



**TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
**STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**  
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October 23, 2020

Mr. Timothy Wilder  
Army Corps of Engineers, Nashville District  
Regulatory Division  
3701 Bell Road  
Nashville, TN 37214

RE: COE-N / Nashville District/Corps of Engineers, Sam Davis Dam Removal, Eligibility, Rutherford County, TN

Dear Mr. Wilder:

At your request, our office has reviewed the above-referenced materials concerning the eligibility of the Sam Davis Dam. This review is a requirement of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for compliance by the participating federal agency or applicant for federal assistance. Procedures for implementing Section 106 of the Act are codified at 36 CFR 800 (Federal Register, December 12, 2000, 77698-77739).

Based on the information provided and further research conducted by our office, we find that the Sam Davis Dam is a contributing resource to the Sam Davis Home.

The Sam Davis Home was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 23, 1969 under Criterion A for Agriculture and Criterion B at the national level for its association with Sam Davis. The National Register recognizes that listed properties may gain new significances over time, particularly as scholars are able to better understand their history within additional contexts. As it has been more than 50 years since the Sam Davis House was initially listed, the passage of time justifies considering whether the property has gained new significances.

After considering all the submitted information, all information on file, and additional research conducted by staff, we have concluded that in addition to the listed significances, the Sam Davis House is also significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture; under Criterion A in the areas of Commemoration, Conservation, and Ethnic Heritage: Black; and under Criterion D in the area of Archaeology (Historic: Non-Aboriginal) and possibly in the area of Archaeology (Prehistoric).

The Sam Davis House is significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture for representing several architectural trends and methods of construction. While the original nomination did not recognize the property's architecture as significant, that evaluation reflects practices of the time which emphasized high-style buildings usually associated with public buildings or the homes of the wealthy. Unornamented, common architectural building forms were mostly excluded from consideration of architectural significance. Since then, preservation practice has broadened to better recognize the wide range of architectural forms and styles used by people of all socio-economic levels. The Sam Davis House property represents several architectural trends over time. Originally constructed ca. 1810-1820, reportedly using log construction, the Sam Davis House was enlarged ca. 1840-1860 to its current I-

House form. Its prominent front portico with Greek Revival detailing is representative of the Middle Tennessee I-House, a recognized subtype of the I-House form. Its architectural evolution mirrors broad patterns of how historic homes were enlarged and altered to meet new needs. Historic log construction techniques are also visible on the property, such as in the ca. 1825 smokehouse.

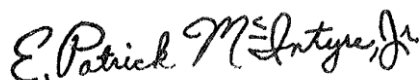
The Sam Davis House appears to have significance under Criterion D in the area of Archaeology (Historic: Non-Aboriginal) as it relates to the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Black and Agriculture. The Sam Davis Home was originally home to dozens of enslaved African American people, whose labor allowed the plantation to be successful. Many of the buildings associated with the property's 19<sup>th</sup> century agricultural history and slavery history were demolished prior to or during the 1930s as the property was altered to become a historic site. Archaeological investigations in 1975, 1977, 1984, and 2004 located evidence of non-extant structures, including domestic buildings, agricultural buildings, and potentially dwellings for the enslaved population. This information has broadened understanding of the Sam Davis Home as representative of 19<sup>th</sup> century plantations and sites of slavery. Additional investigation would likely provide additional important information. At least one investigation identified possible features associated with the pre-historic Woodland period, though its currently unclear whether the evidence is sufficient for significance in Archaeology: Prehistoric.

The Sam Davis House property is significant under Criterion A in the areas of Conservation and Commemoration for its early 20<sup>th</sup> century preservation and use as a historic site perpetuating the Lost Cause interpretation, a significant development in the history of American Commemoration. The Lost Cause narrative reinterpreted the Civil War as being fought over states' rights. Supporters minimized the impact of slavery and downplayed its violence, choosing instead to glorify and mythologize the Old South while celebrating the actions of prominent Confederate leaders and soldiers, often through the creation of monuments, shrines, or the preservation of places related to those men. The myth of Sam Davis as a 'Boy Hero' who martyred himself for the Confederate cause developed within this context. In 1927, at the urging of citizens particularly members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the State of Tennessee purchased the Sam Davis House property to preserve it as a shrine to Sam Davis. The Sam Davis Memorial Association oversaw the day to day management. Typical of Lost Cause commemoration organizations, the memorial association was primarily composed of women. Typical of preservation and historic site development efforts at that time, the property was altered to improve the site for visitor services and interpretation. Several buildings were built or moved onto the property, including log cabins meant to represent housing for the enslaved population. In 1939, a dam was constructed over Stewarts Creek to aid in water level and flood control, which directly supported agricultural activities as well as improvements for the visitor experience.

Therefore, the dam is a contributing resource to the Sam Davis House and its demolition is an adverse effect. Please consult with our office to resolve the adverse effect.

Your continued cooperation is appreciated.

Sincerely,



cjl

E. Patrick McIntyre, Jr.  
Executive Director and  
State Historic Preservation Officer

EPM/cjl