Contextual and Architectural History, Condition Assessment, and Interpretive Plan for the Buchanan Log House

August 2011

A Public Service of the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area
Contextual and Architectural History, Condition Assessment, and Interpretive Plan

for the

Buchanan Log House

A Public Service of the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area

By

Michael Gavin, Preservation Specialist
Katherine O’Bryan, Graduate Assistant

August 2011

Contents

I. Overview ......................................................................................................................... 4

II. Contextual History of Buchanan Log House ................................................................. 5
III. Architectural History of Buchanan Log House………………………………14

IV. Physical Condition Assessment with Restoration

Recommendations……..22

V. Historic Appearance Assessment with
Recommendations…………………….33

VI. Interpretive Plan for Buchanan Log
House…………………………………42

VII. Guided Tour of Buchanan Log House……………………………………….56

VIII. Interpretive Signage for Buchanan Log House………………………..63
Overview

Introduction

This project is a collaboration of the staff at the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area (TCWNHA), a graduate assistant who works for the TCWNHA and is a Ph.D candidate in Middle Tennessee State University’s (MTSU) public history program, and the Buchanan Log House Board of Directors and volunteer staff. This document is designed to provide a contextual and architectural history, a condition assessment, as well as interpretive planning, including a guided tour and signage, for the Buchanan Log House. The hope is that this report will contribute to the effort to preserve, protect, and interpret the Buchanan Log House.

Who is Involved

The TCWNHA is a partnership unit of the National Park Service and administered by the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University. Since its inception, the Heritage Area has worked with communities and organizations across the state to tell the powerful stories of the home front, the demands of fighting and occupation, the freedom of emancipation, and the enduring legacies of Reconstruction.

The TCWNHA works closely with the history students in MTSU’s public history program. The student working on this project is a Ph.D candidate in the public history program, as well as a graduate assistant with the TCWNHA.

This project was initiated when members of the Buchanan Log House Board of Directors, including Lu Whitworth, President, Buchanan Log House (BLH) Chapter, Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities (APTA), and Joe Cathey, Director, BLH Board of Directors contacted the TCWNHA and requested assistance. Tim Walker of the Metropolitan Historical Commission also suggested a partnership between the TCWNHA and the Buchanan Log House Board of Directors.

The staff of the TCWNHA and the graduate assistant conducted multiple fieldwork visits to the site. During these site visits, in addition to surveying and assessing the preservation needs of the site, they spoke to Lu Whitworth and Joe Cathey, as well as other knowledgeable volunteers, concerning their thoughts on the needs of the site. Additionally, Whitworth provided helpful genealogical research on the Buchanan family. The result of this partnership is the following Contextual and Architectural History, Condition Assessment, and Interpretive Plan for the Buchanan Log House.
Buchanan Log House Contextual History

The Buchanan Log House, also known as the James Buchanan House, is located in Davidson County and was constructed in 1807-1808. The history of this building, which is one of the oldest log houses in Middle Tennessee as well as one of the best extant examples of twostory log construction in the area, provides insight into the frontier settlement experience, as well as the Civil War and Reconstruction experience, in Middle Tennessee.

During the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, many individuals and families migrated from the eastern seaboard to what was, at the time, the Western Territory of North Carolina. These pioneers formed several settlements in the area that would eventually become the state of Tennessee. In the early-1770s, they established the Watauga settlement, the Nolichucky settlement, and the North Holston settlement in the area that is now East Tennessee. By the late-1770s and early-1780s, settlers had moved further westward, forming the Cumberland settlement in what is currently Middle Tennessee.¹

James Buchanan was one of these early settlers. James was born in Virginia on July 16, 1763, to Archibald Buchanan and his wife, Agnes Bowen Buchanan. James was the second child, and only son, born to Archibald and Agnes.² By the age of seventeen, James had journeyed to the Cumberland settlement area of Tennessee and signed the Cumberland Compact at Fort Nashborough on May 1, 1780.³ The Cumberland Compact was signed by 256 men above the age of sixteen and established a temporary government in the Middle Tennessee area until 1783, when the Cumberland government petitioned the North Carolina legislature for official recognition, which resulted in the formation of Davidson County the same year.⁴

While James and his father Archibald were some of the first pioneers to settle in Davidson County, they were not among the most prosperous or powerful. In these early years of western settlement, it was oftentimes the land speculators and surveyors who were in positions of power. It was these men who essentially controlled western settlement by owning vast tracts of land and determining the boundaries of land for others.

³ Cumberland Compact of 1780; McAbee, “Archibald Buchanan,” 78.
In the early years of settlement, the North Carolina General Assembly established offices for the sale of all lands in Tennessee, with the exceptions of a military district that had been reserved for those frontiersmen who were willing to join the Continental Army and an eastern Cherokee reservation. The Assembly justified their sale of other lands that Cherokees believed to be theirs by arguing that North Carolina needed to pay war debts and that the Cherokees had forfeited their rights to the land when they allied with the British. Therefore, land speculators during this time had two primary methods of acquiring large tracts of western frontier lands – they could purchase multiple land claims from military veterans, who were allotted grants of 640 acres each or they could purchase lands through the Hillsborough land office that had been established through the North Carolina General Assembly.5

This process led to the concentration of certificates for thousands and sometimes tens of thousands of acres of western lands in the hands of a few large land speculators. Once they received their certificates, the speculators hired agents to travel to the appropriate area in the Cumberland District and survey their claims. According to historian Kristofer Ray:

Men such as James Robertson, John Donelson, Isaac Bledsoe, and Kasper Mansker set up stations to defend the small white community, assess contested lands, gather claims of their own, and use padded surveys to increase their acreage. This group would use their eastern connections, their access to and control over tens of thousands of acres, and their position at the head of local militia companies to become the frontier elite in the 1770s and 1780s.6

Therefore, while Archibald and James Buchanan were among some of the earliest pioneers to settle in the Cumberland District, they were not nearly as prosperous and powerful as some of the early speculator/surveyors in the area.

The Buchanan family did own land and established a home shortly after the signing of the Cumberland Compact and the formation of Davidson County. In an entry dated December 11, 1784, the State of North Carolina deeded a 640-acre tract of land to Archibald Buchanan at the price of ten pounds for every hundred acres of land. The land was formally surveyed for Archibald Buchanan by Daniel Smith on June 6, 1788, and North Carolina Grant No. 583 was signed November 26, 1789. Archibald Buchanan’s tract of land was located “in our County of Davidson on the waters of Stones River including the place called clover bottom.”7 In 1785, the


6 Ibid., 7.

7 North Carolina Grant No. 583, North Carolina to Archibald Buchanan.
remainder of the Buchanan family moved from Augusta County, Virginia, to Davidson County, Tennessee, and settled on this 640-acre tract of land called Clover Bottom.  

Life was not easy for the early settlers that lived in the Cumberland settlement, and later, Davidson County, in the 1770s and 1780s. Although no Native American nation specifically lived on this land, the Cherokees, Creeks, and Chickasaws all used the land on which the pioneers settled for tribal and economic activities. The threat of Native American attacks was a persistent fear among the early settlers. Their fears were often justified, as the Chickasaws and Chickamaugans attacked several of the Cumberland settlements, resulting in loss of life, as well as settlers choosing to relocate, in the early-1780s.

In 1789, three weeks after North Carolina became the twelfth state, the legislature ceded its former western lands to the national government. On May 26, 1790, the Territory of the United States South of the River Ohio was formed and William Blount was appointed territorial governor. Over the next several years, Blount worked to negotiate with the Cherokees and establish a successful government in the Territory. In 1793, state representatives were elected, and the first legislative session convened in 1794. By 1795, the legislature was considering statehood, and in a poll on the question of statehood, the overwhelming majority of free adult males favored the formation of a state, although most residing in Davidson County did not. After some debate in the national Congress, President Washington signed a bill on June 1, 1796, making Tennessee the sixteenth state in the union.

In the mid-1790s, the population of the Territory that would soon become the state of Tennessee was still sparse. At the time of statehood, only about a half a dozen roads were in use throughout the state. In Davidson County, there were 1,192 free white females, 728 free white males aged sixteen and older, 695 free white males under the age of sixteen, 992 slaves, and 6 other free people, for a total of 3,613 people residing in Davidson County in 1795. At the time of statehood, there were approximately one hundred homes in the city of Nashville.

---

8 Rogers, “Buchanan, James House.”
9 Ray, Middle Tennessee 1775-1825, xxv.
10 Corlew, Tennessee: A Short History, 54.
11 Ibid., 86.
12 Ibid., 90-104
13 Ibid., 197.
14 Ibid., 96, 109.
Over the next two decades, James Buchanan acquired additional property. On November 21, 1804, James Buchanan purchased a three-acre tract of land on the east side of Stones River from his brother-in-law, Andrew Steele, which included “the Ferry Landing at the Old Fields” for the sum of one hundred dollars.\(^{13}\) In 1806, James’s father, Archibald, died, and James inherited half of his father’s lands.\(^{14}\) On January 1, 1807, James purchased a 310-acre tract of land for $1,500 from his cousin, Thomas Gillespie. This land was on the west side of the Stones River, near the land that was previously owned by Archibald Buchanan that James had recently inherited.\(^{15}\) Following the acquisition of these lands, James Buchanan constructed his two-story log home in 1807-1808.

While James Buchanan was largely acquiring land and constructing his home during the last years of the first decade of the nineteenth century, he also sold a thirty-four acre parcel of the land that he inherited from his father to John Hoggatt for $340 on April 2, 1810.\(^{16}\)

Less than a month later, on April 24, 1810, James married Lucinda East, with whom he would have sixteen children, ten daughters and six sons, over the next twenty-two years.\(^{17}\) In 1820, in order to provide more living space for his growing family, which now included eight children, James built an addition to his two-story log house.

The population of the state of Tennessee and, particularly, Middle Tennessee, continued to grow in the first several decades of the nineteenth century. Although some Chickasaws remained in West Tennessee, most of Middle and East Tennessee had settled Native American claims to land. In 1809, 60% of people residing in Tennessee now lived in Middle Tennessee. The growth of Middle Tennessee outpaced that of East Tennessee beginning in the 1800s due largely to the superior water transportation that was provided by the Cumberland River.\(^{20}\)

In 1812, when the United States went to war with Britain, Tennesseans were actively involved in the support of their country. In October of 1812, General Andrew Jackson mustered

---

\(^{13}\) Deed, “Andrew Steel to James Buchanan,” made November 21, 1804, recorded August 10, 1810, Davidson County Deed Book I, p. 18; McAbee, “Archibald Buchanan,” 99.

\(^{14}\) Rogers, “Buchanan, James House.”


\(^{17}\) Marriage License, “James Buchanan to Lucy East,” April 24, 1810; Rogers, “Buchanan, James House.”

2,000 Tennesseans and headed south to support a conquest of Spanish Florida. Unbeknownst to Jackson and the Tennesseans, Congress did not support this action, and Jackson and his men were stopped at Natchez and forced to return to Tennessee without pay, supplies, or transportation. Tennesseans also joined Colonel John Williams and General James Winchester in efforts to conquer Spanish Florida and invade Canada, respectively; however, both of these efforts were also unsuccessful. Although these attempts by Tennesseans to support their country in the War of 1812 was unsuccessful, they would not be deterred; 3,500 Tennessee volunteers joined General Andrew Jackson in Middle Tennessee and General John Cocke in East Tennessee to battle the Creek Indians in the Creek War phase of the War of 1812. Jackson’s men defeated the Creeks in the Battle of Horseshoe Bend on March 27, 1814. From here, Jackson and his fellow Tennesseans engaged the British along the Gulf Coast, successfully defending Mobile, driving the British out of Pensacola, and finally, defeating the British in the Battle of New Orleans on January 8, 1815.¹⁸

Like many thousand Tennesseans, James Buchanan and his family were involved in the War of 1812. James was a member of Captain Thomas’s Davidson County Militia Company during the War of 1812. A local home, “Old Blue Brick,” was said to have served as a mustering point for Andrew Jackson’s Tennessee Militia prior to the 1815 Battle of New Orleans. ¹⁹

During his adult life, James Buchanan was active in both his community and the church. He was an active member of the Ephesus Church, which was located at The Hermitage and donated by Andrew Jackson. In the 1830s, James was elected and ordained an “elder” in the church.²⁰

On February 14, 1841, James Buchanan died, and management of his estate was left to his wife, Lucinda, and son Addison. James’s will stipulated that the land not be sold until his youngest child, Sarah Ann, turned fifteen, and Addison was to receive fifty acres of his father’s property for agreeing to help manage the land until that time. He also noted that at the death or remarriage of Lucinda, the estate, including land as well as personal property, was to be sold, and the proceeds divided equally among all of his living children.²¹

¹⁸ Ibid., 139-140.
¹⁹ James Buchanan is listed as number 561 in the “1812 Enumeration of Free Men and Militia of Davidson Co., TN, Captain Thomas’s Militia Company”; Rogers, “Buchanan, James House.”.

²⁰ “History of the Hermitage Church,” (unpublished manuscript, n.d.), 5. The author of this document is also unknown, and it was found in a safe in The Hermitage in 1993; McAbee, “Archibald Buchanan,” 78.

²¹ Will, “James Buchanan,” made January 18, 1841, recorded June 9, 1841, Book 12, p. 152-153. At this time, according to the 1839 Davidson County Tax List, James Buchanan’s property likely consisted of approximately 310 acres of land valued at $63,000. “Davidson 1839 Tax List, Box 3, tax list Davidson – Grainger,” p. 217, Tennessee State Library and Archives.
In the late-1850s and early-1860s, Nashvillians, like those living in other American cities throughout the country, became embroiled in the sectional debate in the days leading to the secession of the Southern states from the Union and the subsequent Civil War. The institution of slavery had been present in Tennessee from the earliest days of settlement, with enslaved people accompanying John Sevier, James Robertson, and some of the other first settlers who journeyed from Virginia and North Carolina to the area that would eventually become the state of Tennessee. By the time of the organization of the Southwest Territory in 1790, there were 3,417 enslaved people in the area, who comprised 10 percent of the total population. This percentage had increased to 13.7 by the time of statehood in 1796; however, the population of enslaved people was greater in Middle Tennessee than East Tennessee, with 20 percent of the population of Middle Tennessee being enslaved people. Both the White and enslaved populations of Middle Tennessee increased rapidly during the antebellum years, and by the time of sectional crisis in 1860, there was approximately one African American for every three Whites living in Tennessee.\(^{22}\)

Prior to the firing on Fort Sumter, many Nashvillians strongly supported the Union, but feelings quickly changed. After the election of Abraham Lincoln as president by the Northern section of the country and with a minority of the popular vote in 1860, and with the firing on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, a majority of Middle and Western Tennesseans favored secession from the Union, which formally occurred on June 8, 1861.\(^{23}\)

It was not long before the Civil War arrived in Middle Tennessee. In early February, 1862, the Union army reached Nashville, and the Confederate high command opted to evacuate the city without a fight, making the city the first Confederate state capital to fall into Union hands. On February 25, a flotilla of seven troop transports that carried the first of the Union soldiers that were to occupy Nashville until the end of the Civil War journeyed up the Cumberland River. By nightfall, perhaps 10,000 soldiers had come ashore to begin the occupation of Nashville, a city of approximately 30,000 people. Shortly thereafter, on March 3, 1862, President Lincoln appointed Andrew Johnson, United States senator and former governor of Tennessee, as military governor of the state.\(^{24}\)

The Union occupation proved difficult, and sometimes disastrous, for many Middle Tennesseans. Although many Nashvillians had already fled the city after hearing of the fall of Fort Donelson, many others, including prominent Nashvillians who had supported secession, left

\(^{22}\) Corlew, A Short History of Tennessee, 209.
\(^{23}\) Ibid., 288-293, 325.

the city within days of the beginning of Federal occupation. Federal authorities began almost immediately to seek out and arrest those who had supported the Confederate cause.25

As the Federal occupation of Nashville continued throughout the early-1860s, the lives of Nashvillians were profoundly impacted. Public schools and many private schools were closed during Federal occupation. Nashville families faced physical threats from marauders, thieves, and killers who drove them from their homes, stole from them, or physically harmed them. Epidemic diseases, such as smallpox, broke out throughout the city. There were shortages of food and labor.26 Nothing concerned Nashvillians more, however, than the undetermined legal status of Tennessee’s African Americans, who were exempt from the Emancipation Proclamation.27

The Civil War impacted the Buchanan family, their land, and their slaves. The 1850 United States Federal Census Slave Schedule shows that Lucinda Buchanan owned fourteen slaves: six males, ages 60, 50, 16, 15, 5, and 5, as well as eight females, ages 27, 24, 11, 11, 7, 2, 1, and 1. Although Lucinda Buchanan is not listed in the 1860 United States Federal Census Slave Schedule, there were apparently still enslaved people on her property, as a letter from Union Army Major-General Lovell H. Rousseau to Brigadier General W. D. Whipple indicates. According to Rousseau, “protections are granted to some slaves to remain with their owners, exempt from labor, as in case of Mrs. Buchanan, relative to Secretary E. H. East.”28 This contrasts sharply with Rousseau’s view of the condition of slavery in the state, as he states early in the same letter that, “slavery is virtually dead in Tennessee, although the State is excepted from the emancipation proclamation. Negroes leave their homes and stroll over the country uncontrolled […] In many cases negroes leave their homes to work for themselves, boarding and lodging with their masters, defiantly asserting their right to do it.”29 Unfortunately, it is unknown why Mrs. Buchanan received this privilege, as a separate letter that was included in Rousseau’s on the subject went unrecorded.

The Civil War and the Union Army occupation of Nashville also impacted the Buchanan family’s land holdings. Lucinda and her son, Alexander Buchanan, filed a claim on their property with the Southern Claims Commission sometime between 1871 and 1873. The

25 Ibid., 10-12, 26-29, 71-72.
27 Durham, Reluctant Partners, 51-53.
29 Ibid.
Southern Claims Commission provided an avenue for Southerners to claim that their property had been taken by the military for use in the Civil War and gain compensation for that property. Thousands of Tennesseans filed such claims. The status of Lucinda and Alexander’s claim is listed as “disallowed,” and, unfortunately, the paperwork for the claim has not been preserved for posterity. It is important, however, to view the Buchanan family as only one of thousands of other families living in Nashville and Middle Tennessee who felt the impact of the Civil War and Union Army occupation of Nashville as their way of life was dramatically altered and their property was taken by Federal troops during the occupation.

On April 16, 1865, Lucinda Buchanan died, and in the following two years, the Buchanan estate was inventoried and settled amongst the Buchanan’s surviving heirs. In this process, the Buchanan Log House and 146-acre property was sold to Judge Thomas Neil Frazier, and his wife Margaret McReynolds Frazier, for $6,789.50.30 Frazier was born in 1810 in East Tennessee to Abner and Mary Edmonson Frazier, and was a graduate of Greeneville College. He studied law and was admitted to the bar in Washington, Tennessee. He became a Clerk and Master of the Chancery Court of Bledsoe County and was an important figure in the county until 1863, when he accepted the appointment of Criminal Court Judge for Rutherford and Davidson Counties and relocated to Rutherford County.31

According to the James Buchanan House National Register of Historic Places nomination, “while living in the Buchanan House, Judge Frazier became embroiled in one of the most bitter and partisan chapters in Tennessee’s Reconstruction history which resulted in his impeachment as judge by the Tennessee legislature.”32 The issue at stake was the ratification at the state level of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Federal Constitution, which led to a power struggle between Tennessee’s Radical and Conservative Republicans. The Conservative Republicans did not have enough votes to defeat the amendment; however, they chose not to attend the legislative session, prohibiting a quorum from being attained. In response, the Radical Republicans had two members of the Conservative Republicans, A. J. Martin and Pleasant Williams, arrested and brought to the legislative chamber. After this action, the quorum was obtained, and the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified in the state. However, Martin and Williams petitioned Judge Frazier to be released from illegal arrest and detention. Frazier issued a writ of habeas corpus demanding that Sergeant-at-Arms Heydt produce Martin and Williams and explain the cause of their incarceration. The state House of Representatives fought the writ, and passed a resolution claiming it was an unwarranted interference into the House of Representatives. Judge Frazier did not agree with the House of Representatives resolution, did not view it as a sufficient reason for the detention of Williams, and ordered the sheriff of Davidson County to arrest Heydt for contempt of court and to free Williams from illegal incarceration. As a result, Frazier was impeached by the Tennessee State House of

31 Rogers, “Buchanan, James House.”
32 Ibid.
Representatives on February 11, 1867, and tried by the Radical Republican dominated Senate where he was found guilty and removed from office. However, with the passage of the new State Constitution under Conservative Republicans in 1870, Frazier was returned to office as Judge of the Criminal Court of Davidson County.

Judge Frazier’s and wife Margaret’s son, James Beriah Frazier, who also rose to prominence in both Tennessee and national politics as a Tennessee governor and United States senator, lived his teenage years in the Buchanan House. James Frazier was born on October 18, 1856. He attended Franklin College near Nashville and graduated from the University of Tennessee in 1878. In 1880 he was admitted to the bar and moved to Chattanooga to practice law. In 1902, he was nominated as governor at the State Democratic Convention and was elected by a large majority. He was nominated and easily won re-election for a second term as governor, but did not serve his full term, as on March 9, 1905, United States Senator William Bate died and Governor Frazier was elected to fill his seat, which he did until March 3, 1911. The Buchanan House and property remained in the possession of the Frazier family until the late 1920s.

The history of the James Buchanan and Thomas Neil Frazier families, both associated with the Buchanan Log House, are representative of the social, cultural, and political changes that occurred in Middle Tennessee from the time of frontier settlement through the Civil War and Reconstruction. The history of the Buchanan family, and the construction and expansion of the Buchanan Log House, is representative of the lives of many early settlers that struggled to establish homes for themselves and their families in the Cumberland settlement, Davidson County, and Middle Tennessee area. This family also shared in the hardships and struggles that many Nashvillians faced during the Union occupation of Nashville during the Civil War. The story of Judge Frazier and his son, James, likewise provide a glimpse into a tenuous and challenging period in Tennessee’s Reconstruction experience.

---


34 Rogers, “Buchanan, James House.”

35 Ibid.
The Buchanan Log House: An Architectural History

For more than two hundred years, the Buchanan Log House has stood on the high ground above McCrory Creek in southeastern Davidson County. Built in c.1808 by pioneer settler James Buchanan (1763 – 1841) on a portion of a Revolutionary War grant originally owned by Thomas Gillespie, the building is one of the oldest in the Donelson community. The Buchanan House has been inhabited continuously since its original construction and successive generations of occupants have left their marks on the structure. Although there have been numerous architectural changes both inside and out throughout the years, the historic residence retains much of its original character, charm, and appeal.

James Buchanan came to Tennessee from Virginia and purchased the land from Gillespie in 1807. His hewn log dwelling most likely reflected the frontier culture that he grew up in during the late 1700s. During that time period, a number of traditional British house types were built in the former colonies and one in particular, two stories in height, one-room deep, and two rooms or more long, appears to be the inspiration for the Buchanan House.
The earliest form of this popular house type (which could be built from wood, brick, or stone) was a rectangular building consisting of two rooms on the first floor: the hall and the parlor. Often, there was only a single room above, but two rooms upstairs were not unusual. Almost all domestic activities took place in the hall, which was square-shaped and the larger of the rooms. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the hall-and-parlor arrangement was the most common multi-room plan found throughout Davidson County and the surrounding area.

Most early buildings constructed in Middle Tennessee were uncomplicated and had simple floor plans. The front and rear walls almost always had opposing entry doors. This was the case in the Buchanan House, although the original location of the rear door has been filled in and the door installed in the place of one of the rear windows. Usually, the chimney was centered on the long axis of the house on the gable end.

Although the settlers and their families often built small log buildings themselves, the size, complexity, and workmanship of the Buchanan House indicate the presence of a professional builder and his crew. The almost complete lack of carpentry or woodworking tools in the 1841 inventory of James Buchanan’s estate provides further evidence for this supposition.

Buchanan’s house was constructed on a continuous foundation of lightly-worked limestone blocks, and utilized hewn hardwood logs from the surrounding forest for the walls, including the interior dividing wall (see Figure 1). Half-dovetail notched at the corners and built to traditional dimensions of 30’ X 18’, the building rose to a full two-story height and had multiple windows on both floors. On each exterior end of the house was a tall, well-constructed, double-shouldered fireplace composed of roughly-hewn limestone blocks laid in courses. Costly features such as the large stone chimneys, the two-story height, and multiple windows on an early house indicate an owner of above average means.
Although whole logs were used for the first floor sleepers (joists), the 4” X 8” ceiling joists on both floors were either split or pit-sawn from yellow poplar timber and then handplaned. The first floor ceiling joists have decorative beading on their lower edges and are set into blind mortises in the bearing logs. A blind mortise only penetrates halfway into the timber, so the ends of the joists are protected from the weather and not visible from the outside.

A one-inch thick false plate was nailed to the tops of the second floor ceiling joists along both of their ends, which extend about a foot past the outside of the walls. These false plates bear the 4” X 3” sash-sawn yellow poplar rafters, which are half-lapped and pegged at the ridge. Approximately four feet below the ridge, horizontal collar beams were half-lapped and nailed to the sides of each set of rafters, forming a primitive truss. This high level of craftsmanship described above is usually found only in early Tennessee houses; architectural details such as this indicate that a skilled house carpenter, one trained in timber-frame construction techniques, erected the first section of the Buchanan Log House.

The roof sheathing consists of un-edged, sash-sawn yellow poplar planks nailed to the rafters. Originally, the roof was covered with wooden boards or shingles, but sometime in the mid-twentieth century one of the owners removed the earlier roofing material and installed galvanized sheet metal 5-V pattern panels on the entire building.
On both the front and rear facades, the opposing doors were set slightly off center and the windows on the second floor were placed directly above the ones on the first floor. Despite this regularity, the front façade presents an asymmetrical appearance because of the position of the stairway inside. In order to access the upstairs, the builder installed a steep boxed stairway in the front corner of the house, which affected the placement of the nearby window. The 10’ ceiling height of the first story required a considerable amount of floor space for the run of the stairs, which were built in a square-C shape and led directly into the upstairs room. Another set of stairs (or ladder) built directly over this staircase led to the attic.

As in many early buildings, there were upstairs hearths as well. The surviving east fireplace on the second floor of the Buchanan House has inscribed geometric markings on the face of the dressed keystone centered in the arched lintel above the opening. The etching is possibly related to Masonic symbolism. At this time, neither the meaning nor the purpose of these markings is known, although they appear to represent the phases of the moon.

With his handsome dwelling complete, James Buchanan started a family. He married Mary Lucinda East (1792 – 1865) on April 24, 1810, and their union eventually produced sixteen children – ten daughters and six sons – who were all raised in the log house. In order to make room for his growing family, Buchanan built a 20’ X 18’ one-and-a-half story, one-room addition to the west side of the residence in c.1820. Also made of hewn hardwood logs halfdovetailed at the corners, the new section of the building enclosed the west fireplace of the original house. The logs used in this section were carefully hewn in a similar size and manner as the earlier ones, but were not as thick as those in the original house (see Figure 2).
When adding a room to a dwelling, often an owner would rework the fireplace so that it could be used to heat both the older and the newer spaces, and the house type that resulted from this action was known colloquially as a “saddlebag” house. Instead, Buchanan chose to construct a third fireplace on the west wall of the new room of the addition. Again, this decision to build new rather than enlarging the earlier one indicates a financially well-off owner. The original mantle for this fireplace remains in place.

Although the new section looks like a small house by itself, with opposing doors and multiple windows, it utilizes carpentry techniques specific to hewn log construction rather than the more exacting timber-frame methods used on the earlier part of the house. For example, instead of a false plate supported by cantilevered joist ends bearing the rafters, the new ones rest on a squared top plate that is supported by extended end logs. This overhang allows the solid wood plate to substitute for the lighter boxed cornice used in the timber-frame system; that is, the rafter-bearing log top plate also functions as both fascia board and soffit.

Another departure from the earlier timber-frame methods involves the second-floor joists. In the new section, the ends of the joists rest in open notches cut through the full thickness of the bearing log rather than in shallow blind mortises. Because a saw was used rather than a mallet and chisel, this technique was much easier and quicker to execute, but it left the exposed ends of the joists visible and more vulnerable to the weather.

The roof framing in the new section is simpler than the framing in the original house. Instead of sash-sawn scantling, the rafters in this section consist of red cedar poles, 4” in diameter. Although they are also half-lapped and pegged at the peak like the first set of rafters, there are no let-in horizontal collar beams; rather, plain collars were nailed flush to the sides of these rafters. Single vertical boards connecting the ridge and collar of each pair of rafters complete the primitive trusses that support the roof of the addition.

Most of the information regarding the construction of the original log house and the c.1820 addition has been obtained by directly examining the dwelling and noting the existence, location, quality, and condition of the historic characteristics. These characteristics often have been altered by decay, repair, or replacement, and may not present the same appearance as when they first were installed. Quite often, only the faintest signs of earlier building components remain, but these architectural “ghosts” and fragments often prove to be quite valuable for educational and interpretive purposes.

We know little about the history of the Buchanan Log House during the period from the end of the Civil War to the beginning of the twentieth century. Lucinda Buchanan lived in the house until she died in 1865. Due to her advancing age and her children leaving home, there is no reason to think that she made any substantial improvements to the house during those years.

Reconstruction-era Judge Thomas N. Frazier purchased the house and farm from the Buchanan estate by 1867, and various family members, including his son, future Tennessee
governor James B. Frazier, lived there during the next 60 years. Although the Frazier family certainly upgraded the old house to suit their needs, there is no information available at present that describes the details of any additions, outbuildings, or other physical changes to the Buchanan House or farm by these owners during this period. It does seem likely that one of the Fraziers added the frame one-story, board-and-batten, shed-roofed addition at the rear of the house, which contained two bedrooms, a bath, and the kitchen, but documentary proof is not available (see Figure 3).

A member of the Frazier family must have removed the log dividing wall between the hall and parlor, as well as the interior fireplace. Well before the end of the nineteenth century, the traditional two-room arrangement had become outdated, and the small interior spaces were problematic for modern living. With the dividing wall removed, there was no real need for two fireplaces. It is hard to say when the rear doorway of the earlier log section was filled in and the adjacent window converted into the new rear door opening, but it most likely occurred when this work was done.

The remodeling described above probably happened during the Fraziers’ stewardship, because the next owners, the Paynes, made no mention of any of these alterations, although they themselves made many substantial changes to the dwelling. These improvements included

![Figure 3](image-url)
installing electricity, covering the logs on the exterior with painted weatherboard siding, replacing the wooden floor of the front porch with steel-reinforced concrete, adding a rear porch, and rebuilding the chimneys. They may have installed a new front door and entry hall in the 3’ 6” space between the log pens where the west fireplace once stood (see Figure 4).

Photographs taken between 1946 and 1950, when the Starks lived in the Buchanan House, show that the interior chimney was gone by then, the original exterior door and window on the c.1820 addition had been replaced by a twin double-hung window, and the window on the southeast corner of the building was still in place.

No record of any alterations to the Buchanan House during the periods of the Hudsons’ occupancy (1950 – 1957) or the Keathleys’ (1957 – 1965) is available at present. The Williamses resided there from 1965 to 1973. They upgraded the electric wiring, installed a new septic system, and rediscovered the fireplace in the upstairs bedroom.

The most significant change that the Williamses made to the interior of the house was eliminating the front door and entry hall between the pens, the closet, and the original box stairway; then replacing them with the wide double stairs that are there at present. To accomplish this, the west wall of the original house and the east wall of the c.1820 addition (both
In 1973, Barry and Virginia Greer bought the Buchanan House and spent eight years restoring it. The Greers removed the weatherboard siding from the exterior of the building and the drywall from the interior log walls; removed the two windows on the west wall of the small log room and installed bookcases in their places; removed some walls to eliminate a downstairs bedroom and open up the kitchen area; added the bay window; removed the earlier low ceiling and created the vaulted ceiling in the rear addition, extended the kitchen into former rear porch area; and installed the recycled yellow poplar floor boards in the main log room.

In addition, they purchased pieces of architectural salvage that came from different historic buildings in the area and incorporated them into the fabric of the Buchanan House. Among these were the following:

- the mantle and chair rail in the large upstairs bedroom (from a c.1830 house in Sumner County).
- the wainscoting and chair rail in Nave Room (from a c.1830 house in Robertson County).
- the double entry doors with sidelights and transom, the mantle backboard, the stones near the propane tank, the small cabin, the smokehouse, and the gazebo (from the c.1830 Chandler House on Central Pike).
- the lock and latch on the hall door (antiques from Pennsylvania).
- the hall door and panel above (made with historic materials from Robertson County).

In 1984, after the Greers completed the restoration work, they placed the Buchanan Log House on the National Register of Historic Places for its architectural and historical significance.

In 1989, the Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority (MNAA) made an agreement to purchase the Buchanan House as part of its plan to expand Nashville’s commercial airport. Initially, the MNAA upgraded the central heat and air system, repaired and replaced the older windows (including interior storm sashes), and added insulation to the house with the intent to use the building for office space. However, three years later, the MNAA acceded to the wishes of the local community and turned the historic house and a surrounding 1.4-acre lot at 2910 Elm Hill Pike over to the Buchanan Log House Chapter of the Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities (APTA) to administer for the benefit of all the citizens of the state.
Sources


Unknown.  “[Notes.]” (n.d.)


The four architectural drawings of the Buchanan Log House are courtesy of J. Don LeCroy and are used with his permission.

Physical Condition Assessment With Restoration

Recommendations

1. **Foundation** -- The foundation appears to be in fairly good shape at this time, although there are some issues that need to be addressed. There are voids between the rocks at various places, which allow moisture to enter the building. Some foundation stones at the northwest corner have been placed so that they jut out past the outside plane of the wall. This allows rainwater that lands on them to splash back onto the lower part of the building, which leads to deterioration of the materials. Also, the metal foundation vents are inappropriate for a historic log building.

![Foundation Image]

**Recommendations:** New mortar should be placed carefully wherever voids occur. This mortar should be soft enough that it does not expand and crack the rocks later. The rocks that
protrude should be removed and set back properly. Historically correct wooden foundation vents should be installed in place of the metal ones.

2. **Fireplaces** – The fireplaces have mold, moss, and other organisms growing on their surfaces. This causes and accelerates deterioration. At various places, there are voids between the rocks, which allow moisture to enter. During the winter freeze/thaw cycle, this moisture will freeze and expand, slowly breaking up the rock and mortar. If this condition persists, eventually the fireplace will fail.

   It appears that previous repairs to the fireplaces (and the foundation) were done with mortar containing a high percentage of Portland cement, which is much harder than the limestone. This can cause cracking and splitting of the stones because they are softer than Portland cement.
**Recommendations:** The cleaning should be done with appropriate materials that do not stain or harm the rock. The old mortar should be removed in small sections and the joints repointed carefully. The mason should take care to use an appropriate lime-based soft mortar for the repointing work.

3. **Logs** -- A number of the wall logs have begun to deteriorate and need repair. The high Portland cement content of the mortar used for previous repairs has accelerated the decay. Several logs have developed cracks that not only will cause the logs to rot, but will admit water into the interior of the building. Mold is growing on some of the logs, particularly on the west wall. High humidity creates favorable conditions for the spread of mold.
Several of the logs are in an advanced state of deterioration and are soft and spongy. These logs continue to absorb water whenever it rains and are deteriorating rapidly. These logs will need complete replacement if they are not repaired in a timely manner.

**Recommendations:** The following steps should be undertaken sequentially to restore each of the logs to a stable condition and good appearance in preparation for installing new daubing:

1. Inspect logs for soundness and repair or replace if necessary. Any stray nails, tacks, staples, or other foreign objects affixed to the logs should be removed.

2. All surfaces should be thoroughly cleaned of dirt, mold, and mildew, as well as any construction debris. A pressure washer can be used, but care should be taken not to damage the historic materials. Do not use high pressure; rely instead on lower pressure and a suitable substance to break down the grime and mold. Murphy’s Oil Soap works well without permanently damaging the wood.

3. All rotten wood should be carefully removed, avoiding damage to the sound wood. Care should be taken to preserve as much of the remaining historic fabric as possible.

4. All seasoning cracks should be filled with a suitable material. Any other damage to the wood should be addressed.

5. Seal all cracks around windows, doors, and butt joints with a suitable material.

6. Clean sealant residue from all surfaces.

7. Stain log surfaces where necessary to unify the appearance of the logs and eliminate any mottled-looking areas.
o Apply a suitable protective coating to the logs.

A number of national companies manufacture a variety of specialized products especially suited for restoring and maintaining log buildings. The following websites can be accessed for additional information:

http://www.aloghomestore.com/chink.shtml
http://www.logcaresolutions.com/
http://www.ozarkloghomes.com/chinking.html
http://www.permachink.com/
http://www.sashco.com/

4. **Chinking and Daubing** -- Much of the material used to repair the daubing in the past has a high percentage of Portland cement in the mix. Portland cement is caustic and has a deleterious effect on the wood. It becomes very hard when dry and tends to crack along the
top and bottom edges of the logs, as well as vertically. Traces of the original daubing that remain indicate that the early daubing mixtures were lime-based and much softer.

**Recommendations:** Remove the older daubing and prepare the logs as detailed above. Replacement daubing utilizing historic materials should be similar to the original in composition and appearance for best results. A soft, lime-based mortar mixture would be historically appropriate.

A viable alternative would be to daub the chinks with a plastic “chinking” compound, available from a variety of manufacturers. These compounds are designed to be applied evenly over solid non-stick backer boards. Advantages include minimal cracking and maintenance, increased insulation values, and a historically accurate appearance.

Basically, there are two choices for dealing with the chinking and daubing: either trowel a historically appropriate mortar mix over the traditional wood chinking or apply the plastic daubing over backer boards.

5. **Board-and-batten siding** -- The board-and-batten siding needs attention. It is deteriorating near the bottom in several places, particularly where rainwater splashes on it. The battens
themselves were fastened improperly when they were installed and many of them have twisted and cracked as a result, admitting moisture to the building.

Short vertical boards without battens have been installed in place of the traditional fascia boards on the front of the house. The lack of battens permits moisture, insects, birds, and other vermin to enter the attic space.

**Recommendations:** Horizontal lapped weatherboards would provide better protection from the weather and would be more appropriate historically. The east gable has original weatherboards captured behind the chimney. The exposed framing components in the attic are deteriorating from moisture exposure and need to be protected. The presence of birds and other vermin is unacceptable. They can damage the historic fabric and their droppings can be a serious health hazard. If the installation of a solid fascia board fails to keep the pests out,
heavy gauge hardware cloth and/or screening should be installed wherever necessary to prevent their entry.

6. **Wheelchair ramp** – The wheelchair ramp is required for handicap access, but aspects of its construction do not meet the Accessibility Guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and its layout and present location detract from the appearance of the house.

**Recommendations:** The ramp should be relocated to a less prominent position (bringing the ramp up to the brick steps from the rear is one possible location) and rebuilt according to the ADA Accessibility Guidelines. The full guidelines can be found at [http://www.mobility-advisor.com/wheelchair-ramp-specs.html](http://www.mobility-advisor.com/wheelchair-ramp-specs.html).
7. **Modern Intrusions** – A number of modern items have been attached to the house in different places. The presence of non-historical components, such as power lines, telephone hardware, recent lighting fixtures, and new gutter types, can be disconcerting to visitors seeking an accurate representation of a historical building.

**Recommendations:** Some of these intrusions can be buried, relocated to a less visible area, or hidden by building components, fencing, or landscaping. Others, such as light fixtures, can be replaced with more historically sympathetic recreations.
8. **Trees and Shrubs** -- Several tree branches extend towards the building and a number of bushes has been planted rather close to it. The proximity of the greenery causes the growth of mold and mildew on the logs and other building components.

**Recommendations**: Trees and shrubs that are too close are not good for buildings. Their shade and moisture content create favorable conditions for decay. At a minimum, the branches in proximity to the house should be trimmed back considerably. For best results, no branches should touch or even hang over the building.
9. **Weatherization** – There are several places where the lack of proper flashing has lead to deterioration of the building fabric. In the example on the left, the logs and daubing have failed because the flashing has continuously funneled the rainwater against the building. In the example on the left, the lack of flashing has allowed the rainwater to penetrate the top of the opening and enter the building. The log above is deteriorating due to this moisture.

**Recommendations**: The entire building should be inspected by a qualified carpenter and the location of problem areas listed. These areas usually occur at the junction of different features, for example, where two different rooflines meet. These are critical areas that go bad quickly, if the proper maintenance is not performed in a timely manner. All flashing needs to be counter-flashed; one cannot rely on a single layer of flashing to prevent damage. Copper or enameled sheet metal is preferred for flashing work.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Preservation Briefs series, published by the National Park Service, provide useful technical information in dealing with historic buildings. Copies are available from:
Superintendent of Documents,
Government Printing Office, Washington,
D.C. 20402-9325.

The materials also can be downloaded and printed directly from:
http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm

Several titles are particularly relevant to the restoration efforts at the Buchanan Log House:

#6: Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings
#26: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Log Buildings
#39: Holding the Line: Controlling Unwanted Moisture in Historic Buildings #47: Maintaining the Exterior of Small and Medium Size Historic Buildings

Note: The restoration or reconstruction of historic log buildings requires specialized skills, tools, and techniques. For best results, only individuals or firms with demonstrated experience in restoring traditional log structures should be hired to perform this work.
Historic Appearance Assessment With Recommendations

The Buchanan Log House has gone through numerous changes since its construction more than 200 years ago. Originally built as a residence, the house has served the domestic needs of at least eight families during that time. Each of them had their own particular requirements and altered the house when necessary to accommodate them.

Since 1992, the Buchanan Log House has been operated as a historical site for the benefit of the citizens of the state by the APTA. The APTA took responsibility for a historic building that had been altered over the years until the cumulative effect of the changes was beginning to obscure the original characteristics of the pioneer-era log house.

The Buchanan Log House now serves as a destination for various events and the interior has been arranged to accommodate the attendees at these gatherings. Because of this reality and other considerations, this report will not recommend any changes to the inside of the building. Rather, this section will focus on the exterior of the house. As one of the oldest dwellings in the region, it is important that the house present as an authentic impression on visitors as possible. The following suggestions are offered as a means to that end.
Windows

1) The front wall of the 1½-story addition has a twin double-hung window unit in place of the original window and door. (left image) This is very noticeable. Twin windows were not used historically on log houses and are out of place on this building. Also, the insertion of the short log pieces to fill in the earlier openings was not done well and detracts from the overall appearance of the house. The original arrangement of the door and single window is an important architectural feature and should be restored by a competent carpenter.

2) The side wall of the 1½-story addition originally had a window on each side of the fireplace. (right image) These two windows have been covered over on the exterior with log pieces or planks and have had bookcases installed in their places inside. Again, the repairs on the exterior were done poorly and are unsightly. The windows next to the fireplace served architectural and practical purposes historically and were not mere decorative elements. The windows are important to the interpretation of the house.
3) On the front of the house, the four windows on the two-story section are flanked with shutters that appear to be made from dimension lumber. These shutters are not historical and should be removed. In the past, Tennesseans generally used blinds rather than shutters because blinds allow ventilation and light when it’s raining; shutters provide protection. If blinds or shutters are installed on the house, they should be properly sized and placed at every window.

4) The storm windows reflect glare and add a jarring modern element to the exterior appearance of the house. Without a doubt, they are needed for insulation and noise abatement; however, they could be mounted on the interior so that they are not as obvious.

5) Neither the round bubble window on the west wall of the rear addition nor the octagonal window on the east wall of the shed addition off the rear are historical and should be replaced by appropriate double-hung windows.
1) 

**Doors**

On the east wall at the southeast corner the door has been filled in with log pieces and planks. (left image) This work was not done well; it admits water to the inside of the room and presents a poor appearance. Assuming that this door will not be replaced, new logs should be obtained so that this corner can be properly rebuilt.

2) The modern storm-and-screen door on the east wall of the rear addition should be replaced with a more historically appropriate door. (right image)

3) The door on the south wall of the west pen should be reinstalled in its original place. (see Windows section above)
1)

**Vents**

The foundation vents are modern metal building components and do not look right on the house. Wooden vents should be substituted for a historic appearance.

![Image of a modern metal vent](image1)

2) The attic should be vented for maximum cooling efficiency. One way to accomplish this is to install a narrow continuous screened vent in the soffits right next to the house. These are the inlets. Next, remove the metal ridge cap and install a continuous fiber roof vent along the entire ridgeline; then re-install the ridge cap over it. This is the outlet. Both are needed to create a positive air flow.
1) Siding

The vertical board-and-batten siding in the gables of the house and porch was not used historically. (left image) The type of wooden siding most commonly used on Tennessee log houses during the nineteenth century was horizontal weatherboarding, or “feather-edged planks,” as some early building specifications read. A section of the original weatherboards can be found in the attic between the east chimney and the gable studs. (right image) The current siding should be removed and weatherboards installed on both gables. The siding boards will last longer and give better service if they are back-primed before they are installed.

2) Short vertical pieces of wooden planks without battens have been substituted for the fascia boards on the house itself and the front porch. The effect is a rather oddlooking appearance for an early log dwelling. In addition, the lack of battens admits water into the attic, which is causing deterioration on the ends of the joists and rafters. The boards should be removed and proper fascia boards installed.
3) There is a 3’ 6” space between the two log pens. This space has been filled in with short pieces of logs. This usually was not done in the past; either the space was left open and used for storage or it was closed in with horizontal weatherboards and incorporated into the house.
Gutter System

1) The aluminum ogee-shaped gutters and their downspouts are not historically correct. Half-round steel gutters with round downspouts should be installed on the front and rear of the Buchanan Log House for both water control and appearance. Ideally, the downspouts should be connected to leaders buried in the ground and sloped away from the house.
Gazebo

1) The gazebo is a lovely structure and a pleasure to sit in. However, its location close to the Buchanan Log House is somewhat disconcerting because of the vast difference in age and style. If the gazebo were to be moved to another part of the property, it would enhance the historic setting of the house itself.
Interpretive Plan for Buchanan Log House

I. General

Consider changing the name of the site from “The Buchanan Log House” to “The Buchanan Frazier Log House” in order to acknowledge the history and interpretation of the site as the home of the Frazier, as well as the Buchanan family.

II. Interior

A. Utilize Built-In Shelving as Areas to Develop Separate Buchanan/Frazier Interpretations

   i. Utilize the hall and parlor area of the original 1807-1808 house to interpret Buchanan ownership of the house.

      a. Remove the American flag and plaques from the built-in shelving in the original hall and parlor section of the house. Place these in the back room with the other current Buchanan House memorabilia.
b. Remove the lowest shelf and replace the flag with a Buchanan-related artifact. The Buchanan Crest that is above the mantle in the 1820 addition is one option.

c. Place an interpretive panel that contains images and text that describes the construction of the original house and the history of the Buchanan family in the remaining lower two-thirds of the shelf.
ii. Utilize the 1820 addition to interpret the Frazier story.

a. Similar to the suggestion above, utilize one or both of the built-in shelves on either side of the mantle in the 1820 addition to interpret the history of Frazier ownership of the house.
b. The appearance of the artifacts in this room have changed during the duration of this project. Be certain that in the future, the artifacts on the mantle and in the room reflect the interpretation of the room and are no earlier than c.1820 and no later than the late-nineteenth century if this room is utilized to present the Frazier story.

iii. An interpretive panel of this nature could also be utilized in the kitchen.
B. Utilize the space on and above the small table in the kitchen to focus on the interpretation of the Buchanan House, not other local historic sites.
i. Remove the images of Clover Bottom and other historic sites from the area above the table.

ii. Replace these with the image of the Addison House that is currently located in the kitchen.

iii. Consider purchasing a digital picture frame to display historic and current images of the Buchanan House and the events that are held there. Place the frame on the small table beneath the picture of the Addison House and next to the sign-in book and donations box.

iv. Remove the framed deeds and other historic documents from the wall. Consider scanning these and putting them on the digital photo frame.
II. Exterior

A. Short-term improvements

   i. Remove the bench and cigarette bins from the front of the house.
ii. Remove the storm doors. They detract from the historic appearance of the house.

iii. Extend the fence so that the additional garbage bins are concealed, find another, more discrete place to store the bins, or only keep as many bins as this fence will conceal.
B. Long-term improvements

i. Consider extending the back fence closer to the edge of the property line in order to give the visitor a greater sense of the open landscape that would have existed when the Buchanans and Fraziers lived here.
ii. Reconfigure the handicap accessible ramp that is currently attached to the historic fabric of the east elevation. Remove the ramp from the original structure and attach it to the side of the brick porch that is attached to the shed addition. Remove the railing on the brick porch. This will help to restore the historic appearance of the house, as well as cover the lower window of the shed addition.
iii. Remove the porch from the front elevation of the house. It is not historic, has no function, and detracts from the original appearance of the log house. The porch gives the house the appearance of a split-level home rather than a pioneer home.
III. Addison House

In the rear of the Buchanan Log House is a single pen, one-and-a-half story log building called the Addison House. This house is thought to have been built by Addison Buchanan at the
time of his first marriage in 1847, on the nearby 50-acre tract of land willed to him by his father in 1841. The house measures about 20 x 18 feet, very common dimensions for a one-room nineteenth-century log dwelling in the Middle Tennessee region, and now rests on a limestone foundation. The hewn red cedar logs are joined with half dovetail notching at the corners. A narrow winding box stairway in one corner of the house provides access to the upper floor.

Little is known about the history of the Addison House at this time, but it seems that this building was moved at least one time before it was transported to the Buchanan Log House grounds. Moving log buildings was (and still is) quite common and posed few problems for skilled craftsmen and their helpers. Sometimes log buildings were dragged intact by a team of oxen or mules from one place to another; other times the house was taken down log by log and then reassembled at the building site. The former course appears to have occurred with this log building.

Evidence for this supposition exists within the house itself, where a careful observer can discern the scribe marks made by a carpenter to identify the position of the logs in their respective walls. When the time came to put the building back up, the logs were erected in the original order.
The series of marks shown above starts at the bottom of a wall with one slash and increases by one on each successive log. The marks shown above were observed on one of the logs near the top of one of the walls adjacent to the box stairway.

In 1998, the APTA had this log building brought to the site and began the restoration. The weatherboards were removed at that time in order to repair some of the logs, as well as the chinking and daubing. The limestone fireplace was rebuilt with the same stones that were used originally. The log house is a familiar symbol of Tennessee’s pioneer period, and the Addison House provides a fine example of a single pen log dwelling.

One interpretive possibility for the Addison House is to use it to demonstrate and discuss nineteenth century domestic life and foodways. The Addison House is, in many ways, already fitted for this purpose. The arrangement of the objects in the downstairs can be interpreted as representing the division of domestic living spaces that was typical of this time period. The food preparation area could be utilized to interpret how people cooked and what foods people ate during this time period.
Guided Tour of Buchanan Log House

Begin Tour on Front Porch of House

Welcome to the James Buchanan Log House!
The James Buchanan Log House was constructed for Tennessee pioneer settler James Buchanan in 1807-1808. It is one of the oldest log houses in Middle Tennessee, as well as one of the best surviving examples of two-story log construction in the area. The Buchanan House provides insight into the frontier settlement experience, as well as the Civil War and Reconstruction experience, in Middle Tennessee.

During the late 1700s and early 1800s, many individuals and families migrated from east coast colonies to what was, at this time, the Western Territory of North Carolina. These pioneers formed several settlements in the area that would eventually become the state of Tennessee, including the Cumberland settlement, in Middle Tennessee.

James Buchanan was one of these early settlers. James was born in Virginia on July 16, 1763, to Archibald Buchanan and his wife, Agnes Bowen Buchanan. Agnes was Archibald’s second wife, and James was the second child, and only son, born to Archibald and Agnes. By the age of seventeen, James had journeyed to the Cumberland settlement area of Tennessee, and, on May 1, 1780, signed the Cumberland Compact at Fort Nashborough. The Cumberland Compact was signed by 256 men above the age of sixteen and established a temporary government in the Middle Tennessee area until 1783, when the Cumberland government petitioned the North Carolina legislature for official recognition, which resulted in the formation of Davidson County the same year. In 1784, Archibald Buchanan acquired land in the Cumberland settlement and moved the remainder of his family here.

While James and his father Archibald were some of the first pioneers to settle in Davidson County, they were not among the most prosperous or powerful. In these early years of western settlement, it was oftentimes the land speculators and surveyors who were in positions of power. It was these men that essentially controlled western settlement, owning vast tracts of land and determining the boundaries of land for others. Some examples of these speculator/surveyors in Middle Tennessee include James Robertson, John Donelson, Isaac Bledsoe, and Kasper Mansker.

Life was not easy for the early settlers that lived in the Cumberland settlement, and later, Davidson County, in the 1770s and 1780s. Although no Native American nation specifically lived on this land, the Cherokees, Creeks, and Chickasaws all used the land on which the pioneers settled for tribal and economic activities. The threat of Native American attacks was a persistent fear among the early settlers.

James Buchanan’s hewn log dwelling most likely reflected the frontier culture that he grew up in during the late 1700s. During that time period, several different kinds of traditional houses were built in the former British colonies, and one particular type, two stories in height, one-room deep, and two rooms or more long, appears to be the inspiration for the Buchanan House. Although the settlers and their families often built small log buildings themselves, the size, complexity, and workmanship of the Buchanan House indicate the presence of a
professional builder and his crew. Costly features such as the large roughly-hewn limestone chimneys, the two-story height, and the number of windows on such an early house indicates an owner of above average means.

Move into Interior Front Room – Buchanan Interpretation

*Please follow me into the house.*

By 1790, North Carolina had become a state and ceded its western lands to the United States government, which formed the Territory of the United States South of the River Ohio and appointed William Blount territorial governor. By 1795, the legislature of the Territory was considering statehood, which the majority of white males living in the territory favored, and after
some debate in the national Congress, President Washington signed a bill on June 1, 1796, making Tennessee the sixteenth state in the union.

In the mid-1790s, the population of the Territory that would soon become the state of Tennessee was still sparse. At the time of statehood, only about a half a dozen roads were in use throughout the state. A total of 3,613 people resided in Davidson County in 1795. By 1790, James Buchanan was assessed as living in Davidson County and owning 50 acres of his own land. Over the next two decades, James would acquire much additional property. He inherited half of his father’s land upon Archibald Buchanan’s death in 1806. He also purchased 310 acres near his inherited land from a cousin, Thomas Gillespie, in 1807. Following the acquisition of these lands, James Buchanan constructed this two-story log home in 1807-1808.

The earliest form of this popular house type (which could be built from wood, brick, or stone) was a rectangular building consisting of two rooms on the first floor: the hall and the parlor. Often, there was only a single room above, but two rooms upstairs were not unusual. Almost all domestic activities took place in the hall, which was square-shaped and the larger of the rooms. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the two-room hall-and-parlor arrangement was the most common multi-room plan found throughout Davidson County and the surrounding area. Originally, the room that we are standing in was divided into two rooms in this hall and parlor arrangement.

Move Upstairs

*Please watch your step and follow me upstairs.*

The staircase that we are going up now was not original to the house. Originally, in order to access the upstairs, the builder installed a steep boxed stairway in the front corner of the house, which was built in a square-C shape and led directly into the upstairs room.
As in many early buildings, there were upstairs hearths as well. These somewhat redundant features, unnecessary in a warmer climate, were usually eliminated in later buildings. The surviving fireplace on the second floor of the Buchanan House has inscribed geometric markings on the face of the dressed keystone centered in the arched lintel above the opening.

On April 24, 1810, James married Lucinda East, with whom he would have sixteen children, ten daughters and six sons, over the next twenty-two years. All of the children were raised in the log house.

*Up to this point, are there any questions about early Tennessee history, the Buchanan family, or their home?*

---

**Move Downstairs into West Room – Addition and Frazier Interpretation**

*Please watch your step as we return downstairs.*

In 1820, in order to provide more living space for his growing family, which by this time included eight children, James built a one-and-a-half story, one-room addition to the west side of the residence in c.1820. We are currently standing in that addition. The new section of the building enclosed the west fireplace of the original house. Instead of choosing to rework the
original fireplace so that it could be used to heat both the older and new spaces, which was common, Buchanan chose to construct a third fireplace on the west wall of the new room of the addition. Again, this decision to build a new fireplace rather than enlarging the earlier one indicates a financially well-off owner. The original mantle for this fireplace remains in place.

On February 14, 1841, James Buchanan died, and management of his estate was left to his wife, Lucinda, and son Addison.

In the late-1850s and early-1860s, Nashvillians, like those living in other American cities throughout the country, became embroiled in the sectional debate in the days leading to the secession of the Southern states from the Union and the subsequent Civil War. The institution of slavery had been present in Tennessee from the earliest days of settlement, with enslaved people accompanying John Sevier, James Robertson, and some of the other first settlers who journeyed from Virginia and North Carolina to the area that would eventually become the state of Tennessee. By the time of sectional crisis in 1860, there was approximately one African American for every three Whites living in Tennessee.

It was not long before the Civil War arrived in Middle Tennessee. In early February, 1862, the Union army reached Nashville, and the Confederate high command opted to evacuate the city without a fight, making Nashville the first Confederate state capital to fall into Union hands.

The Civil War impacted the Buchanan family, their land, and their slaves. Lucinda Buchanan owned fourteen slaves in 1850, six males and eight females, and there were enslaved people living at the Buchanan House throughout the federal occupation of Middle Tennessee.

Lucinda Buchanan lived in the house until she died on April 16, 1865. Due to her advancing age and her children leaving home, there is no reason to think that she made any substantial improvements to the house during those years.

After Lucinda Buchanan’s death, the Buchanan Log House and 146-acre property was sold to Judge Thomas Neil Frazier, and his wife Margaret McReynolds Frazier. Frazier was born in 1810 in East Tennessee to Abner and Mary Edmonson Frazier, and was a graduate of Greeneville College. He studied law and was admitted to the bar in Washington, Tennessee. In 1863, he accepted the appointment of Criminal Court Judge for Rutherford and Davidson Counties.

While living in the Buchanan House, Judge Frazier became embroiled in one of the most bitter and partisan chapters in Tennessee’s Reconstruction history which resulted in his impeachment as judge by the Tennessee legislature in 1867. In 1870, however, Frazier was returned to office as Judge of the Criminal Court of Davidson County.
Judge Frazier’s and wife Margaret’s son, James Beriah Frazier, who also rose to prominence in both Tennessee and national politics as a Tennessee governor and United States senator, lived his teenage years in the Buchanan House, making the Buchanan House the only existing childhood home of a Tennessee governor in the state. James Frazier was born on October 18, 1856. He attended Franklin College near Nashville and graduated from the University of Tennessee in 1878. In 1880 he was admitted to the bar and moved to Chattanooga to practice law. In 1902, he was nominated as governor at the State Democratic Convention and was elected by a large majority. He was nominated and easily won re-election for a second term as governor, but did not serve his full term, as on March 9, 1905, United States Senator William Bate died and Governor Frazier was elected to fill his seat, which he did until March 3, 1911. The Buchanan House and property remained in the possession of the Frazier family until the late 1920s.

Move into Rear Shed Addition

*Please follow me as we move into the final addition of the house.*
Although the Fraziers certainly upgraded the old house to suit the family’s needs, there is no documentation available at present that describes the details of any additions, outbuildings, or other physical changes to the Buchanan House or farm by the new owners. It does seem likely, however, that the Fraziers added this one-story, board-and-batten, frame shed-roofed addition at the rear of the house, which contained two bedrooms, a bath, and the kitchen.

The history of the James Buchanan and Thomas Neil Frazier families, both associated with the Buchanan Log House, are representative of the social, cultural, and political changes that occurred in Middle Tennessee from the time of frontier settlement through the Civil War and Reconstruction. The history of the Buchanan family, and the construction and expansion of the Buchanan Log House, is representative of the lives of many early settlers that struggled to establish homes for themselves and their families in the Cumberland settlement, Davidson County, and Middle Tennessee area. This family also shared in the hardships and struggles that many Nashvillians faced during the Union occupation of Nashville during the Civil War. The story of Judge Frazier and his son, James, likewise provide a glimpse into a tenuous and challenging period in Tennessee’s Reconstruction experience.

Does anyone have any questions?

* This guided tour provides basic information about the history of the Buchanan and Frazier families, as well as the history of the construction and continued development of the Buchanan House. It would be helpful if docents or tour guides are familiar with the contextual and architectural histories on the Buchanan House that are provided in this document so that they might be able to effectively answer questions from visitors that might not be included in this script.
Interpretive Signage for Buchanan Log House

Buchanan Family

This house was constructed for James Buchanan in 1807-1808. James was born in Virginia on July 16, 1763, to Archibald Buchanan and his wife, Agnes Bowen Buchanan. By the age of seventeen, James had journeyed to the Cumberland settlement area of Tennessee, and, on May 1, 1780, signed the Cumberland Compact at Fort Nashborough. In 1785, the remainder of the Buchanan family moved from Augusta County, Virginia, to Davidson County, Tennessee, and settled on a 640-acre tract of land that Archibald Buchanan had purchased.

By 1790, James Buchanan owned 50 acres of his own land. In 1806, James’s father died and he inherited half of his lands. He also began acquiring additional property close by. Following the acquisition of these lands, James Buchanan had his two-story log home constructed in 1807-1808. This room is part of the original home.

On April 24, 1810, James married Lucinda East, with whom he would have sixteen children, ten daughters and six sons, over the next twenty-two years. In 1820, in order to provide more living space for his growing family, which now included eight children, James built an addition to his two-story log house.

On February 14, 1841, James Buchanan died, and management of his estate was left to his wife, Lucinda, and son Addison.

In the late-1850s and early-1860s, Nashvillians, like those living in other American cities throughout the country, became embroiled in the sectional debate in the days leading to the secession of the Southern states from the Union and the subsequent Civil War. The Buchanan’s owned at least fourteen slaves during the 1850s, and the Civil War impacted the Buchanan family, their land, and their slaves.

On April 16, 1865, Lucinda Buchanan died, and in the following two years, the Buchanan estate was inventoried and settled amongst the Buchanan’s surviving heirs.

The history of the Buchanan family, and the construction and expansion of the Buchanan Log House, is representative of the lives of many early settlers that struggled to establish homes for themselves and their families in the Cumberland settlement, Davidson County, and Middle Tennessee area. This family also shared in the hardships and struggles that many Nashvillians faced during the Union occupation of Nashville during the Civil War.
Frazier Family

After Lucinda Buchanan’s death, the Buchanan Log House and 146-acre property was sold to Judge Thomas Neil Frazier and his wife, Margaret McReynolds Frazier. Frazier was born in 1810 in East Tennessee to Abner and Mary Edmonson Frazier, and was a graduate of Greeneville College, where he studied law. He became a Clerk and Master of the Chancery Court of Bledsoe County and was an important figure in the county until 1863, when he accepted the appointment of Criminal Court Judge for Rutherford and Davidson Counties and relocated to Rutherford County.

While living in the Buchanan House, Judge Frazier became embroiled in one of the most bitter and partisan chapters in Tennessee’s Reconstruction history, involving the ratification at the state level of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Federal Constitution. Frazier became involved in a power struggle between Tennessee’s Radical and Conservative Republicans. As a result, Frazier was impeached by the Tennessee State House of Representatives on February 11, 1867, and tried by the Radical Republican dominated Senate where he was found guilty and removed from office as judge by the Tennessee legislature. However, with the passage of the new State Constitution under Conservative Republicans in 1870, Frazier was returned to office as Judge of the Criminal Court of Davidson County.

Judge Thomas Neil Frazier and wife Margaret’s son, James Beriah Frazier, who also rose to prominence in both Tennessee and national politics as a Tennessee governor and United States senator, lived his teenage years in the Buchanan House. James Frazier was born on October 18, 1856. He attended Franklin College near Nashville and graduated from the University of Tennessee in 1878. In 1880 he was admitted to the bar and moved to Chattanooga to practice law. In 1902, he was nominated as governor at the State Democratic Convention and was elected by a large majority. He was nominated and easily won re-election for a second term as governor, but did not serve his full term, as on March 9, 1905, United States Senator William Bate died and Governor Frazier was elected to fill his seat, which he did until March 3, 1911.

The story of Judge Frazier and his son, James, provide a glimpse into a tenuous and challenging period in Tennessee’s Reconstruction experience.