulating uplands are mainly in the northeastern section of the county.

River valleys are generally V-shaped, narrow, and winding. The Duck River is the largest in the county. It meanders southeast to northwest through the middle of the county with an average elevation of about 450 feet. Normal flow is moderate in summer and fall. Flooding is frequent in winter and spring. Most uplands, except a very small area in the northeast corner of the county, are drained by the Duck River and its tributaries. Terraces underlain by alluvial gravel occur up to about 250 feet above the level of the Duck River. Soils that formed in alluvium of the Duck River are dominantly well-drained, loamy, and very deep to bedrock. The alluvial soils on flood plains and low stream terraces have a considerable phosphate content because of phosphatic limestone in the watershed.

The geologic strata exposed in Hickman County extend from the Tuscaloosa Formation, the most recent, to the Hermitage Formation, the oldest. The Tuscaloosa Formation caps many of the highest ridges in parts of the county; however, it is mostly in small, isolated areas. It consists mainly of rounded chert gravel and ranges from 0 to 50 feet in thickness. It is commonly intermixed with residuum derived from St. Louis and Warsaw Limestones.

St. Louis and Warsaw Limestones underlie much of the higher parts of the county, particularly in the north and east. They have weathered to a thick mantle consisting of residual chert and soil. These limestone formations are rarely seen except in road cuts and as outcrops along slope shoulders. A silty mantle, presumably loess, caps the ridges in these areas. It ranges in thickness from several inches to 2 feet or more. The resulting soils are very deep to bedrock; their texture ranges from silty to clayey with variable amounts of chert fragments.

These formations are underlain by chert, silicastone, and siltstone of the Fort Payne Formation, which ranges from about 20 to 250 feet in thickness. The Fort Payne Formation is well exposed throughout the county on steep hillsides and narrow, winding ridges. The soils in these areas are loamy and moderately deep and have numerous chert or siltstone fragments.

Below the Fort Payne Formation is black Chattanooga Shale, which is known for its carbonaceous content, oil-bearing strata, and, recently, radon gas. Blue phosphate has been quarried in several locations at the base of the shale. The limestones of the Brownsport Formation are exposed in the extreme western part of the county but are not exposed eastward. Limestone and shale outcrops of the Wayne Formation and a few local exposures of Brassfield Limestone are east of Coble. The phosphatic limestones are exposed in stream valleys east of Centerville. They include Leipers, Catheys, Bigby, and Hermitage Limestones. Soils that formed in limestone commonly have a clayey textured subsoil and range from shallow to very deep. Soils that weathered from phosphatic limestone have a significant phosphate content.[5]

John Gordon House

The soil associations of the Duck River drainage have been defined as the Armour-Pickwick-Lynnville Association. Lynnville, Egam, and Arrington soils dominate the floodplains of the Duck River, which occupy about 30% of the association. Armour, Pickwick, and Mercer are the dominant soils in the stream terraces of the Duck River, which occupy about 60% of the association. These are considered to be some of the richest soils in Tennessee.

The John Gordon House and cantonment/ferry site are located in the Outer Central Basin. Four soils

5 http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov/manuscripts/TN081/0/Hickman_TN.pdf.

are evident within the John Gordon House and cantonment/ferry site. These are Ennis, Arrington, Egam, and Armour.[6]

The natural slope of the site, from northwest to southeast, directs rain runoff around the house and downhill. French drains installed in 1977-78 were inadequate for handling the runoff, and the basement flooded frequently. Efforts to correct the problem in 2001 resulted in a better outcome.

Circulation

An entrance loop road just off the Natchez Trace Parkway at milepost 407.7 brings visitors to a parking area that includes two spaces that provide accessible parking for the disabled. Brushed concrete sidewalks and deck provide paving for the comfort station/picnic shelter.

A six-foot-wide asphalt path leads from the parking area to the house. From the house, a grass path descends via a section of the Natchez Trace across an open field and through a cut where the Natchez Trace crosses Fattybread Branch. The trail transitions to gravel/dirt as it skirts the hill where the cemetery is located and ends at the likely location of the ferry crossing site on the Duck River. This section of the Old Trace is in good condition.[7]

Old TN 50 is a mere trace, a portion of which has been paved over as a visitor walkway to the parking area. The remainder is unpaved and ends several yards east of the house.

6 Klippel, 465.

7 DCP, 18.



Figure 123. Entrance road, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0056)



Figure 124. Asphalt path, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0138)



Figure 125. Grass path, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0078)



Figure 126. Trail over Fattybread Branch, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0650)



Figure 127. Old Trace skirting hill, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0090)



Figure 128. Old Trace down to the Duck River, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0664)



Figure 129. Old TN 50 east of the house, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0643)



Figure 130. View of the parking area from the house, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0079)



Figure 131. Looking back at the house from a section of the Old Trace south of the house (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0670)

Views and Vistas

The parking area and shelter are clearly visible from the house, although a few trees have been planted in the past to screen the house from the comfort station/picnic shelter. Views from the house across what was old TN 50 and down to Fattybread Branch via the Natchez Trace remain unobscured, as do those of the house from floodplain back up to the house. A view of the modern Gordon Ferry Bridge can be seen from the open field south of the house. Views to TN 50 are screened by NPS plantings north of the house.

Small-scale Features

A possible remnant of a stone walkway sits on the ground under the east front door surround. The well foundation is located in the grass west of the house.

Two wooden picnic tables and a metal garbage can sit under the open portion of the picnic shelter/ comfort station. A drive-by metal litter receptacle allows visitors to deposit trash without stopping.



Figure 132. View of Gordon Ferry Bridge, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0084)



Figure 133. Trees screening TN 50, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/ NPS image 0645)



Figure 134. Stone remnant, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0628)



Figure 135. Well foundation, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0686)



Figure 136. Picnic shelter/comfort station, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0679)



Figure 137. Information kiosk, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0683)

An information kiosk provides visitors with information about the parkway and nearby trails. A large wooden sign describing the John Gordon House sits in front of the parking area. Adjacent, the DAR marker is without its plaque.

An interpretive wayside just south of the house speculates as to what the house might have looked like in 1820. Two waysides are located along the trail to the Duck River. One describes the use of the Natchez Trace as a route between Nashville and Natchez/New Orleans and another describes the ferry operated by John Gordon. Along the trail to the river, a wooden bench overlooks Fattybread Branch. Remnants of a modern post-and-rail fence separate the bench and the embankment of the stream.

Natural Systems and Features

Much of Maury County and part of the Duck River valley in Hickman County are included in the Central Basin physiographic province.



Figure 138. Wayside describing the ferry operation, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0126)



Figure 139. Bench overlooking Fattybread Branch, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0655)

Central Basin Vegetation

The Central Basin lies within the Western Mesophytic forest region and originally supported a forest of large trees. Climax communities including oak (*Quercus* spp.), hickory (*Carya* spp.), tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), beech (*Fagus* spp.), and chestnut (*Castanea* spp.) occur in hilly areas. Lower hills and flats support hickory, winged elm (*Ulmus alata*), hackberry (*Celtis* spp.), and blue ash (*Fraxinus quadrangulata*).

Arboreal taxa of the floodplain include ash, maple (*Acer* spp.), sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*), elder (Sambucus nigra), osage orange (*Maclura pomifera*), gum (*Liquidamber styraciflua*), willow (*Salix* spp.), and eastern hophorbeam (Ostrya virginiana). Arboreal taxa common to the terraces include white (*Ulmus americana*) and winged elm, red oak (*Quercus rubra*), black walnut (*Juglans nigra*), ash (*Fraxinus* spp.), redbud (Cercis *canadensis*), and black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*).

Several cedar glade ecosystems occur in Maury County. Common arboreal taxa of the cedar glades include eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), ash, hickory, oak, elm, hackberry, and sassafras (*Sassafras* spp.). Rare plants include the federally endangered leafy prairie-clover (*Dalea foliosa*), limestone blue star (*Amsonia tabernaemontana* var. *gattingeri*), limestone fame-flower (*Talinum calcaricum*), Tennessee milk-vetch (*Astragalus tennesseensis*), and glade cress (*Leavenworthia exigua var. exigua*). Within the cedar glades, deciduous species are predominantly hickory, oak, and sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*).[8]

Western Highland Rim Vegetation

The Western Highland Rim is part of the Mississippian Plateau section of the Western Mesophytic Forest region, where oak forest was formerly predominant. A mixed oak-tulip-chestnut type forest with accessory stands of beech, hickory, and sugar maple occupies the well-drained areas. Poorly drained lowlands contain oak, gum, red maple, and beech.[9]

The Duck River

The Duck River, one of the major drainages within the Central Basin, is a slow-moving, shallow waterway. The headwaters are located in the Eastern Highland Rim and drain across the southern portion of the Central Basin through the Western Highland Rim where it joins the Tennessee River. Along its journey, its banks are primarily dominated by steep to gentle slopes and dense forests. These forests are generally comprised of oak, hickory, maple, and tulip poplar trees. On its journey across Middle Tennessee, the river passes by pastures and agricultural lands, as well as numerous tall bluffs and steep rocky cliffs and forested banks. The vegetation along the river can be generally characterized as bottomland and riparian hardwoods, mixed hardwoods, cedar forests, brushy thickets, and limestone cedar glades.

In the Middle Tennessee counties of the Central Basin, the river passes through a relatively flat to gently rolling terrain, with areas of shallow soils where the forests are often dominated by Eastern red cedar and oak trees associated with outcroppings of limestone cedar glades and dense shrubby thickets.

During the summer of 1984, the vegetation of southwestern Maury County was sampled. Four community types were defined: floodplain, upland glade, north-facing slope, and south-facing slope. The flood plain community was dominated by box elder (*Acer negundo*), silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*), and hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*). An association characteristic of exposed limestone and shallow soils was dominated by chinquapin (*Quercus muehlenbergii*), winged elm, and eastern



Figure 140. View of Duck River, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/ NPS image 0100)

8 Smith,"Physiography of Tennessee;" Klippel, 10.
9 Smith, "Physiography of Tennessee."

hophorbeam. The north and south-facing slopes were dominated by sugar maple, shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*), mockernut hickory (*Carya tomentosa*), and black oak (*Quercus velutina*).[10] The Duck River Complex is a 2,135-acre natural area complex in Maury County that consists of six natural areas within the 12,800-acre Yanahli Wildlife Management Area (WMA). These natural areas nested within the WMA support federal and state listed species often associated with cedar glades, significant native plant communities, or natural features such as caves, sinkholes, barrens, forests, and streams.

Included are the Columbia Glade (327 acres), Moores Lane Glade (331 acres), and Sowell Mill (306 acres), all of which are cedar glade ecosystems. Rare plants found here include the federally endangered leafy prairie-clover (*Dalea foliosa*), limestone blue star (*Amsonia tabernaemontana* var. *gattingeri*), limestone fame-flower (*Talinum calcaricum*), Tennessee milk-vetch (*Astragalus tennesseensis*), and glade cress (*leavenworthia exigua* var. *exigua*). The Howard Bridge Glade (321 acres) is comprised of cedar glade habitat, woodlands, and karst topography. Duck River bladderpod (*Lesquerella densipila*) occurs here. The Rummage Cave site (50 acres) supports a rare woodrat population and the federally endangered gray bat (*Myotis grisescens*). It is a short horizontal cave that terminates in five successive oval rooms about 15-feet-high and 30-feet-wide. Cheeks Bend (800 acres) includes high quality representative cedar glades, scenic bluffs overlooking the Duck River, and extensive cedar and hardwood forests.

The importance of the Duck River Complex is also enhanced because of its association with the Duck River State Scenic River. There are thirteen miles of the 30-mile state scenic river corridor that flows through this 12,800-acre public land. The Duck River is one of the most biologically rich and diverse rivers in North America. Over 500 species of aquatic plants, fish, and invertebrates have been documented in the section of the Duck River that has been designated as a state scenic river alone, including several federal endangered mussel species that occur there.[11]

Archeological Resources

Shelby Bend Archeological District

The Shelby Bend Archeological District is a three-mile-corridor near the Duck River and the John Gordon House. Beginning in 1944, National Park Service archeologists completed survey and Phase I testing of the area. In 1978, the Shelby Bend Archeological District was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as a prehistoric site with Paleo-Indian, Late Archaic, and Early Woodland cultural affiliations. The University of Alabama completed Phase II testing in 1980. The University of Tennessee conducted Phase III archeological mitigation efforts in 1984 at seven sites within the district following recommendations provided by SEAC.

Duck River Cantonment/Stand Site

Archeological evidence for the cantonment/stand was found along the natural levee adjacent to the confluence of Fattybread Branch and the Duck River in 1985.

10 Klippel, 448, 480; Reggie Reeves, "The Duck River: Tennessee's Newest Designated State Scenic River," http://www.state.tn.us/environment/tn_consv/archive/duckriver.htm.

11 http://www.state.tn.us/environment/na/natareas/duckriv/

Natchez Trace Parkway

Hickman County, Tennessee

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

John Gordon House Existing Conditions



Q:\maps\PARKS\NATR\JohnGordonHouse.pdf
Produced by: Chris Barrow, SER Geospatial Support
Data: NPS; ESRI. Projection: NAD 83 UTM Zone 16N; 8.5"x11" scale: 1:3,000

July 2013

Analysis and Evaluation

Significance Evaluation

Current National Register Status

A National Register nomination for the John Gordon House was completed in 1974. It was listed as being significant under Criterion B for its association with John Gordon, an early settler who was famous as an Indian fighter and who also ran a ferry operation on the Duck River. Its boundary was amended in 1977 from sixty-eight to ten acres.

CLR Significance Evaluation

The existing National Register documentation served as the foundation for evaluating the significance of the John Gordon House cultural landscape as part of this CLR. The documentation was reviewed in terms of relevant National Register criteria and the guidance provided in the National Register Bulletin How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. The comprehensive investigation into the history of the John Gordon House, coupled with the comprehensive review of the landscape, suggested aspects beyond that afforded by the existing nomination.

Statement of Significance

The John Gordon House is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Transportation, Settlement, and Native American History for its association with the Natchez Trace, an early Indian trail that became a national road from Natchez to Nashville in 1801, and the John Gordon Ferry that traversed the Duck River crossing of the Natchez Trace and Gordon's Stand, an early accommodation on the Natchez Trace.

The John Gordon House is locally significant under Criterion B for its association with John Gordon, an early settler whose participation in numerous retaliatory raids against deadly Indian attacks soon gave him a reputation for his fearlessness in battle. He helped Andrew Jackson fight the Red Stick faction of Creek in 1814, culminating with the Battle of Horseshoe Bend and commanded a company of "spies" (scouts) for a campaign against the Seminole in 1818.

The John Gordon House is locally significant under Criterion C as an excellent example of an early brick I-house in Middle Tennessee. It is the one of the oldest structures surviving along the historic Natchez Trace and was one of the earliest brick houses in Tennessee.

The John Gordon House is locally significant under Criterion D for its association with the Shelby Bend Archeological District, a three-mile corridor located along the Duck River in Maury and Hickman Counties and nominated to the National Register in 1978.

The period of significance for the John Gordon House cultural landscape is 1818. This period corresponds with the construction date of the house and reflects the height of travel along the Natchez Trace when boatmen returning from Natchez and New Orleans passed near the house on their way to the John Gordon Ferry crossing of the Duck River. No other aboveground buildings survive from any other period of occupation. All twentieth-century landscape features were removed from the site when the house was returned to its c. 1818 configuration in the 1970s.

Analysis of Landscape Characteristics

In order to better understand the relationship between the existing landscape of the John Gordon House and its character historically, this chapter includes a comparative analysis of historic and existing conditions. The focus of this section is to identify the broad patterns and specific features associated with the historic periods and to evaluate to what extent they survive today.

Spatial Organization

Most of what is known about the early spatial patterns of the John Gordon homestead relate to its close proximity to the Natchez Trace and the John Gordon Ferry crossing of the Duck River. Remains of the original Natchez Trace can be found southeast of the Gordon House, where it crossed a nearby creek, Fattybread Branch, and continued south to the Gordon Ferry crossing of the Duck River. The Army established a cantonment in 1801, and the buildings and ferry were subsequently used as a Natchez Trace stand or trading post operated by John Gordon and William Colbert. The spatial relationship of the John Gordon House, the John Gordon Ferry, and the cantonment/stand with the Natchez Trace is a character-defining and contributing feature of the cultural landscape.

The John Gordon House

The historic spatial order of the landscape around the house was based on its agricultural use. A clustering pattern of work spaces and outbuildings enclosed by a variety of fence types would have been typical. A tenant house, barn, granary, chicken house, wood shed, smokehouse, and privy stood north of the house when acquired by the NPS in 1973, but all dated to the early twentieth century.



Figure 141. Agricultural landscape, 1959. (NATR 10087)



Figure 142. Cultivated fields next to the barn, 1959. (NATR 10093)

John Gordon mentioned one of his fields being put into cotton and an orchard in a letter to Dolly Gordon in 1818. Although field patterns are unknown, cotton was of central importance in the fertile Central Basin counties, followed by corn, tobacco, and wheat. Twentieth-century images show cultivated fields adjacent to the barn. The orchard is thought to have been located on a hill south of the house.

A large vegetable garden would have been needed to feed the family and the enslaved field hands. A smaller kitchen garden would typically be located closer to the house and would likely have included herbs and some ornamentals.

In the twentieth century, an old stone retaining wall ran along the south edge of the front yard in an east-west direction with a white picket fence on top. Access to the property was through a swinging gate at the top of stone slab steps. Although not visible in an early 1910 photograph, a stone slab walk probably continued north to the front porch of the house. A well structure sat west of the house.

At some point, the Jewells, who owned the property for most of the twentieth century, replaced the picket fence with an ornamental wire fence and covered the stone walk with a cement walk. The NPS determined that all landscape features, including the outbuildings, were of twentieth-century origin and removed them during the house restoration in 1977.

In the 1920s, the original alignment of TN 50 intersected a portion of the Natchez Trace east of the house. The house's location about fifty feet north of the road can be seen in several historic images.

John Gordon Ferry Site

There are no aboveground remains of the ferry operation. Archeological investigations conducted in 1985 concluded that the probable location of the ferry would have been located slightly above the base of the hill east of Fattybread Branch where a narrow, level shelf resembling an old road was observed. Phelps described it in 1945 as a "narrow

sunken approach dug out from the north bank." The belowground remains of the John Gordon Ferry are contributing features of the cultural landscape.

Church Cemetery

A cemetery with three marked graves is located southeast of the house near the top of a hill. According to Gordon family tradition, the hill was the site of an orchard that later became a cemetery. John Gordon was originally buried here at his death in 1819 before being moved to Rose Hill Cemetery in Columbia in 1855. The cemetery and three grave markers are contributing features of the cultural landscape.

Cantonment/Stand Site

There are no aboveground remains of the cantonment buildings. Extensive archeological investigations in the vicinity before 1985 effectively eliminated areas to the south, west, and east of the John Gordon Homestead. Archeological investigations conducted in 1985 concluded that the probable location of the cantonment site/stand was southeast of the house near the mouth of Fattybread Branch along the Duck River.[1] The belowground remains of the cantonment/stand site are contributing features of the cultural landscape.

Topography

The Natchez Trace

The Natchez Trace was an outgrowth of a series of ancient Indian trails, which clung to the ridges and water shed locations over the highest ground wherever possible to avoid low, swampy areas, creeks, and rivers. Although typically towns grew up around transportation corridors, this was not the case with the Natchez Trace. The area around the Duck River crossing was too rugged to be suitable for a town location, but the Gordon Ferry continued to be used until a bridge was built in 1896. After crossing the Duck River, the road climbed to the Duck River Ridge, which it followed for nearly twenty-five miles.

The John Gordon House

The John Gordon property is located in an area of rolling, fertile farmland. The site slopes downward from the north towards the house and on towards the river. The John Gordon House's topographic location near the edge of a ridge overlooking the floodplain of the Duck River and Fattybread Branch to the south is a contributing feature of the cultural landscape.[2]

The John Gordon Ferry

It appears that the archeological remains of the cantonment/stand were located on the narrow active floodplain of the Duck River near the mouth of Fattybread Branch, which is still undergoing alluvial deposition. SEAC archeologist Atkinson concluded in 1985 that the probable location of the ferry would have been a depression in the low, natural levee resembling an old road located slightly above the base of the hill east of Fattybread Branch. The belowground remains of the John Gordon Ferry are a contributing feature of the cultural landscape.

Church Cemetery

Prior to archeological investigations in the 1980s, earthworks in the cemetery had been associated with the possible location of the cantonment site. Atkinson concluded in 1985 that soil excavated in the course of grading a road into the hillside was pushed to the outside creating the "embankment" or "earthworks" referred to in previous reports as the site of the cantonment. Recently, archeologists proposed that these could be Civil War earthworks.

Vegetation

Little is known about the cultural vegetation of the John Gordon House during the period up to 1860. Houses on frontier properties like this one tended to dominate the landscape, with very few if any foundation plantings. Often a grove of trees near the house was more typical. Historic twentieth-century photographs show a number of large deciduous trees (primarily pecan and elm) near the house with no foundation plantings. Heirloom plants such as iris and Morning Glory vine can be

1 Atkinson, 7; Phelps, "Gordon's Ferry, 5.

2 Archeologist Jill Y. Halchin, SEAC to Director, Southeast Archeological Center, December 28, 2000, NATR archives.



Figure 143. The John Gordon House, 1958. (NATR 9919)



Figure 144. The John Gordon House, 1959. (NATR 10086)

seen in images from the 1940s. One surviving pear tree and the old southern daffodil 'Twin Sisters' were identified during a 2009 site visit but the daffodils have not been seen in bloom since that visit.

A vegetable garden would have been a necessity during the period up to 1860, but its location is unknown. An orchard would also have been typical, and one was mentioned by John Gordon is a letter to Dolly in 1818. It is likely that most of the land was cultivated or used as pasture for livestock. It is unknown if any ornamental gardens existed in this early period.

Vegetation succession in the wooded areas near the house has increased since the 1970s. Contributing features include: the heirloom daffodils and other bulbs; the lone surviving specimen tree near the house; the open space free of foundation plantings around the house; the open character of the landscape between the house and Fattybread Branch. The trees planted between the parking area and the house are non-contributing features. An



Figure 145. The John Gordon House, 1978. (NATR 12188)

elm and pecans that can be seen in images from the early twentieth century are missing.

Buildings and Structures

The John Gordon House

The John Gordon House was constructed in 1818. The property passed out of the Gordon family in 1896 and was acquired by the Jewell family in 1904. According to the Jewells, around 1907, they erected a double-gallery front porch and rear addition. Around 1947, a full-height porch supported by four square paneled wood columns replaced the double-gallery front porch.

Restoration of the house to its construction date of 1818 began in 1976, when the front porch was removed. The restoration of the house continued in 1977 and included the removal of the two-story, rear addition. After the exterior siding of the rear wood addition had been removed, the wall framing of an earlier, one-story braced frame structure was found. The framing of the second story and the ell on its west side was of balloon frame construction



Figure 146. Braced frame structure, 1990. (NATR 840)

of a much later construction consisting of studs and rafters.

As it was thought to have lost most of its historic integrity, the NPS removed the structure in 1995 after documentation by students of the Middle Tennessee State University Center for Historic Preservation (CHP). Although not prominently stated in any of the many reports and proposals regarding the rear ell, it was acknowledged that the house was originally built with an ell of some sort to house ancillary functions. It might be assumed that later additions were constructed to house the children and grandchildren living with Dolly Gordon during her many years of occupancy. A kitchen likely would have been connected to the main house either directly or by a covered breezeway, a traditional configuration. By the time the Jewells purchased the property in 1904, these additions would likely have needed repairs or replacement.[3]

Investigations about the size and configuration of the original front porch proved inconclusive as to the date of construction. The 1988 historic structure report recommended constructing simple wooden steps, handrails, and landings at each entry without any roof structure. These features allowed rain to enter at the doorway causing extensive damage, and they were removed in 2009.[4]

3 The Center for Historic Preservation, "The Construction History of the Gordon House Ell" (Middle Tennessee State University, May 1996, photocopy), 9; Daniel W. Brown to Shirley B. Gelineau, August 21, 1996; Superintendent's Annual Report, 1995, NATR archives; Oppermann, 56.

4 The Center for Historic Preservation, 6; Chief, Historic Architecture Division, Southeast Region to Superintendent, Natchez Trace Parkway, July 12, 1989, NATR archives.

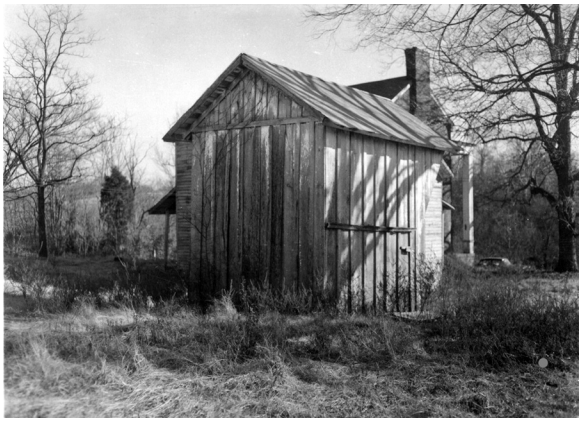


Figure 147. Twentieth-century outbuilding, 1959. (NATR 10079)

Outbuildings

NPS removed the seven farm outbuildings in 1977. The park felt that it was important to restore the John Gordon House as part of the Natchez Trace historic scene in the 1820s. The outbuildings dated to around 1900 and would be a continual maintenance expense that the park did not want to take on.

New Construction

The NPS constructed a comfort station /picnic shelter and new parking area adjacent to the Natchez Trace Parkway and west of the Gordon House in 1986.[5]

The John Gordon House is a contributing feature. The comfort station/picnic shelter and parking area are non-contributing.

Circulation

The Natchez Trace ran southeast of the John Gordon homestead down to its Duck River crossing at the John Gordon Ferry, which was in use until a bridge was built in 1896. In the twentieth century, the highway department constructed TN 50 just south of the house and it intersected the remains of the Natchez Trace east of the house. After the NPS acquired the property, the highway department moved TN 50 north of the house. The road's original location separated the house from portions of the Trace, the ferry, and the cantonment site.

Circulation patterns included a roadway off old TN 50 that ran along the east side of the house and continued back to the barn and granary. A stone walkway originally led from the front porch out to the picket fence. At some point, the Jewells covered it with cement. The cement walkway and roadway were considered part of the twentieth-century landscape, and the NPS removed them. Portions of the stone walkway were uncovered when the cement walk was removed.

The NPS constructed new asphalt trails (0.7) in 1988 from the parking area to the house, covering the historic road trace. From the house, an

5 Superintendent's Annual Report, 1986, NATR archives.

unpaved foot trail, constructed in 1993, turned south down to the ferry site, crossing Fattybread Branch and passing by the cantonment site along the Natchez Trace.

The section of the Old Trace southeast of the house is a contributing feature of the cultural landscape. The trace of old TN 50, now partly covered by an asphalt trail, is a contributing feature of the cultural landscape. The asphalt trail is non-contributing. The stone walkway remnant that sits beneath the east door and any belowground remains of the stone walkway are also contributing. The front walkway and the roadway from old TN 20 that provided access to the farm buildings are missing.

Views and Vistas

The location of the John Gordon House on a high spot gave the house a commanding view out over the ridge and down to the floodplain of the Duck River. Historic views from the house would have been over the fields and pastures down the ridge towards the stream. In the 1920s, old TN 50 was constructed just south of the house. The relocation of TN 50 in the 1950s restored the historic viewshed. Today old TN 50 is a mere trace, a portion of which has been paved as a visitor walkway to the parking area.

Unobstructed views and a lack of visual intrusion are character-defining features. Contributing features include views from the John Gordon House out over the ridge and down to the floodplain of the Duck River and views from the floodplain of the Duck River back up to the house. Non-contributing features include the view from the house to the comfort station/picnic shelter and entrance road and views of the Gordon Ferry Bridge.

Small-scale Features

A hierarchy of fencing would have been present at the John Gordon homestead during the antebellum period. Most likely, Virginia rail fences delimited the perimeter of the property. Post-and-rail, stake-and-rider, and paling fences would have been used to enclose smaller garden spaces and separate the work yard from the larger agricultural landscape.

In the twentieth century, a white picket fence sat atop a low stone retaining wall that ran parallel to old TN 50 in front of the house. A swinging gate provided access to the property. The picket fence was eventually replaced with an ornamental wire fence. Board fences enclosed agricultural spaces. A well house sat west of the house.

Contributing features include the well house foundation and any belowground remains of the picket fence and retaining wall. All aboveground fencing is missing from the site.

Archeological Resources

The Shelby Bend Archeological District is a three-mile-corridor near the Duck River and the John Gordon House with long periods of periodic prehistoric occupations. It has undergone extensive archeological testing. In 1984, archeologists from SEAC did excavations at a site located on a portion of the hill directly north of the John Gordon House and east of Totty Lane, which was at one time part of the original 1,500 acres of land that included the ferry and cantonment sites, almost a mile of the Natchez Trace, and the John Gordon House. The initial surface collection identified a Late Archaic lithic scatter and an early nineteenth-century historical component. The second phase identified the location of an early nineteenth-century historic feature and determined that the prehistoric component was of little archeological significance. The final phase identified the historic feature as a domestic habitation with a median date of occupation of 1808.

The report conjectured that the extremely limited amount of structural evidence for the building suggested that it could have been dismantled and moved and could be the hand-hewn framing system adjoining the John Gordon House or more likely, that it was once the detached kitchen for the house or that it was a building associated with operation of the ferry. Another explanation was that the structure, which would have contained few nails and minimal amounts of other metal or window glass, either burned or collapsed and that remaining materials were salvaged for other construction. Extensive plowing of the site and erosion would have destroyed any remaining structural evidence.[6]

6 Cooper and Walker, 6-26.

John Gordon Ferry

SEAC archeologist James R. Atkinson confirmed the location described by NPS historian Dawson Phelps in 1945 on the north bank of Duck River when a SEAC crew conducted archeology at the site in 1985. Atkinson noted a narrow, level shelf resembling an old road located slightly above the base of the hill east of Fattybread Branch and concluded that the probable location of the ferry would have been a depression in the low, natural levee, which was also described by Phelps.[7] (Atkinson, Figure 1)

The belowground remains of the John Gordon Ferry are contributing features.

John Gordon Cantonment/Stand Site

In April 1985, SEAC archeologist James Atkinson and crew conducted a survey along a section of an old road bed believed to the historic Natchez Trace approach to north side of the Duck River, looking for evidence of the cantonment/stand site. Close to the mouth of Fattybread Branch, the generally narrow, natural levee expanded, creating a level elevation in the grassy woods adjacent to the field between the levee and the hill. Four tests were dug in that area, with one producing a sherd of hand-painted pearlware. The positive shovel test was excavated, and additional early nineteenth-century ceramic sherds and glass fragments were located, along with animal bones and charred floral material. Although the crew conducted no other testing, Atkinson thought it likely that the site extended into the field between the levee and the hill. Previous surface surveys of the area failed to locate the remains of the cantonment and stand because the site is buried beneath 50 cm of recent alluvium.[8]

The belowground remains of the cantonment/stand site are contributing features.

Assessment of Integrity

The effort to determine a landscape's significance according to National Register criteria focuses on seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The persistence of these qualities as they apply to the landscape determines whether the landscape retains enough of its important features to convey its historically significant appearance or associations.

Location

The location of the John Gordon House adjacent to the historic Natchez Trace has remained constant and is a character-defining feature of the historic landscape. Its spatial relationship to the John Gordon Ferry was restored with the relocation of TN 50 north of the house, even though there are no aboveground remains of the ferry today.

The location of internal boundaries changed with the loss of landscape features such as historic circulation patterns and fence lines.

Setting

Because the house was restored to a period of 1818, the NPS removed the twentieth-century outbuildings that were an integral part of the spatial organization of the site, lowering integrity of setting. Also missing are a number of large specimen trees seen in historic photographs, although family members reported that the Jewells planted the pecans.

TN 50's relocation restored the spatial relationship of the house, the Natchez Trace, the ferry, and the river, but the historic setting was disrupted when a portion of the road trace was converted to an asphalt pedestrian path.

The setting of the ferry location along the Duck River retains integrity. Also intact is the setting of the Duck River valley.

Design

Although the house has been restored to its 1818 design, it has been stripped of many of its architectural features added after 1818. Nevertheless, it retains its form, floor plan, and significant interior elements form the time of original construction. The construction date and design of the original front porch has never been determined. The present configuration, without steps or porches to serve any of the three first-floor doorways, lowers integrity of design.

The loss of the spatial arrangement of the outbuildings, fencelines, and historic circulation

7 Atkinson, 7.
8 Atkinson, 7-9, Draft Archeological Overview, 306-07.

patterns around the dwelling house also lowers integrity of design.

Materials

When the house was restored in 1977, materials were replaced in kind as needed. Local bricks were used to replace brittle and crumbling bricks, and the old lime mortar was used for repointing. However, plain sawn poplar was substituted for quarter sawn poplar.[9]

Only one tree survives from a group documented in historic photographs. Its condition is declining. All of the large specimen trees have been lost, although it is unknown if any dated to the historic period. The earliest images of the house from c. 1910 show only small trees in front of the house. Family members reported that the Jewells planted the pecans. The American elm that once stood adjacent to the house may have dated to the nineteenth century. Heirloom bulbs persist in the lawn but have declined since 2009.

Workmanship

Previous studies failed to provide enough documentation to determine if a front porch was original to the house. Steps, railing, and landings were constructed in 1995 to provide access to the house but were removed in 2009, leaving the structure without access to any of the three first-floor doorways.

During restoration of the house in the 1970s, improper repointing techniques on the exterior walls resulted in unsightly wide joints and incorrect mortar color and did not address interior masonry problems. A recently completed historic structure report notes that an alarming number of brick courses are missing on the north and south walls at basement level, and the reconstructed northwest corner of the foundation wall does not match the intact original design of the other building corners and does not provide full masonry support to the masonry above. Although efforts in 1993 and 2003 attempted to correct earlier exterior repointing, the historic structure report concludes that there is a serious threat to the structural integrity of the affected walls at basement level.

The 1977-78 vintage front doors are currently being used as models for preparing in-house replacement doors. While the replacement doors are approximations of the previous designs, the dimensions of individual door components do not match. Individually and cumulatively, the inaccuracies are significant and can easily be passed to successive generations of replications. In addition, sanding of the surfaces has removed the crispness of the delicate bead that is integral to the door design.[10]

Feeling

The dwelling house has been restored to a period of 1818 but is not open to the public. There is no experience of the spatial order of the site, as the house sits in an open field with no landscape features. Trails leading down to Fattybread Branch and the ferry site are well-defined but their historic character is interrupted by a paved pedestrian path linking the site to the parking area. The house has lost its connection to the surrounding landscape.

The open character of the surrounding fields and the lack of visual intrusion contribute to integrity of feeling and are a character-defining feature of the historic landscape. These open fields lead into the riparian corridor of Fattybread Branch and the Duck River, which remain unspoiled and recall the earlier time of the John Gordon Ferry.

Association

The house retains its association with John Gordon and his wife, Dolly, who oversaw the construction of the house and resided there until her death in 1859. The John Gordon House cultural landscape suffers from a lack of connection between the house and the Duck River. Although the location of the house and the ferry along the Natchez Trace during the height of travel in the 1820s has been preserved as part of the Natchez Trace Parkway, the important association between the house, Fattybread Branch, and the Duck River is not evident at the site.

Summary

The dwelling house is the centerpiece of the John Gordon homestead cultural landscape. It is the one of the oldest structures surviving along the historic Natchez Trace and was one of the earliest brick houses in Tennessee. The house has been

9 Completion Report, 10; Jill Garrett, "Gordon House has Face-Lift," *The Daily Herald*, Columbia, TN, July 1, 1978, p. 8.

10 Oppermann, 97.

restored to its construction date of 1818, which also corresponds with the height of travel along the Natchez Trace. Efforts to restore the original front porch failed to determine its design or construction date.

The John Gordon Ferry, located on the north bank of the Duck River slightly above the base of the hill east of Fattybread Branch, was in use until 1896, at which time the County Line Bridge was constructed. The spatial relationship of the house, the Natchez Trace, the ferry site, and the river were restored when old TN 50 was relocated north of the house, but the NPS converted a portion of the road bed to an asphalt path. Also missing is the spatial relationship of the dwelling house and its surrounding landscape features. The NPS removed the outbuildings and other landscape features dating to the twentieth century in the 1970s.

There is currently little linkage between the house, the ferry, and the cantonment/stand site along the confluence of the Duck River and Fattybread Branch or the cemetery on top of the hill southeast of the house, where John Gordon was originally buried. It appears that many visitors walk down to the house and never take advantage of the trail down to the river.

Little is known about the cultural vegetation of the site. It appears from historic photographs that large specimen trees dominated the landscape. Only one of these trees survives and is in very poor condition. A few heirloom bulbs persist in the landscape.

The site retains integrity of location. The site suffers from a loss of the associated landscape features around the house and lacks a coherent connection to the cantonment/stand site, ferry, and cemetery, affecting integrity of setting, design, feeling, and association. The house lacks most of the architectural features added after 1819, but it retains its form, floor plan, and significant interior elements form the time of original construction. It is threatened by the poor quality of recent construction and repairs.

Treatment Recommendations

The John Gordon House cultural landscape is a frontier farmstead spatially linked to the John Gordon Ferry, the historic Natchez Trace, and the Duck River. The house sits near the edge of a ridge overlooking the floodplain of Fattybread Branch and the Duck River to the south. Remains of the original Natchez Trace can be found southeast of the Gordon House, where it crossed Fattybread Branch and continued south to the Gordon Ferry crossing of the Duck River.

Major components of a working plantation in Middle Tennessee would have included the main house, outbuildings, outdoor activity areas, a well, a vegetable garden, slave quarters, agricultural fields and woodlots, and sometimes a small orchard. These components were typically clustered and linked by a network of paths, fences, and functional site lines arranged according to a simple but not always rigid geometry of straight lines and rectangles. Such a geometric layout helped bring a sense of order to a landscape surrounded by wilderness. A letter from John Gordon in 1818 described the house and mentioned agricultural fields and an orchard, but there is no documentation for the original outbuildings and other landscape features.

The John Gordon House is the one of the earliest brick houses in Middle Tennessee. It is one of two surviving structures along the Natchez Trace, whose most frequent travelers in the late 1700s through the mid-1820s were boatmen returning to Middle Tennessee from the Natchez and New Orleans markets. The overarching treatment associated with the historic landscape is preservation. Additional archeological studies are needed to gain more information about missing landscape features, whose restoration would provide a context for the house, ferry operation, and cantonment.

Spatial Organization

- Preserve the spatial relationship of the house to the Natchez Trace and the John Gordon Ferry. Even after the decline of travel along the Natchez Trace by boatmen returning from Natchez and New Orleans, the road was used locally. The ferry was used until the construction of the County Line Bridge in 1896 and was noted on many historic maps. The spatial relationship of the house, the Natchez Trace, and the ferry is a character-defining feature of the historic landscape.

- Preserve the historic setting and viewshed of the house overlooking the floodplain of the Duck River and the valley beyond.

- Conduct archeology to determine the location of the original outbuildings, circulation patterns, and fence lines associated with the John Gordon House. At present, the site is lacking the spatial connection between the house and the original outbuildings, circulation patterns, and fence lines. Artifacts uncovered could be interpreted even if building footprints cannot be located to provide the visitor with a better understanding of day to day life on a nineteenth-century farmstead.

- Preserve Church Cemetery. This is said to be the original location of the orchard mentioned in the letter from John Gordon in 1818. It is also the original burial site of John Gordon. Because of its location in the middle of a forested area and near the top of the hill, no visitor access should be allowed, but it should be re-evaluated for addition to the List of Classified Structures after its National Register eligibility is determined. Consult with Region LCS Coordinator.

- Consult with the Region History Branch and SHPO to determine if an amendment to the National Register nomination should be

prepared for the John Gordon House that includes the entire site, including the ferry, cantonment, and Church Cemetery. The present nomination is poorly written, and the cultural landscape is not well-documented. Additionally, the nomination does not include significance under Criterion C (Embodies distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values).

Vegetation

- Maintain the open character of the landscape between the house and Fattybread Branch, which is a character-defining feature of the cultural landscape.
- Maintain the open character of the landscape around the house, which is devoid of foundation plantings.
- Open up the understory of the wooded area along the walkway overlooking the Duck River valley and in the wooded area east of the house. Use certified arborist for all tree work.
- Prune overhanging tree limbs along the walkway from the parking area to the house.
- Prune sweetshrubs to remove dead wood and rehabilitate to a more manageable size.
- Only one pear tree survives from a group of five large shade trees seen in historic photographs. It should be replaced in kind as it declines.
- Replant American elm seen in historic photos with a cultivar such as 'Princeton' (*Ulmus americana* 'Princeton') that has shown resistance to Dutch elm disease. Consider including Gordon family members in a ceremony to replant the elm. (See Figure 58 for placement)
- Clear encroaching vegetation from Church Cemetery and maintain as an open space.
- A privet eradication project should be considered for the site. Privet has increased at the site in the past two years and is threatening to overtake the native flora in some areas.
- Use best practices for string trimmers and riding mowers to prevent scars to trees and historic resources. A 2011 video produced by NCPTT outlines these practices.
- Preserve the heirloom bulbs found at the site in March 2009 and 2010. Staff should monitor



Figure 148. Open character of the landscape, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0671)



Figure 149. Area to be thinned, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0675)



Figure 150. Sweetshrubs to be pruned, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0688)



Figure 151. Sulphur Phoenix' heirloom daffodils in the lawn, 2014. (Greg Smith/NATR))



Figure 152. Wild flowers in bloom along path to the river, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0126)

the site and record bloom dates for the bulbs, which may need to be divided and replanted at an appropriate depth. Over the years bulbs may have lost vigor and may be planted too deep. The front lawn of the house should not be mown until after the bulbs bloom and the bulb foliage cures, probably May for this part of Tennessee. Care must be taken to preserve historic herbaceous material, such as bulbs and other perennials. Bulbs may be divided as needed to improve vigor.

- Continue to allow wild flowers to flourish along the trail to the Duck River. Consider doing some kind of interpretive walk when the spring wildflowers are blooming.

- Historic photographs from the 1940s show a number of cedar trees beyond the road at the rear of the farm buildings. Use eastern red cedars (*Juniperus virginiana* 'High Shoals' or other native trees to screen the parking lot from the house. Redbuds currently planted are dead and should be removed. Since this is not a historic planting, it does not have to be replaced in kind. (See Appendix for suggestions)

- Consider equally natural and cultural features of the project area in treatment and land use decisions.

Buildings and Structures

- Preserve the John Gordon dwelling house, which is the only surviving aboveground building at the site and an important early nineteenth-century brick structure on the Natchez Trace.

- A recently completed historic structure report should be used to determine appropriate treatments for the house.

- After consultation with SEAC, conduct archeological testing to determine if the original outbuildings can be located and interpret if found. If original outbuildings cannot be located, consider interpretation of the twentieth-century outbuildings using images on a wayside.

- Preserve any belowground resources discovered during archeology and use as an interpretive tool for the site.

- Repair the stone-box grave in the Church Cemetery and consult Region List of Classified Structures coordinator for possible inclusion in the LCS. Preserve the head and foot markers of the other two graves.



Figure 153. Damaged grave, 2011. (Greg Smith/NATR)



Figure 154. View of the house from the Duck River floodplain, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0132)

Topography

- A survey is needed for an accurate base map.
- Preserve the topographic features of the John Gordon House's site near the edge of a ridge overlooking the floodplain of the Duck River and Fattybread Branch to the south.

Circulation

- Preserve the circulation patterns associated with the Natchez Trace and the John Gordon Ferry crossing of the Duck River, including the restoration of the road trace directly south of the house (see below).
- The current grass path down to Fattybread Branch and the unpaved path that continues on to the ferry site are appropriate to the setting of the site.
- Remove the asphalt walkway and restore the road trace in front of the house, whose original alignment intersected the remains of the Natchez Trace east of the house. Use polypavement or some kind of soil stabilizer to ensure universal accessibility while still looking authentic.
- Conduct archeological testing to determine if the remains of any historic circulation patterns can be found around the house.
- A section of the trail to the ferry was part of the Natchez Trace and is mentioned on the John Gordon Ferry wayside. Replace trail sign just beyond the wayside with Old Trace sign used along the parkway to mark sections of the Old Trace.
- Preserve any belowground resources discovered during archeological surveys and use as an interpretive tool for the site.
- Consider constructing canoe steps to provide access to the site from the Duck River and restore the connection of the property to the riparian corridor. Consult with Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program of the SER Partnership Division.

Views and Vistas

- Preserve the vista from the John Gordon House looking out over the floodplain of the Duck River and the valley beyond.
- Preserve the vista looking back to the house from the floodplain of the Duck River.

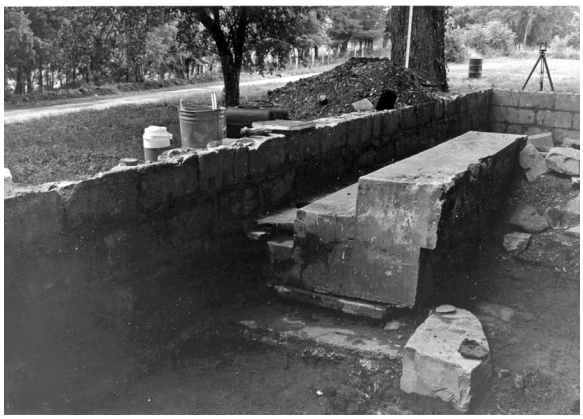


Figure 155. Road trace before asphalt path constructed, 1977. (Shawn Bonath/NPS)



Figure 156. Screen of trees, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0631)

- Maintain the screen of trees between the site and TN 50.

- Open the understory of the wooded area adjacent to the walkway overlooking the Duck River valley.

- Plant new trees to screen the house from the parking area, replacing the dead redbuds (see Appendix for suggestions).

Small-scale Features

- Conduct archeology to determine if any historic fence lines can be uncovered. Archeology conducted in 1978 found the remains of the stone retaining wall topped by a white picket seen in a c. 1910 photograph but did not determine its date of construction and it was reburied in place. Agricultural fence lines can be seen in images from the 1940s, but the NPS removed them.

- Preserve the stone walkway remnant that sits beneath the east door surround and the stone steps leading to the basement. Consult with Region LCS Coordinator to determine if it should be evaluated for addition to the List of Classified Structures.

- Continue to use wooden picnic tables and benches, as this is an appropriate historic material for the site.

- Consult with the DAR about restoration of the missing plaque.

Natural Systems and Features

- Preserve Fattybread Branch, an important feature of the cultural landscape often mentioned by Gordon family members.

- Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plant and Animal Species: Avoid altering the habitats of rare, threatened, or endangered species or species of special concern.

Evaluate the potential impact to wildlife habitat prior to undertaking any construction or vegetation removal project.



Figure 157. View of Fattybread Branch, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0089)

Archeological Resources

- The John Gordon House cultural landscape would greatly benefit from archeological testing to uncover the lost landscape features of the farmstead, ferry, and cantonment site, which could then be interpreted and provide some kind of context for the visitor.

- Consult with the Southeast Archeological Center (SEAC) to determine what level of archeology is appropriate.

- Archeology conducted by Atkinson in 1985 found a narrow, level shelf resembling an old road located slightly above the base of the hill east of Fattybread Branch and concluded that the probable location of the ferry would have been a depression in the low, natural levee. He also located what appears to be the cantonment and Gordon's Stand, west along the natural levee close to the mouth of Fattybread Branch. Here the generally narrow, natural levee expanded, creating a level elevation in the grassy woods adjacent to the field between the levee and the hill. One of four shovel tests produced a sherd of hand-painted pearlware. When the positive shovel test was excavated, they located additional early nineteenth-century ceramic sherds and glass fragments, along with animal bones and charred floral material. Although the crew conducted no other testing, Atkinson thought it likely that the site extended into the field between the levee and the hill. Previous surface surveys of the area failed to locate the remains

of the cantonment and stand because the site is buried beneath 50 cm of recent alluvium.[1]

- Earthworks on the hill east of Fattybread Branch need further study to determine their date of construction and use. Atkinson identified them as the remains of an early road, but they were recently noted as possible Civil War earthworks.

Ethnography

- Conduct oral interviews of Gordon family descendants to gather additional information about the cultural landscape features of the site, such as fence lines, walkways, farm roads, field patterns, the location of vegetable and ornamental gardens, and heirloom plants in the landscape.

- Conduct further research on the slaves owned by the Gordons.

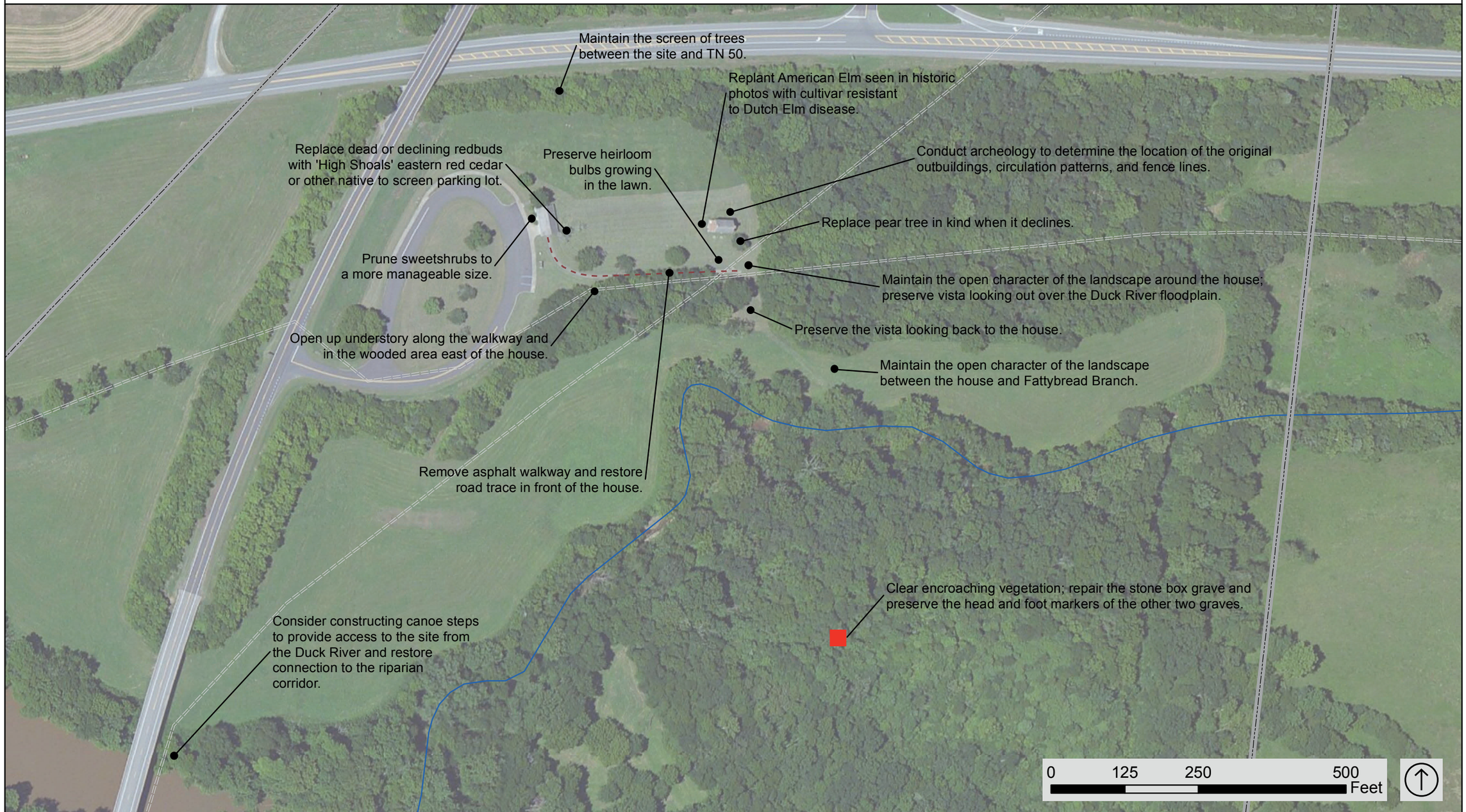
1 Atkinson, 3-9.

Natchez Trace Parkway

Hickman County, Tennessee

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

John Gordon House Treatment Recommendations



Q:\maps\PARKS\NATR\JohnGordonHouse.pdf
Produced by: Chris Barrow, SER Geospatial Support
Data: NPS; ESRI. Projection: NAD 83 UTM Zone 16N; 8.5"x11" scale: 1:3,000

September 2013

Features in the John Gordon House Cultural Landscape

Feature	LCS#ACMIS#	Construction Date	Condition	Contributing	FMSS#	Treatment
John Gordon House	001093/NATR-160	1818	Fair	Contributing	66666	Rehabilitation
Old Natchez Trace segment	101718	1800	Good	Contributing		Preserve
Spatial relationship of house, ferry, and cantonment with Old Trace		1802-1818	Good	Contributing		Preserve
Belowground remains of John Gordon Ferry	NATR-203	1802	Unknown	Contributing		Preserve
Belowground remains of the cantonment/stand	NATR-203	1801	Unknown	Contributing		Preserve
Church Cemetery	017111/NATR-309	1819	Poor	Contributing		Restore
Outbuildings		1900s	Missing			
View of comfort station/picnic shelter from house		1986		Non-contributing		
Views of Duck River floodplain from house		1818	Good	Contributing		Preserve
Views of house from Duck River floodplain		1818	Good	Contributing		Preserve
View of Gordon Ferry Bridge		1896		Non-contributing		
Asphalt path		1988		Non-contributing		
Belowground remains of picket fence and retaining wall		1910	Unknown	Contributing		Preserve
Agricultural fencing and fence lines		1900s	Missing			
Stone walkway remnant		1910	Good	Contributing		Preserve
Well house foundation		Unknown	Fair	Contributing		Preserve
Remains of old TN 20 in front of house		1920s	Poor	Contributing		Restore
Historic circulation patterns around the house and outbuildings		1910s	Missing			
Sloping topography of the site		1818	Good	Contributing		Preserve
Surviving pear tree			Fair	Contributing		Preserve
American elm and pecan trees		1900s	Missing			
Heirloom bulbs			Fair	Contributing		Preserve
Trees planted between the house and comfort station/ picnic shelter		c. 1986	Poor	Non-contributing		
Open character between the house and Fattybread Branch		1818	Good	Contributing		Preserve

Feature	LCS#ACMIS#	Construction Date	Condition	Contributing	FMSS#	Treatment
Open space free of foundation plantings around the house		1818	Good	Contributing		Preserve
DAR plaque		1991	Poor	Non-contributing		Repair
Fattybread Branch				Contributing		Preserve
Shelby Bend Archeological District site 40-Hi-138	NATR-20		Unknown	Contributing		Preserve
Shelby Bend Archeological District site 40-Mu-408	NATR-10		Unknown	Contributing		Preserve
Comfort station/picnic shelter and parking ellipse		1986		Non-contributing		

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Appendix

Suggested list of trees that could be used to screen the parking lot from the house:

'High Shoals' eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana* 'High Shoals')

'Carolina Sapphire'Arizona cypress (*Cupressus arizonica* 'Carolina Sapphire')

'Winter King' hawthorne (*Crataegus viridis* 'Winter King')

'Georgia Gem' green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica* 'Georgia Gem')

Pumpkin ash (*Fraxinus profunda*)

'October Glory' red maple (*Acer rubrum* 'October Glory')

Sugar Tyme® Crabapple (*Malus* 'Sutyzam')

Kentucky coffee tree (*Gymnocladus dioica*)



As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.



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Natchez Trace Parkway

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