

2007 Ten in Tennessee List



1. Spring Hill Battlefield, Maury County

This several hundred acre tract adjacent to historic Rippavilla Plantation in Maury County is one of the largest remaining tracts associated with the November 29, 1864 Battle of Spring Hill, the critical precursor to the Battle of Franklin. The land was acquired in the 1980s by General Motors Corporation for its Saturn automotive plant in Spring Hill. It was not developed and remained in agricultural production, forming a scenic buffer for Rippavilla. In 2007, after GM announced it was ceasing the production of Saturn automobiles at its Spring Hill plant, and retooling the facility for the production of other GM automobiles, the company announced its intention to sell the land for development.



2. Natchez Trace Parkway Corridor, Davidson, Williamson, Maury, Hickman, Lewis, Lawrence and Wayne counties

The Natchez Trace Parkway is one of the nation's premier scenic roads; it draws more than 5.5 million visitors every year, making it the seventh most visited unit of the National Park Service. Parkway visitors are treated to a scenic drive of incomparable beauty while learning the history of this historic route connecting Nashville with Natchez, Mississippi. Unfortunately, when the parkway was planned in the 1930s, park planners did not foresee a future threat to the then rural landscape, and only a limited right-of-way was purchased, too small to protect the viewshed beyond the road. Many of the areas immediately visible from the parkway are vulnerable to the rapidly increasing residential and commercial development. Williamson County is consistently ranked among the fastest growing counties in the state and in the nation, and much of the county's development is in the western section adjacent to the

Trace. In Southwest Davidson County, large developments around Bellevue and Pasquo threaten views near the northern terminus. And even in the more rural counties to the south, residential and commercial development adjacent to the right of way threatens the visual setting for this historic road. The historic original Natchez Trace, which survives as county roads in many areas, is also threatened by expansion and adjacent development. To address the threat to the parkway's scenic values, adjacent lands need to be protected. This can be done through the purchase or transfer of development rights, donated conservation easements, and property sales to conservation-minded buyers. To this end, the Land Trust for Tennessee, in partnership with the Heritage Foundation of Franklin and Williamson County, and the Harpeth River Watershed Association, has launched the "Loveless to Leipers" project to acquire conservation easements and encourage other sorts of land protection along the corridor. To date, more than 2,000 acres of lands within the watershed have been protected through voluntary conservation easements. Ultimate protection of the parkway corridor will require more voluntary land protection measures and perhaps local government guidelines for development within the watershed.



3. Rural Mount, Hamblen County

Rural Mount in rural Hamblen County is a late eighteenth century structure that is one of Tennessee's best examples of early stone Georgian architecture. The house was reputedly built in 1799 by Alexander Outlaw for his son-in-law Joseph Hamilton. Both of these men were instrumental in founding the State of Franklin and later the State of Tennessee. Rural Mount commands an impressive hilltop position overlooking the valleys of the Nolichucky River and its tributaries. Its random ashlar limestone construction is similar several houses of the period in the vicinity and the structure has other unique architectural features. The house has been abandoned for many years and is deteriorating. Present use is as pasturage for a cattle farm, and there does not seem to be much community awareness of the structure's existence. It is hoped that the attention from the "Ten in Tennessee" listing might encourage awareness of the resource and possibly promote its preservation.



4. James Brown House, Hamilton County

The James Brown House was built circa 1836 and is significant for its association with the Cherokee Nation and the “Trail of Tears” and for its unique architecture. James Brown was an influential member of the Cherokee Nation and associated with Chief John Ross. A few years after building the one-story brick dwelling, James Brown led a detachment of Cherokee over the Trail of Tears across the Tennessee River and out west to Oklahoma in 1838. His house near Ooltewah in Hamilton County is unique, featuring rounded brick columns with stone bases surrounding the entrance. With assistance from the Tennessee Preservation Trust and the National Park Service, a preliminary project to stabilize the vacant house was carried out in 2006. However, considerable additional work needs to be done, and the property may best be protected by an easement or transfer to an organization capable of completing the restoration, and then protecting and interpreting this historic 1830s home.



5. Franklin Cinema, Williamson County

Franklin’s downtown theatre opened on July 15, 1937 in the midst of the Great Depression. It was the first building with air conditioning in the county. The theatre brought Hollywood entertainment to the then rural county and movies were shown in the theatre until earlier this year, when the building owner raised the rent and the theater ceased operations. Townspeople in Franklin think of the theater as a community treasure and are concerned the theater may be re-fabricated into an office complex or chain retail store that does not contribute to the historic character of the historic downtown. The threat to the Franklin Cinema typifies the threat to the relatively few downtown theaters surviving across the state. Like theaters in other small towns, the Franklin Cinema was a “rainmaker,” drawing crowds, especially in the evenings, and contributing to a healthy mix of downtowns. Preserving

such theaters can help draw more visitors downtown, increasing city revenues and providing a wonderful alternative movie-watching experience to big-box cinemas. Local preservationists hope the Franklin Cinema can be purchased by a foundation or local government which can seek grant funds to convert it to a combined theater and cultural center.



6. Mount Zion CME Church, Obion County

This circa 1896 African-American church is listed in the National Register of Historic Places; and has had minimal changes to its interior or exterior since its construction. The church bell, which is mounted outside and directly in front of the church, was donated by a local prominent African-American businessman, Mr. Walter Robinson. The threat to the structure is demolition by neglect. Funds are needed to replace the roof, which has deteriorated, especially in the southeast corner of the building, where some small leaks have developed. Ultimately the church needs a congregation to occupy the building and keep the property in good repair. Local preservationists indicate a congregation is interested in using the church, and we hope attention brought by listing in the "Ten in Tennessee" will help raise community awareness and support.



7. Ragland Court Subdivision, Rutherford County

Ragland Court is one of Murfreesboro's best preserved twentieth century subdivisions. The first houses date back to the early 1930s and there are additional houses from the 1940, 50s and 60s. Many of the structures are in the Tudor Revival variant of the Bungalow style. Middle Tennessee State University has placed the Ragland Court Subdivision in its "master plan

acquisition zone." This means that properties are bought by the University as they become available. Most of these properties are rented out. However four houses were purchased and demolished by the university and the University plans to build a parking lot in the green space that was left by this demolition. The ultimate goal as stated by the university officials is to absorb the entire neighborhood into the campus. Contracts for the parking lot work have already been executed and notice to proceed was given to the contractor the week of May 21, 2007. It is hoped that listing in the "Ten in Tennessee" will encourage the University to move the parking lot to their own, ample greenspace and respect the historic neighborhoods surrounding the campus.



8. Dandridge Historic District, Jefferson County

Dandridge, Tennessee is one of Tennessee's oldest towns and its historic downtown is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is significant for its architecture, engineering, and transportation themes and serves as an historic government and commercial center. It contains a wealth of eighteenth century buildings as well historic structures dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Tennessee Department of Transportation has proposed some alternatives for a bridge replacement project that may potentially have adverse effects to the historic district. Some of these alternatives, if implemented, would route the new highway through the historic downtown core and would permanently eliminate the opportunity for the revitalization efforts that are underway to maintain and enhance the town center. The area around the town and to its south is rapidly developing and a safe crossing across Douglas Lake is needed for all the traffic. TDOT is still in the planning stage of the proposed project and studying alternatives while working with concerned parties. It is hoped that the "Ten in Tennessee" listing will encourage all parties involved to adopt an alternative that protects the downtown core of one of Tennessee's most historic communities.



9. Taylor Home at Sabine Hill, Carter County

This property has great historical significance due to its association with the Taylor family, who were early Tennessee settlers in 1772, and also for its wood construction, Federal-style architecture. This home was built prior to 1820 by the widow of General Nathaniel G. Taylor. Both were great-grandparents to Robert L. Taylor and Alfred Taylor, best known for running against each other for governor in the "War of Roses." (Both served as governor during different terms.) The property is threatened by demolition. The present owners acquired this property in 2002 and intended to restore it. It became necessary to sell it, and an option to buy has been granted to a developer who intends to raze the historic structure and develop housing. Local citizens have a back-up contract to purchase this property if the developer declines his option. The Elizabethton City Council is working to develop a municipal ordinance, which would protect and preserve their historic structures. If these local citizens are able to purchase this site, they propose to make it a part of the Historic District, and place restrictions on the property that would preserve this historic house. The State of Tennessee has expressed an interest in obtaining this property to make it into a site such as Rocky Mount and Tipton-Haynes. If this effort fails, the Heritage Alliance will look for a buyer interested in using it for an historic residence. Listing of the property will hopefully support local preservationists, and/or the State, in their efforts to acquire this important historic home and provide for its long-term preservation.



10. Morrystown College, Hamblen County

Morrystown College is an early former African American college located in Hamblen County and is important for its associations with African American collegiate education in East Tennessee. The original building was constructed on the site of a former slave market, and following the Civil War, the original building first became a primary, and then later, a secondary school at which freedmen were taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, subjects that they were

restricted, by law, to learn prior to the war. Often multiple generations of a single family attended the school simultaneously, receiving their educations. The school initially focused on industrial courses for men, and homemaking courses for women. In 1918 a college farm and agricultural departments were added, and in 1927 the school expanded its educational offerings to include a two-year junior college curriculum. At the height of its enrollment, the school occupied 12 buildings and encompassed 375 acres. Today the encompassed college property, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, stands at 51 acres and 7 buildings. The buildings have remained vacant for a number of years, and have been open to the elements for much of that time. The structures need to be stabilized and mothballed. These protective measures would protect the campus until an appropriate plan for its long-range preservation and revival can be developed. An appropriate model for protecting this historic property may be a "Friends of Morristown College" or similar organization that can actively pursue preservation options for this historic property.