

CANNONSBURGH VILLAGE
ASSESSMENT REPORT, PART II:
PRESERVATION NEEDS
AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES
Murfreesboro, Tennessee



Prepared for the Board and Staff at Cannonsburgh Village
2025

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 APPENDIX: Preservation Needs and Development Opportunities (2010 report)



Students in History 6610/7610: Essentials in Historic Preservation / Cultural Resource Management, Fall 2024

Introduction

In September 2024, five graduate students in Dr. Stacey Graham's Essentials in Historic Preservation/Cultural Resource Management course at MTSU were assigned as contributors to an updated report on the condition and usage of buildings at Cannonsburgh Village in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The purpose of this report is to inform and guide the City of Murfreesboro Parks and Recreation Department in its planning and management for this historic site. The MTSU Center for Historic Preservation created a report for this purpose in 2010, which serves as the basis for the current additions and updates (see Appendix). In particular, the 2010 report was used to measure the degree to which certain buildings have been improved and what work still remains to be done.

This updated preservation report is the second part of a larger assessment conducted by the Center for Historic Preservation for Cannonsburgh Village. The first part, "Cannonsburgh Village Museum and Collections Assessment Report," was created by Dr. Carroll Van West and public history graduate students and can be found at https://irp.cdn-website.com/2c253136/files/uploaded/Cannonsburgh_Village_Museum_and_Collections_Assessment_Report.pdf. It deals with artifacts in interior spaces of Cannonsburgh's buildings, particularly the museum building. The following report deals with exterior spaces and the structures themselves.

Students conducted on-site recordation activities from September to November 2024. Buildings and structures along the main Cannonsburgh Walking Tour were photographed and examined for signs of deterioration. The following report includes architectural descriptions and recommendations for each building or structure, an evaluation of current historical interpretations and use of space, and recommendations on how to improve those interpretations and uses. The final component of the report is a site map with an interactive GIS component that consolidates the observations and recommendations into a single digital space. Responsibilities for different parts of the report were divided in the following manner: **Liz Abram** provided updated historical and preservation information on the Visitor Center and Gift Shop, University House, Grist Mill House, One-Room Schoolhouse, Telephone Building, and Cotton Warehouse, and contributed to overall content and editing; **Rhyder Cowart** provided information on the Williamson Chapel, Loom House, and Cotton Warehouse, and developed the Significance and Use of Space Links sections; **Josie Teague** contributed information on the Leeman House and Town Hall, and developed ideas and content for Use of Space; **Logan Williamson** contributed information on the Caboose, Windmill/Well, and Pavilion, and developed ideas and content for Interpretation of Space; and **Ken Mosier** wrote the Introduction, contributed information on the General Store and Doctor's Office, and created the digital Site Map.

Lastly, **Clelly Johnson**, as part of their Ph.D. residency with the Center for Historic Preservation, updated the history of Cannonsburgh from the 2010 report and added a statement of significance. They also created a list of potential granting agencies that may be of use to Cannonsburgh Village staff as they look to address preservation and programming updates.

Dr. Graham organized, edited, and revised the report in entirety and added the preservation recommendations overview.

Architectural Descriptions & Preservation Recommendations:

OVERVIEW



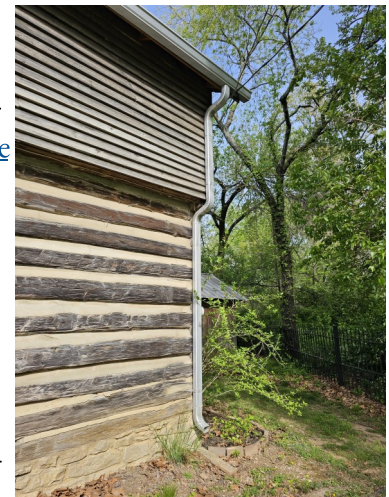
Town Creek serves as the northern boundary of the village's collection of buildings.

Architectural descriptions for each building/structure located in Cannonsburgh begin on the southeast side, closest to the opening gate, and proceed clockwise around the village. These buildings include historic, relocated buildings and structures from various Rutherford County locations and which form the core of historic interpretation of 19th- and early 20th-century life in a rural settlement. Most are vernacular log and wood frame constructions, reflecting the community-based building techniques common to Middle Tennessee at that time, with the log houses from the earlier part of the 19th century and wood frame buildings from the later 19th and early 20th centuries. Other buildings located on the premises are excluded from this study because they are not owned

and operated by the City of Murfreesboro as part of the official park property (the Lions House, the Jaycees House, the Antique Auto garage, the Art League building and warehouse, and the Blacksmith Shop). (See ordering on Site Map, page ____.)

Sources for the following building profiles include the walking tour brochure available from the Visitor Center, plus the interpretive plaques on the buildings themselves. The 2010 report was referenced often, with preservation information coming from student course content and from National Parks Service publications such as [Restoration Guide for Historic Log Buildings on the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail](#) (written by the Center for Historic Preservation) and [Preservation Brief 26: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Log Buildings](#).

Most of the preservation issues observed in Fall 2024 are common to log structures from the 19th-century American South. Because of their gradual, endemic nature, many of the issues with the structures are holdovers from what was observed in the preparation of the 2010 report. Moisture is the biggest issue, as is usually the case in Tennessee's climate. Happily, the City of Murfreesboro invested in new roofs and gutter systems for most of the buildings after the 2010 report, which solves some of the issues with moisture, especially near the foundations of buildings.



Gutter and downspout on the rear east corner of the Leeman House, protecting the roof and walls from water damage.

Other preservation issues that are common across Cannonsburgh village include the prevalence of mold (both of the green and black kinds) growing on exterior sides of the log beams, decay in logs creating cavities that weaken structural integrity, and decay in the chinking and daubing materials between logs that allow moisture and pests to penetrate the interiors of buildings. Specific cases on specific buildings are outlined, building by building, in the pages below, but first I will offer general preservation recommendations for dealing with these issues.

Removing mold from logs

- Gently brush away mold. If that doesn't work, try sanding. If that doesn't work, try light planing.
- Do not apply herbicides.
- Remember, mold doesn't compromise the log's structural integrity, but it does indicate an elevated presence of moisture, which can damage the structure in other ways.

Filling in holes and cavities in logs

- Only use appropriate epoxy, since inappropriate supplies will further damage logs.
- For small cavities or holes, patch with epoxy. For large ones, use a wood splicing technique in combination with epoxy. Hiring professional help is highly recommended.
- Make sure any cavities in logs do not lead to even more rotted wood by carefully probing in the cavity for further rot with a small knife. Make sure all rotted wood material is removed before the cavity is filled in.
- Protect epoxy repair by shielding it from moisture (as if under a sufficient roof overhang), if possible.

Shoring up chinking and daubing

- For chinking, try to replicate the chinking material already used between the logs.
- Remarkably, this area is one in which Portland cement is sometimes recommended, though only when used in a mixture with lime, clay, and sand, and only in amounts half the amount of the lime used in the mixture. Plain cement, unmixed, however, remains non-recommended as it can hold in moisture and won't "breathe" with the rest of the building materials. Hiring professional help is highly recommended.

General moisture avoidance

- Be sure to keep sill logs at least eight inches from the ground and divert the flow of drainage from the ground beneath buildings.
- For downspouts on the sides of buildings, consider adding flexible extension fittings that will lead water away from the foundations of buildings.
- Keep vegetation back from encroaching on log buildings, as that often invites excess moisture or insect infestation. This includes intentional plantings and mulched areas.
- Consider placing a vapor barrier (in the form of polyethylene sheeting) on the ground beneath log structures. This will keep moisture away from sensitive log joists and sill beams. It can also prevent the ground from shifting as much, which can weaken stone or wood foundation pillars.

General Store



North Elevation

Location: The General Store is located southeast of Williamson Chapel / Loom House and adjacent to the Doctor's Office near the entrance of Cannonsburgh village.

Historical Context: Originally located twelve miles due southwest of Murfreesboro in the small community of Link, the General Store represents a style typical of general stores in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Carrying a broad array of goods, including fresh produce, clothing, hardware, and medicine, general stores also provided a vital social function, serving as both post offices and important meeting places for community members.

Overall Structure: The General Store is a one-story wood frame structure with horizontal lap siding, a steeply pitched, open gabled roof, and covered porches with shed roofs supported by square wooden posts in the front and rear. Both the main and porch roofs are metal with gutters and downspouts. A brick chimney with metal flashing protrudes from the rear of the roof. Double doors open on the front (north elevation) façade, and a single door opens on the rear (south elevation) façade. The front façade also features two single-hung, four-over-four sash windows, one on either side of the door. The main structure rests on a brick foundation, while the porch is supported by both wood and brick piers. The rear façade also features a wooden ADA-compliant ramp running west to east that leads to the small rear porch.

Preservation and Restoration: Compared with the 2010 report, the condition of the General Store is much improved. The metal roof has been replaced, metal flashing has been added around the chimney, and gutters now run along the east by southeast and west by northwest elevations as well as around both porches. Downspouts have been added, and wooden cornices/siding have been repaired. New paint has been added around entire exterior. Deteriorated beams underneath the front porch, however, pose a potential issue, as does the continued lack of a moisture barrier beneath the structure and porches.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Replace/repair beams supporting the roof of the porch, with same style of beam.
- Add moisture barrier beneath structure.
- Repair remaining holes in wood siding using appropriate epoxy.



East Elevation



South Elevation



West Elevation



Brick Foundation Along East by Southeast Elevation



Lack of Moisture Barrier Beneath General Store



Rotted Beams for Front Porch Roof

Doctor's Office



North Elevation

Location: Adjacent to the General Store and southwest of Williamson Chapel and the Loom House, the Doctor's Office is near the entrance to Cannonsburgh Village.

Historical Context: Originally located in south Murfreesboro, the Doctor's Office represents the type of small establishment maintained by doctors who also performed a substantial number of house calls. It is typical of late 19th/early 20th-century rural frame architecture.

Overall Structure: The Doctor's Office is a one-story wood frame structure with horizontal lap siding, an open gabled roof with shallow pitch, and an offset covered front porch to the right side of the façade. A concrete step provides access to the interior. Both the main and porch roofs are metal, and the main roof features new gutters and downspouts. The structure rests on concrete blocks.

Preservation and Restoration: Compared to the 2010 report, the condition of the Doctor's Office is much improved. Damaged/moldy siding has been cleaned and repaired. New paint has been applied to all exterior walls. New gutters and downspouts help mitigate the water damage that plagued the building previously. Some siding panels, however, still have visible holes and there is still no moisture barrier beneath the structure.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Add moisture barrier beneath structure.
- Make sure mulch does not come within six inches of the stone foundation or wood joists of the building. Wood mulch retains moisture near the building fabric and can provide a home for termites.
- Repair remaining holes in wood siding



West Elevation



Mulch Close to Foundation



Lack of Moisture Barrier Beneath Structure



East Elevation



Hole in Siding



South Elevation

Windmill and Well



Windmill West Elevation

Location: Old windmill and dug well located between the General Store and Doctor's Office southeast, the Williamson Chapel northwest, and Loom House on its west.

Historical Context: Context for the windmill is missing from the overall interpretation. The thirty-foot-deep hand-dug well beside the windmill is the oldest well at Cannonsburgh (there are three in total), dating to the 19th century. Its location has (obviously) not changed.

Overall Structure: The windmill is a multi-story structure, consisting of a tall tower and a windmill head at the top. The tower is constructed of metal, likely steel, and has a triangular cross-section. The tower is supported by diagonal braces that form a triangular lattice pattern, adding to its structural integrity. It appears to be around 40-50 feet tall. The windmill head is made of metal and features four vanes or sails that would have been used to capture wind energy. At the base of the windmill, there is a well pump connected to the windmill's mechanism. The dug well is rectangular in shape. It appears to be constructed primarily of stone, likely a type of limestone or sandstone, given its rough texture and color. The structure is approximately 3 feet tall.

Preservation and Restoration: The windmill's metal components show signs of rust. This is common with old metal structures exposed to the elements. The well appears to be in good condition. It has a sturdy stone wall and a metal grate covering the opening, preventing people from falling in. The water level seems to be high, and the water itself looks clear, suggesting that the well is still functioning.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Windmill:

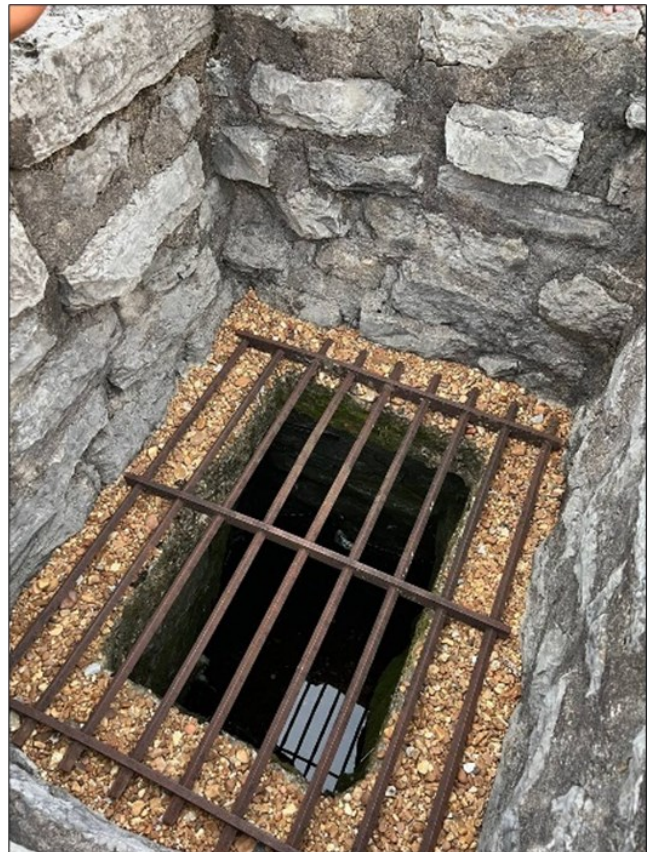
- Clean the metal, remove loose rust, and apply a rust-inhibiting primer and protective paint to prevent further deterioration.
- Clean and lubricate moving parts to ensure smooth operation and prevent wear.
- Mitigating the impact of weather and pests by using protective coatings or treatments.

Well:

- Continue cleaning of debris and vegetation, and any damaged stones or mortar may have been repaired or replaced with materials that match the original style.
- Continue to treat to prevent the growth of algae or other harmful organisms.



Well Northwest Elevation



Grate Covering Well Opening

Loom House



East Elevation

Location: The Loom House is located south of the Williamson Chapel and caboose near the center of the Cannonsburgh Village.

Historical Context: The Loom House was originally built in the first half of the 1800s. This log building exemplifies the homes of that era in Middle Tennessee. Today, it houses a hand loom from the same period, which remains fully functional. Weavers regularly demonstrate the garment-making process to visitors, offering a fascinating glimpse into historical craftsmanship.

Overall Structure: The Loom House is a one-story, single-pen log structure with a gable front. The roof is covered with wooden shingles. Its construction features hand-hewn logs, which are notched at the corners using saddle joinery. The walls of the cabin are constructed from locally sourced timber and have weathered over time. It has double hung six-over-six sash windows on the North Elevation with a single board wooden door on East Elevation. The house's foundation is brick.

Preservation and Restoration: Roof has been replaced per 2010 recommendations. Recommendations from the 2010 report to remove mold from foundation logs on North and South Elevation were not addressed and both logs have deteriorated significantly. Foundation logs need replacing or the integrity of the structure will become compromised. Several bricks in the foundation along the West Elevation lack mortar between them and have eroded away in places. Some of the bricks appear to have been fixed with cement, which is not recommended as a patching material as it does not allow for ...

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Remove mold from foundation logs by sanding or brushing. (While mold does not necessarily make the wood weaker, it does indicate potentially high moisture levels. Note where it grows and whether it increases as clues to water sources that may need to be removed.)
- Replace rotted foundation logs. (New replacement logs will look different in color and possibly in grain but should mimic the cut of the other logs. It's a good thing for newer materials to be distinguishable from historic materials so that people can witness the preservation process at work.)
- Replace mortar on brick foundation. (Choose a non-cement-based mortar that best matches the existing mortar.)



North Elevation



South Elevation



West Elevation



Degraded Logs South Elevation



Degraded chinking and daubing West Elevation



Degraded logs North Elevation



Brick Foundation with Missing Mortar West Elevation

Williamson Chapel



North by Northeast Elevation

Location: The Williamson Chapel is located adjacent to the Village Loom House, gazebo, and caboose, on the southwest side of the main loop.

Historical Context: Williamson Chapel originally functioned as a schoolhouse, dating to around 1915, in northern Rutherford County. The Commission decided to relocate this historical building to Cannonsburgh Village, reinterpreting it as a classic Southern church. Stained glass windows from a church in Georgia, a pulpit window from Germany, and a steeple were later added. Now, Williamson Chapel's charming altar has become a popular destination for weddings, with 2,800 couples having celebrated their nuptials here since it began operating as a wedding venue.

Overall Structure: The Williamson Chapel is a one-story, single room balloon-framed building. The chapel features a steeply pitched gabled roof, covered with shingles. The Gothic pointed-arch stained glass windows on the south, east and west sides of the building allow natural light to filter inside the building. The chapel includes a small, bricked front stoop with simple wooden posts on the North elevation, complete with wrought iron handrails on either side. Double wooden doors with pediment on North Elevation.

Preservation and Restoration: The chapel is in excellent condition, thanks to ongoing preservation efforts. The roof was replaced following recommendations made in 2010[1]. The roof and flashing on the West by Northwest elevation awning have also been replaced. However, the flashing around the steeple is currently absent and needs attention. Additionally, the sealant on the double Gothic stained glass window on the South elevation is coming off and requires replacement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Replace the sealant on the double Gothic stained glass window.
- Installation of chimney flashing.



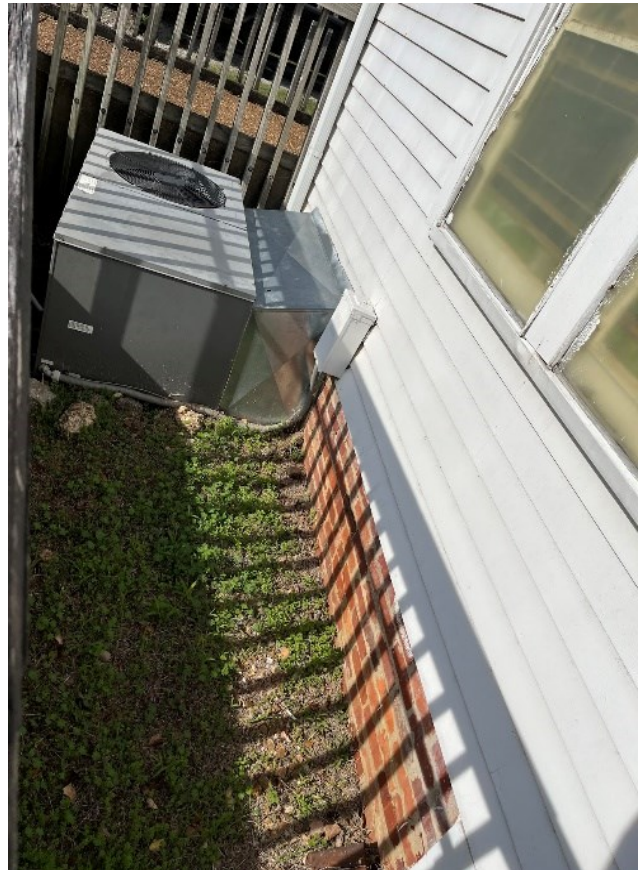
East by Southeast Elevation



West by Northwest Elevation



South Elevation



HVAC South Elevation



ADA ramp South Elevation



Tombstones (but no graves), East by Southeast Elevation



Windows in Disrepair South Elevation

L&N Train Caboose



East Elevation

Location: L&N Caboose No. 121 located between the C.N. Haynes Museum and Williamson Chapel on the southwest side of the main loop.

Historical Context: Constructed in 1960s-70s, this bay window caboose was built by the Louisville and Nashville Railroad (L&N) in their South Louisville Shops, showcasing the craftsmanship and industrial capabilities of the era. The caboose served primarily with the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, playing a crucial role in their operations. The L&N built cabooses were often referred to as “Shorty” cabooses because of their short length, measuring in at just 32 feet 7 inches, where most steel cabooses of the time were closer to 38 feet. This caboose was donated to Cannonsburgh in 1988.

Overall Structure: Featuring a bay window design, the L&N 121 offers a unique architectural aspect compared to traditional cabooses. This design was instrumental in providing enhanced visibility for the crew, especially important for monitoring the train while in motion.

Preservation and Restoration: The caboose appears to be in relatively good condition, with the exterior paint and lettering still visible. The windows and doors seem intact. There is some rust and weathering, which is expected for a vehicle of this age.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The exterior paint may need touch-ups or a complete repaint to protect the metal and preserve the original color scheme.
- The interior of the caboose could be restored to its original appearance, including the sleeping compartments, kitchen area, and other amenities. This might involve replacing worn or damaged furnishings and appliances.



West Elevation



Interior of Caboose

Cotton Warehouse



Cotton Warehouse North Elevation

Location: The Cotton Warehouse is located at the west border of the Cannonsburgh Village along the Lytle Creek.

Historical Context: The Cotton Warehouse was built in the 1870s. It served as a storage facility for cotton bales before they were shipped to textile mills. It illustrates the economic importance of the cotton industry in Tennessee during the 19th century. Innovations in agricultural storage and transportation were important for the success of the cotton trade. Today, the warehouse serves as a historical exhibit within the Cannonsburgh Village.

Overall Structure: The Cotton Warehouse at Cannonsburgh Village is primarily constructed of wood beams and planks, brick walls in an American common bond pattern, and a stone foundation. The building has a front-gabled roof with corrugated metal sheets. It has large, multi-paned windows on the sides to allow natural light to enter the interior space and the doors are solid wood. The interior of the warehouse is an open floor plan, with minimal interior walls to maximize storage space. The roof is supported by wood columns and beams. There is a covered porch on the north side of the building. The porch is supported by simple wooden posts.

Preservation and Restoration: The Warehouse is not in great shape. The roof is in bad shape and the flashing is missing from the awning on the north elevation. On all sides of the building there are missing and/or damaged bricks. The porch needs to be restored as some of the boards are rotting and have mold on them. There is also mold growing on the foundation that needs to be removed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Replace the missing and damaged bricks. Be sure to use bricks that match relatively well in color and in texture.
- When repointing the mortar in places where it has disintegrated or where it needs reapplication due to replacement of bricks, keep these tips in mind (from [NPS Preservation Brief 2: Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings](#)). They ensure not only a unified look, but also the prevention of potential stresses between old materials and new.
 - Try to “match the historic mortar in color, texture, and tooling.”
 - This means matching the type of sand used in the original mortar, if possible. (This might be infeasible, as it may require laboratory testing.)
 - “The new mortar must have greater vapor permeability and be softer” than the surrounding bricks.
 - “The new mortar must be as vapor permeable and as soft or softer ... than the historic mortar.”
- Do NOT use Portland cement.
- Replace the roof, using similar metal shingles as has been used on many of the other buildings, to match the style.
- Remove the wrought iron fencing that is leaning against the north elevation. (Not only does the fencing pose a danger to visitors who may touch it, but it puts undue burden on the north wall.)
- Remove mold from stone foundation using a non-acidic biological solution appropriate for masonry.
- Fix or replace the wood porch and ADA accessible ramp.
- Replace flashing on the awning.



Roof on North Elevation



Porch on North Elevation



Roof East Elevation (No Gutters), Damaged Bricks, Damaged Roof Line



South Elevation



West Elevation: Mold on Foundation, Worn Stairs, Missing Gutters on Roof



West Elevation Roof line



West Elevation: Unsafe Wrought Iron Fencing



East Elevation Roof (No Gutter)



West Elevation ADA Ramp



East Elevation Wood Doors

Leeman House



South Elevation

Location: The Leeman House is an 1820s residence located between the art center and the town hall. It sits on the northernmost point along the walking loop, in front of Town Creek.

Historical Context: The Leeman House is from Eastern Rutherford County, representing a more refined living space from the early 19th century. The front section of the house is from the 1820s and was constructed from hewn cedar logs joined by V-notching. The back section of the house was added in the 1870s. The upstairs in the front of the house was used as a bedroom for the girls and not connected to the back upstairs section where the boys slept.

Overall Structure: This is a one-and-a-half-story hall-and-parlor log house with a rear kitchen. There is a dogtrot that separates the living and kitchen areas, providing a private living space and then a separate area for cooking and dining. The building has an ADA-compliant ramp located on the left side of the building. There is also a chimney located on the right side of the building. Inside the building, visitors will see newspapers that are being used as insulation and wallpaper.

Preservation and Restoration: Compared to the 2010 report (p. 23), the overall condition of the building has not greatly improved. In 2010, the building did not have a rain gutter system, but that has since been added to the structure. The roof is free from rust and seems to be in good condition. However, the window-mounted AC units remain. An HVAC system would be a preferable replacement for the window-mounted units if at all possible. Furthermore, there is still exposed Romex wiring on the exterior of the building. The building has also sustained more damage than reported in the 2010 report. There are holes and gaps in the wood, which could allow creatures to enter the structure.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Remove window-mounted AC units and, if possible, invest in a centralized HVAC system. Window units are unsightly and risk damaging window frames and other building fabric located beneath the unit through leakage and sagging.
- Cover exposed Romex wiring. In this situation, it is best not to sheath in conduit. Consult an electrician. Consider running electrical wires underground, if possible, as an enhanced safety measure.
- Repair holes with appropriate epoxy material and gaps in logs with a non-cement-based material.



Exposed Romex Wiring, Southeast Elevation



V-Notching with Holes, Southeast Elevation



Window AC Units Southwest Elevation

Pavilion



North by Northeast Elevation

Location: The pavilion is located in the center of Cannonsburgh Village.

Historical Context: The pavilion was purpose-built to accommodate events and activities within Cannonsburgh Village and as such is not a historic structure. Its central location, however, provides an anchor for events and gatherings and a point of reference for all the surrounding buildings.

Overall Structure: The gazebo is a single-story, hexagonal structure. It is approximately 33 feet in diameter and 10 feet tall at its highest point. It is made of wood, with a dark brown or stained finish. The floor is an elevated, flat concrete platform. The roof is galvanized metal, possibly aluminum or steel, and is pitched to allow for water runoff. Six wooden posts support the roof. It is electrified with ceiling light fixtures and powered via exposed Romex wiring. The pavilion has a simple, open design with low walls, allowing for a view of the surrounding area.

Preservation and Restoration: The pavilion appears to be in relatively good shape. The structure seems sound, with no visible signs of major deterioration or damage. The roof was replaced with galvanized sheet metal following recommendations made in 2010 (p. 32). However, there is still exposed Romex wiring on the exterior of the building.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Either cover exposed Romex wiring or have wires rebundled in different material, as it is in an exposed, outdoor location and subject to rain. Consult an electrician on this.



Pavilion on South-East Elevation



ADA-compliant Ramp on North-West Elevation



Interior of the Pavilion looking Southwest onto chapel and warehouse

Town Hall



South Elevation

Location: Town Hall is located near the Leeman Residence and is along Town Creek on the north side of the walking loop.

Historical Context: Town Halls served similar functions to county courthouses and were important civic centers in 19th-century small-town Tennessee. This particular building, however, never served as a town hall. Rather, it was a log cabin from Eagleville in western Rutherford County and later served as a kitchen. Its limestone chimney was moved along with the building.

Overall Structure: The Town Hall is a single-pen log building with a chimney located at the back of the structure (on the north side). The building has side doors and half-dovetail notching that holds the building together.

Preservation and Restoration: Compared to the 2010 report (p. 22), the building has had some minor improvements, but there is still much to do. A rain gutter system has been added to the building to help improve drainage. However, the town hall still has side doors, which should change into windows or be removed. Furthermore, there is exposed Romex wiring on the exterior of the building. There are also gaps in the foundation, which could potentially allow for creatures and moisture to enter the building. There are also pieces of wood missing from the logs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Replace side doors.
- Cover Romex wiring.
- Repair gaps in the foundation.
- Repair missing pieces of logs (when they present gaps in the walls).



Side Door, Exposed Wiring, and Rain Gutter System East Elevation



Gaps Between Wood and Foundation West Elevation



Wood Missing West Elevation

Note: This appears to be purposeful cuts into the logs, perhaps to accommodate a cross-joint at a previous time. It does not represent damage but it does point to a potential weakness in the wood's integrity.

University House



University House South Elevation

Location: The University House is located between the Town Hall and the Telephone Building on the east edge of the Cannonsburgh Village along the Town Creek.

Historical Context: The University House originally stood on the current site of Middle Tennessee State University's campus and dates back to the mid-1800s. It is a dogtrot, a popular vernacular architectural style in the South from 1780 to 1830. This vernacular style grew in popularity due to the challenges of connecting log structures. If a family needed more space they would often build a second room a few feet away from the first and then connect them with a continuous roof. The brick chimneys are located on the exterior to prevent overheating the house while cooking during warmer months. During the hot summer, cooking and other family activities were conducted outside in the dogtrot.

Overall Structure: The University House at Cannonsburgh Village is an 1800s dogtrot residence. The defining feature of this log structure is its dogtrot design, which includes two separate log rooms (pens) connected by an open breezeway. The house is constructed from hand-hewn logs. The logs are notched and fitted together without the use of nails, relying on traditional joinery techniques like half-dovetail notch. The two-pen log structure features a continuous side-gabled roof that covers both rooms and the central dogtrot. The two log rooms have an exterior brick chimney. The interior of the house is simple and functional, with exposed log walls and wooden floors. The dogtrot design is emblematic of Southern rural architecture, reflecting the practical and communal living arrangements of early settlers.

Preservation and Restoration: Compared to the 2010 report, the condition of the University House seems to have improved over the last fourteen years. The horizontal gable siding on both the east and west side of the building have been replaced and look to be holding up well. The chimneys both have new

flashing and new black chimney caps to prevent rain and debris from entering the chimney. The porch floor is in good condition. Additionally, new downspouts and rain gutters were added to the structure to control rainwater and drain away from the building. However, the chinking and daubing is missing on the west side of the building and in need of repair on the north, south, and east sides. There are gaps in the wood logs that can be an entrance point for birds and other animals to enter the building. The wood logs need to be treated as they are discolored from weather. The brick chimney on the west side of the structure has missing and broken bricks.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Replace the rotted logs.
- Repair or replace the chinking and daubing.
- Repair or replace bricks on the west chimney.



North Elevation: Rotted Logs



East Elevation: Chinking and Daubing Damage



West Elevation: Damaged Siding



West Elevation: Damaged Chimney



Chinking and Daubing Damage

Telephone Operator Building



Telephone Building South Elevation

Location: The Early 1900s Telephone Building is located next to the One-Room Schoolhouse on the east edge of the Cannonsburgh village along the Town Creek.

Historical Context: By the early 1900s, telephones had become a common feature in many rural homes. All calls were connected by an operator at a switchboard, much like the one at the Cannonsburgh Telephone Exchange Company. Since the operator needed to be available at all hours, the switchboard building also served as a residence for the employee. The switchboard in this building was originally from the Rockville Home Mutual Telephone in southern Rutherford County.

Overall Structure: The early 1900s Telephone Building at Cannonsburgh Village is another example of functional architecture from Tennessee's history. The building is a single level, wood frame structure with a traditional gabled roof. The exterior has clapboard siding, a common feature in rural buildings of the time. This siding provides weather resistance and adds to the building's rustic charm. A small front porch with a shed roof provides a sheltered entryway. The porch is supported by simple wooden posts. The main entrance is centrally located on the front facade, which gives the building a symmetrical appearance. There is a second entrance on the west side of the building. Inside, the building is organized to accommodate both the operational needs of the switchboard job and the living quarters for the operator.

Preservation and Restoration: Compared to the 2010 report, the condition of the Telephone Building seems to be better. The downspouts and rain gutters appear to be in good repair. The siding is free from holes and cracks and the clapboard is in good condition. Some of the paint is peeling and flaking off. The floorboards on the east side of the front porch are damaged and broken and should be repaired and/or replaced. On the north side of the building, there is a wood foundation block that is deteriorating and should be replaced.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Replace the rotted and broken floorboards on the front porch.
- Repair or replace the wood foundation footing.



South Elevation: Damaged Front Porch



Damaged Wood Foundation Block



West Elevation: Peeling and Chipping Paint

One-Room Schoolhouse



Schoolhouse South by Southwest Elevation

Location: The one-room schoolhouse is located next to the gristmill at the northeast corner of the Cannonsburgh village along the Town Creek.

Historical Context: The one-room schoolhouse was included in the village to show the 19th-century settlers' determination to provide their children with a basic education. A community pooled their money and would hire a teacher for the community children. As it was not possible to find an existing schoolhouse, when the village was created they constructed a model using logs from a large corn crib located in southern Rutherford County.

Overall Structure: The one-room schoolhouse at Cannonsburgh Village is representative of 19th-century rural education architecture. The structure is constructed from logs, which shows the rustic and practical building techniques used by early settlers. The logs being sourced from Rutherford County adds authenticity and historical value to the structure. The structure is a single floor log building with a gabled roof which allows for effective drainage. The double doors open to allow natural light into the room. Inside, the schoolhouse is simple and functional, with wooden desks arranged in rows and a single blackboard at the front. The interior design reflects the minimalist approach of early rural education, focusing on utility and practicality.

Preservation and Restoration: Compared to the 2010 report, the condition of the One-Room Schoolhouse seems to be about the same. The vines and overhanging branches have been removed and the structure is free of debris, however some of the logs are rotting and/or growing moss. The beam on the north-

west corner is rotted and looks to be deteriorating in the center. The chinking and daubing is cracked, or in the case on the south side it is missing. Also, it looks like the chinking was replaced with a different material than the rest of the structure. The foundation footings on the west side looks like it is missing a log. The rear sill looks like it has been replaced since 2010 and it looks good. The low spot under the building is deep and may cause water to pool.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Remove the mold and moss from logs by light scraping.
- Improve the drainage beneath the building. Consider mounding dirt in the center of the crawl space so that water cannot pool beneath the building.
- Replace the rotted, ill-fitted, and mismatched logs.
- Repair or replace the chinking and daubing with a material more consistent with the appearance of the building.



West Elevation: Chinking and Daubing Damage



East Elevation: Drainage Issue Under Building



Southwest Elevation: Chinking Damage



Southwest Elevation: Rotted Logs



Southwest Elevation: Rotted Logs



Northwest Elevation: Rotted Logs



Northwest Elevation: Rotted Logs

Gristmill



Gristmill South by Southwest Elevation

Location: The Gristmill is located at the northeast corner of the Cannonsburgh village along the Town Creek nearest to the bridge.

Historical Context: The Gristmill is part of Cannonsburgh Village, an open-air museum that represents life in Tennessee from the 1830s to the 1930s. The mill serves as an educational tool, demonstrating the process of grinding grain and the importance of mills in early American communities. The mill in the village is a scaled-down reproduction of a 19th-century mill, based on Elam's Mill which once stood by the nearby Stones River. The 150-year-old machinery, sourced from an abandoned mill in northern Alabama, includes an overshot wheel that uses water flowing over its top to generate motion. A deep well, still located behind the blacksmith shop, provides the water that powers the mill today. When the mill is in operation a noticeable sulfur odor from the underground water permeates the air. The mill includes the original grindstones, which are preserved in the building.

Overall Structure: The Gristmill is a front-gable, two-story structure with a covered front porch. It has wood siding and shutters. Typical of early American gristmills, the mill is equipped with an overshot water wheel. Water from the nearby well flows over the top of the wheel, causing it to turn and generate power to operate the mill's machinery. Housed inside the mill is the machinery, which includes grindstones and other equipment used for grinding grain into flour. The window's wood shutters can be closed to protect the

interior from harsh weather or opened to let in fresh air and light.

Preservation and Restoration: Compared to the 2010 report (see Appendix A), the condition of the Gristmill has improved. In 2010 the building had mold growing on the porch roof and in 2024 the roof appears to be free of mold. Erosion on the north side of the mill, along the Town Creek, is still a concern. On the back of the building (north side) the top window is missing one of its shutters. There is a little bit of moss growing on the southwest side of the building. The siding is damaged and there are visible holes and gaps in the siding that can be an entrance point for birds and other animals to enter the building. The wood siding needs to be treated as it is discolored from time and weather.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Replace missing window shutter.
- Fix the holes and spaces in the wood siding using epoxy.



North Elevation: Missing Window Shutter



East Elevation: Damaged Siding



West Elevation: Damaged Siding



East Elevation: Mold Growth



West Elevation: Damaged Siding

Visitor Center & Gift Shop



Visitor Center & Gift Shop, Northeast Elevation

Location: The Visitor Center & Gift Shop is located outside the fenced village at the main entrance to the Cannonsburgh village.

Historical Context: This log structure was originally a house; it still has its front porch that takes up the entire width of the façade, rear breezeway, and bathhouse. The building was moved to Cannonsburgh from Lascassas Pike in northeastern Rutherford County and housed the Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce until 1997. In 1998, it was converted into the Cannonsburgh Village Visitor Center and Gift Shop.

Overall Structure: This building was constructed from hand-hewn logs, showcasing the traditional craftsmanship of early 19th-century settlers. This historic hall-and-parlor log building used logs that were fitted together using half dovetail joints, which provides both durability and historical accuracy. The long front porch spans the width of the building and serves as a welcoming space for visitors. The porch is supported by sturdy wood posts and features a simple, functional design. The building is a two-story structure with a side-gabled roof. The structure has an exterior chimney made of stone located on the south side of the building. Inside, the building maintains its historical ambiance with exposed log walls and wooden floors. At the rear of the building, there is a bathhouse. While the building retains its historical integrity, it has been adapted to serve contemporary purposes as evidenced by the HVAC system and the wheelchair ramp seen at the rear of the building.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Cover HVAC system with screen or vent.
- Repair or replace the chinking and daubing.
- Remove moss and mold from logs.
- Fill in decayed cavities with epoxy to strengthen walls and notching.



Southwest Elevation: HVAC System Visible



Northwest Elevation: Rotted Logs with Mold and Moss Growth



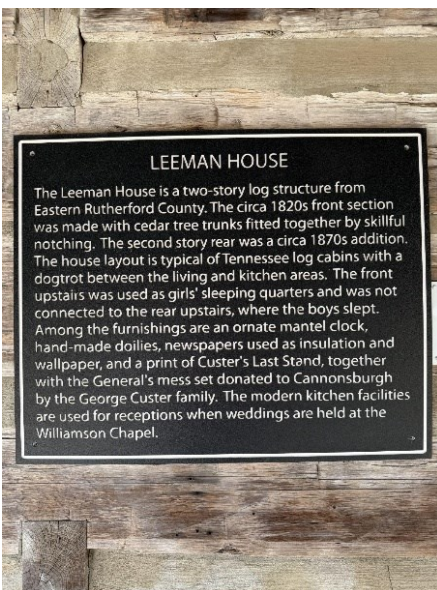
Northwest Elevation: Chinking and Daubing Damage

Issues in Exterior Interpretation

Cannonsburgh Village exemplifies what rural life was like in Tennessee in the 19th-century. As a curated experience that creates an imagined historical setting, the village attracts visitors keen on learning about the past. A notable feature of the village is its interpretative markers—plaques affixed to various structures and buildings. While these markers are intended to provide context and information about the historical significance of the structures, they can also pose significant challenges in the field of historic preservation. This section will explore how such interpretative markers can be detrimental to the preservation of historic integrity and authenticity while proposing sustainable alternatives that respect both the structures and the context in which they exist.

One of the primary concerns regarding interpretative markers at Cannonsburgh Village is their potential physical impact on the historic buildings that inhabit the site. The common practice of affixing plaques to the walls, particularly those constructed from aged wood, raises serious concerns about structural integrity. The act of screwing these markers into surfaces can lead to long-term damage, as the delicate nature of older materials makes them particularly susceptible to injury. This process can result in unsightly holes that mar the visual appeal of the heritage structures, compromising the aesthetic integrity that is often a crucial aspect of a historic site. Moreover, the act of attachment can weaken key load-bearing elements, increasing the risk of structural failure over time. With prolonged exposure to the elements, these interpretative markers may further catalyze chemical reactions with the original materials, accelerating weathering and deterioration. As a result, the longevity and preservation of these invaluable sites may be jeopardized, raising essential questions about the balance between education and preservation in historical contexts.

Interpretative markers often aim for brevity and simplicity to convey complex histories efficiently. However, this can lead to oversimplification or misinterpretation of crucial historical facts. Nuanced stories regarding social, economic, and cultural aspects are frequently lost in the quest for quick comprehension. For example, the marker for the Windlass Well provides a physical description and its family-centered use but does not explain what a “windlass” well is. Visitors may leave with an uncertain understanding of history, which can perpetuate incomplete narratives about 19th-century rural southern life.



Interpretative marker at the Leeman House, screwed onto the wooden exterior

Considering that these plaques are already affixed to the historic buildings, immediate removal is not necessary. Periodic check-ups on the condition of the surrounding wood surfaces, however, is recommended to detect possible fissures that could spread from the screw holes. If any are detected, remove the plaque and fill in the holes with epoxy and sand smooth.

For future signage, consider more sustainable alternatives. These alternatives should not only prioritize the preservation of historic values but also enhance the educational experiences available to visitors. Emphasizing eco-friendly and culturally sensitive methods can provide richer educational opportunities while fostering a deeper appreciation for history among visitors.



Interpretative marker at the Windlass Well

One of the most effective and innovative alternatives for enhancing visitor engagement is using digital interpretative tools, particularly mobile applications. Imagine visitors arriving at a historical site and being able to download an app specifically designed for that location. This app could harness the power of Quick Response (QR) code technology, allowing users to scan codes placed discreetly near various structures to access a wealth of information. These QR codes could serve as gateways to an interactive experience beyond traditional signage. When scanned, they could provide detailed historical narratives, architectural insights, or even personal anecdotes from individuals who lived in a given era. This would enrich the visitor's understanding and foster a more personal connection to the site. The app could utilize augmented reality features, overlaying historical images, descriptions, or animations onto the real-world views of the buildings as seen through the device's camera. For instance, visitors could point their smartphones at a crumbling wall and see what it looked like decades ago, complete with corresponding historical events in

that spot. Cannonsburgh Village has employed QR codes already. However, to fully realize the potential of this technology, the QR codes must be functional and easily scannable. Unfortunately, not all QR codes at historical sites are functional. Furthermore, a web presence that houses this information will need to be maintained by staff or outsourced.

Rather than attaching plaques directly to the historic buildings, the village could opt for elegantly designed free-standing interpretative panels placed thoughtfully at key locations throughout Cannonsburgh Village. These panels would be curated to blend seamlessly with the village's charming aesthetic, showcasing beautifully crafted designs that echo the vernacular rural architectural style. Each panel would offer in-depth educational content, providing visitors rich historical context and engaging narratives about the village's heritage. (One company to consider is Pannier Graphics, which has created outdoor signage for South Cumberland State Park and Oak Ridge, among other projects.) By keeping these informative displays separate from the historic structures, this strategy minimizes the risk of physical damage to buildings. It could enhance the overall visual harmony of Cannonsburgh Village as a cohesive historical site.

Considerations for Use of Exterior Space

Throughout the years, Cannonsburgh has hosted many events at the site. Harvest Days, for example, showcases handmade crafts, hayrides, music, dancing, food trucks, and blacksmith demonstrations. During the summer, the village hosts children's camps that focus on pioneer life, with arts, crafts, and living history demonstrations. These events are well-received by the community and should be continued. To attract a wider audience, programming could be expanded to include, as a suggestion, a "Movie Under the Stars" event beyond the summer months. This could tie in with heritage-themed months such as African American history in February and women's history in March. Other events, such as Story Time, Coloring and Story Time, and Scavenger Hunts, could also tie in with the stories of how African Americans and women helped shape the rural landscape of Rutherford County in the 19th through the early 20th centuries.

In order to accommodate events and patron activities in the outdoor spaces of the village, however, special consideration must be paid to how users actually are able to move among points of interest. Functionality and the presentation of history influence guest experiences and revenue opportunities. The version of history chosen for display by Murfreesboro Parks & Recreation plays a significant role in Cannonsburgh's community engagement. For example, digital visitors are unable to experience the entirety of the park. Cannonsburgh Village's website features a link to a detailed description of the World's Largest Cedar Bucket. However, a complete narrative of other structures remains absent from this webpage. While many park-goers may wish to visit Cannonsburgh solely to marvel at the World's Largest Cedar Bucket, others may wish to experience the historical representation of rural 19th-century Middle Tennessee. Guests from other states or countries looking for an adventure in Middle Tennessee will be unable to gauge the true nature of Cannonsburgh's offerings with the current webpage layout. By adding links to each of the other structures with photographs and simple descriptions, Murfreesboro Parks & Recreation can increase website traffic which can lead to an increase in physical movement throughout the park (see link to Interactive Map on p. 61).

Although the presentation of history affects participation, the most influential factor that can impact the way visitors learn history on-site has to do with the way they move through the park and whether they can access buildings, spaces, and the stories presented. Currently, Cannonsburgh is arranged in an asymmetrical loop with prominent buildings along the outside edge of the loop's bend (apart from the pavilion which is situated at its center). Since no path exists to encourage visitation of all structures, patrons must travel either clockwise from the McKnight Building along the pea-gravel walkway of the loop and end at the Blacksmith's Shop or counterclockwise the opposite direction. The Tractor Barn, outhouse and smokehouse behind Leeman House, and the World's Largest Cedar Bucket are all outside the loop and must be reached via extra sidewalks branching off from the main loop. If patrons leave the main loop to view other areas of the park, they must backtrack to experience everything offered or they may opt to miss it entirely as nothing exists to keep their attention along the path.

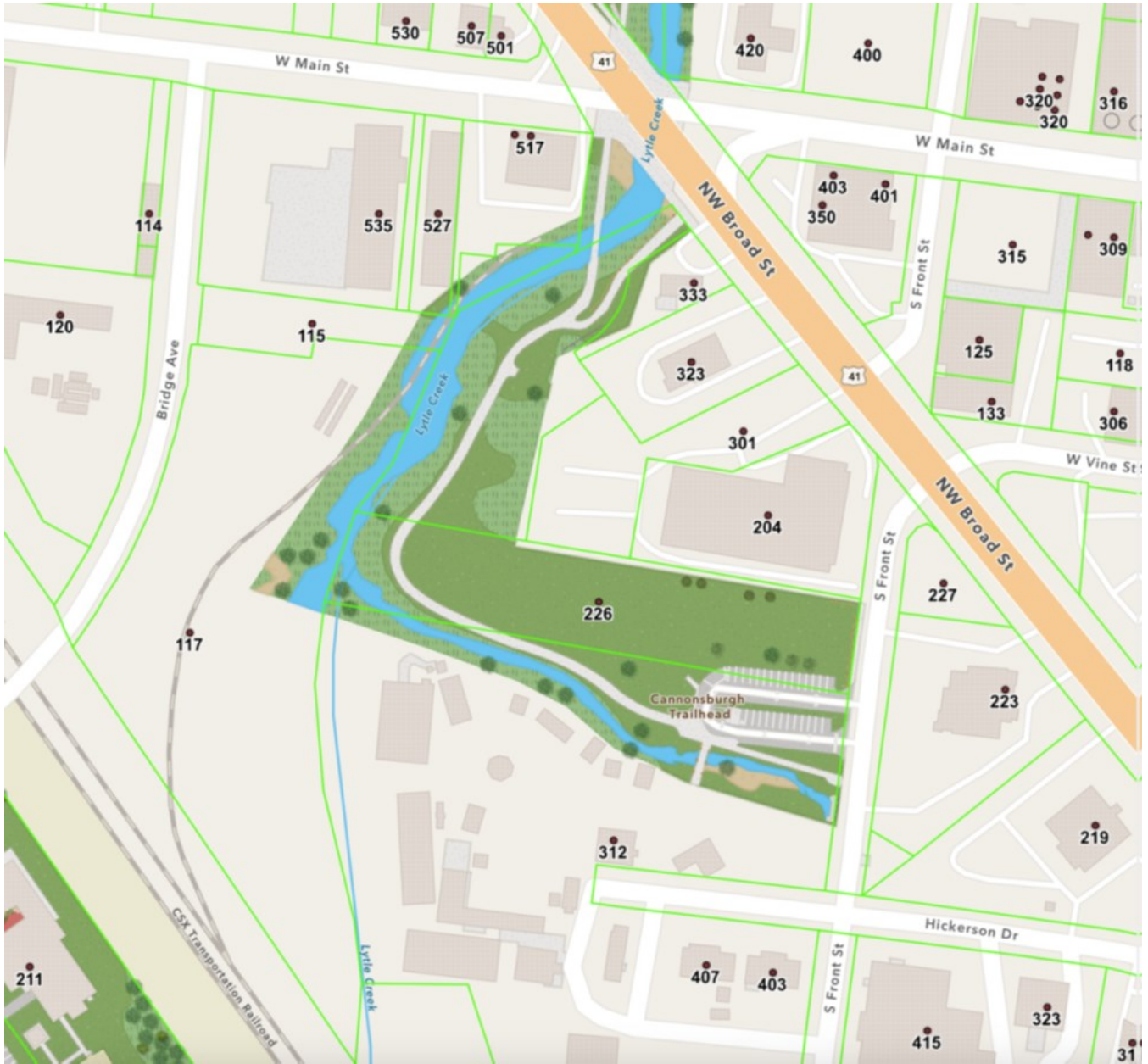
To combat this issue, Murfreesboro Parks & Recreation can opt to add only one entrance into the park and erect directional signs instructing patrons on which direction to travel. The current "walking tour" brochure given to patrons provides a guided route in a counterclockwise direction along the loop. However, not every visitor checks in at the Visitor Center to get a brochure, nor does it capture every structure Cannonsburgh has to offer. The entrance beside the McKnight Building does not follow the same route as the

brochure, but makes more sense. Patrons can travel around the McKnight Building to visit the Doctor's Office, General Store, Garage, and Tractor Barn but then come back to interact with Village Loom House and Williamson Chapel before proceeding into C.N. Hayes Museum and continuing along the route. By placing interpretive wayside panels along this route, it would allow engagement with the landscape between structures and ensure patrons follow the designated path and make backtracking more sensible. Panels may dig deeper into the interpretation of the landscape such as vegetation, the creek, etc.

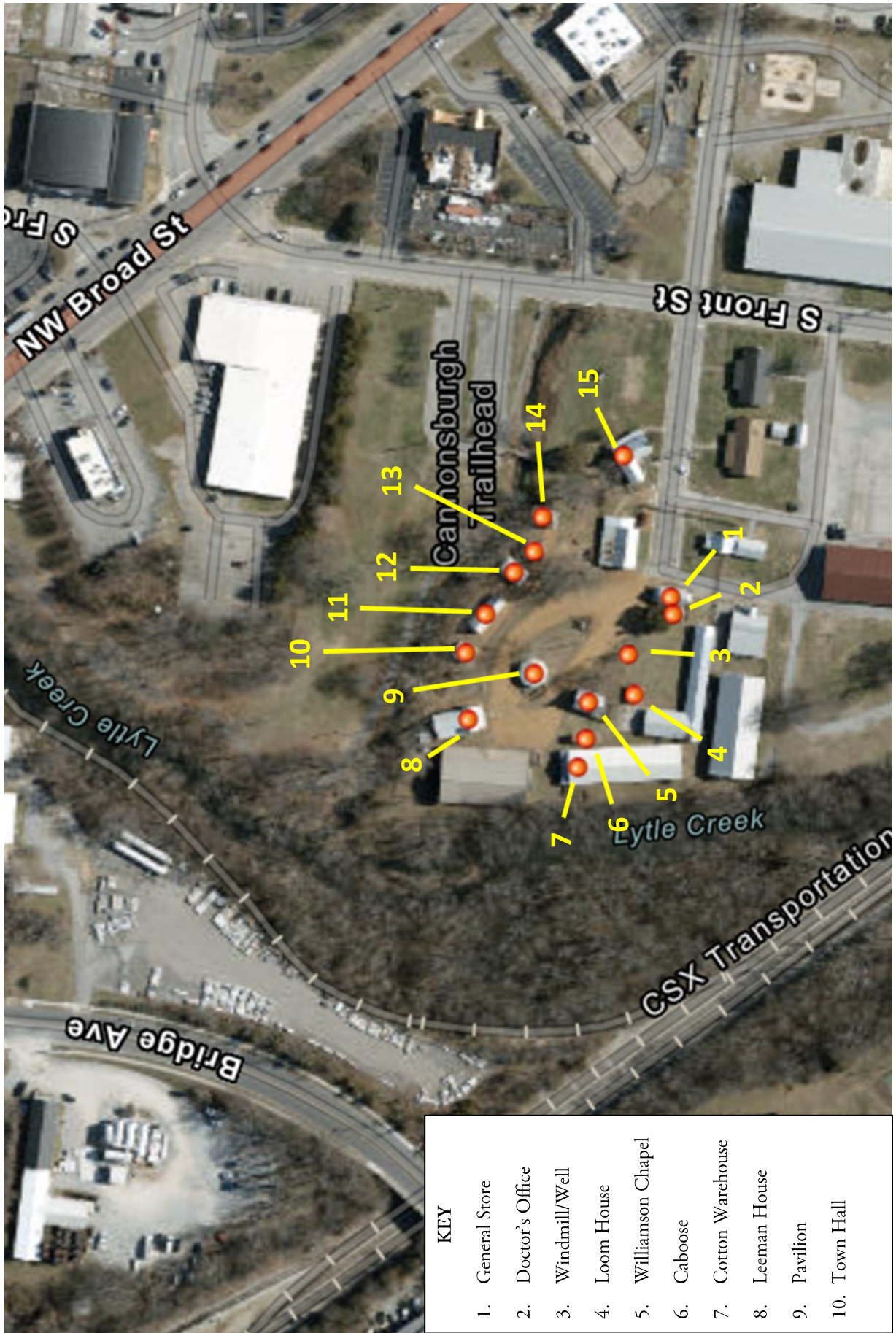
The last area of concern for Cannonsburgh Village is accessibility. The pea-gravel walkway within the center of the loop poses serious ADA concerns and hinders flow throughout the park. Patrons with limited mobility, such as the elderly or vision impaired, may slip on the loose gravel underfoot. Wheelchairs may also experience increased difficulty traveling throughout the park as paved walkways are quite narrow and maneuvering the gravel can be extremely strenuous and challenging. Only four structures, the General Store, Williamson Chapel, the Pavilion, and C.N. Hayes Museum, contain ADA accessible ramps (one of which is in serious disrepair). This severely limits patron engagement with the entirety of the park as most buildings require ascending steps to view their interior displays. Other structures inaccessible to patrons with mobility difficulties include the outhouse and smokehouse behind Leeman House. The terrain leading to both structures is uneven and can cause slips and falls. By adding more ADA accessibility, Murfreesboro Parks & Recreation can expand their guest experience as Cannonsburgh Village becomes a more inclusive space.

Unfortunately, the current topography of Cannonsburgh Village hinders adequate and inclusive patron participation. Adding ADA ramps for several structures and replacing the pea-gravel with a material less dangerous can aid in inclusion. For functionality purposes, patrons would benefit from a structured route where interaction with all buildings and structures were possible.

Rutherford County Property Assessor Map



SITE MAP — Interactive version available at <https://arcg.is/00mrby0>



The History of Cannonsburgh Village

Americans have a deep-rooted affinity for celebrations, a sentiment exemplified vividly on the Fourth of July in every town square nationwide. Independence Day pulsates with a vibrant tapestry of music, a variety of food, long-winded speeches, and dazzling fireworks displays, embodying the essence of American festivity. In a letter to his wife Abigail, John Adams passionately endorsed the idea of an annual anniversary, envisioning a spectacle replete with pomp, parades, games, and illuminations spanning the continent. Even amidst the passing of two founding fathers, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, the United States Jubilee commemorated 50 years of nationhood, underscoring the enduring spirit of celebration that defines American identity.¹ The Centennial celebration in 1876, situated in the shadow of the Civil War's unresolved complexities, further exemplified this indomitable spirit as the American people rallied to honor their nation's legacy despite challenges. Those monumental challenges during the Bicentennial were the continued integration of American schools, the American Indian Movement (AIM), and the fresh wounds of the Vietnam War. Historian Robert Hartje eloquently captured this essence, describing how Americans celebrated a century of achievement and cherished their profound connection to a past that shaped their values and aspirations—a sentiment that echoed resoundingly during the Bicentennial for most.

When the 1976 Bicentennial rolled around, the United States was once again in a state of uncertainty. The country was led by President Gerald Ford, whom the American people did not elect, since he came to office due to the political crimes committed by his predecessor, Richard Nixon. The country was still coming to terms with the Vietnam War, which created divisions in society that were televised across the nation. The Bicentennial of 1976, on the other hand, brought communities together in festive revelry. It became more than just a commemoration of historical events; it reaffirmed American unity, resilience, and pride for some, while others remained silenced. The nation reflected on its journey through exhibitions, parades, and myriad cultural expressions, acknowledging both triumphs and challenges while renewing its commitment to the principles enshrined in the Declaration of Independence. The Bicentennial rekindled a sense of national identity and sparked a renewed interest in American history and patriotism, leaving an indelible mark on the cultural landscape. However, the celebration did fall short of recognizing the Civil Rights movement that had just occurred a decade earlier. During the celebration, the recognition of the contributions of African Americans to the Revolution was limited. However, African Americans took it upon themselves to recognize their contributions. Such is the case in the song lyrics: "First

¹ Robert Hartje, "Celebrating the Bicentennial: "Lessons" from Past Centennials," *The Historian*, 37, no.3 (May 1975): 392.

man to die. For the flag we now hold high, Was a black man" in the 1976 song "Black Man" by Stevie Wonder, remembering Crispus Attucks, the first casualty at the Boston Massacre.²

The 1970s marked a transformative period for the women's movement, as women increasingly advocated for equal rights and opportunities beyond traditional domestic roles. The establishment of the President's Commission on the Status of Women in 1961, the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, and the formation of the National Organization for Women in 1966 were pivotal in driving this momentum. Historian Gerda Lerner also played a crucial role in shaping the field of Women's History during this era, before which historical study was mainly limited to great men and wars. This was a time when women were not only making their voices heard, but they were also finding their place in the United States's past. Jennifer Helgren explains in her article, "Finding 'Hidden Heroines': Girls' Organizations, Public History, and the 1976 American Bicentennial," which explored the role of girl organizations during the national celebrations, how the Bicentennial provided a unique platform for this historical shift:

The Bicentennial invited girls to play with history on a grand scale at the same moment that women's history and identity politics found acknowledgement among professional and popular historians... Girls in the 1970s grew up with the lesson that her-story mattered. Girls' participation in the Bicentennial moment, then, particularly their advocacy for multiple competing historical narratives, gave educational and popular cultural legitimacy to these shifts.³ These efforts underscored the growing recognition of diverse narratives and the importance of integrating women's voices into the broader historical dialogue.

In this contemplative moment, attention turns to Tennessee's distinctive role in American history. Embracing its identity as the sixteenth state to join the Union, Tennessee was not one of the original thirteen colonies, but it emerged as a vital frontier territory that facilitated the westward expansion of early colonists. Its rugged landscapes and untamed wilderness beckoned pioneers and settlers drawn by the promise of new beginnings and adventure, albeit at the expense of Native American populations displaced in the process. Tennessee's narrative intertwines with tales of legendary folk heroes like David Crockett, whose roots in the state's frontier epitomize the spirit of American exploration and independence. The frontier that defined Tennessee's early days expanded colonial influence into the western reaches through speculation of lands that were already home to many indigenous peoples.

As the United States approached its Bicentennial, there was a marked shift in historical scholarship toward grassroots or social history, with a greater emphasis on the lives of everyday people rather than solely the elite or influential figures. This movement sought to illuminate localized histories,

² "Crispus Attucks-Boston National Historical Park." National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/people/crispus-attucks.htm>.

³ Jennifer Helgren, "Finding 'Hidden Heroines': Girls' Organizations, Public History, and the 1976 American Bicentennial," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 43 No. 1 (February 2021) 105.

offering fresh perspectives on broader historical narratives such as the American Revolution. In Tennessee, this shift manifested through the Tennessee American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, which aimed to connect the state's history to its people. The commission's initiatives focused on three key areas: heritage, which encouraged Tennesseans of all ethnic backgrounds to explore their roots and reflect on the meaning of America; festivals that united communities in celebrating 200 years of freedom from Great Britain; and horizon projects that aimed to improve community life "through impactful local endeavors."

In James C. Kelly's "The Bicentennial and Tennessee History," the author highlights a wide range of projects initiated across Tennessee in honor of the Bicentennial. These efforts included producing high-quality documentaries on Tennessee history, spearheaded by the Tennessee American Revolution Bicentennial Commission (TARBC), and multimedia projects such as slide and sound programs centered on Knoxville's history. The Bicentennial celebrations also inspired the publication of historical booklets, reprints of essential texts, and outdoor pageants that brought to life pivotal moments and figures in Tennessee's past, such as James Robertson and David Crockett. Significantly, the Office of Black Studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, organized symposia on Black history in Tennessee, marking an inclusive and multifaceted approach to commemorating the state's rich heritage.⁴

In anticipation of the Bicentennial, the *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* published James K. Huhta's article, "Tennessee and the American Revolution Bicentennial," in 1972. Huhta called upon the Tennessee American Revolution Bicentennial Commission to seize this historical moment and illuminate the state's overlooked contributions to the American Revolution. He believed the Bicentennial could draw national attention to Tennessee's role, urging a deeper exploration of its history. Huhta's article became a guiding force, offering a framework for commemorating Tennessee's involvement in the Revolution and calling for a more inclusive and thoughtful celebration of the nation's 200th anniversary.⁵

The evolving historical perspectives and the momentum of the Bicentennial led to the creation of Cannonsburgh Village, a unique concept, unlike any other historical attraction in Murfreesboro. The history of area as seen through Oaklands Mansion and Stones River Battlefield showcased antebellum and Civil War history. Cannonsburgh aimed to offer an immersive experience through carefully reconstructed settings of pioneer era and beyond. It symbolized Tennessee's resilience, innovation, and community spirit, offering visitors a tangible connection to the past. Since its opening in 1976, Cannonsburgh Village has become a well loved local history site. It plays a role in preserving Tennessee's heritage while reinforcing what was considered historically important in 1974.

⁴ James C. Kelly, "The Bicentennial and Tennessee History," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 36 no.2 (Summer 1977) 229–230.

⁵ James K. Huhta, "Tennessee and the American Revolution Bicentennial," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 36 no.4 (Winter 1972) 303.

Cannonsburgh Village was the pet project of then Mayor W.H. Westbrook and County Executive Ben Hall McFarlin. The name pays tribute to an early chapter in Rutherford County's history, though it's rooted more in intention than reality. Back in 1811, as Tennessee leaders debated the establishment of a new county seat, Newton Cannon, a young legislator who would later become governor, proposed naming the settlement "Cannonsburg" after himself. It was a name briefly floated for a town that hadn't even been built yet. However, that idea didn't last long. Just weeks later, Cannon introduced an amendment to change the name to Murfreesborough in honor of Revolutionary War hero Col. Hardy Murfree, a decision that quickly gained legislative approval. While the name Cannonsburg never officially took hold back then, the revival of it in 1976 for the reconstructed pioneer village in Murfreesboro was a nod to that short-lived moment in the town's naming history. The village's name honors both Cannon's role in the early plans and the legacy of local identity tied to place, politics, and memory.⁶

The Cannonsburgh Village project garnered national recognition as a standout initiative during the Bicentennial. It secured a \$75,000 award from the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission (ARBC) and earned a place among the top sixteen Bicentennial projects in the United States.⁷ With these funds, historic buildings were relocated from across middle Tennessee to create an architectural tapestry representing middle Tennessee heritage. Its various structures and artifacts connect to Tennessee's rich history, honoring the state's legacy while fostering an appreciation for the past. As noted by Mabel Pittard in her 1985 history of Rutherford County, no local money was used for the Cannonsburgh project.⁸

Cannonsburgh Village sits on land that once made up a community known as The Bottoms, a low-lying area southwest of the Public Square in Murfreesboro. After the Civil War, The Bottoms developed into a working-class neighborhood where African American families lived and nearby industries operated. Due to its location where Town Creek flows into Lytle Creek, the area was prone to frequent flooding, especially during heavy rains, which led to its nickname. Despite the hardships, residents created homes using whatever materials they could find, though most lacked basic utilities like running water or electricity. Town Creek was later diverted underground and still flows near the village today. The National Housing Act of 1949 brought about Urban Renewal projects that displaced many families in The Bottoms, allowing for commercial development along Broad Street. Though the area is now home to Cannonsburgh Village, its layered history reflects the resilience of a community that once stood there. In recent years, Cannonsburgh staff have made an effort to include the history of The Bottoms. According to Assistant Facility Coordinator Mary Beth Nevills,

⁶ Greg Tucker, "Newton Cannon and a Cannonsburgh Fish Tale," <https://rutherfordtnhistory.org/newton-cannon-cannonsburgh-fish-tale/>.

⁷ Stacey Graham and Michael Thomas Gavin, "Preservation Needs and Development Opportunities for Cannonsburgh Village Murfreesboro, Tennessee," The Center for Historic Preservation, June 2010. 5.

⁸ Mabel Pittard *Rutherford County*, (Memphis, 1985) 26. Stacey Graham and Michael Thomas Gavin, "Preservation Needs and Development Opportunities for Cannonsburgh Village Murfreesboro, Tennessee," The Center for Historic Preservation, June 2010.5.

“I have added panel signs that I borrowed from the Rutherford County Archives. They are in the School House and cover the story of The Bottoms. My goal is to include this information in the museum once it is restored and redone. I plan to add additional interpretation to the site as we are working to refresh the buildings and grounds.”⁹

Work on the village began in 1974 to clear industrial buildings along Front Street. Some structures, like a cotton gin and brick warehouse owned by the C.N. Haynes family, were preserved and integrated into the village. By its opening in June 1976, Cannonsburgh Village featured eighteen buildings and structures, most of which still stand today.¹⁰ A 1976 planning report outlined the original concept for Cannonsburgh, emphasizing preservation, education, and heritage tourism based on local historic resources, goals that continue to shape the village's mission today.¹¹

Cannonsburgh Village includes several historic structures that were carefully relocated to the site, blending elements from across Tennessee and the broader South. Among them is the small white chapel now used for weddings, which originally stood as the Tipperary School in District 3 of Lavergne from 1915 to 1925. Initially called the Gambill School, it was renamed after students took a liking to the popular wartime tune, “It’s a Long Way to Tipperary.” The building, once a simple subscription school near the railroad, was donated by Mrs. Robert Carrothers in 1976 and moved to Murfreesboro. Since then, it’s been transformed into a picturesque chapel with a steeple, an antique organ, and pews. Its stained-glass windows, imported from a church in Germany, have drawn visitors from abroad. Though its purpose has changed over the years, the building remains a striking example of how Cannonsburgh village can not only preserve history but also adapt buildings for new use and even generate revenue for the overall site.¹²

Among the many historical structures that now make up Cannonsburgh Village, several stand out for their unique stories and local significance. The Gordon School, a rustic one-room log building, is named after J.P. “Pet” Gordon, a long-time magistrate and school board member who represented Rutherford County in the state legislature during the 1920s. Interestingly, the building was never originally a school—it began as a corn crib on Gordon’s own land. Nearby, visitors will find the Telephone House, which was moved from Rockvale. It once housed a widow and her daughter, the former working as the community’s telephone operator, available day and night to manually connect calls. In 2013, quick action from Murfreesboro firefighters saved the building after a fire broke out, likely from smoldering mulch near the foundation. Another preserved structure is the University House, a classic dog-trot home that once stood on what is now Middle Tennessee State University’s

⁹ Nancy De Gennaro, *The Daily News Journal*, November 27, 2016. Nikki Foshee, “The Bottoms,” *Momentous Murfreesboro*, <https://momentous-murfreesboro.mtsu.edu/items/show/16>. Interview with Mary Beth Nevills, March 11, 2025.

¹⁰ Stacey Graham and Michael Thomas Gavin, “Preservation Needs and Development Opportunities for Cannonsburgh Village Murfreesboro, Tennessee,” *The Center for Historic Preservation*, June 2010. 5-6.

¹¹ “The Museum!” *Daily News Journal*, [n.d.], 1976.

¹² “Cannonsburgh Chapel-Tipperary School, 1915-1925,” <https://rutherfordtnhistory.org/cannonsburgh-chapel-tipperary-school-1915-1925/>. Nancy De Gennaro, *Daily News Journal*, Monday, April 20, 2015.

campus. It reflects the architecture of early settler life, with a breezeway running through the middle to cool the home naturally. Cannonsburgh's Town Hall also holds symbolic value—it honors Mayor Westbrooks, whose enthusiasm for local history helped bring the entire village to life.¹³

Cannonsburgh Village isn't just a collection of preserved buildings—it also carries with it pieces of local folklore, most notably through its steel bridge that spans Town Creek. This bridge, originally from Smyrna, brings along the eerie legend of the "Monkey Woman Bridge." The story tells of a mysterious, half-human, half-monkey creature who would appear late at night to disturb couples parked near a secluded cemetery. According to local historian Marty Luffman, the tale has long been part of Smyrna's oral tradition. While the details vary, most versions include the creature crawling up the arm of an unsuspecting person and causing them to frantically slap the side of their car to shake her off. Over time, this became a ritual for those crossing the bridge—more out of tradition than fear. Though the legend lacks physical evidence, the story was once taken seriously enough that respected journalist Ed Bell reportedly investigated it in the 1950s, claiming something jumped on his car. The tale only deepened when construction crews, tasked with removing the bridge, supposedly found human remains nearby. Rather than demolishing it, Jesse Messick, a key figure in Murfreesboro's cultural life, arranged for the bridge to be relocated to Cannonsburgh, preserving not just the bridge, but also a haunting piece of Middle Tennessee lore.¹⁴

An iconic attraction at Cannonsburgh Village is the World's Largest Cedar Bucket. Its storied history dates back to 1887 when the Red Cedar Woodenware Company in Rutherford County built it, originally as a promotional gimmick. The 1,566-gallon bucket traveled to significant fairs, including the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis.¹⁵ After being partially destroyed by arson in 2005, the Rutherford County Blacksmith Association meticulously rebuilt and returned it to Cannonsburgh in 2011. Today, this unique artifact stands as a nod to the era of roadside attractions and remains a beloved highlight for visitors.¹⁶

While Cannonsburgh Village is a well-known tourist attraction in Murfreesboro and Tennessee, it also holds deep significance for the local community. Many Rutherford County organizations use Cannonsburgh as a downtown meeting place and event site, including the Murfreesboro/Rutherford Art League, the Rutherford County Blacksmith Association, the Antique Auto Club, the Jaycees, and the Lions Club, which are all headquartered in various buildings on the property. The MTSU

¹³ Nancy De Gennaro, "Cannonsburgh Village to celebrate Pioneer Days," *Daily News Journal*, Monday, April 20, 2015, :Cannonsburgh Building Damaged by Fire," *The Murfreesboro Post*, June 1, 2013

¹⁴ Eric Goodwin, "A piece of Smyrna Folklore: The Legend of 'Monkey Woman Bridge,'" *MTSU Sidelines*. October 11, 2017.

¹⁵ "Bucket held a bit of history," *Daily News Journal*, June 21, 2005.

¹⁶ "World's Largest Cedar Bucket" <https://www.murfreesborotn.gov/2476/Worlds-Largest-Cedar-Bucket>.

Department of Agriculture also played a crucial role in establishing the Farm Implement Museum in 1982.¹⁷ The site is also known for hosting yearly events such as Pioneer Days and Harvest Days.

Cannonsburgh Village became much more than just a preserved pioneer settlement—it grew into a celebrated cultural hub, in large part due to its long-standing role as the home of the Uncle Dave Macon Days festival. This annual event drew crowds from all over to Murfreesboro, honoring the legacy of David Harrison Macon, one of the first stars of the Grand Ole Opry and a local folk icon.¹⁸

Uncle Dave Macon Days officially began in the late 1970s but was inspired by earlier local efforts like “Homespun Days,” which sought to rekindle interest in Murfreesboro’s historic square. What began as a small banjo competition on the courthouse steps evolved into a nationally recognized gathering that included championship dance contests and musical performances. The festival helped solidify Murfreesboro’s place on the map for folk and roots music, making Cannonsburgh Village more than just a historic site—it became a living, breathing celebration of Tennessee culture. Uncle Dave Macon Days moved to The Fountains at Gateway then to Shelbyville and is currently being held at Hop Springs on John Bragg Highway. While Cannonsburgh Village should be acknowledged for nurturing the festival so that it could grow beyond their capacity, the move has created a void at Cannonsburgh that needs to be filled by a new event with the same regional pull as Uncle Dave Macon Days.¹⁹

Over the years, Cannonsburgh Village has evolved, making updates as resources allowed. The fencing that now outlines much of the property wasn’t always there; it was built in stages, with the perimeter fence coming first and the entrance sections added gradually between 2006 and 2012. For a time, the museum had to close due to structural concerns, but repairs to the foundation and roof are expected to begin soon. One notable change involves the village’s “bucket jail,” which had been hidden behind fencing following an arson attempt but is now visible again after those barriers were removed. Ongoing maintenance is a constant effort. Each historic structure requires individual attention, especially when it comes to preventing water damage and weather-related wear. The team is currently gathering bids to re-chink the log cabins and hopes to complete that project by year’s end. Items in the collection, like the old tractors and the iconic cabooses, also need regular care, with the cabooses especially in need of restoration and improved access. New additions are also in progress, such as more benches around the village to encourage guests to relax, and recently planted trees meant to one day provide welcome shade. A chicken coop is also being added soon, bringing new life, and a bit of charm, to the grounds.²⁰

¹⁷ Stacey Graham and Michael Thomas Gavin, “Preservation Needs and Development Opportunities for Cannonsburgh Village Murfreesboro, Tennessee,” The Center for Historic Preservation, June 2010.9-10.

¹⁸ Susan Harber, “Banjo Icon has Roots in Rutherford County,” *The Daily News Journal*, July 2, 2018.

¹⁹ Gloria Shacklett Christy, “Jesse Messick – Founder of Uncle Dave Macon Days,” *Murfreesboro Post*, June 29, 2014.

²⁰ Interview with Mary Beth Nevills, March 11, 2025.

As we approach 2026, just two years from the nation's semi-quincentennial (250th) anniversary of independence, we also commemorate the semicentennial of the bicentennial celebrations and the founding of Cannonsburgh Village. When fifty years old, Cannonsburgh Village is poised for eligibility in the National Register of Historic Places, a designation that would profoundly enhance its protection and legacy. Achieving this prestigious status offers a vital opportunity to safeguard the village's cultural and historical significance for Tennesseans and visitors from around the globe. Such recognition would ensure Cannonsburgh Village remains a cherished landmark, allowing future generations to explore and appreciate Tennessee's rich heritage. Although many long-time citizens of Murfreesboro have cherished it over the years, insufficient investment in proper staffing and maintenance has resulted in ongoing preservation and interpretation challenges.



The "World's Largest Cedar Bucket"—built locally in 1887, destroyed by arson in 2005, and rebuilt in 2011—remains one of the favorite pieces of material culture in all of Cannonsburgh.

Grants

Some grants may be used for programming needs and others may be applied to brick-and-mortar projects. Grants are often competitive, so it is important to make sure your organization is grant-ready. The American Association of State and Local History suggests that you should begin with simple grant applications in your immediate area. Once you become comfortable applying for (and receiving) these types of grants, move on to the more complex grants. You should target each grant to its specific foundation or agency. It may be impossible to find one organization or agency that would fund all costs of restoration.

The grants listed below encompass opportunities from state, federal, and private organizations, all of which could benefit Cannonsburgh Village's unique offerings. The village's idyllic setting, complete with a nearby stream and walking trails, adds a park-like atmosphere that enhances its appeal. At its core, however, Cannonsburgh Village is more than an event space; it is a historic site that owes its creation to the 1976 Bicentennial celebration. Serving as both a museum and an educational hub, the village offers hands-on learning opportunities for visitors of all ages. This combination of cultural heritage, natural beauty, and educational significance positions Cannonsburgh Village as a prime candidate for a wide range of grant funding aimed at preservation, community engagement, and historical education.

MAJOR GRANTS

National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund

Funding is provided from Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas lease revenues, not tax dollars, and an amount is appropriated annually by Congress. Awards from the HPF are made to States, Tribes, Territories, local governments, and non-profits. The National Park Service's State, Tribal, Local, Plans & Grants Division manages the programs and grant awards funded by the HPF. Today, the fund is the primary Federal funding source for matching grants to State and Tribal historic preservation offices and other eligible recipients to pay for such things as surveys and repair of historic resources, training, nominations to the National Register of Historic Places, and grants to local jurisdictions for their preservation priorities. In short, the HPF makes preservation possible.

- <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservation/historic-preservation-fund.htm>
- <http://tn.gov/e cd/section/cdbg#sthash.6avMJpGT.dpuf>

Tennessee Department of Tourist Development: Tourism Enhancement Grant

Tourism is one of the largest industries and the most important economic drivers in Tennessee. This grant was developed to help communities improve their tourism assets and increase tourism related economic impact. These projects are being funded through the Tennessee Rural Economic Opportunity Act of 2016. Cannonsburgh could possibly use such a grant to promote itself as being a destination in the Nashville area.

- <https://industry.tnvacation.com/industryresourcestourism-grants-and-scholarships/tourism-enhancement>

Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation Local Parks and Recreation Fund (LPRF) Grants

The Local Parks and Recreation Fund (LPRF) provides grants to eligible local government entities for the purchase of lands for parks, natural areas, greenways, and recreation facilities. The funds may also be used for trail development and capital projects in parks, natural areas, and greenways. At least 60 percent of the funds allocated will go to municipal governments as authorized by TCA 67-4-409. All grant projects must be on publicly owned land. Since Cannonsburgh is administered through the Murfreesboro Parks & Recreation Department, it should be eligible for this grant. Possible ideas could be connecting the pathways near Cannonsburgh more and in using Town Creek as a more of an accessible feature for the site.

- <https://www.tn.gov/environment/about-tdec/grants/recreation/lprf.html>

Tennessee Special Event Fund

The purpose of the Tennessee Special Event Fund is to provide monetary resources for bidding on and securing major events capable of generating \$10,000,000 or more in direct economic impact or \$1,000,000 in state and local tax generation unless determined to be an Underrepresented Event Location. The Fund demonstrates a monetary commitment on the state level to attract and maintain high-profile events to call Tennessee home. This incentive-based grant program allows Tennessee a competitive advantage in securing events that promise measurable performance outcomes, including tangible economic impact to communities. Cannonburgh's past as a concert venue could make it eligible for this fund. Cannonsburgh succeeding in growing Uncle Dave Macon Days to the extent that it had to move due to its size, so there is evidence that that the site can be used that way again.

- <https://industry.tnvacation.com/tennessee-special-event-fund>

National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Grants

Our Town is the NEA's creative placemaking grants program. Through project-based funding, the program supports activities that integrate arts, culture, and design into local efforts that strengthen communities over the long term. Our Town projects engage a wide range of local stakeholders in efforts to advance local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes in communities. Competitive projects are responsive to unique local conditions, develop meaningful and substantive engagement in communities, center equity, advance artful lives, and lay the groundwork for long-term systems change. The Cannonsburgh site is living history that is intertwined with the arts. The site was once used for concerts and story tellers and in addition it also houses artisans, the local art league, and the local blacksmith association.

- <https://www.arts.gov/grants/our-town>

National Endowment for the Arts Public Heritage Grant

The Public Humanities Projects program supports projects that bring the ideas of the humanities to life for general audiences through public programming. Projects must engage humanities scholarships to analyze significant themes in disciplines such as history, literature, ethics, and art history. Awards support projects that are intended to reach broad and diverse public audiences in non-classroom settings in the United States. Projects should engage with ideas that are accessible to the general public and employ appealing interpretive formats. This would be an ideal grant for Cannonsburgh and what it does for the community, especially if it were to follow suggestions from the Center for Historic Preservation. The living history of Cannonsburgh along with its in-house artisans show that it would be a good match for this grant.

- <https://www.neh.gov/grants/public/public-humanities-projects>

Tennessee Arts Commission Arts Build Communities Grant

The Arts Build Communities (ABC) grant program is designed to provide support for arts projects that broaden access to arts experiences, address community quality of life issues through the arts, or enhance the sustainability of asset-based cultural enterprises. ABC funds may be used to provide innovative arts experiences that are new or unfamiliar to community residents; offer arts programs that are designed to help affect positive change in community social issues; develop arts programming that strengthens social networks through community engagement; undertake cultural arts initiatives that enhance a community's identity and/or economic development; and offer training that helps experienced or emerging artists/arts administrators develop entrepreneurial skills or

innovative strategies for building sustainability. This grant would be appropriate for the crafts that are taught and made on site as well as its history as a concert venue.

- [https://tnartscommission.org/grants/arts-build-communities-grant/#:%7E:text=Fiscal%20Year%202023%3A%20August%2016%2C%202022%20%E2%80%93%20June%2015%2C%202023&text=Objectives-.The%20Arts%20Build%20Communities%20\(ABC\)%20grant%20program%20is%20designed%20to,of%20asset%2Dbased%20cultural%20enterprises](https://tnartscommission.org/grants/arts-build-communities-grant/#:%7E:text=Fiscal%20Year%202023%3A%20August%2016%2C%202022%20%E2%80%93%20June%2015%2C%202023&text=Objectives-.The%20Arts%20Build%20Communities%20(ABC)%20grant%20program%20is%20designed%20to,of%20asset%2Dbased%20cultural%20enterprises)

U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services

Inspire! Grants for Small Museums is a special initiative of the Museums for America program. It is designed to support small museums of all disciplines in project-based efforts to serve the public through exhibitions, educational/interpretive programs, digital learning resources, policy development and institutional planning, technology enhancements, professional development, community outreach, audience development, and/or collections management, curation, care, and conservation. Inspire! has three project categories: Lifelong Learning, Institutional Capacity, and Collections Stewardship and Access. The small museum at Cannonsburgh is in desperate need of modernization and general updating. This grant would allow expansion of the museum to make it more inclusive of the people and voices from the pioneer days that are underrepresented. [Please note that some of these grants, while available at the time of student writing, may no longer be available at this time.]

- <https://www.imls.gov/grants/available/inspire-grants-smallmuseums>

National Endowment for the Humanities Public Humanities Projects

Project topics may be international, national, regional, or local in focus, but locally focused projects should address topics that are of regional or national relevance by drawing connections to broad themes or historical questions. Award amounts offered to successful applicants will reflect the project's scope and the size of its expected audiences. The history that reflects Middle Tennessee also reflects the nation as a whole. The story of pioneers in Middle Tennessee is a story of opportunity for some and oppression for others. These are common themes in the long history of the United States. Through this grant Cannonsburgh Village can explore this theme by including more of the story of the enslaved people that were brought into Middle Tennessee and the Indigenous people that lived nearby. [Please note that some of these grants, while available at the time of student writing, may no longer be available at this time.]

- <https://www.neh.gov/grants/public/public-humanities-projects>

Humanities Tennessee Annual General Grant

Any not-for-profit organization or governmental agency is eligible to apply for grants, including museums, libraries, historical societies, colleges and universities, public television and radio corporations, arts organizations, municipalities, churches and religious organizations, neighborhood and community groups, social service agencies, and various state agencies. These grants can help with annual public programming and costs. [Please note that some of these grants, while available at the time of student writing, may no longer be available at this time.]

- <https://www.humanitiestennessee.org/our-grants/general-grants/>

Humanities Tennessee Opportunity Grant

Opportunity grants provide financial support to nonprofit partners for special, focused public humanities projects. It is designed to encourage nonprofits to use humanities projects – those that engage the audience’s skills of inquiry, analysis, and reflection, and provide the historical and social contexts with which to do so – to strengthen work in their communities. [Please note that some of these grants, while available at the time of student writing, may no longer be available at this time.]

- <https://www.humanitiestennessee.org/our-grants/opportunity-grants/>

TN Association of Museums Scholarships

The scholarships are open to volunteers without museum-related backgrounds who work for a nonprofit museum or organization that is starting a museum which has no paid professional staff. Each scholarship provides two nights lodging and conference registration fees for up to two people from each applicant organization.

- <https://www.humanitiestennessee.org/programs-grants/our-grants/tennessee-association-ofmuseums-scholarships>

National Leadership Grants for Museums

This program support projects that address critical needs of the museum field and that have the potential to advance practice in the profession so that museums can improve services for the American public. This program has five project categories: Collections Care and Public Access, Data, Analysis, and Assessment; Digital Platforms and Applications; Diversity and Inclusion; and Professional Development. Cannonsburgh Village could benefit from several aspects of this grant.

With Collections care the small museum could be updated. Digital Platforms and Applications could bring the site into the present more, for the most part it still feels as it probably did in 1976. There could be QR codes at exhibits that go into more detail that the signage could not display. The site could also have a well-developed website that associates itself with Nashville tourism. The most online presence it currently has is a Facebook page.

- <https://www.imls.gov/grants/available/national-leadership-grants-museums>

Teaching with Primary Sources Southern Regional Grants

The Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) Southern Region at Middle Tennessee State University is a TPS Consortium partner of the Library of Congress. TPS Southern Region uses its Library of Congress grant to allocate sub-grants of up to \$25,000 each to educational organizations such as school districts, pre-service teaching programs, libraries, museums, historic sites, and other nonprofit cultural organizations. The projects funded by these sub-grants can range from creating educator materials to conducting educator workshops and more, and must include TPS strategies and sources.

- <https://library.mtsu.edu/tps/home>

REVENUE SOURCES

When I spoke with Mary Beth Nevills, the assistant facility coordinator at Cannonsburgh Village, I asked her who makes up their current audience. She told me, “Right now our numbers are made up mostly by our visitors from out of town, but I do believe that our local community are our primary audience. We are working on new ways to engage our community with our site and expand our reach.” While it’s encouraging that tourists are visiting, it’s clear that the local community is being underutilized as a core audience. Many people in Murfreesboro only recall visiting Cannonsburgh once, usually as children, and never return. That’s something that needs to change. There should be regular programming that draws folks in several times a year, not just for Pioneer Days or the Harvest Festival. As Nevills pointed out, “We host many weddings, baby showers, family reunions, graduation & birthday parties, as well as holiday and small educational events.” These events are great for private use, but the public side needs to grow too. “We also need to reach the adults in our community through more programs, offered at different times and with different subjects,” Nevills added. “Adding more speakers to come and do presentations/demonstrations for the public and incorporate exhibits.” She’s right. Cannonsburgh has the bones of a living history site with real community value, but it needs fresh energy and intentional programming. Fundraising is another opportunity. As Nevills mentioned, “The closest we have to a fundraiser is our Christmas events

which are free with donations accepted. The donations come directly to Cannonsburgh.” If more community-driven fundraisers were held throughout the year, events that educate and entertain, it could help bring in revenue while also strengthening ties with the people who live right here in town.²¹

Weddings- Weddings have long been celebrated at Cannonsburgh Village, but how about expanding the wedding experience. Cannonsburgh Village’s charming historic setting and proximity to Nashville make it an attractive and profitable wedding venue. Its picturesque backdrop, including rustic buildings and scenic trails, offers couples a unique alternative to urban venues, appealing to those seeking a vintage or outdoor aesthetic. The village’s location near Nashville provides easy access for both local and out-of-town guests, while the versatility of its spaces allows for a range of wedding sizes and styles. Revenue can be generated through venue rental fees, partnerships with local vendors, and optional add-ons like photography packages or guided tours for guests. Weddings do not have to be limited to the chapel, but can be outdoor events that rents the entire site.

Folk Art Exhibitions- Folk art exhibitions at Cannonsburgh Village present a unique opportunity for profitability by attracting diverse audiences interested in traditional crafts, music, and storytelling. These exhibitions can draw both local residents and tourists, boosting attendance and generating revenue through ticket sales, artisan vendor fees, and workshop participation. By showcasing regional heritage and offering hands-on experiences, such events not only celebrate cultural traditions but also create a sustainable model for supporting the village’s operations and maintenance.

50th Anniversary Gala- A 50th-anniversary gala at Cannonsburgh Village could be a highly profitable event, capitalizing on its historical significance and nostalgic appeal. A disco-themed celebration, paying homage to its 1970s inauguration, would attract a diverse audience, from long-time community members to newer residents. Revenue opportunities include ticket sales, themed merchandise, partnerships with local food and beverage vendors, and sponsorships from local businesses. The unique combination of history and lively retro entertainment could make this gala a standout event, fostering community engagement while generating significant funds for the village’s upkeep and future projects.

New attractions- Cannonsburgh Village could greatly benefit from introducing new attractions that enhance its appeal and inclusivity. Building on its unique claim to fame with the world’s largest cedar bucket, commissioning a whimsical addition like the world’s largest ladle could draw tourists and create buzz. Simultaneously, embracing the full scope of Middle Tennessee’s history by authentically interpreting and marketing buildings, such as potentially highlighting an enslaved cabin, would provide a more inclusive narrative. This approach not only honors the African American

²¹ Interview with Mary Beth Nevills, March 11, 2025.

communities that have shaped the region but also fosters a deeper, more honest engagement with the realities of history, enriching the educational value of the site.

Community Yard Sales- Hosting monthly Community Yard Sales at Cannonsburgh Village could be a profitable venture, drawing in locals and visitors eager to shop or sell in a historic and picturesque setting. By charging nominal booth fees for sellers and offering refreshments or small admission charges for attendees, the village could generate consistent revenue. Additionally, these events would increase foot traffic, boosting awareness of the site's other attractions and services, and potentially inspiring repeat visits.

Theatrical Space- Cannonsburgh Village's historic and rustic atmosphere makes it an ideal theatrical space, particularly for productions like "To Kill a Mockingbird" or "Our Town" where the setting naturally complements the narrative. The grounds could host audiences in chairs or on the grass, creating an intimate, open-air experience perfect for summer evenings and a great collaboration opportunity with local or university theater groups. Additionally, transforming the village into a "haunted venue" during October nights could attract crowds eager for seasonal thrills, blending history with interactive storytelling while boosting revenue and community engagement. This could be a great opportunity to engage with the folk lore of Monkey Woman Bridge.

Cooking Presentations/Classes- Cannonsburgh Village's historic charm provides the perfect backdrop for cooking classes or demonstrations focused on outdoor cooking and the foods of frontier Tennessee. Attendees could learn techniques and recipes enjoyed by early settlers, with an emphasis on the diverse culinary traditions of the region's Native American, African, and European communities. This unique experience could be a ticketed event, offering both education and entertainment, and would likely attract local media coverage, further promoting the village as a dynamic cultural destination.

Historic Dinner Evenings- In the same vein as above the historic dinner evening would serve period-appropriate meals with actors in costume. It would be much more in line with Historic Williamsburg.

Seek Local Business Engagement- Cannonsburgh Village could profit significantly by engaging local businesses as sponsors or collaborators for events and activities. Businesses could showcase their products or services during festivals, cooking demonstrations, or community yard sales, creating a mutually beneficial relationship that boosts both their visibility and the village's revenue. Additionally, partnerships with local restaurants, artisans, or retail shops could enhance the visitor experience while generating income through vendor fees or revenue-sharing agreements. This type of engagement fosters community ties and positions Cannonsburgh Village as a hub for local commerce and culture.

Sponsor a Building Drives- In the same vein as above, the sponsor a building drive would seek out contributions from local corporations to help with the repair or upkeep of a building at

Cannonsburgh Village. For example, Nisan presents the Gordon School, or Amazon's Telephone House.

Lecture Series- Cannonsburgh Village covers over a hundred years in the history that it presents to the public. This would be the perfect atmosphere to invite authors and historians to present lectures on events or the time frame that would be represented at Cannonsburgh. Cannonsburgh Village is also fortunate enough to be close to several prominent colleges and universities that they could invite historians from.

History Summer Camp- During certain days or certain times in the summer Cannonsburgh Village could be closed off to the general public so that it would run a History Summer Camp. The history summer camp would be an immersive experience for children to learn about a time long ago. At the camp they could learn candle making, cooking the pioneer way and watching blacksmiths make products. It would also serve as a needed break for parents who might need a break from their children during the summer.

Yearly Event- Cannonsburgh Village could benefit greatly from establishing a new annual signature event, like Uncle Dave Macon Days, which drew crowds and celebrated local culture. A yearly festival tailored to the village's unique historic and cultural setting—such as a heritage fair, a pioneer-themed festival, or even a music and food showcase—could attract significant attendance. Ticket sales, vendor fees, and sponsorships would generate steady revenue, while the event itself would bolster the village's reputation as a cultural landmark. A signature event could become a cornerstone of the community calendar, ensuring long-term engagement and profitability.

**PRESERVATION NEEDS
AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES
FOR
CANNONSBURGH VILLAGE
MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE**



CHIP MTSU Center
for Historic
Preservation
History • Education • Architecture

June 2010

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FOR
CANNONBURGH VILLAGE
MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

Prepared for

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I. INTRODUCTION

Cannonsburgh, a reconstructed village in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, is one of Rutherford County’s most popular attractions. It was created by moving a number of buildings to a former industrial site on Lytle Creek where they were arranged to represent a rural town of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The village was unveiled in 1976 as part of Murfreesboro’s plan to celebrate the Bicentennial of the United States. Since that time it has been a picturesque venue for gatherings of all kinds. Its historic resources, however, have the potential for far greater benefits for tourism, education, and recreation. A well-conceived plan for renovation, restoration, and interpretation—beyond the core issues of maintenance and day-to-day operations—could revive and make Cannonsburgh the cultural resource that it was originally intended to be.



Cannonsburgh Village

In the years since Cannonsburgh first opened to the public it has hosted festivals, weddings, receptions, and parties; provided open green space for recreation and outdoor entertainment; accommodated school and other educationally-minded groups, and served as headquarters for various local organizations. Though the village has enjoyed great popularity during those thirty-four years, it has suffered from benign neglect over time, with many of its resources left barely interpreted, underutilized, and minimally maintained.

To improve this situation, Cannonsburgh needs to reevaluate its mission and envision the future -- one that follows a comprehensive, yet practical and economically-feasible, interpretive and restoration plan. However, if no new measures are taken to stabilize the physical condition of the buildings, initiate regular cyclical maintenance, and bring the level of interpretation up to current standards, this “diamond in the rough” soon will cease to be a viable destination for the public.

This report contains:

- A brief **historical background** of the development of Cannonsburgh
- The **ways Cannonsburgh contributes** to the community
- An **analysis of the preservation needs** of specific buildings
- A discussion of ways to **improve the physical appearance and interpretive potential** for the village as a whole
- Suggestions of **new ways to utilize** existing buildings
- Steps to **increase Cannonsburgh’s educational potential**
- Ideas to **expand its role as a revenue-generating draw** for the city of Murfreesboro.



Toll bridge over Town Creek

II. CANNONSBURGH PAST AND PRESENT

Cannonsburgh was developed in 1974-76 as a Bicentennial project for the city of Murfreesboro.¹ The brainchild of Mayor W.H. Westbrook, it was initially envisioned as a recreated nineteenth-century village, representative of early settlement life in Middle Tennessee. “Cannonsburgh is intended to be an historical, cultural, recreational and entertainment attraction,” declared the community development perspective in a local article from January 1976.² The American Bicentennial Commission awarded the project a \$75,000 grant as one of only sixteen projects in the nation deemed the “most innovative.” Cannonsburgh has been owned, governed, and maintained by the City of Murfreesboro since the village’s inception.

The development of Cannonsburgh is better understood in the context of the historic preservation movement and urban renewal in the 1950s-70s. In Murfreesboro, pressures to raze the Oaklands plantation to create space for housing projects inspired concerned townspeople to lobby to save the antebellum mansion on the former plantation in 1959. Four years later, Oaklands Historic House Museum was opened to the public and has become a landmark of Rutherford County and a mainstay of the region’s heritage tourism. Civic growth during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s also led to the need for more county offices and an expansion of the county courthouse.

When a proposal to demolish the courthouse—one of only six surviving antebellum courthouses in the state of Tennessee—was put forward, public outcry killed the plan. In 1959-61, two wings were added to the existing courthouse that duplicated the original architectural style, resulting in a successful compromise between modernization and expansion on one side and preservation of significant cultural resources on the other. Furthermore, the Civil War centennial in the early to mid-1960s renewed local interest in the Stones River National Battlefield, located a mile and a half northwest of downtown. A new visitor center, built during the centennial, better accommodated the increase in tourism and education programs developed in the 1970s.³

The American Bicentennial celebrations also encouraged an interest in local heritage resource that would support tourism. In Murfreesboro in 1976, a wide range of public works projects were planned to boost economic development, including a two-story City Hall building off the square, new electric sub-stations, and an amphitheater at Old Fort Park.⁴ The idea for Cannonsburgh was consistent with the city’s goal to beautify the Lytle Creek area south of Broad Street. A community development committee in Murfreesboro, led by coordinator C.H.

¹ Construction continued until 1979, though the grand opening was held in 1976 for the Bicentennial.

² “Cannonsburg [sic] Set To Open June 26,” *Daily News Journal*, January 13, 1976.

³ Huhta, James K., “Murfreesboro, Tennessee” in Arthur P. Ziegler, Jr. and Walter C. Kidney, *Historic Preservation in Small Towns: A Manual of Practice* (Nashville, 1980): pp. 102-117, cf. pp. 103-104.

⁴ “Tourism Major Focus For M’boro In ’76,” *Daily News Journal*, Jan. 30, 1976.

Williamson, identified the Town Creek area on South Front Street as a suitable location for the proposed village. The jumble of run-down industrial buildings at this site was considered a public eyesore that needed to be rebuilt. Furthermore, the location was close enough to the Murfreesboro square to draw visitors downtown from the new interstate exit (No. 78) off I-24 two miles to the west. The seven-acre site chosen to become the future Cannonsburgh Village was originally intended for a municipal auditorium. Long-range plans at the time included a convention center, the establishment of a park across Lytle Creek, and the development of a downtown block across Broad Street with access to the village via an elevated walkway (none of which materialized).



Cannonsburgh site before construction



Cannonsburgh site before construction

Cannonsburgh reflected a popular 1970s view that historic resources should be preserved and made available to the public for edification, enjoyment, and economic development. The planning for Cannonsburgh was spearheaded by a few key individuals: Mayor Westbrook; James K. Huhta, a Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) professor of history and director of the newly-created Historic Preservation program; Murfreesboro city manager Clyde Fite; community development coordinator C.H. Williamson; *Daily News Journal* editor Douglas Sparks; and Rutherford County historian and MTSU professor Homer Pittard. The mayor's vision of a living museum of nineteenth-century Southern life dovetailed perfectly with the Bicentennial Horizons committee's plans for the renewal of the industrial lot along Lytle Creek.⁵

Westbrooks helped establish a development committee for Cannonsburgh with twenty-seven members, chaired by John and Bettye Rucker. The development committee was subdivided into "phase" committees, responsible for different aspects of the project. By the time Cannonsburgh first welcomed the public in 1976, the development committee had grown to sixty members, including a nine-member executive committee (Charlotte Dill, Baxter E. Hobgood, Joe Bell Robinson, Huhta, Pittard, the Ruckers, Westbrook, and Williamson). This committee, at Pittard's suggestion, decided on the name Cannonsburgh,⁶ in honor of the original name of the

⁵ "Cannonsburg [sic] Set To Open June 26," *News Journal*, January 30, 1976. Also, unnamed, unauthored report from the files of Murfreesboro Parks and Recreation Department (dated c. 1980s).

⁶ The name was apparently spelled without the "h," until the program for the dedication ceremonies in 1976 added the "h," which has since been used by the village in their promotional brochures.

settlement of Murfreesboro in 1811. The full name, “Village of Early Southern Life,” was meant to convey the site’s primary objective, which was the interpretation of nineteenth-century village life in Tennessee through buildings and artifacts in an outdoor museum setting.

The City of Murfreesboro donated the starter funds from federal community development grant money that remained from the McFadden urban renewal project. These federal funds were used for flood control of the area through the rechanneling of Town Creek a short distance to the south. In fact, Cannonsburgh was the only project of the proposed redevelopment and beautification plans for the two-block section along Lytle and Town Creeks completed in 1976. Rutherford County Judge Ben Hall McFarlin provided labor through the federally-funded Public Service Employment Project which employed over a hundred people in constructing the village. Additional monies came from the United States Departments of Commerce, Labor, and Housing and Urban Development. The main part of Cannonsburgh’s funding came from a \$75,000 grant from the American Bicentennial Commission. The total funds for the project totaled around \$100,000 by the end of 1976. As Mabel Pittard noted in her 1985 history of Rutherford County, “No local money was used on the project.”⁷

A tourism council was established by the Chamber of Commerce to coordinate efforts to promote the heritage resources of Rutherford County, including Oaklands, Stones River National Battlefield, Sam Davis Home, and the new site of Cannonsburgh. A Nashville architectural and engineering firm, Barge, Waggoner, Sumner & Cannon, was hired to design the plan for the layout of buildings and additional features. This design included some details, such as a parking lot south of the creek and a central pond, that were not included in the final construction.



Haynes Cotton Gin

Seven acres was purchased from four owners, and work began in 1974 to clear the industrial buildings on Front Street. A cotton gin and brick warehouse, owned by the C.N. Haynes family, were spared demolition and incorporated into the village. Scrap materials from a flour mill

⁷ Mabel Pittard, *Rutherford County* (Memphis, 1985), p. 26.

were used to build parts of the mill that would host an important part of the village’s living history presentation. An iron fence that had originally stood on the courthouse square was installed to surround the pioneer village.

In the end, fifteen buildings and structures were moved to, replicated, or constructed on site. The built environment of Cannonsburgh, at its opening in June 1976, contained eighteen buildings and structures, most of which survive today. Structures that were planned for construction or installation but never materialized included a carriage house, smoke house, print shop, and sorghum mill. The Art League warehouse once contained the Battle of Stones River diorama, built and designed by blacksmith Robert Ragland, but this feature was dismantled in the 1990s. The cotton gin was demolished in 1983 following a tornado which greatly damaged its walls; restoration was deemed too costly at that point. The 1976 flatboat, moored along Town Creek, sustained so much water damage by the mid 1980s that its remains were removed in 1988. This flatboat was part of a reconstructed flotilla that recreated John Donelson’s 1779-80 water voyage along the Holston River to the new settlement of Nashville. A second replica was also destroyed by flood waters.⁸



Students from the MTSU Historic Preservation program on flatboat in the late 1970s.

“Cannonsburgh Day,” a public event to mark the grand opening of the site, was held on Saturday, June 26, 1976, and featured a parade, a ceremony, a dedication, a forum for local political candidates, mule pulling, horseshoe pitching, a patriotic band, and a reenacted wedding in the chapel presided over by Mayor Westbrook. Welcoming remarks were provided

⁸ Interview, Fred Trujillo, Cannonsburgh director from 1980-2009, March 9, 2010.

by James K. Huhta and Jack O. Weatherford, co-chairmen of the Horizons '76 Program; Robert E. Corlew, chairman of the Rutherford County Bicentennial Commission; and Mack Wayne Craig, an active Tennessee preservationist and keynote speaker.⁹ The event and the village itself received positive press in the local *Daily News Journal*, though support for the project was not entirely united among the larger community. For example, Ted Beach, a city councilman in 1976, was originally opposed to the village's construction; even after he changed his outlook and called the site "a wonderful thing," he still called for a report of the costs the City put into Cannonsburgh.¹⁰ This concern for how much money the City was spending on Cannonsburgh has been a key issue in the maintenance of the site from 1976 to the present.

A 1976 planning report for the museum exhibit reflects the original concept for the historical interpretation of Cannonsburgh. The objectives for the exhibit included preservation, education, and heritage tourism based on local historic resources.¹¹ The museum exhibit, housed in the C.N. Haynes cotton warehouse, was installed in 1976 using donor funds, and includes fourteen panels with brief summaries of local history on the topics of settlement, families, transportation, town life, religion, economics, and the experiences of women and African Americans. The exhibit was designed, written, and installed by a committee headed by Anne Taylor, with consulting from designer Bill Pritchett. Several volunteers were involved, as well as MTSU students and faculty from the University's Learning Resources Center and departments of Theatre, English, Art, History.¹² The museum exhibit has remained unchanged since its installment thirty-four years ago, and, apart from a brochure from the visitors center, provides most of the historic interpretation at the site.

Cannonsburgh has, from the beginning, attempted to provide visitors and tour groups with an educational experience about rural Tennessee life. Several reports over the years have suggested ways in which the village could interpret history more coherently. These reports include a proposal to design and construct an interpretive kiosk, another to develop a heritage education program at the site, and a 1993 comprehensive needs assessment report by the Center for Historic Preservation.

Cannonsburgh has been owned and operated by the City of Murfreesboro since its inception. In 1997, the village was placed under the direct supervision of the Parks and Recreation Department, where it remains today. The Cannonsburgh town council grew out of the original executive committee and today is composed of representatives from the different activities associated with the village: the grist mill operator, the Rutherford County Blacksmith's Association, the Antique Automobile Club of America, the Lions Club, the Jaycees, the Murfreesboro Art League, and other involved citizens and volunteers. Until 1997, the town council met regularly and handled policy and planning for Cannonsburgh. After maintenance

⁹ Public program, "Cannonsburgh Day: A Horizons '76 Bicentennial and Community Development Project in Downtown Murfreesboro, Tennessee," June 26, 1976.

¹⁰ "Settlers' at Cannonsburgh," *Daily News Journal*, June 27, 1976.

¹¹ Anne Taylor, "A Development Plan for the Museum at Cannonsburg [sic]," Center for Historic Preservation, 1976.

¹² "The Museum!," *Daily News Journal*, [n.d.], 1976.

costs increased and the Parks and Recreation Department assumed control over the village, the council ceased to be the active governing body and now meets only occasionally.¹³

Cannonsburgh has hosted numerous community events over its thirty-four-year history. Pioneer Days in the spring and Harvest Days and Fiber Festival in the fall are two of the main events on Cannonsburgh's annual calendar, the former celebrating the opening of the park to visitors after its winter closure. These seasonal events were started in 1977 (Harvest Days) and 1978 (Pioneer Days); they honor pioneer industries and folkways, such as blacksmithing, butter churning, broom making, and sheep shearing. The Bible reading marathon, begun in 1995, allows people to take turns reading the Bible aloud in their language of choice. Other yearly events include the Blacksmith Convention (sponsored by the Rutherford County Blacksmith Association), the National Day of Prayer, Free Day in May, Candlelight Tours, *Little House on the Prairie* Book & Craft Club, Community Yard Sale, American Girl Spring Tea, Plant Swap, (one event of) the International Folk Festival, and Movies under the Stars.¹⁴ Every summer at Heritage Camp, Cannonsburgh becomes a laboratory for children to learn pioneer practices such as churning butter and grinding wheat for flour. School groups also visit the village during the spring and fall. Total visitation to the village for events and tours numbered an estimated 75,070 for the period from January 2009 to October 2009.¹⁵



Cannonsburgh has hosted many community events.

¹³ Interview, Judge Ewing Sellers, ex-Mayor and vice-Mayor of Cannonsburgh and member of the town council, March 25, 2010.

¹⁴ Murfreesboro Parks and Recreation Department Annual Report 2009, <http://www.murfreesborotn.gov/uploadedFiles/government/Parks-Rec/Home/Annual%20Report%202009.pdf> (accessed March 19, 2010); "Cannonsburgh Village Calendar of Events 2010," [flyer]. Candlelight Tours through Movies under the Stars are new events added in 2010.

¹⁵ For a breakdown of visitation numbers to each event, please see Appendix A, "Cannonsburgh Visitor Count, 2009."

Various Rutherford County organizations use Cannonsburgh as a meeting place and events site. The Murfreesboro/Rutherford Art League, the Rutherford County Blacksmith Association, the Antique Auto Club, the Jaycees, and the Lions Club are all headquartered in various buildings on the Cannonsburgh property. The Art League's gallery, located in an early twentieth-century warehouse building, is often open to the public, and also houses a studio for community art classes. The blacksmiths operate a replica smithy and are an important part of the village's living history demonstrations. The Auto Club replicated an early twentieth-century garage on the grounds, replete with antique metal signs and gas pumps, and hosts its own events for auto enthusiasts.



Stones River Garage

The Jaycees and Lions Club meet in twentieth-century log buildings located outside the entrance gate, beyond the actual village. A reconstructed nineteenth-century log house (now the visitor center) housed the Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau until these offices moved into a new location in 1997.

The MTSU Department of Agriculture was instrumental in the planning and organization of the farm implement museum, beginning in 1982. The museum, housed under several of open-air, covered structures, includes a wide collection of twentieth-century tractors and other farm equipment. Dr. N. Omri Rawlins of the MTSU Department of Agriculture (retired) continues to oversee this collection, which has relied heavily on donated implements.

The Williamson Memorial Chapel has served as the venue of hundreds of weddings throughout the years. This is one of the prime sources of income for the village, and a good use of its picturesque qualities. Brides and grooms prepare for the service in separate quarters in the Leeman House, and guests can attend the reception either in the pavilion or under the covered open-air structures behind the chapel. The chapel was named for C.H. Williamson, who died a few days after the village's grand opening.



Williamson Chapel under construction in 1975.

The event that attracts by far the largest number of visitors to Cannonsburgh is Uncle Dave Macon Days (UDMD), an old-time music and dance competition held annually on the second weekend of July. This event draws upwards of 40,000 visitors and brings an estimated two million dollars of tourism revenue to the city.¹⁶ These visitors, many of them traveling from out of town and out of state, contribute significantly to Murfreesboro's sales tax revenue each July by patronizing local retail shops, hotels, restaurants, and other sites of interest. The festival hosts the national championship competitions in three of its twenty-four categories. The two newest categories, Jug Band and Blues Singing, seek to diversify both the offerings and the audience for the festival, and are signs that UDMD is not only growing in size and prestige, but increasingly reflecting the importance of popular music in the lives of Tennesseans.

UDMD moved from the courthouse square to Cannonsburgh in 1989, and has since grown into a three-day event. The main stage was originally erected on the lawn in front of the present-day visitor center building, and since 1999, has been located in the field bounded by the parking lot on the east and the Stones River Greenway on the west. Food and craft vendors pay for booths near the south entrance gate and along the inner loop of village buildings. There is a

¹⁶ No specific numbers can be found at this time. Open and free admission policies make estimating attendance an experienced guess, and no formal studies have been done by the CVB to determine a more accurate estimate of indirect revenue generated. The number of two million was determined by an informal formula derived by the CVB and UDMD staff.

temporary exhibit of early twentieth-century photographs in the museum, an open gallery by the Art League, and living history demonstrations by the blacksmiths and Auto Club members. Contestants practice their old-time music, clogging, and buck dancing (among other categories) among the village's buildings and green spaces. For instance, it is not unusual to spot cloggers in the dogtrot of the University House, or a bluegrass band on the porch of the Leeman House. These vignettes illustrate the parallel purposes of the village and the festival: to preserve and engage citizens in local folkways. The festival provides a soundtrack of folksongs that would have been authentic to the time period that Cannonsburgh's authentic buildings represent. Cannonsburgh provides a picturesque backdrop for the festival's many activities.



Uncle Dave Macon Days at Cannonsburgh Village

Credit: Steve Bryant

However, UDMD does not pay Cannonsburgh any fee to hold its event on the grounds, even though the grounds overflow with tens of thousands of visitors during one single weekend per year. This situation may change in 2010, when the festival begins to charge entry fees. Fencing off the main stage and creating temporary access to the grounds, however, will impact the grounds in new ways that will need assessment. The added strain to Cannonsburgh can potentially be offset by new profit-sharing measures in partnership with the UDMD committee, which will be discussed in further detail in section IV: Vision for the Future.

The people of Rutherford County also use the village for recreational purposes. The Stones River Greenway has a segment that follows Lytle Creek and ends at the Cannonsburgh parking lot, connecting the village with four and a half miles of walkway that also incorporate other historical sites in Rutherford County. The village's recreational opportunities are well-emphasized due to its organization under the Parks and Recreation Department.

A case study to sample the public attachment to Cannonsburgh involves the World's Largest Cedar Bucket, which was brought back to Murfreesboro during the construction phase of Cannonsburgh in 1975. Constructed as a promotional gimmick at the Red Cedar Woodenware Company in Rutherford County in 1887, the 1556-gallon bucket traveled to several fairs, including the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893 and the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in

1904, “where it was filled completely with beer and became one of the most popular attractions at the fair.”¹⁷ A symbol of the area’s ecological inheritance as well as industrial heritage, the bucket was one of the most memorable objects in the village.

Public reaction to its destruction by arson in 2005 indicated that the bucket, specifically, and Cannonsburgh by extension had over the years attained a high degree of emotional attachment in the hearts of the people of Murfreesboro. Several articles in the *Daily News Journal* shared the personal memories of citizens who had seen or played in the bucket (or similar buckets) in their youth. The bucket even enjoyed a profile on MySpace for some time. Visitor reactions shortly after the bucket’s destruction were so sad and emotional that then-coordinator Fred Trujillo remarked that “it was like somebody died.”¹⁸ Contrasted with Trujillo’s remarks a few days earlier, that no one even knew it was there, his later reassessment reveals a general attitude that could potentially be applied to Cannonsburgh as a whole. In other words, the people of Murfreesboro have a deep attachment to the village and will potentially rally to its defense should it fall into grave disrepair. Plans to restore the bucket are still being discussed; the charred remains are presently stored in a covered area near the farm implement museum.



1975



2010

¹⁷ “Bucket held a bit of history,” *Daily News Journal*, June 21, 2005.

¹⁸ “City mourns burning of old cedar bucket,” *Daily News Journal*, June 21, 2005.

III. PHYSICAL CONDITION ASSESSMENT

Cannonsburgh has been home to a number of historic buildings, structures, and objects since 1976. Examples of once-commonplace traditional resources have been relocated to the downtown site in order to illustrate approximately one hundred years of Rutherford County's cultural development—the period from 1830s to the 1930s. These buildings need thorough periodic inspections followed by proper maintenance if they are to survive. All of them have perishable components, primarily wooden, which must be maintained regularly to prevent deterioration and ruin. Normal use, weather, chemical and biological agents, and vandalism have taken their toll on these historic artifacts over the years. The negative effects of these threats should be dealt with as soon as possible in order to present an attractive physical appearance, prevent additional deterioration, and minimize the expense of repairs.

Unfortunately, for a number of reasons, proper cyclical maintenance has not been performed at the village on a constant basis. The lack of regular care and unfamiliarity with proper conservation methods have had a deleterious effect on the preservation of the buildings. In some cases, postponing repairs has led to failure of the building fabric that will necessitate a complete rehabilitation of the affected area. In others, repair work has been done improperly and made a bad situation worse. This lack of timely and appropriate maintenance continues to be a serious threat to the long-term stability of the buildings, and by extension, the entire village.

Tight budgets often impact decisions regarding maintenance. Even though maintenance often is seen as low priority by some administrators, serious consequences will ensue if it is neglected. “Pay now or pay much more later” is a pithy, yet accurate summary of the maintenance issue. Proper maintenance always has preservation as its goal. Its main purpose is to make the historic fabric last as long as possible and has other benefits as well. Maintenance should be recognized as a highly technical skill which requires decision-making ability and attention to detail. Cleanliness is the first step not only for the sake of appearance, but also because it prevents the spread of disease and reduces deterioration of the building materials.

Maintenance can delay deterioration, but cannot eliminate it entirely. In order to slow down the normal process of change, a number of effective techniques can be employed. Applying protective coatings, shielding from sunlight, keeping uniform interior temperatures, and controlling moisture can reduce maintenance problems in the future and significantly enhance visitors' experiences in the present. A complete cessation of deterioration is impossible, but timely and appropriate maintenance will slow it down enough so that visitors can see, feel, pass through, and encounter examples of our heritage without being unduly distracted by poorly maintained historic fabric.



Wooden trim deterioration at Visitor Center needs to be repaired.

The following pages contain an examination of the most important maintenance issues facing the buildings of Cannonsburgh at this time, in order of priority:

1. Water Control
2. Log Buildings
3. Foundations
4. Roofs
5. Windows and Doors
6. Wooden Siding
7. Electrical System

This report identifies and provides descriptions of the problem areas, makes recommendations for addressing each issue, and details lists of both short-term and long-term restoration priorities for the individual buildings. Many of the tasks that are recommended can be undertaken individually, although some must be done in coordination with other work. For example, log repair should be followed by the application of a protective coating on the log, before the chinking and daubing is installed.

1. WATER CONTROL – The number one maintenance issue at Cannonsburgh Village is the control of water and moisture. The village is situated adjacent to Lytle Creek and Town Creek amid wetlands, and the water table is relatively high. Several water-related issues must be resolved to ensure the continuity of Cannonsburgh and its buildings: creek bed erosion, site drainage, lack of individual gutter systems, and water infiltration into the buildings.



Town Creek bank erosion undercuts foundations.

Creek Bank Erosion – Town Creek has been eroding the bank on the village side for some time and now endangers the foundation of the grist mill, as well as others along the creek. Several concrete footings of one section of the iron fence have been undercut by the action of the current and only the bordering trees prevent a large portion of this historic fence from toppling over into the creek.

RECOMMENDATION: If permitted by environmental regulations, the creek bed could be slightly shifted to divert water away from the bank in order to arrest further erosion.



Grist mill foundation endangered by erosion.



Iron fence footings undercut by flood waters.

Site Drainage – The overall drainage of the village site should be addressed, particularly along Town Creek. Many of Cannonsburgh’s buildings rest near to the ground, in some cases as close as six or eight inches. As time has passed, soil accumulation and landscaping efforts have raised the level of the earth surrounding the buildings, simultaneously creating low spots underneath them, particularly along the creek. These low spots attract surface water which flows beneath the buildings on its way to Town Creek. This and the high water table allow the area under the buildings to stay moist for a substantial part of the year, which causes accelerated deterioration of the wooden elements of the buildings.



Depression under building attracts water and holds moisture.

The area beneath each building along the creek should be inspected to see if surface water has been flowing there. If so, any debris should be removed and remedial action taken.

RECOMMENDATION: The surrounding soil should be graded and sloped away from the building to encourage positive drainage. A slope of 1:12 is the accepted standard. Ideally, the buildings should sit on a slight mound so that water can flow around the building, rather than under it. After debris has been removed, a heavy (6 mil) black sheet plastic vapor barrier should be installed over the entire surface beneath the building. This vapor barrier can be held in place by covering it with several inches of crushed rock, which will keep ground moisture in check and prevent vegetation from growing there.

Gutter Systems – There are few, if any, gutter systems on the buildings. As a result, the water rushing off the roofs pounds the ground, splashing water and mud on the lower parts of the buildings and creating trenches where the drip lines form. Mold and algae grow and flourish on the damp surfaces. The repeated wet and dry cycles cause the wooden elements to rot, and the retained water in the ground keeps the moisture level high enough to sustain the deterioration process. This condition is pervasive throughout the site, and almost all the wooden buildings exhibit marked deterioration of the lower sections. Some of the buildings will require considerable rehabilitation to repair this moisture damage.



Gutter system at the Stones River Garage drains rainwater.

A proper roof drainage system consists of horizontal gutters of the right size along the eaves just below the roof, enough vertical downspouts so that the water does not overflow the gutters, and underground leaders to carry the water away from the building's foundation. The Stones River Garage building currently has a first-rate gutter system connected to a French drain, which can serve as a model for the other buildings.

RECOMMENDATION: The most common gutters used for residential applications in the nineteenth century were the half-round type with round downspouts. V-shaped wooden gutters would be more appropriate for the log buildings. Complete gutter systems should be installed on all buildings in the village, beginning with the ones along the creek.

Water Infiltration – In this same vein, many of the doors, windows, porches, vents, and chimneys in the village have not been adequately sealed, and continuously allow water to penetrate the exterior fabric of the buildings and even admit moisture into the interiors. This seepage causes the wooden elements to decay. In these cases, a little bit of water goes a long way and can quickly cause unseemly discoloration followed by deterioration that will result in permanent damage to the building components. In order to prevent this from happening, proper flashing must be installed.

In many cases, roofing tar or aluminum coil stock is the flashing of choice for Cannonsburgh's buildings, although neither is suitable. Tar always dries out and cracks, and aluminum will react chemically with sheet metal and deteriorate. In both cases, unwanted water will penetrate the building fabric.



Inadequate tar flashing on University House.



Aluminum flashing on Leeman House porch.

RECOMMENDATION: Proper flashing usually consists of two parts: under-flashing and counter-flashing. Each of the two pieces of flashing is attached only on one end to allow for movement when the other building components expand and contract. One-piece flashing cannot work satisfactorily because one of the ends will either shear off or pull out when expansion inevitably occurs. For best results, galvanized sheet metal or sheet copper flashing should be used for this work.

2. LOG BUILDINGS – The log cabin is a familiar symbol of Tennessee’s pioneer period. Although the cabin’s use as shelter is well-known, its quaint image has tended to obscure its importance to nineteenth century settlers. The seven log buildings at Cannonsburgh Village originated during this historic period, and still attract and hold people’s attention today. Many visitors view these buildings as a link to a simpler time and enjoy introducing friends and family members to this beloved vernacular tradition.



Log buildings at Cannonsburgh Village

Although log houses are relatively simple buildings with walls built from whole timbers and a minimum of hardware, they need their share of maintenance, too. The logs, although large, are made of wood and will rot if they are not protected. Several of the log buildings have significant damage to their lower wall logs, which needs to be addressed before the deterioration spreads much further.

The most pressing need of all seven log buildings is the rehabilitation of the chinking and daubing that fill the cracks between the wall logs. Common problems include rotten logs; poorly prepared wood surfaces; stained, discolored, cracked, and missing daubing; improperly applied daubing; inappropriate daubing materials (primarily Portland cement); and the replacement of missing pieces of wood with daubing.

Each of Cannonsburgh’s log buildings is described in the following pages, and detailed preservation priorities, both short- and long-term, are listed for the individual buildings.

One Room Schoolhouse

This Rutherford County building was originally used as a corncrib. The one-story log outbuilding has been adapted to represent a typical nineteenth-century one-room school house.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

Immediate Preservation Priorities:

1. Removal of vines and overhanging branches.
2. Removal of debris under building
3. Removal of mold and moss from logs.
4. Addition of wooden gutters to control rainwater.
5. Improvement of drainage around building.
6. Replacement of rotted, ill-fitted, and mismatched logs.
7. Repair or replacement of chinking and daubing with appropriate materials.
8. Application of protective coating to logs.



Long-Term Preservation Priorities:

1. Replacement of rear sill.
2. Proper installment of siding.



University House



This historic building is a c.1850s two-pen log house with an open hall that formerly stood on the campus of MTSU. It was reconstructed on site.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Immediate Preservation Priorities:

1. Proper installation of chimney flashing.
2. Repair mortar voids on chimneys.
3. Addition of wooden gutters to control rainwater.
4. Improvement of drainage around building.
5. Removal of mold and moss from logs.
6. Repair or replacement of chinking and daubing with appropriate materials.
7. Application of protective coating to logs.



Long-Term Preservation Priorities:

1. Jack up building to improve air circulation.
2. Complete replacement of horizontal gable siding.
3. Replacement of deteriorated or missing fly rafters.
4. Replace porch floor with red cedar boards.
5. Replace doors and windows with more historically appropriate ones.
6. Correct installation of proper battened shutters.
7. Installation of historically appropriate hardware.



Early 1800s Town Hall



This historic single pen log building originally served as the kitchen for the residents of a large house near Eagleville. The one-story log building and its chimney were rebuilt on site.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Immediate Preservation Priorities:

1. Removal of debris under building.
2. Improvement of drainage around building.
3. Addition of gutters to control rainwater.
4. Proper Installation of chimney flashing.
5. Remove mold from lower logs.
6. Repair or replacement of chinking and daubing with appropriate materials.
7. Application of protective coating to logs and wooden components.
8. Repair wood cornice.



Long-Term Preservation Priorities:

1. Reconfiguration of side doors; they should be changed into windows or eliminated completely.
2. Correct installation of proper battened shutters with suitable hardware.
3. Replace door with an historically appropriate one.
4. Eliminate roof overhang at eaves.



1820s Residence (Leeman House)



This building is an historic c.1820s two-story hall-and-parlor log house with a rear kitchen wing. The front section of the house was moved intact to Cannonsburgh from northeastern Rutherford County. The 1870s rear portion of the building was reconstructed on site.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Immediate Preservation Priorities:

1. Addition of gutter system to control rainwater.
2. Proper installation of chimney and porch flashing.
3. Removal of mold from lower logs.
4. Log repair.
5. Repair or replacement of chinking and daubing with appropriate materials.
6. Application of protective coating to logs and wooden components.
7. Elimination of exposed romex wiring on exterior.



Long-Term Preservation Priorities:

1. Replacement of doors with historically appropriate ones.
2. Historically appropriate restoration of windows, sash, and frames.
3. Replacement of southern yellow pine tongue-and-groove flooring in breezeway.
4. Removal of window-mounted AC units and installation of HVAC system.



One Room Log Cabin



This is a one-story log building that houses a nineteenth century hand loom.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Immediate Preservation Priorities:

1. Removal of mold from lower logs.
2. Addition of gutter system to control rainwater.
3. Repair or replacement of chinking and daubing with appropriate materials.
4. Application of protective coating to logs.
5. Cut back extended top plates.



Long-Term Preservation Priorities:

1. Replacement of vertical gable siding with horizontal lap siding.
2. Replace door and windows with more historically appropriate ones.
3. historically appropriate ones.



McKnight House



This is an historic log building that originally stood two stories tall, but was reconstructed at Cannonsburgh as a one-story building.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Immediate Preservation Priorities:

1. Removal of debris under building.
2. Proper Installation of chimney flashing.
3. Addition of wooden gutters to control rainwater.
4. Repair or replacement of chinking and daubing with appropriate materials.
5. Application of protective coating to logs.



Long-Term Preservation Priorities:

1. Removal of the linking room to the rear addition.
2. Proper repair of former door opening in side wall.
3. Installation of horizontal lap siding on porch gables
4. Add fascia board to cover porch joist ends.
5. Replacement of porch floor boards with red cedar.



Visitor Center & Gift Shop



This historic hall-and-parlor log house was moved from another location and reconstructed on site. It is presently used as the visitor's center.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Immediate Preservation Priorities:

1. Removal of vines and other debris.
2. Addition of wooden gutters to control rainwater.
3. Removal of mold from lower logs.
4. Application of protective coating on logs.
5. Proper Installation of chimney flashing.
6. Repair or replacement of chinking and daubing with appropriate materials.



Long-Term Preservation Priorities:

1. Replacement of deteriorated logs.
2. Installation of historically appropriate windows, doors, frames, and hardware.
3. Installation of historically appropriate roofing material.
4. Replacement of aluminum foundation vents.
5. Replacement of reverse board-and-batten siding on gables with horizontal lap siding.
6. Removal of plastic vents.
7. Replacement of historically inappropriate stone work on foundation.
8. Replacement of historically inappropriate wood trim work.
9. Installation of screens and chases to hide HVAC components and electrical wires.
10. Replacement of porch floor boards with red cedar.
11. Removal of circular vent on roof and metal cap on chimney.



3. FOUNDATIONS – As mentioned above, several buildings have been placed quite close to the ground during their construction and significant damage to the sills and floor systems has been the result. Splashing rainwater and ground moisture have created favorable conditions for mold and rot to flourish.



Moss and mold on University House foundation.



Mold on Doctor's Office foundation.

Waterborne debris and discarded construction materials are scattered on the ground under the buildings, drawing termites and other wood-consuming insects. All buildings should be jacked up to a minimum of eighteen inches from the ground and the proper repairs undertaken. Rock pier foundations are recommended for the smaller buildings. Wooden piers should never be used on permanent buildings.



Wooden foundation at Telephone Exchange.



Sill at Schoolhouse needs replacement.

4. ROOFS – Overall, the condition of Cannonsburgh’s roofs is good. Most of them are covered with galvanized sheet metal roofing panels that have been recently installed. Two buildings, the steel pole shed and the rear addition on the Leeman House, are extremely rusty and should be refurbished; a third, the chapel, has developed several rust patches which should be dealt with before they spread any further.



Leeman House roof



Williamson Chapel roof

The fasteners should be inspected to see if they are loosening and retightened if necessary. The store and the blacksmith shop are covered with historic sheet metal shingles. The shingles on both buildings are rusty and are coming loose. Again, both need refurbishing.



General Store roof



Blacksmith Shop roof

Newly-installed cedar shingles cover the schoolhouse and grist mill. Although split shingles would last much longer, the life of these sawn shingles could be extended by placing copper strips near the peak of the roof so that rainwater interacts with it. The chemical reaction will produce a weak acidic solution that will inhibit the growth of mold and moss.



Schoolhouse roof



Grist mill porch roof

The remaining two buildings, the visitor center and the pavilion, have modern composition shingle roofs. The visitor center roof is in good condition at present, but the pavilion is showing signs of wear and is beginning to leak. It should be replaced in the near future with a more suitable material, such as galvanized sheet metal.



Visitor Center roof



Gazebo roof

5. WINDOWS AND DOORS – Windows and doors are very susceptible to the effects of weathering and need to be monitored continually. In addition to the flashing problems mentioned above, many of the windows require wood and metal repairs, glazing, and painting.



Town hall window and shutter



Leeman House window and trim

A number of doors show signs of wear and need repairs, paint, and more robust hardware. In some of the more extreme cases, the surrounding framing may be affected and should be inspected and redone if necessary.



Leeman House rear door



Cotton warehouse doors

6. WOODEN SIDING – With the exception of the brick museum building, the open sheds, and the gazebo, all of Cannonsburgh’s buildings are sided with either wood horizontal lap siding or vertical boards and battens. The board-and-batten-sided buildings are in excellent shape for the most part, although the Blacksmith Shop should be either painted or stained. The siding (including the cornice work) on all of the other buildings needs varying degrees of repair and painting.



General Store cornice deterioration



Doctor’s Office siding and paint deterioration

Much of the paint failure can be attributed to a lack of proper preparation compounded by high moisture levels both inside and outside the buildings. Before painting, it is essential to scrape and sand the surfaces before applying a primer coat. This procedure will maximize the longevity of the final two finish coats.



General Store paint failure



Doctor’s Office mold and siding deterioration

As noted above, the installation of a plastic vapor barrier underneath a building can reduce the amount of moisture inside considerably. Reducing moisture will increase the life of the paint, which will lead to lower maintenance costs.

In addition, much of the siding has been nailed improperly, and this has contributed to the infiltration of water into the buildings. The siding should be firmly nailed to the framing near the bottom of each piece, but not to each other, as is the case at the present on most of Cannonsburgh's buildings. The material used for the siding on the grist mill is low quality, knotty wood, and should be replaced with higher quality lumber as soon as possible.



Art Warehouse batten splitting



Grist Mill siding deterioration

Several buildings, including the University House, Town Hall, and the Telephone Exchange, have missing or damaged siding which allows birds and varmints to inhabit the building. Bird infestation is unsanitary and could develop into a public health issue. The birds must be removed, their waste cleaned up, and measures taken to prevent further occurrences.



University House gable siding voids



Town Hall gable siding voids

7. ELECTRICAL SYSTEM – Many of the buildings at Cannonsburgh have electricity. Because of this, the components of the electrical system – cover plates, wiring, insulators, and the units themselves – are visible to visitors. In many cases, this situation could be improved. The use of screens, chases, and ingenuity can keep most of these modern intrusions hidden and out of sight.

Also, the electrical transmission lines are overhead, in most cases. Consideration should be given to running the majority of electrical lines underground. Underground electricity would improve security, increase safety, and enhance the verisimilitude of the historic village.



HVAC unit at Visitor Center



Window air conditioner at Leeman House



Electrical boxes and HVAC unit at Visitor Center

IV. VISION FOR THE FUTURE

In the early 1970s, the founders of Cannonsburgh envisioned the village as an outdoor exhibit of buildings, structures, and objects that were once integral parts of early Tennessee rural life. At the beginning, the objectives of the members of the development committee were to:

- preserve and protect the collection of artifacts
- provide a facility for citizens' self-education in history and material culture
- increase awareness in school children about the roots of their past
- improve the local economy through heritage tourism.

In many ways, these goals have been met, but after almost 35 years, a fresh look at Cannonsburgh's potential is warranted.

1. CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COMMUNITY

Cannonsburgh Village's current standing as a heritage tourism destination rivals those of the most important historic sites in Rutherford County—Stones River National Battlefield, Oaklands Historic House Museum, Sam Davis Home, and the Murfreesboro public square and courthouse. The Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau features the village in a visitor brochure, 100,000 of which are distributed across the state each year.

Cannonsburgh is not operated or maintained by a non-profit organization, federal program, city/county partnership, or private enterprise. The village is funded solely by the City of Murfreesboro. A minimal budget supports a full-time program director, a secretary, the operation of a small visitor center and gift shop, and yearly maintenance. Proceeds from visitor donations, gift shop sales, and venue rental for weddings and other gatherings contribute to the village's operating budget, which comes to approximately \$30,000 per year (not counting salaries).¹⁹ This budget has to cover all programs and events, and immediate repairs—though the City has contributed to special repair projects in the past. However, this budget does not support the necessary cyclical maintenance of the buildings or an expanded interpretation of the site's resources to visitors.

The income that Cannonsburgh directly generates for the City of Murfreesboro amounts from about \$25,000 to \$35,000 per fiscal year.²⁰ These monies come from venue rentals, tours, and resale items. 2010 promises to bring even more direct revenue, due to an increased number of program offerings, a first-time-ever admission charge for Uncle Dave Macon Days (UDMD), and a new policy of charging vendors \$10 per booth at events held on the grounds. All Cannonsburgh's revenue, with the exception of visitor donations, is placed into the City of Murfreesboro's general fund.

¹⁹ See Appendix B, "City of Murfreesboro Cannonsburgh Expenditures, FY 2008 – 2009."

²⁰ See Appendix D, "Cannonsburgh Yearly Revenues, 1997-2010."

Cannonsburgh has the potential to be self-supporting, or nearly so. It draws more than 75,000 visitors a year, many of them out-of-town visitors who spend their money on food, lodging, and souvenirs, which contributes to steady yearly tourism revenue for Murfreesboro.

Cannonsburgh also plays a major role in generating the two million dollars of indirect revenue brought in each year by the UDMD festival alone. Over 40,000 visitors generate considerable sales tax revenue at hotels, restaurants, gas stations, and retail shops, as well as a considerable profit for food and craft vendors at the festival. If Cannonsburgh could work with UDMD to create and share more profit-sharing opportunities, then the village could potentially gain a significant amount of money from the festival that it could use for the upkeep of the buildings.

For instance, if vendors across Front Street were required to pay the same booth fees as vendors within the village grounds, and if UDMD retained the sole right of beverage sales, then the UDMD committee would make a profit from the festival. The committee's plan to restrict public entry and charge \$5 per person for access to UDMD in 2010 will bring the festival one major step closer to self-sustainability and allow future opportunities for expansion. If UDMD were to share an agreed-upon percentage of proceeds with Cannonsburgh (or with the City, ear-marked for Cannonsburgh), or if the festival were to pay the City a venue rental fee for the use of the village, then Cannonsburgh would better be able to maintain and assure the sustainability of the very buildings that make it such an appropriate and desirable venue for the festival.

Without a reliable outside revenue stream, substantial engagement by the city and/or county is the only assurance for the future viability of Cannonsburgh as a heritage tourism site. Funds to repair and maintain the buildings will ensure that the site will be able to attract visitors, and be interesting enough to encourage community participation. Non-profit organizations, educational institutions, businesses and corporations, or other groups of concerned citizens could take part by "adopting" a building or structure and helping to raise funds for its maintenance and interpretation. Investment by local stakeholders through financial support and shared promotional efforts in the village will contribute to its sustainability. Fundraising ventures could be combined into a yearly fall event, with food, music, dance, funder booths, and possibly a political forum for office seekers (as was the case at "Cannonsburgh Day" held in 1976). An investment into more lights on the village perimeter and an additional bridge across Town Creek (placed in the area behind Leeman House or the town hall) would enhance security, provide additional emergency access (and egress), and deter vandalism.

The organization of a non-profit, 501 (c)(3) "Friends of Cannonsburgh" group could broaden fundraising efforts in the community through the planning of events, acceptance of personal and business donations, grant writing, and publication of periodic newsletters. A Web site could be created at minimal cost to better publicize the village on the Internet. A "Friends" group could also assume chief responsibility for attracting and organizing volunteer work at the village, from giving tours and helping with school groups to event planning and publicity. The staff currently in charge of programming at the village already relies on volunteer help, with nine volunteers on the contact list. Reorganization of the volunteer program could engage additional and much-needed volunteers.

2. SPACE ANALYSIS

Necessary building repairs and attention to heritage education at Cannonsburgh obviously will come at a cost, and the City of Murfreesboro could look to the village to recover some of those costs. Strategies to bring in more revenue at Cannonsburgh will benefit from long-term thinking, and how the village fits into the broader heritage tourism vision of downtown Murfreesboro. Those responsible for planning a future for Cannonsburgh need to consider how it can attain sustainability, to provide the necessary repairs and maintenance for the buildings and support for quality educational programs.

In the early 1970s, the construction of Cannonsburgh was viewed as an urban renewal project by city officials. It replaced a tired and run-down urban industrial block with an exciting outdoor educational and recreational facility. Ironically, the pioneer village is hemmed in by abandoned, run-down industrial and commercial buildings at present.



South field; railroad tracks off to the right

The large open area adjacent to the village on the south side has the potential to be used for extended green space, a multipurpose athletic field, picnic area, additional parking, or as a site for future buildings. At present, it is vacant. In addition, more green space could be created within the inner loop of the village itself. The pea gravel that presently fills the loop is difficult to walk across and prone to raising large amounts of dust. The loop is seen by many visitors as more of a space to avoid than a space to transverse. Replacing the expanses of pea gravel with defined areas of wood mulch and grass would greatly enhance the visual and practical aspects of the main space of the village. Mulch is considerably safer, more ecological, and much more user-friendly to all, especially for the physically-challenged. Its use would also deter vandalism by presenting a cleaner, better-maintained appearance for the entire site. Public vehicle traffic

should be prohibited from the loop; golf carts or similar vehicles could be used for any necessary transportation, such as handicap access.

Another problem that arises from Cannonsburgh’s present location is its physical isolation from the rest of downtown by Broad Street, a wide and very busy street that prevents pedestrian crossing (that isn’t assisted by police, as at UDMD). In fact, more people walk to Cannonsburgh from farther up the Greenway than from the square two blocks away. Giving the village more visibility from the downtown area would enhance not only the village, but also the overall scheme of Murfreesboro’s downtown as a heritage destination. The physical separation that Broad Street represents also translates into a separation of perception, with the downtown side of Broad Street seen as more desirable for development and commerce, and the Cannonsburgh side of Broad Street perceived as less attractive.

Solutions to remedy this situation include acquiring the commercial lot at the corner of Broad and Front Streets, presently occupied by an empty retail warehouse, and expanding the village site in another direction—across Lytle Creek to West Main Street. The expansion to West Main Street would allow for space for a new visitor center, parking, more green space, and more creek frontage, but would require the purchase of several acres of commercial/industrial space presently occupied by brick warehouses. This site-expansion option would link Cannonsburgh to the historic Murfreesboro railroad depot and to the Main Street corridor, and permit the stories and the spaces of Murfreesboro’s downtown historic resources to come together in a more cohesive telling.

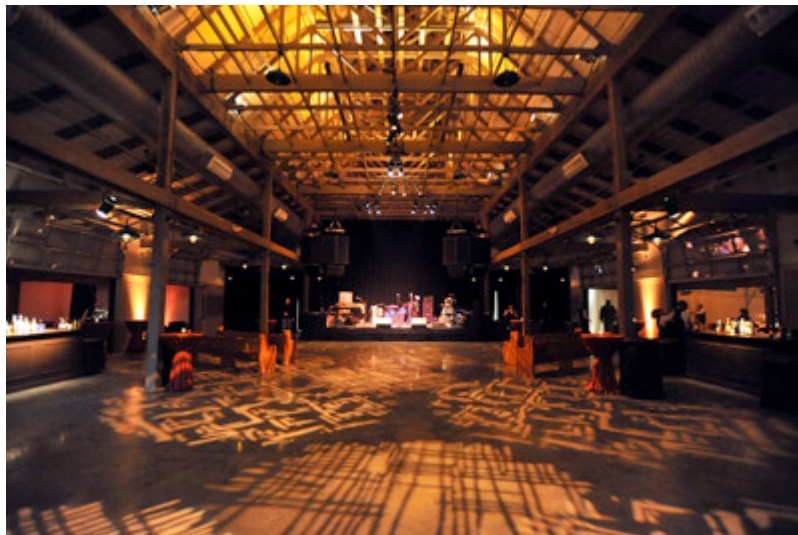
Cannonsburgh can become more successful by expanding its image as a destination. This can be done by increasing the number and quality of its programs and events. Many opportunities exist if the proper venues are available. At present, the village lacks an indoor facility that can accommodate large crowds. The renovation of the cotton warehouse into a revenue-generating venue would serve that function. With more than 5,000 square feet of floor space, the building could be used in its entirety or temporarily divided into smaller spaces for a multi-use facility. The more than 300 linear feet of wall space could accommodate exhibit panels, large maps and photographs, art exhibitions, etc.



Cotton warehouse

Substantial repairs and upgrades to the cotton warehouse could transform this historic c.1910 brick building (original to the site) into a suitable venue for radio shows and other live performances. Traditional music, though not well represented in the village's present artifact collection, has always been a part of Cannonsburgh's largest events. As a village of traditional ways of rural life, Cannonsburgh indeed has a prominent role to play in the promotion of music as a way both to engage visitors and to tell the diverse story of Tennessee's history and culture. Planners involved in Uncle Dave Macon Days have a vision for Murfreesboro to be home to a future national center for traditional music, with possible headquarters at a downtown building near the village. One element of the center's programming would include a weekly radio show from WSM (650 AM), Nashville's premier old-time music broadcaster since 1925.

The museum panels presently in the cotton warehouse could be stored in the Art League warehouse (or other suitable place) until their further use is determined, while the lobby of the renovated warehouse could support smaller, temporary exhibits related to traditional music (such as the UDMD two-panel exhibit at the Heritage Center of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County.) The building needs to be stabilized, renovated both on the exterior and interior, and equipped with modern heating, air conditioning, lighting, and plumbing. This expense, estimated at over \$100,000, could come from the city and/or from corporate and foundation grants. If the success of the WSM weekly live broadcast from Loveless Barn just outside Nashville is any indication, such a broadcast held in Murfreesboro would bring sell-out crowds, merchandising opportunities, and greater recognition to downtown Murfreesboro's place in the contemporary traditional music scene.



Musical events in a venue like the Loveless Barn would contribute to the cultural life of Murfreesboro.

Credit: <http://www.musiccityroots.com/loveless-cafe-barn>

These musical events (live or otherwise) would contribute to the city and the whole state in significantly positive ways, ranging from the monetary—a share of ticket prices and parking, booking fees, tourist meals and lodging—to the culturally sustainable. The interpretation of Tennessee's musical culture through the years could create a brand for Murfreesboro and

Rutherford County, and provide a thematic link between many of its historic and cultural sites.²¹ Traditional music would open up cultural and merchandizing opportunities, somewhat along the lines of the Mississippi Blues Trail.

Visitors from around the world already associate Nashville with country music; Murfreesboro could easily link with such recognition and tell the other part of that story—that traditional music continues to be performed and recreated on a daily basis right here in our city. Cannonsburgh’s association with the premier traditional music event in the area since 1989, its proximity to the music venues on the square, its potential for parking, and its tangible connection to the rural Tennessee heritage that nourished traditional music all make the case for Cannonsburgh’s potential role in this musical branding strategy.

Cannonsburgh’s educational mission also would benefit from changing the function of the present museum. Housed since 1976 in the cotton warehouse, the exhibits in the museum have become worn and outdated, and have not been integrated and interpreted at the other buildings and structures at the site. The time is right to identify and prioritize the main themes in Tennessee, Rutherford County, and Murfreesboro history that will be presented at Cannonsburgh, such as history, education, government, industry, etc. New exhibit panels which feature the village’s artifact collections, fresh images, and updated text would reflect these choices. Each exhibit could be housed in a historic building that is relevant to the topic; for example, the education exhibit could be placed inside the schoolhouse. A public history class at MTSU has already begun an inventory of all the artifacts at the village; a complete list will help identify suitable artifacts for inclusion in the various exhibits. Further involvement by university student groups would be a good and economical way to bring the benefits of up-to-date research and state-of-the-art educational programming to the site.

This interpretation on a building-by-building basis would greatly enhance the visitor experience, help focus the historical narratives framed by the buildings themselves, and facilitate tour groups and school programs by offering an enhanced self-guided educational experience. These building-specific panels could be installed at minimum expense by displaying concise text on unobtrusive signs near the entry of each building. Public history classes from MTSU could research and write the texts, while community donors could contribute to the cost. Furthermore, an auction of the deaccessioned artifacts could also generate significant one-time funds for such a project, if the proceeds were designated for the village’s operating budget and not funneled into the City’s general fund.

The largest and most varied group of artifacts at Cannonsburgh is the tractor and farm implement collection. A winter storm blew down one of the sheds where a part of the collection is stored and the remaining structure is in poor condition. A modern open steel building (where the farmer’s market was formerly held) is presently serving as a temporary storehouse for some of this equipment. The steel structure could be enclosed, added to, and made into a permanent home for these important resources.

²¹ Interview with Gloria Christy, President of Uncle Dave Macon Days, March 5, 2010.



Iron fence could be extended to incorporate the buildings into the village.

Extending the iron fence from where it now terminates toward the south property line would help to integrate this new museum building, the McKnight House, and the Stones River Garage into the main area of village.

At the present time, the McKnight House, an authentic early log dwelling relocated to Cannonsburgh, is not interpreted and is used mainly for storage. This important example of vernacular architecture could play a much bigger role at the village. Although it has been joined at the rear by a small addition to a frame storage building, the two sections could easily be physically separated and the McKnight House then used to house exhibits or to present programming to small groups. The other section could remain as a storage facility.



McKnight House linked to the storage building

V. CONCLUSION

What make Cannonsburgh successful as a community resource are its historic resources that provide a traditional backdrop for festivals, events, meetings, and recreation. The village brings in around 75,000 visitors per year, which is amazing considering its minimal maintenance budget and operations staff. The site also has wonderful potential to draw more visitors and to provide them with a stronger picture of rural and small-town Tennessee life of the early nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. A concerted effort to address the most significant maintenance issues and the implementation of a few low-cost interpretive solutions will keep Cannonsburgh as one of the major heritage destinations of Rutherford County. More involved recommendations, such as repurposing the cotton warehouse, will further maximize the village's potential as a revenue-generating venue and educational experience. This report recommends that the City of Murfreesboro should take the following actions:

- 1. Address maintenance issues**
 - Water control concerns
 - Stabilization of the main log buildings
 - Essential repairs to foundations, roofs, windows, doors, and siding.
- 2. Expand Cannonsburgh's heritage education program**
 - Updated signage
 - New interpretive panels
 - Thematic reorganization of the village's artifacts
- 3. Reconsider Cannonsburgh's contributions to the community and the community's investment in the village**
 - Development of profit-sharing policies
 - Organization of a non-profit support group
 - Creation of Web site
 - Application for grants
 - Pursuit of other ideas for community involvement that could provide a greater financial benefit for the village to offset maintenance costs
- 4. Create a venue for live music performances and/or heritage education programs**

The Murfreesboro of 1976 that conceived, built, and sustained the first year of Cannonsburgh's existence is quite different from the city of 2010. Murfreesboro's population has more than doubled, putting pressure on the city's remaining historic resources and heightening the competition for funds. Cannonsburgh, on the other hand, has remained largely the same in physical appearance and management policy. It has not grown to accommodate new practices in museum management and the needs of a larger population. If serious measures are not taken to address the physical integrity and interpretation of the site, then Cannonsburgh may not survive to present even minimally, the vision of its founders and the efforts of all those who have participated in the dream of 1976.

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APPENDICES

- A. Cannonsburgh Visitor Count, 2009
- B. City of Murfreesboro Cannonsburgh Expenditures, FY 2008 – 2009
- C. Cannonsburgh Annual Revenues, 1997 – 2009

APPENDIX A: CANNONSBURGH VISITOR COUNT, 2009

These statistics were taken directly from the Murfreesboro Parks and Recreation Department 2009 annual report:

<http://www.murfreesborotn.gov/uploadedFiles/government/Parks-Rec/Home/Annual%20Report%202009.pdf>.

This report covers the period from January to October 2009. Estimated overall total: **75,070**.

MONTH	ESTIMATED TOTAL	EVENTS
January	650	Blacksmith Convention
February	65	weddings
March	55	weddings
April	8300	Pioneer Days (7000) Bible Reading (300) guests, tours, weddings (1000)
May	1250	National Day of Prayer (50) Free Day in May (200) weddings, guests (1000)
June	1000	weddings, guests
July	51,850	Uncle Dave Macon Days (50,000) weddings, tours, Heritage Camp (1850)
August	500	guests
September	1200	weddings, guests
October	10,500	Harvest Days (9000) weddings, guests (1500)

APPENDIX B: CITY OF MURFREESBORO CANNONSBURGH EXPENDITURES, FY 2008 – 2009

These statistics are based on line items within the Parks and Recreation Department budget for FY 2008 – 2009 (July – June). Some budget items, such as water, power, and salaries, were not itemized specifically for Cannonsburgh, and therefore were not included in the table below. There is no separate budget that indicates the exact total amount of money budgeted and spent on the village.

CANNONSBURGH LINE ITEM	2008 – 2009 BUDGET	2008 – 2009 12-MONTH EXPENDITURES
Grounds	4480.00	-2806.80
Buildings	14,200.00	-10,792.78
Supplies	1035.00	-502.74
Ads	2900.00	-2677.64
Brochures	1000.00	-1995.20
Janitorial	1000.00	-1026.27
Activities	1725.00	-1571.14
Tools & hardware	425.00	-232.48
Clothing	875.00	-367.97
Miscellaneous supplies	500.00	-359.62
Special events	3350.00	-1865.00
Concerts	2000.00	-575.00
Purchases for resale	3000.00	-2663.22
TOTAL	36,490.00	-27,435.86

APPENDIX C: CANNONSBURGH ANNUAL REVENUES, 1997-2009

These statistics are based on Parks and Recreation Department budgets, and were provided by Cindy Nancy in the Parks and Recreation office. This department of the Murfreesboro city government assumed control of Cannonsburgh in 1997, the first year for which budget numbers are available.

FISCAL YEAR (JULY – JUNE)	ACTUAL REVENUES
1997 – 1998	14,358.31
1998 – 1999	21,586.18
1999 – 2000	25,691.77
2000 – 2001	28,274.53
2001 – 2002	29,360.78
2002 – 2003	32,138.63
2003 – 2004	36,821.59
2004 – 2005	35,285.29
2005 – 2006	28,092.80
2006 – 2007	32,666.76
2007 – 2008	33,981.00
2008 – 2009	25,088.00

Projected revenues for 2008 – 2009 were \$35,000, a reasonable expectation considering the previous years' revenues. Cannonsburgh's income, however, is apparently hard to predict. FY 2009 – 2010 has already surpassed the previous year's mark, at \$21,604.47 by February.