
National Park Service
Cultural Landscapes Inventory



John Gordon House
Natchez Trace Parkway

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Inventory Summary

The Cultural Landscapes Inventory Overview:

CLI General Information:

Purpose and Goals of the CLI

The Cultural Landscapes Inventory (CLI) is an evaluated inventory of all significant landscapes in units of the national park system in which the National Park Service has, or plans to acquire any enforceable legal interest. Landscapes documented through the CLI are those that individually meet criteria set forth in the National Register of Historic Places such as historic sites, historic designed landscapes, and historic vernacular landscapes or those that are contributing elements of properties that meet the criteria. In addition, landscapes that are managed as cultural resources because of law, policy, or decisions reached through the park planning process even though they do not meet the National Register criteria, are also included in the CLI.

The CLI serves three major purposes. First, it provides the means to describe cultural landscapes on an individual or collective basis at the park, regional, or service-wide level. Secondly, it provides a platform to share information about cultural landscapes across programmatic areas and concerns and to integrate related data about these resources into park management. Thirdly, it provides an analytical tool to judge accomplishment and accountability.

The legislative, regulatory, and policy direction for conducting the CLI include:

national Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (16 USC 470h-2(a)(1)). Each Federal agency shall establish...a preservation program for the identification, evaluation, and nomination to the National Register of Historic Places...of historic properties...

Executive Order 13287: Preserve America, 2003. Sec. 3(a)...Each agency with real property management responsibilities shall prepare an assessment of the current status of its inventory of historic properties required by section 110(a)(2) of the NHPA...No later than September 30, 2004, each covered agency shall complete a report of the assessment and make it available to the Chairman of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Secretary of the Interior... (c) Each agency with real property management responsibilities shall, by September 30, 2005, and every third year thereafter, prepare a report on its progress in identifying... historic properties in its ownership and make the report available to the Council and the Secretary...

Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Federal Agency Historic Preservation Programs Pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act, 1998. Standard 2: An agency provides for the timely identification and evaluation of historic properties under agency jurisdiction or control and/or subject to effect by agency actions (Sec. 110 (a)(2)(A))

Management Policies 2006. 5.1.3.1 Inventories: The Park Service will (1) maintain and expand the following inventories...about cultural resources in units of the national park system...Cultural Landscape Inventory of historic designed landscapes, historic vernacular landscapes,... and historic sites...

ural Resource Management Guideline, 1997, Release No. 5, page 22 issued pursuant to Director's Order #28. As cultural resources are identified and evaluated, they should also be listed in the appropriate Service-wide inventories of cultural resources.

Responding to the Call to Action:

The year 2016 marks the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service. A five-year action plan entitled, “*A Call to Action: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement*” charts a path toward that second century vision by asking Service employees and partners to commit to concrete actions that advance the agency’s mission. The heart of the plan includes four broad themes supported by specific goals and measurable actions. These themes are: Connecting People to Parks, Advancing the NPS Education Mission, Preserving America’s Special Places, and Enhancing Professional and Organizational Excellence. The Cultural Landscape Inventory relates to three of these themes:

Connect People to Parks. Help communities protect what is special to them, highlight their history, and retain or rebuild their economic and environmental sustainability.

Advance the Education Mission. Strengthen the National Park Service’s role as an educational force based on core American values, historical and scientific scholarship, and unbiased translation of the complexities of the American experience.

Preserve America’s Special Places. Be a leader in extending the benefits of conservation across physical, social, political, and international boundaries in partnership with others.

The national CLI effort directly relates to #3, Preserve America’s Special Places, and specifically to Action #28, “Park Pulse.” Each CLI documents the existing condition of park resources and identifies impacts, threats, and measures to improve condition. This information can be used to improve park priority setting and communicate complex park condition information to the public.

Responding to the Cultural Resources Challenge:

The Cultural Resources Challenge (CRC) is a NPS strategic plan that identifies our most critical priorities. The primary objective is to “*Achieve a standard of excellence for the stewardship of the resources that form the historical and cultural foundations of the nation, commit at all levels to a common set of goals, and articulate a common vision for the next century.*” The CLI contributes to the fulfillment of all five goals of the CRC:

- 1) *Provide leadership support, and advocacy for the stewardship, protection, interpretation, and management of the nation’s heritage through scholarly research, science and effective management;*
- 2) *Recommit to the spirit and letter of the landmark legislation underpinning the NPS*

- 3) *Connect all Americans to their heritage resources in a manner that resonates with their lives, legacies, and dreams, and tells the stories that make up America's diverse national identity;*
- 4) *Integrate the values of heritage stewardship into major initiatives and issues such as renewable energy, climate change, community assistance and revitalization, and sustainability, while cultivating excellence in science and technical preservation as a foundation for resource protection, management, and rehabilitation; and*
- 5) *Attract, support, and retain a highly skilled and diverse workforce, and support the development of leadership and expertise within the National Park Service.*

Scope of the CLI

CLI data is gathered from existing secondary sources found in park libraries, archives and at NPS regional offices and centers, as well as through on-site reconnaissance. The baseline information describes the historical development and significance of the landscape, placing it in the context of the landscape's overall significance. Documentation and analysis of the existing landscape identifies character-defining characteristics and features, and allows for an evaluation of the landscape's overall integrity and an assessment of the landscape's overall condition. The CLI also provides an illustrative site plan that indicates major features within the inventory unit and generates spatial data for Geographic Information Systems (GIS). The CLI also identifies stabilization needs to prevent further deterioration of the landscape and provides data for the Facility Management Software System

Inventory Unit Description:

The John Gordon House cultural landscape, established in 1973, is a part of the Natchez Trace Parkway, which was established in 1934. Containing an 1818 brick residence, an original portion of the old Natchez Trace and significant archaeological associations with a ferry and cantonment/stand, the landscape reflects the Western expansion of American settlement, economy, and transportation. The property and surrounding lands were owned and operated by John Gordon, an early trader, farmer, innkeeper, and ferryman. Though Gordon died in 1819, agricultural and ferry-related activities continued for some time. The evidence of much of this activity, however, has been lost.

The cultural landscape is significant under Criteria A, B, C, and D, contributing to the period of significance of 1818. This year marks the date of construction of the house, as well as peak activity of travel along the Natchez Trace and the use of the John Gordon ferry. While the house and the adjacent portion of the Natchez Trace are the most significant remaining above-ground cultural resources that date to this year, the archaeological sites of the ferry and stand lend to a broader understanding of regional settlement, Native American relations, trade, and travel.

Site Plan

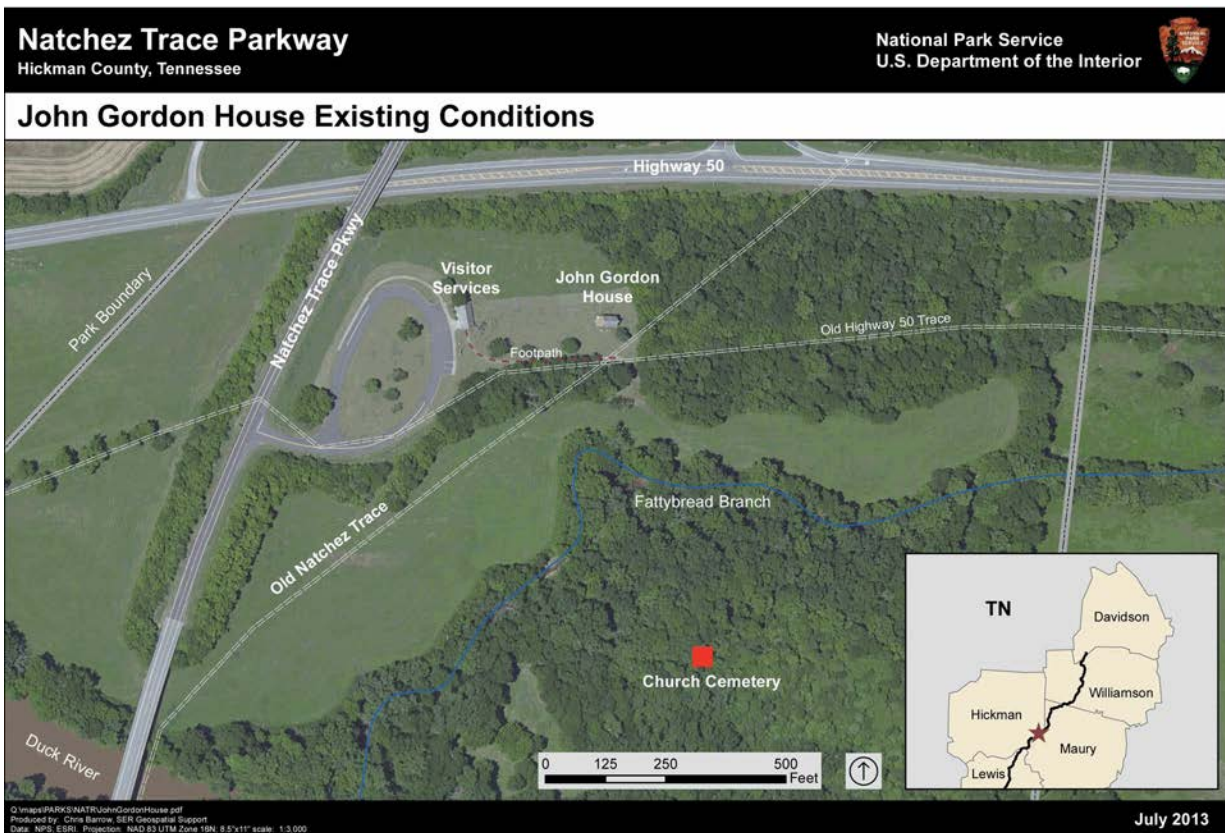


Figure 1: The John Gordon House, 2011 (2013 John Gordon House CLR, p. 76)

Property Level and CLI Numbers

Inventory Unit Name:	John Gordon House
CLI Identification Number:	975864
Parent Landscape:	975864

Park Information

Park Name and Alpha Code:	Natchez Trace Parkway -NATR
Park Organization Code:	5570
Park Administrative Unit:	Natchez Trace Parkway

Concurrence Status

Inventory Status: Complete

Concurrence Status:

Park Superintendent Concurrence:	Yes
Park Superintendent Date of Concurrence:	09/25/2015
National Register Concurrence:	Eligible -- SHPO Consensus Determination
Date of Concurrence Determination:	09/03/2015

Concurrence Graphic Information:



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
Atlanta Federal Center
1924 Building
100 Alabama St., S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303



H22(SERO-CRD)

28 August 2015

Memorandum

To: Superintendent, Natchez Trace Parkway
From: Chief, Cultural Resources Division, Southeast Region 
Subject: John Gordon House Cultural Landscapes Inventory

We are pleased to transmit to you the Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) for the John Gordon House. The CLI is an evaluated list of landscape properties in the National Park System eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NR) or that contribute to a previously-listed NR historic property. This CLI was produced by Cultural Resources Division (CRD) staff, primarily using data provided by a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) written by CRD Historical Landscape Architect, Susan Hitchcock.

The existing National Register nomination for the John Gordon House was written in 1974 and approved in 1977. At that time, the property was listed as a building and determined to be significant under Criterion B for John Gordon's military association and education, with a period of significance of the 19th century. While the narrative text mentions the transportation, Native American, and western settlement aspects of the site, it nevertheless did not include these as areas of significance. The existing nomination does not include Criterion A under transportation, settlement, Native American history related to Natchez Trace as well as the John Gordon Ferry and Gordon's Stand, Criterion C related to the architectural significance of the house, and Criterion D for its relation to the Shelby Bend Archaeological District. The nomination does cover Criterion B, for its association with John Gordon, a locally significant figure, and generally has the period of significance the same as the CLR, though the CLR offers an exact date of 1818. David Hasty, CLI Coordinator for the Southeast Region, will send a request to the Tennessee State Historic Preservation Division for concurrence on the CLI findings.

Approval by the park superintendent is also needed for certification. If the findings of the CLI are agreed upon, please sign the attached approval form and return it to our office to the attention of David Hasty by fax (404.562.3202), e-mail (david_hasty@nps.gov) or mail.

Attachment



Memo to Superintendent



IN REPLY REFER TO:

L7617(NATR)

September 25, 2015

Memorandum

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Natchez Trace Parkway
2680 Natchez Trace Parkway
Tupelo, Mississippi 38804



To: Regional Director, Southeast Region
Attn: Historical Landscape Architect David Hasty

From: Superintendent, Natchez Trace Parkway

Subject: John Gordon House Cultural Landscapes Inventory Condition Assessment
Concurrence Sheet

Attached is a signed copy of the cultural landscape inventory condition assessment form for the John Gordon House. We appreciate the support the Southeast Region Cultural Resource Division provides on behalf of the Natchez Trace Parkway.

Should you require additional information regarding the cultural landscape inventory condition assessment concurrence sheet, please contact Cultural Resource Specialist Christina Smith at (662) 840-7560.

Mary Risser

Attachment

**CULTURAL LANDSCAPE INVENTORY
CONDITION ASSESSMENT CONCURRENCE SHEET**

Park Information

Park: Natchez Trace Parkway
Name: John Gordon House
Location: Tennessee
County: Maury and Hickman
CLI#: 975864

Cultural Landscape Condition Information

Landscape Condition:

Good ☐

Fair ☒

Poor ☐

Management Category:

Must be preserved ☒

Should be preserved ☐

May be preserved ☐

May be released, altered or destroyed ☐

Park Concurrence

Concur ☒

Do Not Concur ☐


Signature
Mary Risser

Title
Superintendent

9.25.15
Date

Park Superintendent Signature, Page 2



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
Atlanta Federal Center
1924 Building
100 Alabama St., SW.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303



IN REPLY REFER TO:
H22 (SERO-CRD)

28 August 2015

Claudette Stager
Assistant Director for Federal Programs
Tennessee Historical Commission
Department of Environment & Conservation
2941 Lebanon Road
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0442

Dear Ms. Stager:

Enclosed please find a copy of the Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) for the John Gordon House, a site within the Natchez Trace Parkway, located in Maury and Hickman Counties, Tennessee. The enclosed inventory includes a statement of significance, a written history, analysis and evaluation of cultural landscape features, and graphic attachments.

The CLI is an evaluated list of landscape properties in the National Park System considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or that contribute to an existing historic property. In order for CLI data to become certified, National Park Service regulations require concurrence from the SHPO on the eligibility of these properties. We are requesting your review of the John Gordon House CLI and ask that you return the enclosed concurrence form.

The existing National Register nomination for the John Gordon House was written in 1974 and approved in 1977. At that time, the property was listed as a building and determined to be significant under Criterion B for John Gordon's military association and education, with a period of significance of the 19th century. While the narrative text mentions the transportation, Native American, and western settlement aspects of the site, it nevertheless did not include these as areas of significance. The existing nomination does not include Criterion A under transportation, settlement, Native American history related to Natchez Trace as well as the John Gordon Ferry and Gordon's Stand, Criterion C related to the architectural significance of the house, and Criterion D for its relation to the Shelby Bend Archaeological District. The nomination does cover Criterion B, for its association with John Gordon, a locally significant figure, and generally has the period of significance the same as the CLR, though the CLR offers an exact date of 1818.



Letter to SHPO Aug 2015

With concurrence from your office, the findings become certified in the NPS CLI database. Your concurrence also gives us justification to submit proper additional documentation to you at a future date that addresses the points mentioned above.

If you have any questions, please contact David Hasty, CLI Coordinator, Southeast Region (SER), at (404) 507-5780 or by e-mail at david_hasty@nps.gov. The concurrence form can be returned by fax at (404) 562-3202, email, or mailed to the address above.

We greatly appreciate your office's assistance with the project.

Sincerely,



Dan Scheidt
Chief, Cultural Resource Division
Southeast Region

Enclosure

We have reviewed the submitted documentation that identifies cultural landscape features at John Gordon House of Natchez Trace Parkway in Maury and Hickman Counties, Tennessee. We concur with the findings of the Cultural Landscape Inventory, and understand that these features have the potential to contribute to the existing National Register of Historic Places nomination.


Tennessee State Historic Preservation Officer


Date

SHPO Signature, September 2015

Geographic Information & Location Map

Inventory Unit Boundary Description:

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 in Maury and Hickman counties, about 40 miles south of Nashville, 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.

John Gordon House
Natchez Trace Parkway

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 (historic term for a tavern) and cantonment site. No original agricultural outbuildings survive aboveground.

State and County:

State: TN

County: Maury County

State: TN

County: Hickman County

Size (Acres): 45.20

Boundary Coordinates:

UTM Zone: 0

UTM Zone: 0

Boundary Source Narrative:	Boundary Latitude	Boundary Longitude
	35.7210	-87.2618
	35.7211	-87.2567
	35.7164	-87.2573
	35.7179	-87.2635

Lat Long does not load into the database. The points are listed above.

The boundary points for the John Gordon cultural landscape were collected from Google™ Earth software.

UTM Zone: 0

UTM Zone: 0

Location Map:

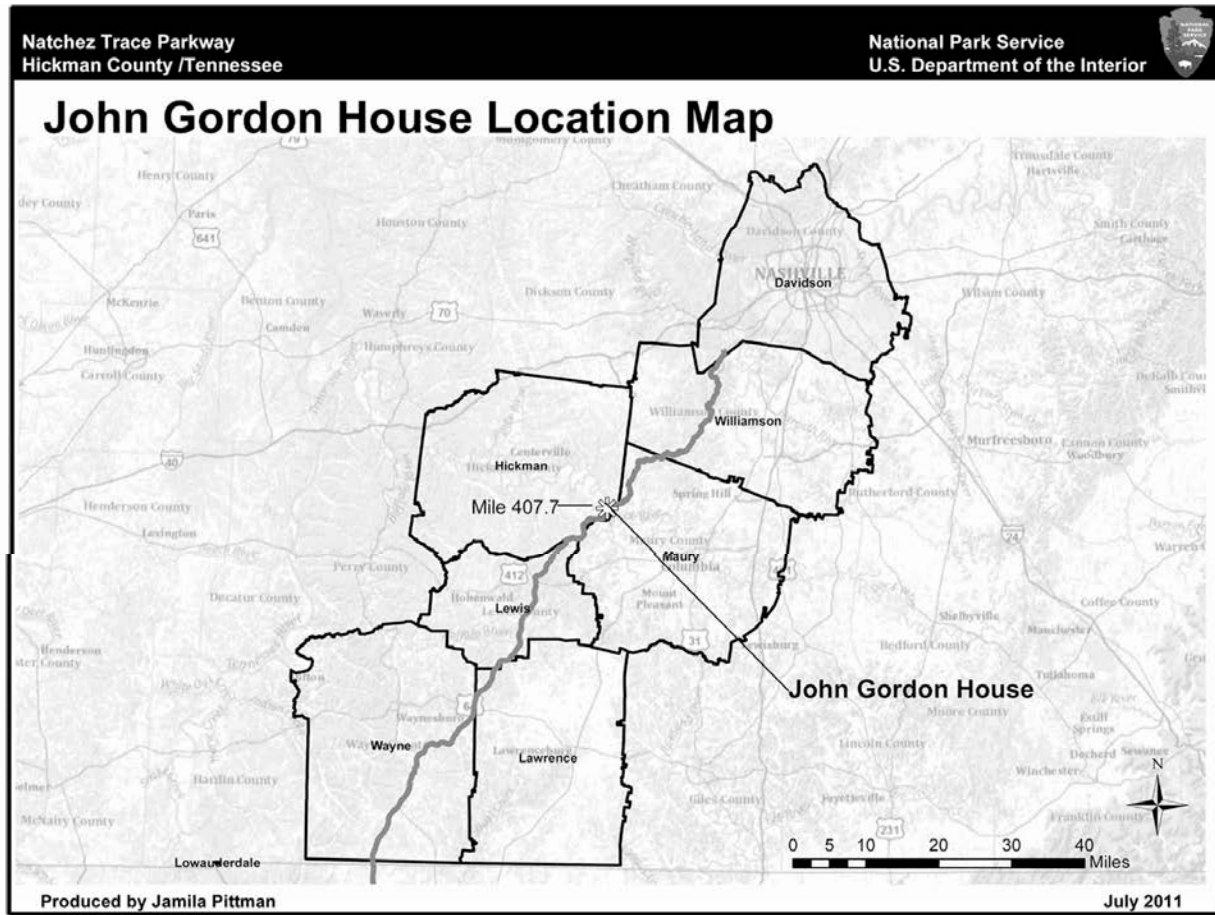


Figure 2: The John Gordon House location map, 40 miles south of Nashville, TN. (2013 The John Gordon House CLR, p. 3)

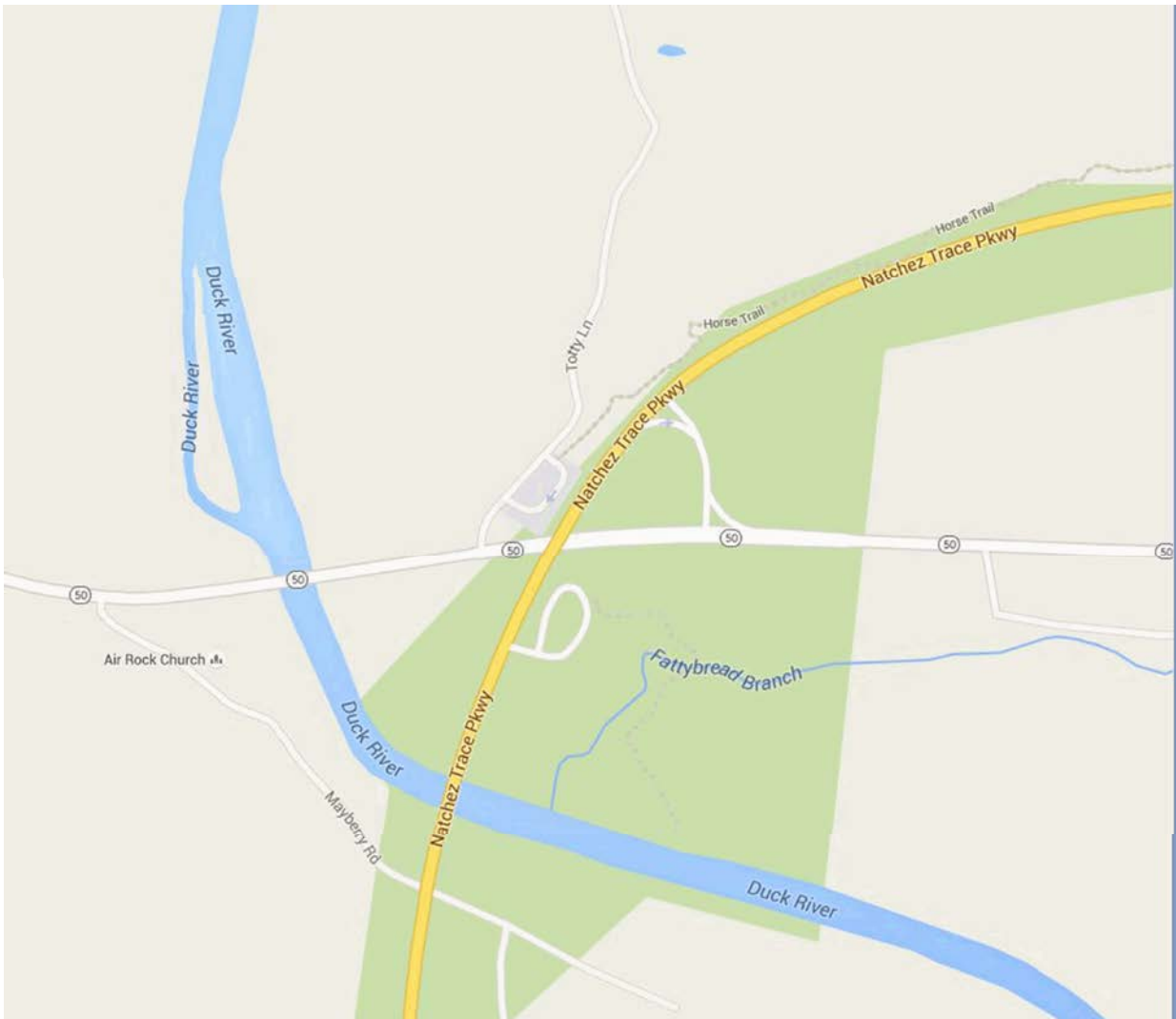


Figure 3: The 45.2 acre John Gordon House site is bounded by Route 50 to the north, the Duck River to the south, and the park boundaries on the east and west. (Google Maps image of overall property boundary.)



Figure 4. This plat indicates both the approximate boundary of the 10 acre National Register site (in red), and a portion of the 45.2 acre property boundary (Susan Hitchcock email attachment, May 26, 2015).

Regional Context:

Type of Context: Cultural

Description:

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 discrete, new cultural elements.

Type of Context: Physiographic

Description:

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

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 (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), willow (*Salix* spp.), and eastern hophornbeam (*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*). (Smith; Klippel, 10).

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 (Smith).

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 hophornbeam. The north and south-facing slopes were dominated by sugar maple, shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*), mockernut hickory (*Carya tomentosa*), and black oak (*Quercus velutina*) (Klippel, 448,480); Reeves).

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. *gattereri*), 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 (<http://www.state.tn.us/environment/na/natareas/duckriv/>).

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. (Manning, 252; Klippel, 275).

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.

Type of Context: Political

Description:

The John Gordon cultural landscape is located within Tennessee congressional districts 4 and 7.

Management Information

General Management Information

Management Category: Must be Preserved and Maintained

Management Category Date: 09/25/2015

NPS Legal Interest:

Type of Interest: Fee Simple

Public Access:

Type of Access: Other Restrictions

Explanatory Narrative:

Technically the park has operating hours and the site access can theoretically be considered restricted to open hours, however the landscape itself is unrestricted. There is currently no access to the interior of the John Gordon House.

Adjacent Lands Information

Do Adjacent Lands Contribute? Undetermined

National Register Information

Existing National Register Status

National Register Landscape Documentation:

Entered Inadequately Documented

National Register Explanatory Narrative:

The existing National Register nomination for the John Gordon House was approved in 1974. At that time, the property was determined to be significant under Criterion B for John Gordon's military association and education, with a period of significance of the 19th century. While the narrative text mentions the transportation, Native American, and western settlement aspects of the site, it nevertheless did not include these as areas of significance. The existing nomination does not include Criterion A under transportation, settlement, Native American history related to Natchez Trace as well as the John Gordon Ferry and Gordon's Stand, Criterion C related to the architectural significance of the house, and Criterion D for its relation to the Shelby Bend Archaeological District. The nomination does cover Criterion B, for its association with John Gordon, a locally significant figure, and generally has the period of significance the same as the CLR, though the CLR offers an exact date of 1818.

Existing NRIS Information:

Name in National Register:	Gordon, John, House
NRIS Number:	74000333
Primary Certification Date:	04/18/1974

National Register Eligibility

National Register Concurrence:	Eligible -- SHPO Consensus Determination
Contributing/Individual:	Individual
National Register Classification:	Site
Significance Level:	Local
Significance Criteria:	A - Associated with events significant to broad patterns of our history
Significance Criteria:	B - Associated with lives of persons significant in our past
Significance Criteria:	C - Embodies distinctive construction, work of master, or high artistic values
Significance Criteria:	D - Has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history

Period of Significance:

Time Period:	CE 1818
Historic Context Theme:	Peopling Places
Subtheme:	Colonial Exploration and Settlement
Facet:	American Exploration and Settlement
Other Facet:	None
Time Period:	CE 1818
Historic Context Theme:	Peopling Places
Subtheme:	Westward Expansion of the Colonies and the United States, 1763-1898
Facet:	Military-Indigenous Peoples Contact
Other Facet:	None
Time Period:	CE 1818
Historic Context Theme:	Expressing Cultural Values
Subtheme:	Architecture
Facet:	Georgian (1730-1780)
Other Facet:	None
Time Period:	CE 1818
Historic Context Theme:	Shaping the Political Landscape
Subtheme:	Political and Military Affairs 1783-1860
Facet:	Indian Wars
Other Facet:	None
Time Period:	CE 1818
Historic Context Theme:	Developing the American Economy
Subtheme:	Military-Indigenous Peoples Contact
Facet:	East Of The Mississippi, 1763-1850's
Other Facet:	None
Time Period:	CE 1818
Historic Context Theme:	Developing the American Economy
Subtheme:	Trails and Travelers
Facet:	Indigenous Peoples Trails
Other Facet:	None

Time Period:	CE 1818
Historic Context Theme:	Developing the American Economy
Subtheme:	Transportation by Land and Air
Facet:	Early Turnpikes, Roads, And Taverns East Of The Mississippi
Other Facet:	None

Area of Significance:

Area of Significance Category: Education

Area of Significance Subcategory: None

Area of Significance Category: Military

Area of Significance Subcategory: None

Area of Significance Category: Exploration - Settlement

Area of Significance Subcategory: None

Area of Significance Category: Transportation

Area of Significance Subcategory: None

Area of Significance Category: Ethnic Heritage

Area of Significance Subcategory: Native American

Area of Significance Category: Architecture

Area of Significance Subcategory: None

Area of Significance Category: Archeology

Area of Significance Subcategory: None

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.

Chronology & Physical History

Cultural Landscape Type and Use

Cultural Landscape Type:

Vernacular
Historic Site
Ethnographic/Traditional

Current and Historic Use/Function:

Primary Historic Function: Single Family House

Primary Current Use: Interpretive Landscape

Other Use/Function

Water-Related-Other

Horse/Bridle Trail

Trade

Lodge (Inn, Cabin)

Leisure-Passive (Park)

Other Type of Use or Function

Historic

Historic

Historic

Historic

Current

Current and Historic Names:

Name

John Gordon House and Ferry

Natchez Trace

Type of Name

Both Current And Historic

Both Current And Historic

Ethnographic Study Conducted:

No Survey Conducted

Ethnographic Significance Description:

While no ethnographic study appears to have been conducted yet, an archaeological survey was completed for various locations on the site and within the Duck River Valley, known as the Shelby Bend Archaeological District.

Chronology:

Year	Event	Annotation
CE 1792	Altered	John Gordon appointed a Lieutenant in the Davidson County militia.
CE 1802	Land Transfer	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. John Gordon & William Colbert
CE 1806	Land Transfer	The Tennessee legislature passed an act in 1806 giving John Gordon pre-emptive right to 640 acres at Gordon's Ferry. John Gordon
CE 1809	Purchased/Sold	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.

John Gordon

Purchased/Sold John Gordon received by grant another 214 acres on the north side of the Duck River and 160 acres on the Elk River.

John Gordon

CE 1808 - 1812 Inhabited Sometime between 1808 and 1812 Gordon moved his family and slaves from Nashville to the Duck River (unknown location).

John Gordon

CE 1818 Built John Gordon House built under supervision of John Gordon's wife, Dolly.

CE 1819 Altered John Gordon dies of pneumonia on June 19, 1819.

CE 1819 - 1855 Altered John Gordon buried in family cemetery on the hill.

CE 1855 Moved John Gordon moved to Rose Hill Cemetery in Colombia, Tennessee.

CE 1859 Altered Dolly Cross Gordon dies on December 5, 1859, aged 80.

Purchased/Sold Richard Cross Gordon (Dolly's grandson) purchased house and land, though likely never lived on site.

CE 1879 Land Transfer On January 27, 1879, Richard Cross Gordon conveyed the John Gordon property in trust to George W. Stockard as security against various debts.

CE 1883 - 1896 Built New steel bridge built over Duck River in area, reducing need for Gordon Ferry operations.

CE 1896 Altered George Stockard had died by this point.

Land Transfer G.P. and Ethel Mayberry acquired John Gordon property (155-160 acres) in or before 1896.

John Gordon House
Natchez Trace Parkway

	Purchased/Sold	A. Hooten purchased property.
CE 1904	Purchased/Sold	Hooten sold the house and 107 acres to W.C. Jewell and his son, Richard S. Jewell.
CE 1918	Land Transfer	W.C. Jewell died, and property belonged to Richard solely.
CE 1934 - 19334	Planned	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."
CE 1935	Planned	Public Works Administration project with a \$1.5 million budget was set up to initiate the construction of the Parkway in Mississippi.
CE 1938	Established	Public Law 75-530 established the Natchez Trace Parkway and assigned its administration to the NPS with a direct appropriation of \$1.5 million.
CE 1945	Planned	NPS investigates property history in relation to Natchez Trace.
CE 1959	Moved	Tennessee Highway 50 (TN 50), which ran in front of the John Gordon House, is relocated to its north.
CE 1966	Land Transfer	Tennessee acquired the right-of-way for the Natchez Race, Section 1-D beginning in 1966.
CE 1969	Land Transfer	72-acre tract south of relocated TN 50 was acquired from the Jewell family for the John Gordon House development.
CE 1973	Land Transfer	NPS acquired the John Gordon House in 1973 from the state of Tennessee, along with the other properties in Section 1-D.
CE 1974	Stabilized	Initial stabilization of the house occurred.
	Established	On April 18, 1974, the house and sixty-eight acres were listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

John Gordon House
Natchez Trace Parkway

CE 1977	Altered	National Register amendment reduced the acreage from sixty-eight acres to ten.
CE 1978	Altered	NPS restored the house in 1978 to its approximate 1818 appearance.
	Removed	NPS removed a two-story rear addition and two-story front portico, and several outbuildings dating to the early twentieth century.
CE 1986	Built	NPS constructed a visitor parking lot and comfort station/picnic shelter in 1986 just off the Natchez Trace Parkway.
CE 1988	Built	Crews completed the asphalt path between the house and the comfort station/picnic shelter.
CE 1993	Built	The park added hiking trails down to the Duck River.
CE 1995	Removed	An earlier, one-story framing system was left standing, but it too was taken down.
	Built	To provide access to the house, two sets of front steps with railings and landings were constructed.
CE 2005	Built	A 15-mile section in Jackson and an 8-mile southern terminus section in Natchez completed the Natchez Trace Parkway.
CE 2009	Removed	Park removed steps/railing/landings as serious problems resulted from their installation.

Physical History:

Introduction

The history—and much of the significance—of the John Gordon House cultural landscape is based upon the establishment and use 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 (Bureman, p. 41).

By 1800, regularly scheduled mail service had been initiated between Natchez and Nashville. At that 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 (Phelps 1949, p. 50.)

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.

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 Natchez. Ferries provided transport over the Duck and Tennessee Rivers (Phelps 1946, p. 5; Phelps 1954, p. 7; Phelps 1962, 206).

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 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.



Figure 5: Stands, also known as inns or taverns, along the Natchez Trace.
(www.tngenweb.org/maps)

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.” (Williams 1928, p. 285).

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 to 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. (Leach, 6; County Register, p. 67-77; Bond, p. 58 & 180; Opperman, 18).

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 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. (Leach, p. 6-21 & 42; Opperman, p. 18-19).

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. 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. (Myers, p. 119).

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 priviledged 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 Conjunction with Colberts son Jamison."

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 (Leach, p. 47-48; Bond, p. 178; Myers, p. 120; Phelps 1945, p. 15).

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. (Phelps, 1945, p. 16-17; Leach, p. 68-69; Bond, p. 187-188; Cooper and Walker 1984, p. 3; Map study 1944).

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."

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." (Bond, p. 153 & 275; Oppermann, p. 24; Leach, p. 62).

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, and 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. (Leach, p. 62-63; Bond, p. 144-45).

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.

A campaign against the Creeks led by Andrew Jackson began. (Leach, p. 26-30; Davis, p. 314; Spence and Spence, p. 121).

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 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" (Leach, p. 37-39; Phelps 1945 p. 21-23; Spence and Spence, p.124).

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 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 faciously [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. (Bond, p. 159-200; Myers, p. 140; Leach, p. 64-72; J.G.M. Ramsey, p. 607-08).



Figure 6: Dolly Cross Gordon, 1819. (Courtesy Maury County Archives)

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. The heirs also acquired title to an additional 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres on the Duck River adjacent to the Gordon property from the state, 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 she 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." (Bond, p. 145-147; Leach, p. 10, 74-77; Hickman County Census 1840-1880; Spence, p. 124; Turner, p. 66).

John Gordon, Jr.

John Gordon, Jr., Dolly's 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. (Bond, p. 214-216, 250).

Bolling Gordon

Dolly's 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."

Bolling Gordon died in 1880. Cottage Hill burned in 1940, at that time owned by Curley Church (Bond, p. 263-275; Phelps 1945 p. 25-29; Leach, p. 78-79; Hickman County Census 1840-1880; Spence, p. 48).

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 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 (Phelps 1945, p. 12, 29; Opperman, p. 33; Leach, p. 74; Dawson A. Phelps to R. S. Jewell, December 19, 1944, NATR archives).

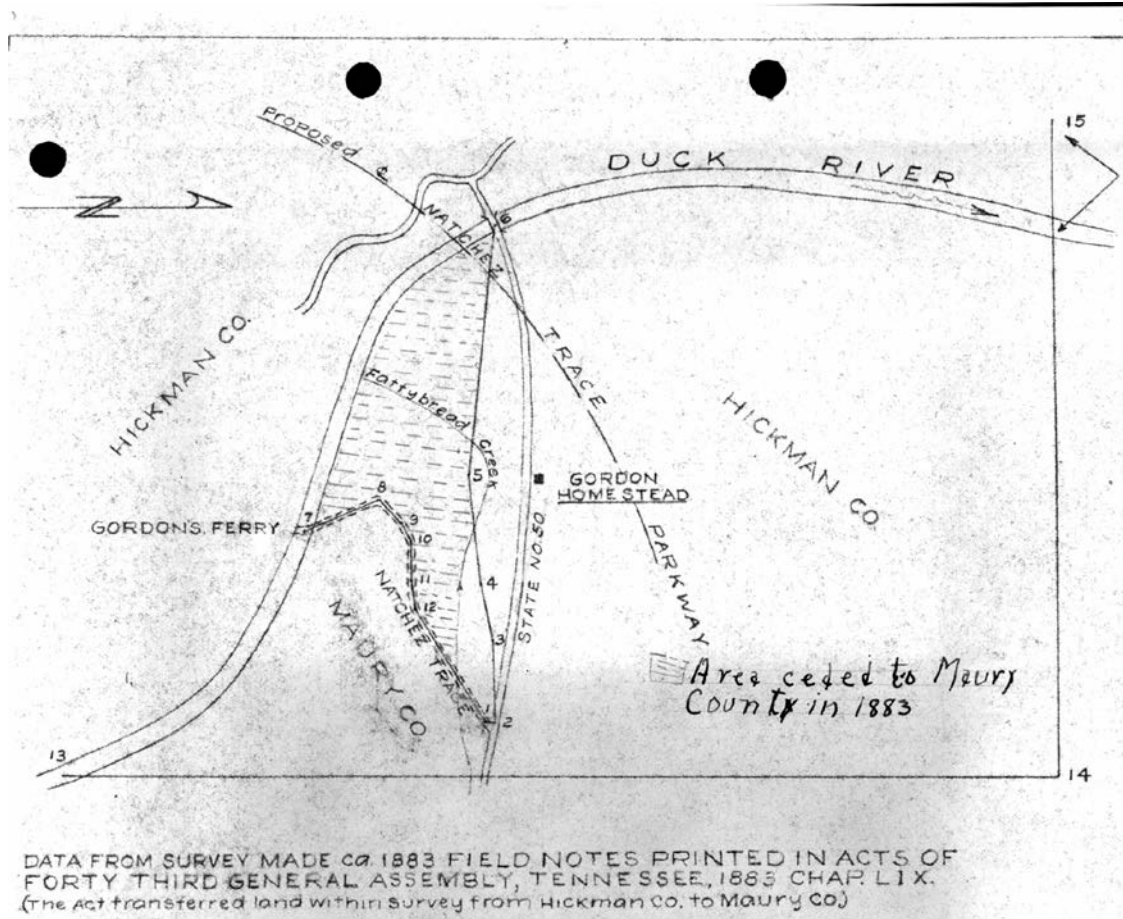


Figure 7: Plat of land ceded to Maury County in 1883. (NATR 8065)

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 (Phelps 1945, p. 3; Oppermann, p. 33).

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 (Oppermann p. 34-36; Phelps 1945, p. 12; Leach, p. 75).

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 (National Register Nomination).



Figure 8: Undated photograph of the house. (NATR 7095)

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

The NPS restored the house in 1978 to its approximate 1818 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 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 (Personal communication, Ron Bishop; Superintendent's Annual Report, 1986, 1988, NATR archives; Oppermann, p. 58).

PRESERVATION OF THE JOHN GORDON HOUSE NATCHEZ TRACE PARKWAY

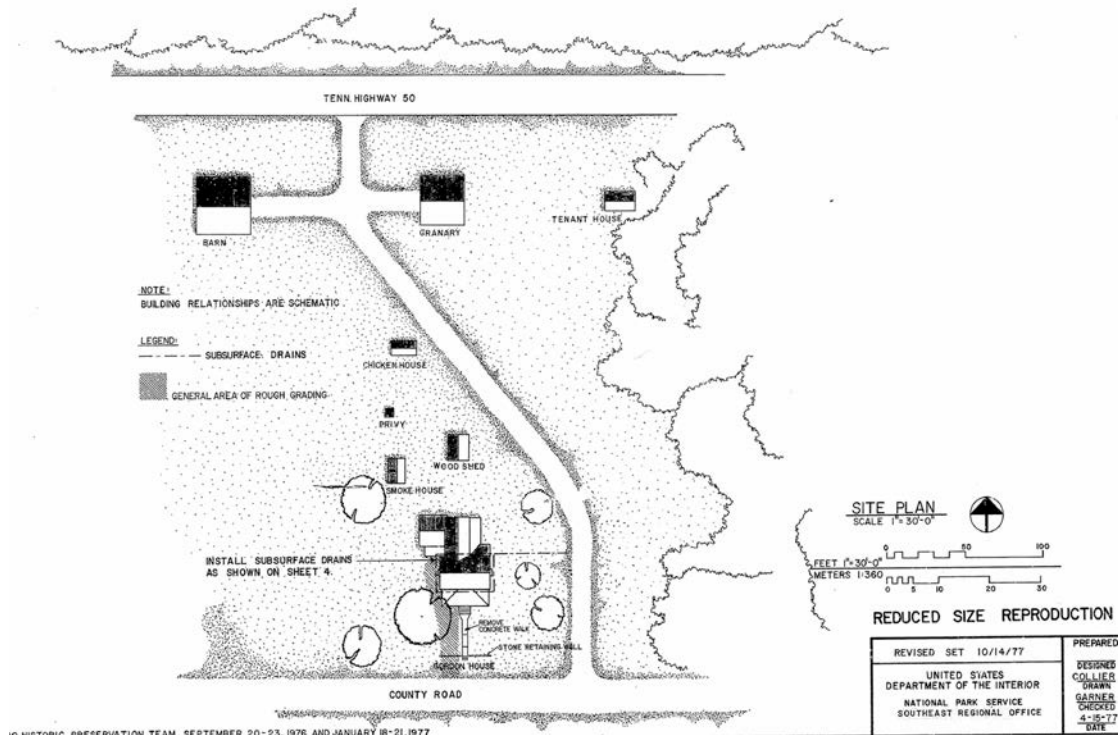


Figure 9: Site plan showing clustering of outbuildings, 1977. (Denver Service Center etic 604/80000)



Figure 10: John Gordon House after restoration, 1978. (NATR 12186)

Analysis & Evaluation of Integrity

Analysis and Evaluation of Integrity Narrative Summary:

The John Gordon House landscape is a part of the Natchez Trace Parkway. Based on the 2013 Cultural Landscape Report, a 45.2 acre site was assessed in this CLI. This assessment includes a discussion of all major landscape features pertaining to the development and establishment of the John Gordon House cultural landscape. Distinct areas of focus include the John Gordon House, the John Gordon Ferry, the cantonment/stand, the old Natchez Trace remnant, and visitor service area.

These areas collectively contain landscape features related to the landscape characteristics of Natural Systems and Features, Spatial Organization, Land Use, Topography, Views and Vistas, Vegetation, Circulation, Buildings and Structures, and Small-Scale Features. This section provides an overview of these existing features, as well as a discussion of their integrity related to historic significance.

Landscape Characteristics Summary

Natural Systems & Features

The natural systems and features of the John Gordon House cultural landscape historically relate to its position within the Central Basin physiographic province. The Duck River and Fattybread Branch serve as notable natural features that bound the sloping topographic area upon which the house and ferry area was built. They are also associated with significant cultural events and activities.

The natural systems and features of the John Gordon House cultural landscape today reflect the period of significance.

Spatial Organization

The spatial organization of the John Gordon House cultural landscape today relates to the arrangement of extant significant landscape features; in particular the John Gordon House, the John Gordon Ferry, the cantonment/stand, the old Natchez Trace remnant, and visitor service area. The site is arranged so that the John Gordon House is the focal point for visitors arriving from the western clearing. The house sits along the eastern edge of a cleared plateau a short walk from the parking area and comfort station to the west. The southern portion of the site is generally characterized by dense tree growth, a significant ridge, and is bounded on the south by the Duck River.

The spatial organization of the John Gordon House cultural landscape has been altered to a large degree. All spatial organization related to agricultural use from both the period of significance and afterward has been removed. However, highly significant features remain in situ and therefore reflect the period of significance.

Land Use

The land use of the John Gordon House cultural landscape today relates to its former function as a place of residence, travel, and trade. With the closure of the ferry in 1896, and later acquisition and interpretive alterations by the NPS, historic-era land use ceased.

The land use of the John Gordon cultural landscape does not reflect the period of significance.

Topography

The topography of the John Gordon cultural landscape historically was generally hilly, sloping topography in association with the Duck River valley. The landscape also possesses a significant ridge along the north side of the Duck River. This ridge served various functions during the period of significance, such as an orchard and burial ground.

The topography of the John Gordon House cultural landscape reflects the period of significance.

Views & Vistas

The views and vistas of the John Gordon cultural landscape today relate to several distinct, character-defining sightlines as well as other views that are not historically-significant. The view from the house atop the plateau down across Fattybread Branch and towards the Duck River was a principal view during the historic period, as was its reverse view. The newer view was created with the construction of the visitor service complex west of the house.

The views and vistas of the John Gordon House cultural landscape reflect the period of significance, with the only detractor being contemporary views, primarily to and from the visitor services area.

Vegetation

The vegetation of the John Gordon House cultural landscape today consists of both specimen trees and the lowland broad-leaved deciduous forest near the Duck River in addition to pasture and flower bulbs. It is unknown what cultural vegetation existed during the period of significance, however, field crops along with a vegetable garden would likely have existed. There is written evidence of the presence of an orchard on the ridge during the period of significance. Post-period of significance specimen trees dominated the landscape around the John Gordon house. Heirloom bulbs are still present at the site. The house is devoid of any foundation plantings, and this reflects the likely landscape character during the period of significance.

The vegetation of the John Gordon House cultural landscape—despite several contributing features—does not generally reflect the period of significance due to the absence of field crops, a garden, the orchard, as well as the successional growth of the forest.

Circulation

The circulation of the John Gordon cultural landscape today relates to various significant and non-significant pathways on the property. Historically, the old Natchez Trace provided the rationale for John Gordon's decision to purchase land in the area. The pathway was frequently used by traders, boatmen, Native Americans, and the military. Furthermore, the trace crossed the Duck River at what would become the John Gordon Ferry, which was adjacent to the stand/cantonment operation. Circulation patterns relating to agricultural operations during and after the period of significance are missing. Only a trace of Old TN 50 remains. The portion of the old Natchez Trace on the property is one of the best preserved sections remaining.

The circulation of the John Gordon House cultural landscape reflects the period of significance, despite no longer posing any agricultural circulation patterns.

Buildings and Structures

The buildings and structures of the John Gordon cultural landscape relate to both past and present additions and modifications. Historically, the John Gordon House, built 1818, served as the principal building in the landscape. While the definitive type and number of agricultural buildings and structures is unknown, it is extremely likely that they were also a part of the landscape. Other buildings and structures were added by subsequent owners, and when the site was photographed several times between 1945 and 1959, alterations to the house and landscape was apparent, such as changes to the porch, the addition of outbuildings, and modifications to fencing. Between 1976 and 1977, under the management of the NPS, seven outbuildings as well as the two story porch and rear addition, were removed.

The buildings and structures of the John Gordon cultural landscape reflect the period of significance due to the continued presence of the 1818 John Gordon House.

Small-scale Features

The small-scale features of the John Gordon cultural landscape relate primarily to recent visitor-service and interpretation additions to the landscape. Historically, small-scale features pertaining to agricultural activity would have been present. Such features likely include fences, watering troughs, and gates, among others. With the removal of these features after NPS acquisition, the small-scale features of the site transitioned from those related to work to those of interpretation and tourism, as shown by the later addition of waysides and benches.

The small-scale features of the John Gordon cultural landscape do not reflect the period of significance.

Aspects of Integrity 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 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 from the time of original construction. It is threatened by the poor quality of recent construction and repairs.

1. 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.

2. Setting

In restoring the house to the 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, as does the intact setting of the Duck River valley.

3. Design

Although the house has been restored to its 1818 design, during the process many of the architectural features added after 1818 were removed. Nevertheless, it retains its form, floor plan, and significant interior elements from 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, fence lines, and historic circulation patterns around the dwelling house also lowers integrity of design.

4. 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. (Completion Report, 10; Garrett, p. 8.).

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.

5. 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. (Opperman, p. 97).

6. 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 associated 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.

7. Association

The house retains its association with John Gordon and his wife, Dolly, who oversaw the construction of the house and resided there until his death in 1819 and 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.

Landscape Characteristic:

Natural Systems and Features

Historic Conditions

During the period of significance, the natural systems and features of the site represented the Central Basin physiographic province, a cluster of lowlands bracketed by generally barren highlands on either side (the Highland Rim). Specifically, the primary natural systems and features are the presence of the Duck River and Fattybread Branch, along with associated topography and vegetation.

Existing Conditions

The John Gordon House cultural landscape continues to be located within the Central Basin physiographic province. Significant features include the Duck River, Fattybread Branch, and associated topography and vegetation.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Fattybread Branch

Feature Identification Number: 174746

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

<u>Latitude</u>	<u>Longitude</u>
0.0000000000	

Feature: Duck River

Feature Identification Number: 174748

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

<u>Latitude</u>	<u>Longitude</u>
0.0000000000	

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 11: View of Duck River, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0100)



Figure 12: View of Fattybread Branch, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0089)

Spatial Organization

Historic Conditions

During the period of significance, the 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 and a cantonment site. The Army established a cantonment in 1801, and the buildings and ferry were subsequently used as a Natchez Trace stand or trading post 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.

During the historic period, the Gordon family operated a farm on the site, however little is known about the spatial arrangement between fields, buildings, and other landscape features. It is known that cotton was being grown somewhere on the 640 acre property, and there existed an orchard on the ridge south of the house. After the period of significance, agricultural operations continued into the 20th century. 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. 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 (Bishop, p. 1; Marrinan, p. 10).

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.

Existing Conditions

The spatial organization at the John Gordon House site focuses on the arrangement of landscape features within the landscape, in particular the relationship between the John Gordon House, ferry site, and old trace running through the property. The current site is organized so that the John Gordon House is the focal point located in an open field with no surrounding landscape features. The house sits along the eastern edge of a cleared plateau a short walk from the parking area and comfort station to the west. The southern portion of the site is generally characterized by dense tree growth.

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, albeit the NPS converted portion of the road trace to an asphalt path. In its present configuration, there is intact physical association between the house and the river, with the cantonment site mentioned on a wayside although the visual connection is minimal due to the lack of existing landscape features to help associate one site to another. It appears that many visitors walk to the house but never take advantage of the trail down to the river. Post period of significance, the spatial relationship of the dwelling house and its surrounding landscape features are also missing, specifically the agricultural landscape features. The NPS removed the outbuildings and other landscape features dating to the twentieth century in the 1970s.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Spatial relationship of house, ferry, and cantonment with Old Trace

Feature Identification Number: 174750

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Latitude Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: Open character between the house and Fattybread Branch

Feature Identification Number: 174752

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Latitude Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: Open space free of foundation plantings around the house

Feature Identification Number: 174754

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Latitude Longitude

0.0000000000

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 13: Open character of the landscape, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0671)



Figure 14: Grassy path down to Fattybread Branch (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0071)

Land Use

Historic Conditions

During the period of significance, land use related to residency at the house, agricultural operations, transportation, and trade. With the closing of the ferry and the disuse of the Natchez Trace, land use pertained to agriculture and residency. With the NPS acquisition and subsequent restoration of the property, land use pertained to historic tourism and education.

Existing Conditions

The John Gordon House landscape is currently being used as a public park and historic site, as part of the NPS-owned and administered Natchez Trace Parkway.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: John Gordon House Historic Site

Feature Identification Number: 174756

Type of Feature Contribution: Non contributing – compatible

Topography

Historic Conditions

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. During the period of significance, topographic features defined land use. The siting of the house, agricultural operations, and transportation routes responded to the sloping topography of the landscape. For example, 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. While the portion of the trace that ran through the John Gordon property crossed the Fattybread Branch, it otherwise followed the contours of the land.

The John Gordon House landscape also includes a significant ridge on the north bank of the Duck River. On top this hill, an orchard once grew during John Gordon's ownership of the property. Here, he would be buried in a small cemetery upon his death in 1819.

At some point during the historic period, it is possible that a spur road branched off from the old Natchez Trace, and climbed the ridge, which provided access to the orchard and/or cemetery. These would later be interpreted as "earthworks" by NPS researchers, until in 1985 there were identified as being a byproduct of the construction of the road. However, recent archaeological research posits that they may in fact be Civil War-era earthworks.

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.

Existing Conditions

The John Gordon House sits near the edge of a ridge overlooking the floodplain of the Duck River as part of the Central Basin physiographic province. Fattybread Branch flows to the south, about 400 yards from its confluence with the Duck River. The natural slope of the site, from northwest to southeast, directs rain runoff around the house and downhill.

The topography of the site retains integrity to the period of significance.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Sloping topography of the site

Feature Identification Number: 174758

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 15: View of the house from the Duck River floodplain, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0132)

Views and Vistas

Historic Conditions

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.

Existing Conditions

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.

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.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: View of comfort station/picnic shelter from house

Feature Identification Number: 174760

Type of Feature Contribution: Non contributing – incompatible

Latitude Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: Views of Duck River floodplain from house

Feature Identification Number: 174762

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Latitude Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: Views of house from Duck River floodplain

Feature Identification Number: 174764

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Latitude Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: View of Gordon Ferry Bridge

Feature Identification Number: 174766

Type of Feature Contribution: Non contributing – compatible

Latitude

Longitude

0.0000000000

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 16: Looking back at the house from a section of the Old Trace south of the house (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0670)



Figure 17: View of Gordon Ferry Bridge, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0084)



Figure 18: View of the parking area from the house, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0079)

Vegetation

Historic Conditions

Little is known about the cultural vegetation of the John Gordon House during the period of significance up to 1860. 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.

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. 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 in a letter to Dolly in 1818. 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.

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.

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 fence line 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. (Hichcock personal conversation with Mrs. Barbara Baker, May 18, 2012).

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

In 1983, about half the site was unimproved pasture, which the NPS leased to local farmers for cattle grazing. (Atkinson, p. 3).

Existing Conditions

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. profunda*/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 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. (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/worldworld/profiles/terrestrial/na/na0404_full.html).

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.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Surviving pear tree

Feature Identification Number: 174768

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Latitude Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: Heirloom bulbs, possibly 19th c.

Feature Identification Number: 174770

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Latitude Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: Trees planted between the house and comfort station/picnic shelter

Feature Identification Number: 174772

Type of Feature Contribution: Non contributing – compatible

Latitude Longitude

0.0000000000

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 19: Surviving tree, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0672)



Figure 20: 'Twin Sisters' in the lawn, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0069)



Figure 21: Redbuds and other trees, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0674)

Circulation

Historic Conditions

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

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

Historically, a stone walkway led from the front porch out to a 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.

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.

Existing Conditions

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 (NPS Natchez Trace Development Concept Plan, 18.).

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.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Old Natchez Trace segment

Feature Identification Number: 174774

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Latitude Longitude

0.0000000000

IDLCS Number: 101718

LCS Structure Name: Old Natchez Trace Segment, MP 407.7

LCS Structure Number: NATR101718

Feature: Asphalt Path

Feature Identification Number: 174776

Type of Feature Contribution: Non contributing – compatible

Latitude Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: Stone walkway remnant

Feature Identification Number: 174778

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Latitude Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: Remains of old TN 20 in front of house

Feature Identification Number: 174780

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Latitude

Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: Parking ellipse

Feature Identification Number: 174782

Type of Feature Contribution: Non contributing – compatible

Latitude

Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: Gordon Ferry Trail

Feature Identification Number: 174784

Type of Feature Contribution: Non contributing – compatible

Latitude

Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: Entrance Road

Feature Identification Number: 174786

Type of Feature Contribution: Non contributing – compatible

Latitude

Longitude

0.0000000000

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 22: Old Trace down to the Duck River, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0664)



Figure 23: Figure 126. Trail over Fattybread Branch, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0650)



Figure 24: Asphalt path, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0138)



Figure 25: Old Trace skirting hill, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0090)



Figure 27: Entrance road, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0056)



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

Buildings and Structures

Historic Conditions

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. (Emrick, p. 9, Oppermann, p. 28).

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 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. 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 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 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 its placement is not traditional. Also visible in the photograph are half-glazed front doors and Victorian spool screen doors. (Oppermann, p. 37-39; Field Notes, 1976).

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. Additional changes to the porch occurred in the late 1940s.

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. 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.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s various repairs and alterations were made to the house, including constructing simple wooden steps, handrails, and landings at each entry without any roof structure. 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.

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 are 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. (Winters, p. 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

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)

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. (Superintendent's Annual Report, 1986, NATR archives).

Existing Conditions

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 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. (Taken directly from Oppermann, p. 27, 67-69; Emrick, p. 7).

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

Character-defining Features:

Feature: John Gordon House

Feature Identification Number: 174788

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

IDLCS Number: 1093

LCS Structure Name: John Gordon House, MP 407.7

LCS Structure Number: 416-1D

Feature: Comfort station/picnic shelter

Feature Identification Number: 174790

Type of Feature Contribution: Non contributing – compatible

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 29: The John Gordon House, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0642)



Figure 30: Comfort station/picnic shelter, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0677)

Small Scale Features

Historic Conditions

During the historic era, a small cemetery existed on the hill south of the house. 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. 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

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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.

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 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 above-grade 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. This suggests that concrete was poured over the original stone slab steps, and it is probable that the stone slab walk was also covered (Bonath, p. 13-15).

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. 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 (Field notes, 1976; Hitchcock personal communication Mrs. Barbara Baker, May 2012).

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

Existing Conditions

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.

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.

The Church Cemetery remains extant on the hill southeast of the house.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Well house foundation

Feature Identification Number: 174792

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Latitude

Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: Church Cemetery 017111/NATR-309

Feature Identification Number: 174794

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Latitude

Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: DAR plaque

Feature Identification Number: 174796

Type of Feature Contribution: Non contributing – compatible

Latitude

Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: Informational kiosk

Feature Identification Number: 174798

Type of Feature Contribution: Non contributing – compatible

Latitude

Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: Signage

Feature Identification Number: 174800

Type of Feature Contribution: Non contributing – compatible

Latitude

Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: Picnic Table

Feature Identification Number: 174802

Type of Feature Contribution: Non contributing – compatible

Latitude

Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: Bench overlooking Fattybread Branch

Feature Identification Number: 174804

Type of Feature Contribution: Non contributing – compatible

Latitude

Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: Remnants of a modern post-and-rail fence at Fattybread Branch

Feature Identification Number: 174806

Type of Feature Contribution: Non contributing – compatible

Latitude

Longitude

0.0000000000

Feature: Footbridge

Feature Identification Number: 174808

Type of Feature Contribution: Non contributing – compatible

Latitude

Longitude

0.0000000000

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 31: Damaged grave, 2011. (Greg Smith/NATR)



Figure 32: Bench overlooking Fattybread Branch, 2011.



Figure 33: Natchez Trace crossing of Fattybread Branch, 2009. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0087)



Figure 34: Wayside describing the ferry operation, 2009 (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0126).



Figure 35: DAR marker, 1994. (NATR 1137)



Figure 36: Information kiosk, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0683)



Figure 37: Comfort station/picnic shelter, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0677)



Figure 38: Well foundation, 2011. (Susan Hitchcock/NPS image 0686)

Condition

Condition Assessment and Impacts

Condition Assessment: Fair

Assessment Date: 09/25/2015

Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:

While not explicitly stated as such, based on the information provided by the 2013 CLR, the overall condition assessment can be determined as being “fair.” This judgment generally averages the condition of the features specifically listed in the CLR, with most extant features being in fair or good condition. Extra consideration was given to more significant features such as the John Gordon house, ferry site, old Natchez Trace segment, and the cemetery.

Impacts

Type of Impact: Neglect

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Description: The Church cemetery suffers from neglect as the graves are in poor condition, and vegetation is encroaching on the site.

Type of Impact: Release To Succession

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Description: Vegetation encroachment on open areas and understory—which the CLR determined to be significant features—should be addressed.

Type of Impact: Structural Deterioration

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Description: The deterioration of the Church Cemetery is a concern. The surviving graves are damaged and need repair.

Type of Impact: Vegetation/Invasive Plants

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Description: Privet is spreading on the property and needs to be eradicated.

Treatment

Treatment

Approved Treatment:	Rehabilitation
Approved Treatment Document:	Cultural Landscape Report
Document Date:	10/05/2012

Approved Treatment Document Explanatory Narrative:

Proposed Treatments as defined in the 2013 CLR:

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 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.

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- 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 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.
- 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.

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- 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.

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.

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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.
- 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.

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.

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.

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.

Approved Treatment Completed: No

Approved Treatment Costs

Cost Date: 10/05/2012

Bibliography and Supplemental Information

Supplemental Information

Title: Bibliography

Description:

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