

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



James K. Polk Home Reconnaissance Survey

Columbia, Tennessee



Photo by David Libman, NPS

James K. Polk Home – Columbia, Tennessee

October 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Park Service (NPS) prepared this reconnaissance survey at the request of U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander (TN), to evaluate the James K. Polk Home in Columbia, Tennessee as a potential unit of the National Park System. The purpose of a reconnaissance survey is to provide a preliminary evaluation of a resource and to determine whether an authorization for a Special Resource Study should be considered by the Congress of the United States.

The James K. Polk Home is a National Historic Landmark (NHL) located in downtown Columbia, Tennessee, about 48 miles southwest of Nashville in Maury County. James K. Polk lived in his parents' Federal-style residence from 1818 until 1824 before serving in the state legislature, U. S. House of Representatives, as Governor of Tennessee, and as the eleventh President of the United States.

Although the site is owned by the State of Tennessee (with the exception of Polk Presidential Hall), the James K. Polk Memorial Association administers and operates the James K. Polk Home and Museum while owning and preserving over 1,300 artifacts and original documents directly relating to President Polk.

The National Park Service survey team visited Columbia, Tennessee on May 13 and 14, 2014, to tour the site and meet with representatives of the State of Tennessee and the James K. Polk Memorial Association.

A reconnaissance survey is the preliminary assessment of a potential study area or site proposed for inclusion in the National Park System. It is beyond the scope of this survey report to produce final conclusions or recommendations to Congress with regard to the establishment of the Polk Home and Museum as a unit of the National Park System. To receive a favorable recommendation from the NPS in a potential Special Resource Study, a proposed addition to the National Park System must (1) possess nationally significant natural or cultural resources; (2) be a suitable addition to the system; (3) be a feasible addition to the system; and (4) require direct NPS management, instead of alternative protection by other public agencies or the private sector.

The James K. Polk Home district is nationally significant under NHL Criterion 2 for its association with the eleventh President of the United States. As the only surviving residence in which Polk lived, besides the White House, this house is the property that is most closely associated with James K. Polk

This survey report presents preliminary findings on suitability and feasibility but leaves the question of whether or not direct NPS management would be required to a subsequent Special Resource Study, which must first be authorized by Congress.

SEPTEMBER 2014
JAMES K. POLK HOME RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY
COLUMBIA, TENNESSEE

The National Park Service (NPS) prepared this reconnaissance survey at the request of U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander (TN), to evaluate the James K. Polk Home in Columbia, Tennessee as a potential unit of the National Park System. Although the National Park Service cannot initiate studies of potential new units without specific Congressional authorization, Congress does permit the NPS to conduct preliminary resource assessments and gather data on potential study areas or sites. The term “reconnaissance survey” has been used to describe this type of assessment. The purpose of a reconnaissance survey is to provide a preliminary evaluation of a resource and to determine whether an authorization for a Special Resource Study should be considered by the Congress of the United States. A congressionally authorized Special Resource Study determines whether a resource meets the criteria for potential congressional designation as a unit of the National Park System. This reconnaissance survey makes preliminary findings on whether the James K. Polk Home and adjacent buildings with related ownership and history would be likely or unlikely to meet congressionally directed criteria. The survey suggests whether further study of the resource is advisable for further consideration of the establishment of a unit of the National Park System.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The James K. Polk Home is a National Historic Landmark (NHL) located in downtown Columbia, Tennessee, the county seat of Maury County, about 48 miles southwest of Nashville. The street address is 301 West Seventh Street, Columbia, Tennessee 38401. The Polk Home is located two blocks west of the courthouse square in downtown Columbia. James K. Polk lived in his parents’ Federal-style residence from 1818 until 1824 before serving in the state legislature, U. S. House of Representatives, as Governor of Tennessee, and as the eleventh President of the United States.

The site surveyed by the National Park Service includes the James K. Polk Home and adjacent property owned by the State of Tennessee and the James K. Polk Memorial Association. The Polk Home is owned by the State of Tennessee (Land Lot 35). The Sisters’ House, located on the same lot immediately to the west, was built in 1818 by James Polk’s brother-in-law and is used as a visitor center and staff offices. Also on the property are gardens, a garden cottage, and a kitchen rebuilt in 1937. The James K. Polk Memorial Association restored a church (Land Lot 38) on the same city block in 2009 and the property was included in this survey due to its use as an exhibit and visitor services building. (See Site Map, Appendix A)

The Polk Home is located on the northeast corner of a 2.5-acre city block bounded on the east by South High Street, on the south by West Eighth Street, on the west by Frierson Street, and on the north by West Seventh Street. The block lies between the eastern boundary of the Columbia Commercial historic district and the western boundary of the Columbia West End historic district, both listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The neighborhood surrounding the site includes churches, banks, a public library and residential and commercial structures dating to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The site is accessible by surface streets and angled parking is available for the James K. Polk Home along South High Street (see Figure 2).

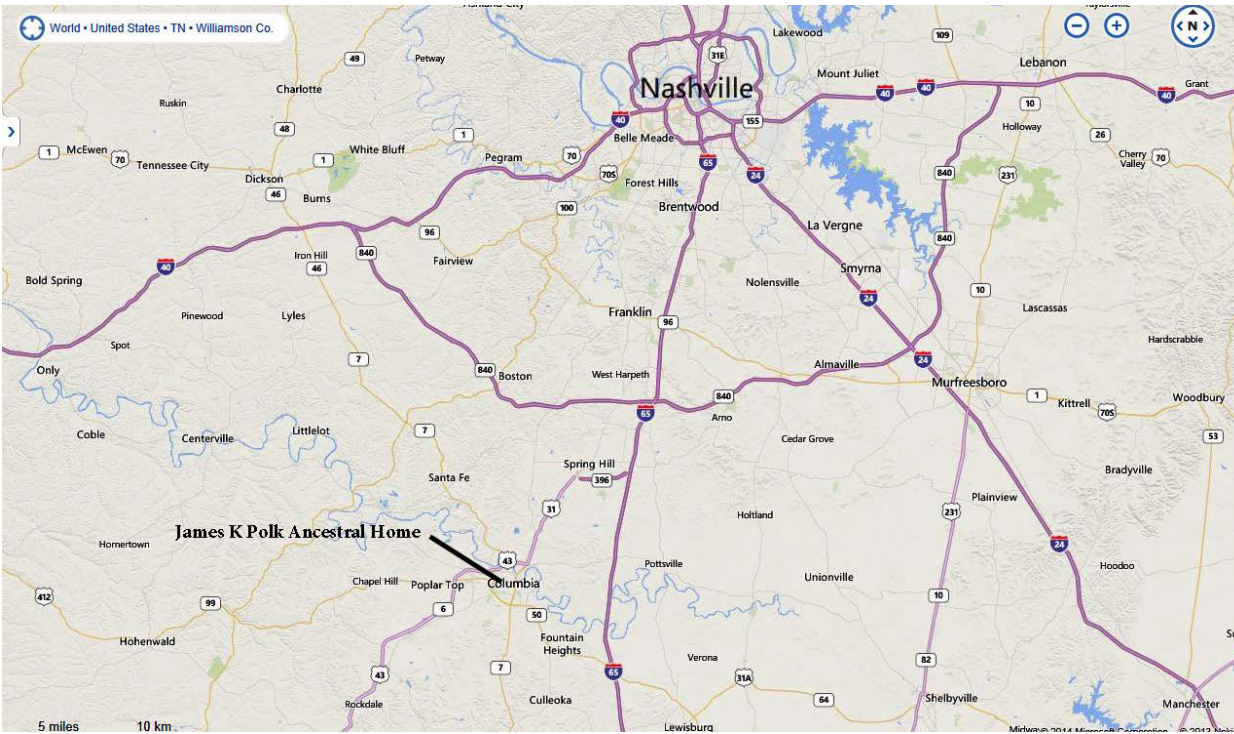


Figure 1 - Regional Map

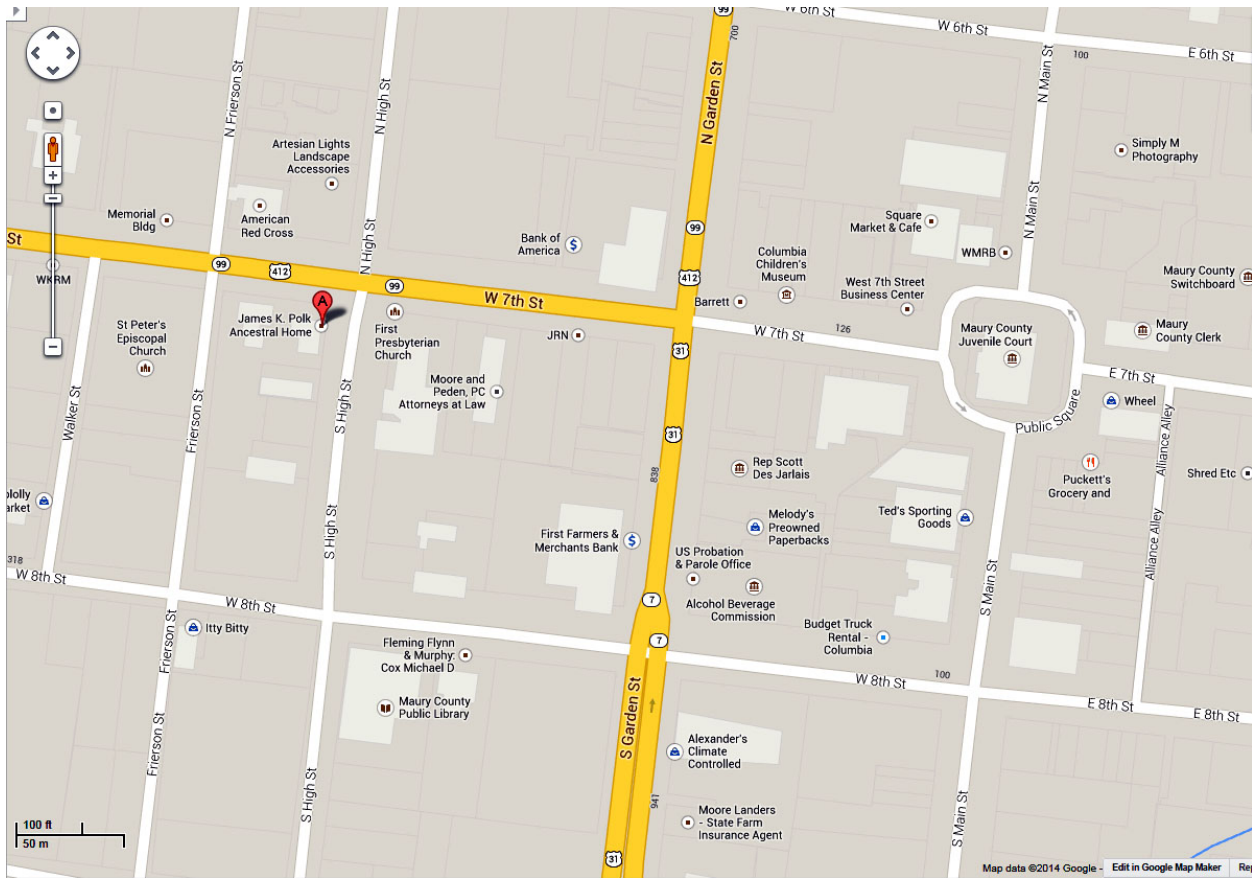


Figure 2 - Vicinity Map

BACKGROUND

James Knox Polk was born in Mecklenberg County, North Carolina, on November 2, 1795. In 1806, at the age of eleven, he moved with his family to Tennessee, settling in what is now Maury County. Samuel Polk, his father, purchased three lots in the town of Columbia in 1816 and constructed a two-story brick house (the present Polk Home) on the corner of West Seventh Street and South High Street. Samuel and his wife Jane remained in the house until their deaths in 1827 and 1852, respectively.

James K. Polk lived at the home after graduating the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and for the next few years as he traveled to Nashville to read law with Felix Grundy. While living with his family and passing the bar in 1820, Polk began a successful law practice in Columbia and campaigned for the state legislature. Though Samuel and Jane Polk's house in Columbia was only a short-term home for James K. Polk, it is the only extant residence associated with the eleventh President, besides the White House, and marks the beginning of his political career. He moved to a new home a few blocks away when he married Sarah Childress of Murfreesboro on January 1, 1824.

The Polk Home in Columbia remained in the family until 1862 and then changed owners several times before it was purchased by the State of Tennessee in 1929. At the same time, a descendant of the Polk family established the James K. Polk Memorial Association of Nashville and the James K. Polk Memorial Auxiliary of Columbia committed to "operate, maintain, preserve, and restore" the Polk Ancestral Home and properties and to "perpetuate the memory of the eleventh President of the United States." The Memorial Association opened the home to the public in 1929.

In 1937, the State acquired the adjacent lot to the south and reconstructed the kitchen outbuilding. In 1941, the State bought the next-door Sisters' House; an 1818 residence constructed by James K. Polk's brother-in-law and lived in by two of his sisters and their families. Additional land was added to the site in 1953 and 1961, expanding the garden. In 2009, with private funding, the Memorial Association purchased an 1882 church on the same block and renovated the space into a state-of-the-art exhibit facility. The renovated church, Polk Presidential Hall, has hosted traveling and original exhibits related to the U.S. Presidency and American society and culture during the Polk period. Two privately owned commercial buildings remain on the same block as the Polk Home, between the Polk Presidential Hall and the reconstructed kitchen.

Although the site is owned by the State (with the exception of Polk Presidential Hall), the Memorial Association still administers and operates the James K. Polk Home and Museum while owning and preserving over 1,300 artifacts and original documents directly relating to President Polk. The Memorial Association also offers educational programs on President Polk to regional and national audiences. The Association has an eight-member Board of Directors that employs one full-time professional Executive Director and one full-time Curator of Collections. Two paid docents staff the Sisters' House and provide house tours and educational programs for the 10,000 to 20,000 annual visitors.

RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY PROCESS

The National Park Service survey team visited Columbia, Tennessee on May 13 and 14, 2014, to tour the site and meet with representatives of the State of Tennessee and the James K. Polk Memorial Association. Also attending the meeting was a representative of the Governor of Tennessee. A list of meeting participants is included in Appendix B of this report.

The information and findings in this reconnaissance survey were derived from preliminary research, a literature review, the National Historic Landmark nomination and theme study, material available on the James K. Polk Home and Museum website (<http://www.jameskpolk.com/>), and discussions with the Tennessee Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office) and Memorial Association officials prior to, during, and subsequent to the site visit. The NPS survey team acknowledges and appreciates the assistance provided during this effort.

A reconnaissance survey is the preliminary assessment of a potential study area or site proposed for inclusion in the National Park System. It is beyond the scope of this survey report to produce final conclusions or recommendations to Congress with regard to the establishment of the Polk Home and Museum as a unit of the National Park System. To receive a favorable recommendation from the NPS in a potential Special Resource Study, a proposed addition to the National Park System must (1) possess nationally significant natural or cultural resources; (2) be a suitable addition to the system; (3) be a feasible addition to the system; and (4) require direct NPS management, instead of alternative protection by other public agencies or the private sector. These criteria are designed to ensure that the National Park System includes only the most outstanding examples of the nation's natural and cultural resources. They also recognize that there are other alternatives, short of designation as a unit of the National Park System, for preserving the nation's outstanding resources. This reconnaissance survey assesses the James K. Polk Home and makes an initial assessment. The findings of this survey should inform a Special Resource Study.

NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

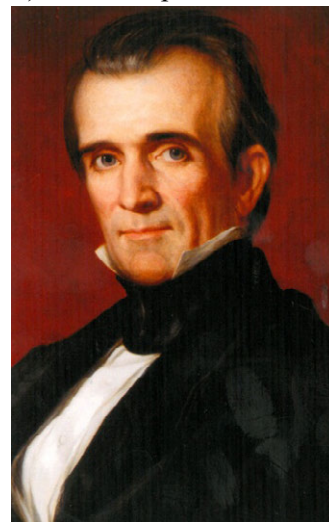
Introduction

NPS professionals, in consultation with subject-matter experts, scholars, and scientists, will determine whether a resource is likely to be nationally significant as part of the reconnaissance survey process. In the case of the Polk Home, the Secretary of the Interior designated the James K. Polk Home a National Historic Landmark on July 4, 1961. National significance is ascribed to districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States in history, architecture, archeology, engineering and culture, and that possess a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Reconnaissance surveys evaluate national significance based on criteria applied to National Historic Landmarks (NHLs) identified in 36 CFR Part 65 (Code of Federal Regulations). NHLs represent outstanding and authentic examples of historic places important to the history of the United States.

James Knox Polk

On November 2, 1795, James Knox Polk was born in Mecklenberg County, North Carolina, the first of ten children, to Samuel and Jane Polk. The Polk family moved from present-day Charlotte to the Duck River in Middle Tennessee in 1806. Samuel Polk and his family settled in Maury County, Tennessee. Samuel Polk became a farmer, land speculator and served as a county judge. In 1816, he purchased three lots in the town of Columbia and built a two-story brick house. The Polk Home still stands on the corner of West Seventh Street and South High Street. Samuel and his wife Jane remained in the house until their deaths in 1827 and 1852.

James K. Polk lived with his family in the Polk Home after graduating the



University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1818. From 1818 to 1820, while studying law with Felix Grundy, an attorney and politician, in Nashville, Polk travelled back and forth from his family home. After passing the bar in 1820, Polk opened a law office and began a successful practice in Columbia. In 1823, James Polk was elected to the Tennessee House of Representatives as a Democrat. On January 1, 1824, he married Sarah Childress of Murfreesboro and moved to a house a few blocks away in Columbia. The home of James K. and Sarah Polk was demolished at an unknown date in the nineteenth-century.

James K. Polk served one term in the Tennessee legislature before representing the Columbia district in the United States Congress from 1825 to 1839. Polk served on the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Committee of Ways and Means and became Speaker of the House in 1835, holding the position until his retirement in 1839. He returned to Tennessee to serve one term as Governor, but lost the next two gubernatorial elections in 1841 and 1843, to James C. Jones, the Whig candidate.

During the Democratic convention in 1844, the party could not resolve their differences over three prominent candidates, Martin Van Buren, Lewis Cass, and James Buchanan. With differences unresolved, James K. Polk became the “dark horse” nominee. Polk campaigned on a platform to annex Texas and change policy regarding the Oregon boundary dispute with Great Britain. He ran against Henry Clay, a leading National Republican, and at the age of 49 became the youngest person elected to the Presidency in 1844. Upon election, Polk promised that he would not run for a second term.

Polk’s presidency marked the rapid expansion of the United States’ territorial boundaries. Polk pushed for the acquisition of Texas to the Rio Grande and added land in the southwest that would become New Mexico and California, resulting in the Mexican War. A treaty with Great Britain added Oregon to the



Sarah Polk

United States and for the first time, stretched the country to both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Although the Democratic goal of Manifest Destiny defined the Polk administration, his presidency included a treaty with New Granada (Colombia) to guarantee a right-of-way for United States citizens across the Isthmus of Panama, passage of the Tariff Act of 1846, and establishment of a warehouse system for temporary retention of undistributed imports. Polk’s term also included a reenactment of an independent treasury system, the creation of the Department of the Interior, the establishment of the United States Military Academy, and authorization of the Smithsonian Institution.

At the end of his term, Polk retired from office and moved to Nashville, Tennessee to a home purchased by the Polks for retirement. He and Sarah settled into Polk Place, the former residence of Felix Grundy, originally called Grundy Place. James K. Polk passed away only three months later on June 15, 1849, from cholera. Sarah Polk remained a widow for another 42 years until she passed away in 1891. James K. and Sarah Polk were buried at Polk Place and their remains were later moved to the Tennessee State Capitol when the house was demolished in 1900.

Significance

The James K. Polk Home is nationally significant for its association with the eleventh President of the United States. The 1961 designation as an NHL, as approved by the Secretary of the Interior, is the authority for this determination. As the only surviving residence in which Polk lived, besides the White House, this house is the property that is most closely associated with James K. Polk. The period of significance, which begins in 1818 and ends in 1824, represents the period James K. Polk lived in the

house as well as the beginning of his productive political life. During his time in Columbia, Polk practiced law and ran for the Tennessee legislature.

According to the National Historic Landmark program guidelines, to be designated an NHL, a property must possess exceptional integrity and meet one of six criteria. NHL Criterion 2 states that a property, “be associated with the productive life of an important person and reflective of the period during which the important individual achieved significance.” Properties like the Polk Home, which pre- or post-date an individual’s productive period are generally not eligible. However, exceptions are made in cases like that of the Polk Home where there are no other more appropriate properties associated with a person. Furthermore, in 1965, the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments resolved that “an election by the citizens of the Nation of a President is in itself an event of transcendent historical importance” and that “upon the election of any man as President of the United States, an appropriate site be identified and considered for classification as a National Landmark.”¹ Although the James K. Polk Home was previously listed, the National Historic Landmark program recognized the national significance of all presidents. Today the National Park Service manages dozens of sites that illustrate or commemorate the lives of over 17 presidents while many more presidential NHLs are preserved by non-profit organizations, states, and private owners.²

In 1979, the documentation for the James K. Polk Home NHL was approved. Using the National Register for Historic Places nomination form, the Polk Home was identified as a nationally significant building. The nomination noted the boundaries of the NHL include the Sisters’ House and kitchen outbuilding but, “...neither of those buildings contributes directly to the national significance of the Polk Home, [and] both are included in the boundaries for the landmark designation for convenience in definition and because of their value in maintaining the historic setting of the Polk Home.”

In 1975, the Sisters’ House was individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places as significant at the state level. The nomination notes the Sisters’ House as an exceptional example of Federal-style architecture in middle Tennessee. The nomination also states that the house is significant for its association with the Polk family as the residence of James and Jane Maria Polk Walker and Dr. Samuel and Ophelia Polk Hays, both brother-in-laws and sisters to the President.

The kitchen outbuilding, reconstructed in 1937, and the small garden cottage need further study to determine potential significance. Neither resource contributes to the association with the former president, although archeology may provide additional information. Polk Presidential Hall, included in this reconnaissance survey, was constructed as a church after the period of significance and is not associated with James K. Polk. Further study is necessary to evaluate the significance of this building’s architecture to state or local historical contexts. If a Special Resource Study is authorized, all resources associated with the James K. Polk Home should be further evaluated.

Resources

The James K. Polk Home in downtown Columbia, Tennessee is the only surviving structure closely associated with the eleventh President. The NHL boundary includes the Polk Home (contributing) as well as the Sisters’ House and kitchen outbuilding (identified as non-contributing) bounded by West Seventh

¹ Mackintosh, Barry. *The Historic Sites Survey and National Historic Landmarks Program: A History*. Washington, DC: National Park Service, History Division, 1985. P.86. Utley interview; memorandum, Chairman Wallace E. Stegner to Secretary of the Interior, October 7, 1965, in Minutes, 53rd Advisory Board Meeting, October 4-7, 1965.

² The Advanced Search feature (www.nps.gov) lists the topic American Presidents and queries all NPS sites, including National Heritage Areas and park units.

Street to the north and Frierson Street to the west. To the south and east, the site is bordered by private property and South High Street.

Polk Home

Built in 1816, the Polk Home is a two-story painted brick house with a raised basement. The exterior of the residence retains historic integrity from the period James K. Polk lived with his parents (1818-1824). The Federal-style dwelling is ell-shaped with a side hall and front and rear parlors. Two interior chimneys are located at the gable ends of the building. The front façade is unadorned and includes a simple cornice, five window bays and a Federal door surround with keystones above each opening. The entrance has recessed molding, pediments, sidelights, and an elliptical glass transom, all typical features of the Federal style. The house has nine-over-nine sash windows with green-painted wood shutters. The gable roof is clad in wood shingles.

The National Heritage Corporation, a preservation contractor hired by the Tennessee Historical Commission, outlined a restoration plan at the Polk Home in 1976 to preserve original materials and remove Victorian alterations. Sometime before the 1920s, owners of the Polk Home enlarged the window openings on the first-floor parlor to accommodate triple-hung sashes and added decorative iron work and a cornice to the north facade. The Victorian iron work and cornice were removed and the windows returned to the original configuration. A rear porch and standing-seam metal roof added after the period of significance were also removed as part of the restoration. The Polk Home was painted beige and the wooden bars added to the basement windows. Despite the changes made to the Polk Home since 1824, the house today has been restored to the time James K. Polk resided with his parents in Columbia. The James K. Polk Home possesses integrity of location, design, association, materials, workmanship, feeling, and setting. Although the roof has been replaced several times, the brick work, windows, and entrance surround survive as excellent examples of Federal-style architectural details.

Interior and Collections

The interior of the house interprets an era after the period of significance (1818-1824) though one representing the family's long tenure and showing the extensive museum collection. The 1976 restoration plan guided interior finishes to complement the furnishings, artwork, and personal items dating to the mid-nineteenth century. The collection includes Polk family furniture from the White House and Polk Place, memorabilia from James K. Polk's presidency, and campaign souvenirs, as well as decorative arts, historic documents and correspondence, and clothing. The collection is likely a contributing resource and remains closely associated with James K. Polk.

Sisters' House

The 1818 Sisters' House built by Columbia carpenter James Purcell for James and Jane Maria Polk Walker is two-story brick residence immediately west of the James K. Polk Home on West Seventh Street. The Walkers lived in the house until 1843 and from 1849 to 1853, John and Ophelia Polk Hays occupied the home. The Sisters' House, with similar scale and proportion to the Polk Home, has been expanded and altered several times.

The original house had three bays and a one-story ell to the rear. In 1827, the builder Nathan Vaught added a two-story addition to the east side and a second story to the rear ell. Around 1875, owners reconfigured and enlarged the rooms and added Victorian detail to the interiors. The construction of a



Sisters' House - photo by Jackson DeParis, May 2013

detached two-story kitchen occurred around 1890 and a later side porch was added to adjoin the two buildings. The current Sisters' House provides meeting and office space for the James K. Polk Memorial Association as well as a small auditorium, gift shop, kitchen, and restrooms. The building retains integrity of location, setting, and association, though integrity of materials, workmanship, feeling, and design are diminished.

Kitchen

The outbuildings associated with the Polk Home do not survive. In 1937, a detached kitchen was built on the original foundation of a Polk-period outbuilding south of the residence. The kitchen is a one-story



Reconstructed Kitchen Building

brick building with a central chimney and gable roof with wood shingles. The north elevation has an entrance on the eastern end and two nine-over-nine sash windows. The west elevation has a central door. All openings have blind arches. A small brick courtyard and brick wall connects the kitchen to the James K. Polk Home. The kitchen needs extensive moisture abatement and masonry repair on the south elevation. The kitchen has not been evaluated for National Register eligibility and further study on the reconstruction and archeology is recommended if the NPS determines that a broader period of significance is appropriate.

Gardens and Garden Cottage

The Polk Home gardens are non-contributing resources. In the 1960s, the James K. Polk Memorial Association created a garden in the nineteenth-century style to complement the Federal-style residence and as additional land was acquired, expanded the gardens to the south of the Sisters' House. Although the formal garden design is not significant, the iron fountain that provides a focal point connecting the Polk Home, Sisters' Home, and kitchen is from the Polk Place in Nashville. It is a scenic enhancement to the property and has not been evaluated as a historic feature.

The garden cottage in the southwest corner of the site is a gable-end wood-frame structure with a full attic and central chimney. The cottage has two unheated rooms and porch with chamfered posts along the east elevation. The cottage is in poor condition and is used for seasonal education programs and storage. The garden cottage was added sometime between 1880 and 1910 and does not contribute to the association with James K. Polk.

Polk Presidential Hall

A building on the same block as the James K. Polk Home owned by the Memorial Association was included in the reconnaissance survey. The Memorial Association purchased an 1882 Gothic Revival church on South High Street and opened the Polk Presidential Hall in 2009, after extensive renovation. The church does not contribute to the association with James K. Polk, but does provide a modern facility for exhibits. Prior to



Polk Presidential Hall

retrofitting the sanctuary into museum space, the structure was in poor condition with vegetation growing through windows. The Memorial Association restored the lancet windows on the east facade and the rounded arch windows on the remaining elevations. The main entrance has lancet-shaped solid-wood paneled double doors. The former church has a central tower with a clipped-gable metal roof and corbelled decorative brick cornice on the tower and primary elevations. The building retains integrity to the late nineteenth-century with the preservation of original materials, workmanship, location, and setting. The adaptive reuse of the church as an exhibit building provides the Polk Home valuable interpretive space for visitors, but diminishes the integrity of design, association and feeling.

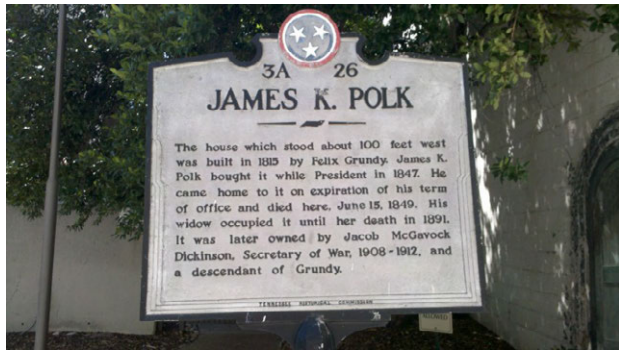


Figure 3 - Polk Place Historical Marker - Nashville

SUITABILITY

An area is considered suitable for addition to the National Park System if it represents a natural or cultural resource type that 1) is not already adequately represented in the National Park System, or (2) is not ***comparably represented and protected*** (emphasis added) for public enjoyment by other federal agencies; tribal, state, or local governments; or the private sector.

Adequacy of representation is determined on a case-by-case basis by comparing the potential addition to other comparably managed areas representing the same resource type, while considering differences or similarities in the character, quality, quantity, or combination of resource values. The comparative analysis also addresses rarity of the resources, interpretive and educational potential, and similar resources already protected in the National Park System or in other public or private ownership. The comparison results in a determination of whether the proposed new area would expand, enhance, or duplicate resource protection or visitor use opportunities found in other comparably managed areas.

The careers and lives of U. S. Presidents have been commemorated by scores of sites, ranging from the humble to the palatial: birthplaces, residences, other buildings, inaugural places, monuments, and tombs. Visits to them enhance understanding of the distinguished group of men who have led the Nation; their ways of life; family backgrounds; locales and regions in which they were born or resided; eras in which they lived; and the social, economic, and intellectual influences that molded them. The National Park Service preserves historic places ranging from the White House (President's Park) to birthplaces (President William Jefferson Clinton) to homesteads (Andrew Johnson) to battlefields (Horseshoe Bend), to monuments (Mount Rushmore).

Adequacy of Representation

There is no current site in the National Park System that represents the life or presidency of James K. Polk. The nature of our country's history is such that each president has had unique challenges consisting of very different political, societal, economic, and international pressures. Furthermore, there are no other sites in the United States with extant properties of James K. Polk. Although the State of North Carolina maintains a historic site that is the birthplace of President Polk, the structures and artifacts exhibited there are not original to the site or to the Polk family. President and Mrs. Polk also maintained a home in Nashville that became known as Polk Place, but that home was eventually torn down to make way for urban development. The site of that home is now occupied by a hotel and a historical marker (Figure 3).

As stated earlier in this report, adequacy of representation is determined on a case-by-case basis by comparing the potential addition to other comparably managed areas representing the same resource type, while considering differences or similarities in the character, quality, quantity, or combination of resource

values. The comparative analysis also addresses rarity of the resources, interpretive and educational potential, and similar resources already protected in the National Park System or in other public or private ownership. The comparison results in a determination of whether the proposed new area would expand, enhance, or duplicate resource protection or visitor use opportunities found in other comparably managed areas. Therefore, the Polk Home in Columbia, Tennessee would seem to meet this part of the suitability test easily.

The second part of the suitability criterion is a bit more complicated. While the site is owned by the State of Tennessee and managed by the Polk Home Memorial Association, the question of whether it is ***comparably protected for public enjoyment*** cannot be adequately determined within the scope of this survey and would have to be more thoroughly examined in a Special Resource Study. Because the site is managed by a private, non-profit memorial association, the ongoing staffing, preservation, and maintenance of the site depend upon the capacity of this association to raise sufficient funds to supplement the funding it receives from the State of Tennessee. These state funds are not sufficient, by themselves, to completely cover all staffing, maintenance, programming, and capital improvement costs. The State of Tennessee maintains 14 historic sites throughout the state through this same type of partnership. (http://www.tn.gov/environment/history/history_historic-sites.shtml)

FEASIBILITY

As stated in *NPS Management Policies 2006*, a proposed addition to the National Park System must first receive a positive determination of national significance and suitability as described in the preceding sections of this survey. Then, in order to be considered feasible, an area must be of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure sustainable resource protection and visitor enjoyment (taking into account current and potential impacts from sources beyond proposed park boundaries), and an area must be capable of efficient administration by the National Park Service at a reasonable cost. In evaluating these criteria, the National Park Service considers a variety of factors. These evaluation factors include:

- size and boundary configurations
- landownership patterns
- current and potential uses of the study area and surrounding lands
- local planning and zoning
- access
- public enjoyment potential
- costs associated with acquisition, development, restoration, and operation
- staffing requirements
- current and potential threats to the resources
- existing degradation of resources
- the level of local and general public support (including landowners)
- the economic and social impacts of designation as a unit of the National Park System

An overall evaluation of feasibility of a proposed addition to the National Park System can be made after taking into account all of the above factors. However, evaluations may sometimes identify concerns or conditions, rather than simply reach a yes or no conclusion. For example, some new areas may be feasible additions to the National Park System only if landowners are willing to sell, or the boundary encompasses specific areas necessary for visitor access, or state or local governments will provide appropriate assurances that adjacent land uses will remain compatible with the study area's resources and values. The analysis also considers the ability of the National Park Service to undertake new management responsibilities in light of current and projected availability in relation to both funding and personnel.

Level of Local and General Public Support

This reconnaissance survey defers a complete treatment of this topic to a Special Resource Study, should one be authorized by Congress. However, from our meetings with the board members of the James K. Polk Memorial Association, the Director and Curator of Collections, and the Tennessee State Historic Preservation Officer it was clear that there is substantial interest in exploring various options for NPS involvement in the site ranging from an Affiliated Area to a National Park System unit as well as other potential partnerships.

A thorough examination and appraisal of all the above factors is beyond the scope of this report. However, the survey team did not observe or discover, during the course of the site visit or subsequent research, any glaring issues or conditions that would disqualify the site for a National Park System designation based on feasibility. Should a Special Resource Study be authorized by Congress, the study team should more thoroughly consider each of the evaluation factors listed in the bullets above, including the economic and social impacts of designation as a unit of the National Park System. However, based on our site visit and tour, conversations with and materials provided by the Director and Curator of the Polk Home and Museum and the Polk Home Memorial Association, and both pre-visit and post-visit research, our preliminary finding is that the site is likely to be determined to be of sufficient size and configuration to be efficiently administered by the National Park Service.

CONCLUSION

The reconnaissance survey offers a preliminary assessment of the national significance, suitability, and feasibility of including the study area in the National Park System. The Polk home possesses national significance based on its status as a National Historic Landmark designated in 1961, though additional resources have not been formally evaluated against NHL criteria and require further study. The NHL appears likely to be a suitable addition to the System, as there are no extant homes associated with James K. Polk, the nation's eleventh president. Preliminary findings further indicate that the site is likely to be of sufficient size and configuration to be efficiently administered by the National Park Service and it is currently being administered for public enjoyment and resource protection. The Sisters' Home and other resources on the same block may have historical significance and could also potentially provide space for ancillary services in a potential new unit, such as for administrative infrastructure, visitor services, space for exhibits and for interpretive and educational activities. The presence of these associated resources indicates areas of inquiry that also warrant further study. The survey did not assess

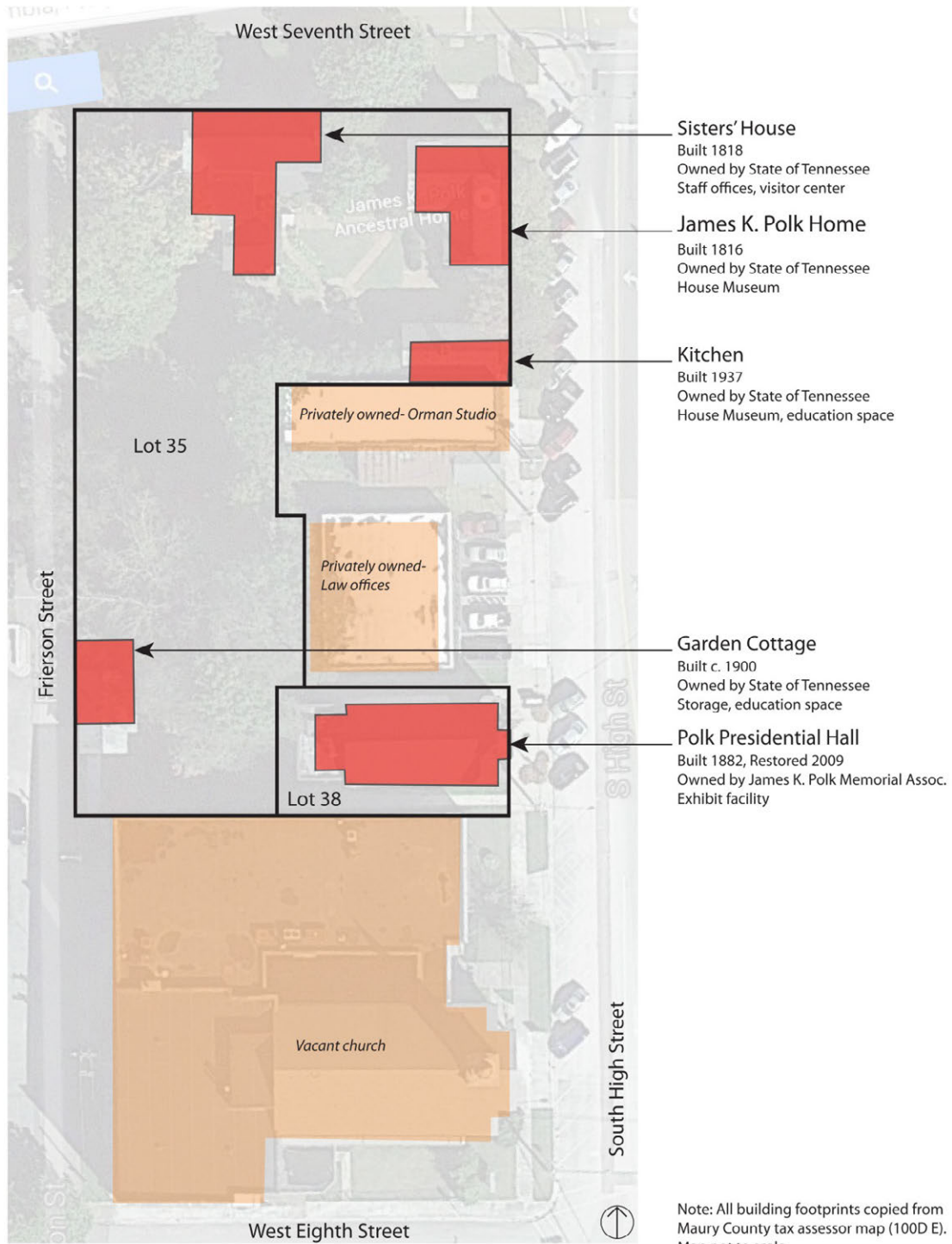


Photo by David Libman

whether direct NPS management or alternative protection by other public agencies or the private sector is appropriate for the area, as the collection and assessment of the in-depth data necessary to address this criterion was beyond the scope of the study. On the basis of these preliminary findings, the NPS determined that further study is warranted and is able to recommend that Congress consider authorizing a Special Resource Study for the James K. Polk Home in Columbia, Tennessee and the associated properties surveyed in this report.

APPENDIX A

James K Polk Home Reconnaissance Survey Site Map



APPENDIX B

SITE VISIT PARTICIPANTS

National Park Service:

1. David Libman, Park Planner, Planning and Compliance Division, Southeast Regional Office
2. Beth Byrd, Landscape Historian, Cultural Resources, Partnerships, and Science Division, Research and Science Branch, Southeast Regional Office

State of Tennessee:

1. E. Patrick McIntyre, Jr., Executive Director, State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission
2. Martha Akins, Tennessee Historical Commission
3. Jeremy Harrell, Campaign Manager, Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam

James K. Polk Memorial Association

1. Lisa Butler, Former President
2. Dinah Vire, President
3. Tiny Jones, Past President
4. Julia West, Past President
5. Kathie Fuston, Properties Chair

James K. Polk Home and Museum Staff

1. John Holtzapple, Executive Director
2. Tom Price, Curator of Collections