

THE LANDSCAPES OF THE BATTLEFIELD OF FRANKLIN,  
TENNESSEE  
Franklin  
Williamson County  
Tennessee

HALS TN-7  
*HALS TN-7*

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

### THE LANDSCAPES OF THE BATTLEFIELD OF FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE (Carnton Plantation, the Carter House, and Lotz House)

HALS NO. TN-7

**Location:** The location of all three sites is in Williamson County, Franklin, Tennessee, immediately south of downtown Franklin.

Carnton Plantation (HALS TN-7-A) is located at 1345 Carnton Lane, Franklin, Tennessee. It is bounded by Lewisburg Pike to the north and surrounded by residential areas to the West, South, and East.

Lat: 35.903097, Long: -86.8584 (Center of House, Google Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84).

The Carter House (HALS TN-7-B) is located at 1140 Columbia Avenue Franklin, Tennessee. It is bounded by Columbia Avenue (Highway 31) to the east, Strahl Street to the south, W. Fowlkes Street to the north, and a community center to the west.

Lat: 35.917044, Long: -86.873483 (Center of House, Google Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84).

Lotz House (HALS TN-7-C) is located at 1111 Columbia Avenue Franklin, Tennessee. It is bounded by Columbia Avenue (Highway 31) to the west, E. Fowlkes Street to the north, and various small-scale commercial buildings to the south and east.

Lat: 35.917761, Long: -86.872628 (Center of House, Google Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84).

**Ownership:** Carnton Plantation and the Carter House are overseen by *The Battle of Franklin Trust*, a 501 (c) (3) management corporation. Lotz House is owned by the Lotz House Museum, directed by J.T. Thompson.

**Significance:** The historical significance of these three sites is intertwined with the story of the Civil War Battle of Franklin, 30 November, 1864. Following General William T. Sherman's Union victory in Atlanta, Confederate Lt. General John Bell Hood decided to pursue an aggressive offensive northward. Leading his Army of Tennessee from Alabama, Hood met Union forces that were entrenched at Franklin on their retreat towards Nashville ("*The Carter House...*"). In the afternoon of 30 November, the Union and Confederate armies clashed in what would be a seventeen hour engagement. Some historians refer to the climax of the battle as the "bloodiest five hours of the Civil War" (McDonough) because of the intense and brutal hand-to-hand combat that ensued. The front line of this battle ran just 100 yards south of the Carter House and Lotz House. Following the end of the Battle of Franklin, Carnton Plantation was converted into a large

field hospital serving the Confederate casualties. In 1866, John McGavock, owner of Carnton, dedicated two acres of his land to serve as the McGavock Confederate Cemetery, the final resting place for nearly 1,500 Confederate soldiers who died in combat (*For Cause...*, 83).

Description: Carnton Plantation, located southeast of downtown Franklin, once bordered the Harpeth River to the north before the introduction of Lewisburg Pike and the Carnton Country Club, a collection of athletic facilities and a golf course. In 2007, the county club was purchased and re-claimed by The Battle of Franklin Trust with the intent of reverting the landscape to its Civil War era aesthetic. Though golfing activities have ceased, the course itself still remains. The plantation is readily accessible by Lewisburg Pike to Carnton Lane. The approach through the plantation occurs on a gravel road that terminates in a gravel parking lot. To the north of the parking lot lies a contemporary visitor's center, built in 2009, and to the south lies Carnton itself. The grounds around the house consist of mostly lawn, evergreen shrubs, and mature deciduous trees that are regularly maintained. A collapsed porch remains on the east side of the house. Further to the east of the house, as the ground moderately slopes toward Carnton Creek, sits a collection of historic structures associated with Carnton: a smokehouse, slave house, utility building, and spring house. The eastern limits of the site are bounded by the swampy lowland of Carnton Creek. On the south side of the house there is an alley of evergreen trees that run east-west, connecting to the entry gravel drive. Further south of these trees is a rolling flatland of periodically mown grass. The southern limits of the site are bounded by a line of trees dividing the plantation from the residential areas. The open grassland encompasses most of the south, west, and northwestern areas of the site. Along the northern limits of the site sits the McGavock Confederate Cemetery, the resting place of nearly 1500 Confederate Soldiers. The interior of the cemetery is fairly well maintained and mature trees dot the area. A nineteenth-century wrought iron fence encloses the cemetery.<sup>1</sup>

The Carter House is located immediately south of downtown Franklin. The house itself can be seen from Highway 31 (Columbia Avenue), but the entry drive is located to the northwest, from W. Fowlkes Street. To the west of the parking lot is a moderately sloped ramp and stairs that lead upslope to a contemporary visitor's center. Through the visitor's center a pathway continues west, becoming a gravel path. At the top of this hill sits a collection of historic structures and The Carter House. Sitting among mature deciduous trees are a log house (a twentieth-century introduction to this site), a smokehouse, a one-room frame office, and a brick kitchen. These latter three structures still bear evidence of the battle that took place around them: pockmarks from rifle and cannon fire dot all four sides. The Carter House lies in the middle of these structures, a well

---

<sup>1</sup> The description of the physical characteristics of the site and their relationship to its context was gathered by the Historian through site visits to Carnton Plantation in January 2013 and data provided by Google Earth.

preserved brick house. The northern limits of the site are bounded by a massing growth of scrub and deciduous trees. To the east of the site runs Highway 31 (Columbia Avenue), a road that directed the Union and Confederate armies at the time of the battle. To the south lies a collection of residential and small mixed commercial buildings.<sup>2</sup>

The Lotz House is located a few hundred feet from the front door of the Carter House, across Highway 31 (Columbia Avenue). The house today sits on a much smaller lot than in its historical five acres—the contemporary cityscape has nearly engulfed it. However, the white exterior and intricate detailing of the house attract attention from the highway. Only a few mature trees remain, including two large *Magnolia virginiana*. The foundation evergreen plantings of *Taxus x media* ‘*Densiflorus*,’ *Buxus sempervirens*, and *Ilex cornuta* ‘*Needlepoint*’ contrast with the white walls of Lotz House. A gravel and asphalt road encircles the house and connect the site to E Fowlkes Street to the north and Highway 31 (Columbia Avenue) to the West.<sup>3</sup>

History: Carnton was built in 1826 by Randall McGavock (1768-1843), a former Nashville mayor, who passed the house on to his son John. John McGavock (1815-1893) and his wife Carrie made their living farming wheat, corn, oats, hay, and potatoes, supplementing their income by raising and breeding livestock and thoroughbred horses. The house was originally connected with the smokehouse building via a kitchen, but the kitchen was destroyed by a tornado in 1909. John McGavock renovated Carnton in the Greek Revival style in the 1840s, adding a portico and two dormers. Following the Battle of Franklin, the McGavocks dedicated two acres of the plantation to serve as the McGavock Confederate Cemetery. Following the death of John and Carrie, Carnton passed into the ownership of their surviving son, Winder. The house was sold in 1911, following Winder McGavock’s death. In 1973, Carnton was listed on the National Register of Historic Places and in 1977 the house and ten acres were donated to Carnton Associate, Inc. The house exists today as a central location for tourism related to the Battle of Franklin (“Carnton Plantation...”).

The Carter House was built in 1830 by Fountain Branch Carter. At the time, the town of Franklin was small, and the house and farm were surrounded by a rural setting. The Federal style brick farmhouse had several accompanying structures: a one-frame farm office, a smokehouse, and a kitchen. Consisting of 288 acres, the Carter farm produced a variety of crops, including corn, grain, and cotton, worked by 28 slaves who lived and worked on the farm. A cotton gin, built in the 1850s, no longer stands today (“The Carter House...”).

---

<sup>2</sup> The description of the physical characteristics of the site and their relationship to its context was gathered by the Historian through site visits to the Carter House in January 2013 and data provided by Google Earth.

<sup>3</sup> The description of the physical characteristics of the site and their relationship to its context was gathered by the Historian through site visits to Lotz House in January 2013 and data provided by Google Earth.

German emigrant Johann Albert Lotz purchased 5 acres of land from Fountain Branch Carter in 1855. After three years Lotz completed building his house, doing most of the work himself. As a master carpenter and piano maker by trade, Lotz used his home as a “show house” to demonstrate his carpentry work to potential clients. Additionally, the interior of the house is filled with other example of his skills: fireplace mantles, a solid black walnut stair handrail, and other woodworks. Lotz House was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976 (“History”).

Civil War  
History:

On 30 November, 1864, aware of the impending battle that would engulf his wooded house, Johann Lotz quickly relocated his family across Highway 31 (Columbia Avenue) and into the brick basement of the Carter House (“The Carter House...”). The Army of Tennessee, under the command of Lt. General John Bell Hood moved northward, passing through the fields of Carnton Plantation. Under the command of Maj. General John Schofield, the Army of the Cumberland and the Army of the Ohio were entrenched immediately south of the city of Franklin, with their backs to the Harpeth River. The mainline essentially formed a semi-circle, running from the northwest and terminating in the southeast at the Harpeth River. After a quick initial contact, the advance line of the Union army retreated northward to the main line 100 yards south of the Carter House, where division commander Brig. General Jacob D. Cox was housed. At 4 p.m. Confederate forces launched their assault on the Union line (“Franklin”).

A weak spot in the Union mainline became evident: a slim space located directly on Highway 31 (Columbia Avenue) directly beside the Carter House. The Confederates poured through the breach in the Union line, pushing inward and surrounding the Carter House in intense, brutal hand-to-hand combat using weapons such as bayonets, rifle butts, entrenching tools, axes, and picks (Knight 74). Union reinforcements surged forward from their reserve position 200 yards north of the Carter House. The break in the line was finally sealed by Colonel Emerson Opdycke’s brigade and Brig. General James W. Reilly’s division (McDonough).

At 7 p.m. General Hood deployed a division under Maj. General Edward “Allegheny” Johnson in a final attempt to overcome the Union line. They were repulsed after a single assault. Following this failed assault, Hood ended offensive actions and began to plan for resuming the attacks the following morning. Union commander John Schofield began pulling his forces north of the Harpeth river beginning at 11 p.m. to continue their march to fortifications and reinforcements at Nashville (“Franklin...”).

The result of this engagement was the neutralization of the Army of Tennessee. The Confederates suffered considerable losses: 6,252 casualties, 1,750 of them dead. The Union suffered far fewer losses: 2,326 casualties, 189 of them dead

("Franklin..."). Following the Battle of Nashville two weeks later and again suffering a decisive defeat, the Army of Tennessee never fought as an effective force. Fourteen Confederate generals were casualties, four of which (Patrick Cleburne, John Adams, Otho F. Strahl, and Hiram B. Granbury) were brought to the field hospital at Carnton Plantation and laid on the back porch. Hundreds of Confederate wounded and dying were tended by Carrie McGavock and the McGavock after the battle ("Carnton Plantation..."). The wounded and dead were spread out on the plantation fields and in other structures at Carnton. Though all three houses stand today, they still bear the bloodstained floors and bullet-pierced walls from the Battle of Franklin.

Sources: "Carnton Plantation: History." *The Battle of Franklin Trust: The Carter House and Carnton Plantation*. The Battle of Franklin Trust. Web. <[http://www.battleoffranklintrust.org/carnton\\_history.htm](http://www.battleoffranklintrust.org/carnton_history.htm)>.

"Franklin: Second Battle of Franklin." The Civil War Trust. Web. <<http://www.civilwar.org/battlefields/franklin.html?tab=facts>>.

"History." *Lotz House: Civil War House Museum*. The Lotz House Museum. Web. <<http://www.lotzhouse.com/history.htm>>.

Jacobson, Eric A. *Baptism of Fire*. O'More Publishing, 2011.

Jacobson, Eric A. *For Cause & For Country: A Study of the Affair at Spring Hill & the Battle of Franklin*. O'More Publishing, 2007.

Knight, James R. *The Battle of Franklin: the Devil had Full Possession of the Earth*. Charleston: History Press, 2009.

McDonough, James Lee. *Five Tragic Hours: The Battle of Franklin*. The University of Tennessee Press, 1983.

"The Carter House: History." *The Battle of Franklin Trust: The Carter House and Carnton Plantation*. The Battle of Franklin Trust. Web. <[http://www.battleoffranklintrust.org/carterhouse\\_history.htm](http://www.battleoffranklintrust.org/carterhouse_history.htm)>.

Historian: This documentation was prepared by Jordan Boan, at the Robert Reich School of Landscape Architecture, Louisiana State University:  
Jordan Boan  
5004 Penbrook Drive  
Franklin, Tennessee 37069  
615-791-6743  
[jordanboan@gmail.com](mailto:jordanboan@gmail.com)

Date Completed: 17 April, 2013



Carnton Plantation, Main House front entry, view looking Southwest (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



Carnton Plantation, Main House rear entry, view looking Northeast (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



Carnton Plantation, Smoke House entryway, view looking South (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



Carnton Plantation, Slave House front entry, view looking East (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



Carnton Plantation, Utility Building, view looking East (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



Carnton Plantation, Spring House, view looking East (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



Carnton Plantation, kitchen and ornamental gardens located west of the main house, view looking Southwest (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



Carnton Plantation, surrounding grounds and old farmland, view looking West (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



Carnton Plantation, Confederate Cemetery with main house in background, view looking Southeast (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



Carnton Plantation, McGavock Cemetery adjacent to the Confederate Cemetery, view looking Southeast (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



The Carter House, Carter House front entry, view looking Southeast (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



The Carter House, Carter House rear entry, view looking Northeast (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



The Carter House, Log House, view looking South (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



The Carter House, Smokehouse, view looking Southeast (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



The Carter House, bullet scarring on the Log House from the Battle of Franklin, view looking East (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



The Carter House, One-room Frame Office, view looking Southeast (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



The Carter House, Brick Kitchen, view looking Southwest (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



The Carter House, original well that served the Carter House, view looking Southeast (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



The Carter House, collection of structures around the Carter House (pictured far left), view looking Southeast (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



The Carter House, contemporary visitor center rear entry, view looking West (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



Lotz House, front landscape, view looking Northeast (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



Lotz House, front entryway, view looking North (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



Lotz House, front façade and landscape, view looking East (Jordan Boan, January 2013).



Lotz House, front entry, view looking East (Jordan Boan, January 2013).