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Special Resource Study

National Park Service
 U.S. Department of the Interior



Wolf House • Arkansas
 Newsletter 1 • April 2010

*Wolf House
 Special Resource Study*



The Jacob Wolf House: Arkansas Territory and Early Statehood

The Wolf House stands on a hill overlooking the confluence of the North Fork River and the White River in present-day Norfolk, Arkansas. Constructed by Territorial Arkansas trader, blacksmith, builder, and statesman Jacob Wolf, the two-story log structure is one of the last of its kind still standing west of the Mississippi, and is the oldest public building in Arkansas. The date of construction of the house has been a matter of some debate over the years, but recent scholarship and scientific testing places the date of construction ca. 1829.

Jacob Wolf, who also held the title of Major from his service in the Arkansas Territorial Militia, settled in the area in 1820 with members of the Wolf and Adams families. He held claim to approximately 75 acres at the river junction, which was a popular trading area with local Shawnee and Delaware Indians. Wolf secured a license to operate a ferry across both the North Fork and the White Rivers, and a town developed around the ferry and family homestead.

The settlement became known as Liberty (now Norfolk), and in 1825 it became the seat of the newly formed Izard County. Wolf began his political career in 1827,

representing Izard County in the territorial legislative council, a position he went on to hold for five consecutive terms. In 1829, Wolf successfully passed legislation to establish Liberty as the permanent “seat of justice.” Wolf donated the courthouse site and then secured the contract for construction. The two story log building had a central breezeway on the first floor, called a dogtrot. Fireplaces served each room, and the floors were made from hewn wood planks. Rooms served as the courthouse for Izard County and the county clerk’s office.

By 1835, new counties had been subdivided from Izard County, and Liberty was no longer a central location. The county seat was moved, but Jacob Wolf had shrewdly passed legislation the year before causing ownership of the courthouse he built to revert to his ownership in such an event. The building became the home of his large family, and though private, it continued to play a large role in the community as his home and business headquarters. Jacob Wolf prospered as settlers passed through Liberty and patronized one or more of Wolf’s many enterprises such as the blacksmith shop and ferry. Jacob Wolf died in 1863. Since the late 1930s, the Jacob Wolf House has been under public ownership and maintained through the stewardship of local residents and local government.

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Time Frame	Planning Activity	Public Involvement
2010	Begin the Study Gather team members to visit the site, become familiar with related work affecting it, and make preliminary significance, suitability, and feasibility determinations.	Attend the public meeting and let us know what you think. You can also send a note through our website or use the postage-paid response form in this newsletter.
Winter 2010/2011	Develop Alternatives Draft the Special Resource Study using public comment and feedback to develop proposed management alternatives.	Attend a public meeting to provide comments on alternatives. You will receive another newsletter that describes the alternatives and includes a comment form.
Fall 2011	Analyze Alternatives and Produce Draft Study Using feedback from the public on alternatives, analyze their benefits, costs, and impacts to identify the most efficient and effective alternative. The result will be a draft of the study, including an environmental assessment if necessary.	Provide comments on the draft study.
Spring/Summer 2012	Finalize the Study and Submit to Congress	



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Wolf House Special Resource Study Launched

The Wolf House as a unique example of vernacular architecture and a representation of Arkansas' territorial history prompted the Wolf House Study Act, directing the National Park Service to study the Wolf House site for possible inclusion in the national park system. With the sponsorship of Arkansas Senators Blanche Lincoln and Mark Pryor, the legislation was enacted on May 8, 2008 as part of as Public Law 110-229, the Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008. In response, the NPS formed a Wolf House Special Resource Study Team tasked with conducting a Special Resource Study of the site.

The NPS process for conducting these studies includes five steps:

- First, the national significance of the site is assessed. The criteria used to determine whether or not a property is nationally significant enough for inclusion in the national park system are the same as national historic landmark (NHL) criteria. The Wolf House was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973, but has not been conclusively evaluated for possible national significance or higher level of recognition as an NHL.
- Second, the suitability of the Wolf House for inclusion in the national park system is assessed. The suitability assessment will involve comparing the site to other units already in the national park system or comparably protected by others such as other federal agencies, states, localities or private entities. If the study team finds that preserving and interpreting Wolf House would not duplicate comparable efforts elsewhere, then it will be found suitable for inclusion in the national park system.
- Third, the feasibility of the site for inclusion in the national park system is assessed. According to the management policies that govern the National Park Service, an area must be "(1) of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure sustainable resource protection



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and visitor enjoyment, taking into account current and potential impacts from sources beyond proposed park boundaries, and (2) capable of efficient administration by the Service at a reasonable cost.”

- Fourth, the study team will determine whether or not there is a need for direct management by the National Park Service.
- Lastly, a range of management alternatives to preserve and interpret the Wolf House will be developed. For this study, the NPS was specifically asked to study alternatives regardless of findings on significance, suitability, and feasibility. Alternatives will be presented to the public for feedback, and evaluated in terms of costs, benefits, and environmental impacts in order to determine how to most efficiently and effectively manage significant resources. Unless direct NPS management of the Wolf House is identified as the clearly superior management alternative, the Service will recommend that another organization (for example, state, local or private entities or another federal agency) assume a lead management role.

Public involvement is a critical part of this study process. The purpose of this newsletter is to invite you to participate by introducing you to the study process and encouraging your feedback about key issues we should consider as we proceed. See “How to Participate in this Study” discussion on this page.

Wolf House: A History of Public Stewardship

The City of Norfolk purchased the Wolf House in 1937 for \$3,700 in the depths of the Depression, with the intention of opening it as a house museum. Restoration work was done by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which removed added porches and additions to the house that had been constructed since the Civil War era. Twenty years later, the building was again in poor condition, and the Elna M. Smith Foundation of Eureka Springs took an interest in the property, reroofing the house and installing walkways among other improvements. The City of Norfolk leased the property to the Smith Foundation, which charged 25 cents for tours.

In 1973, the Wolf House was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Wolf House Memorial Foundation (WHMF), formed in 1976, took over operation of the museum. In addition to improvements to the house and the landscape, the WHMF added the annex building, built of logs sawn at a local mill. The WHMF also constructed the blacksmith's shop to interpret Jacob Wolf's role as a blacksmith and relocated the home of Jacob's brother, Reverend John Wolf, to the Wolf House property. The John Wolf House was constructed around the same time as the Wolf House south of Calico Rock, Arkansas. The group secured grants from the Arkansas Humanities Council for various projects, published a quarterly journal, and gave tours of the furnished home for \$1.

The Wolf House property was transferred from the City of Norfolk to Baxter County in 1999, allowing the County to apply for a Court House Restoration Grant through the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. At this time, the house was closed to the public. Intensive investigation and analysis of the building and Wolf House property informed the 1999-2002 restoration of the building, as well as the 2004 historic structure report, the definitive document on Wolf House history that also chronicles the recent restoration efforts.



HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

There are three ways to provide feedback at this early stage:

1. **Send comments through our study website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/>.** Once at this site, click on the “plans/docs” tab and then select “Special Resource Study” for the plan type and scroll down to “Wolf House.”
2. **Send in the enclosed, postage-paid comment form.**
3. **Attend the public meeting to learn more about the study and offer comments.**

**The meeting will be held on
Tuesday, April 20
from 5-8 pm
at the Norfolk Community Center
City Circle Drive (Hwy. 5)
Norfolk, Arkansas
Presentations will be made at 5 pm and at 6:30 pm.**

Please feel free to come to either presentation at your convenience.

Once we develop a range of management alternatives, we will issue a second newsletter asking for your specific feedback on them. In the meantime, please check our website for project updates. Questions about this study can be addressed to:

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