

Flood Damage Assessment to date, May 15, 2010

General: Two weeks after one of the state's most significant natural disasters find Tennesseans of all ages and backgrounds working together, with now tens of thousands of volunteer hours in the till, to build back their neighborhoods and lives. While some heritage and preservation groups have rather inexplicitly announced that "we're ok, it wasn't that bad," I find myself unable to join that chorus due not only to the amount of damage recorded so far but also the amount of damage that we do not yet know. The historic event of the 2010 storm will impact Tennessee's heritage for years to come. Here is my updated list, with more details in several areas. Monday I am visiting the river communities east of Nashville and should have a better idea of how and where the Center for Historic Preservation should focus its next efforts.

The good news is that we have an experienced small-town volunteer from the Mississippi Gulf Coast willing to help. Brent D. Anderson is the recovery manager for the City of Waveland, Mississippi, and he knows what a bear but also how helpful the federal agencies can be to recovering communities. He is willing to help; his contact information is 228-466-2549 or bldgofficial@mchsi.com. I will be in Lebanon, Hartsville, and Carthage on Monday if people want to bring impacts on heritage properties to our attention. To see me at these events, contact the local chambers of commerce who are arranging the gatherings.

Nashville

Grand Ole Opry House (1974)—extensive damage to one of the Nashville's major modernist landmarks and performance hall with significant historical associations to all realms of American popular music in the late twentieth century. The nearby Acuff Museum also suffered extensive damage to its invaluable collections. Work is underway, a good story in Tennessean, 5/15/10 about the progress.

Residential historic districts. We are starting to get a more full picture of the damage from flooding to several neighborhoods, to the east, west, and south of downtown in particular. The Tanglewood historic district, which some of the CHP students worked on in the 1990s, suffered significantly. Current graduate students who live in East Nashville have reported (in some cases about their own homes) damage in Lockeland Springs and Inglewood neighborhoods. Another former graduate student, Phil Thomason, who has employed many other CHP students over the years, lost a good bit of his project archives once the basement in his West Nashville home flooded. These stories have multiplied over the week, with thousands of homes being impacted. And, of course, only a small portion of the pre-1960 neighborhoods had been adequately surveyed and assessed for potential National Register eligibility.

Other Nashville properties that have been reported to us:

Cameron School (basement flooding), Nashville. This New Deal school, designed by noted Nashville architect Henry Hibbs, is listed in the National Register.

The Parthenon (basement flooding as been addressed). Warner Parks also suffered

from the flooding and volunteers are carrying out repairs this weekend.

St. George Episcopal (1949). A Belle Meade landmark. Damaged but restorable and congregation is at it.

Holy Trinity Episcopal (1850s). This major South Nashville landmark has had some flooding as well as water damage due to the heavy rains.

Belle Meade Mansion. Extensive basement flooding, road damage, stone wall damage.

Bicentennial Mall State Park, where a new exhibit under construction was flooded.

Newsom Mill, Bellevue. This National Register city park on the Harpeth River was undoubtedly flooded but the amount of damage is unknown.

Middle Tennessee, thus far

Franklin battlefield, Williamson County. A historic outbuilding (springhouse) on the Carnton section of the battlefield was inundated and partially demolished. Fort Granger at Pinkerton Park was surrounded by flood waters and still inaccessible.

Franklin downtown historic districts, Williamson County. The Reconstruction- era Hardbargain neighborhood had flooding around the historic Primitive Baptist church. The commercial district came off fairly well, surprisingly so, but the downtown historic cemeteries suffered heavily from the waters and need to be cleaned, desperately. The Hincheyville neighborhood also had some flooding. Fleming Hall at Battle Ground Academy (historic campus) also had significant flooding damage.

Leiper's Fork historic district, Williamson County, suffered from flooded homes and basements. Boyd's Mill Road, a historic corridor into the village, also suffered considerable damage.

Hickman County. Here the damage might be the most extensive of any Tennessee community. While the county seat of Centerville, located mostly on high ground, came through in fair shape, the rural areas of the county were hit hard. Two weeks later, many county roads remained closed and an almost equal list just remain "passable." The Pinewood community, subject of a recent CHP heritage study, was particularly hard hit. Schools remain closed. The county mayor said: "it's going to take years to fully recover."

McGregor Park Museum, Riverwalk, Clarksville. This museum took 5 to 6 feet of water and remains closed.

Historic Town Square, Lebanon, Wilson County. High waters damaged the first floor of many downtown Lebanon buildings.

Cheatham County. The 1898 Pratt truss bridge in Kingston Springs suffered damage but its approaches did not wash out.

In Humphreys County, the road and bridge associated with the entrance to the Loretta Lynn Farm (on National Register) suffered serious damage.

Maury County. In Columbia the historic downtown African American neighborhood, "The Bottoms," flooded, with the Mt. Lebanon Missionary Baptist Church (National Register) receiving a good bit of water.

Dickson County and Perry County. Two areas that need more attention. Flooding was heavily in the Cumberland Furnace community (a large National Register historic district).

In Sumner County, Rock Castle and Wynnewood, two historic house museums of the nineteenth century experienced significant flooding, Rock Castle got hit twice by rising waters. The access road to Cragfont, another historic house museum, has been partially swept away..

West Tennessee, thus far

In general: rural areas and several county seats received much more impact than people realize, due to the focus on the Nashville area.

Dyersburg, Dyer County. South Main is a key artery into the downtown business district—a place of several mid-20th century roadside buildings and garages, and it has received high flood waters. Extensive damage in the commercial but also the residential area, which is largely a early 20th century neighborhood of small bungalows and typical worker cottages. The flood damage to historic farms and churches in the county may be even higher.

Bemis Historic District, Jackson, Madison County. A potential serious loss of residences and industrial buildings associated with one of the most significant company towns in Tennessee history. Listed in the National Register, Bemis is also covered by an entry in the Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture.

Camden, Benton County seat, received flooding damage but I have been unable to determine which sections of town were most affected.

Millington Naval Air Station, Shelby County. A key chapter of Tennessee's Cold War history is embodied in the buildings at the air station and most of it suffered significantly from the storm. The Commercial Appeal has several excellent photos of the damage.

Bethesda Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, and other possible damage, Purdy, McNairy County (tornado). Purdy is a key spot to tell the Unionist story in West Tennessee during the Civil War. Home to the Hurst Nation, the village is the location of the Col. Fielding Hurst house, which was in poor condition before the tornado. Damage from the storm also impacted Selmer, the county seat.

Jackson, Madison County. It has once again been buffeted by the heavy rains and winds, although damage seems limited in its downtown historic districts. What is worrisome in this huge county is the damage to its many farms, churches, and

cemeteries. The county government that the flood damage is almost equal to the tornado damage from 2003.

Tipton County, Haywood County, Lauderdale County, Crockett County, Gibson County: all are in a similar situation. Their county seats did not experience significant damage it appears but the situation in rural sections is not known—and some of those same areas have gotten such little attention from historians and preservationists—there may be needs not yet identified. The impact on the road system is severe—bridges weakened, sections destroyed.

Pocahontas, a historic railroad town on the Tennessee-Mississippi line, received a direct hit from a tornado. It has scattered historic buildings within its boundaries, but impact from the storm is unknown outside of significant damage to the NR listed Pocahontas school from the tornado, Patrick McIntyre, Tennessee SHPO confirmed that to me on Monday.

Historic Bridges

Martha Carver of Tennessee Department of Transportation has reported that, “For non-highway bridges (bypassed as ruins or used on trails), the news is not good. We know that the 1889 Parker truss bridge at Linton in Davidson County washed out as did the downtown Centerville Bridge, a 1913 two-span Pratt truss bridge. The 1911 Pratt truss bridge in the National Register listed Hurricane Mills District also completely washed out. The nearby 1903 two-span Camelback truss Tanksley Bridge lost one of its spans. Both the 1898 Double Intersection Warren truss bridge at Belle Meade and the 1898 Pratt truss bridge in Kingston Springs suffered damage to their approaches but did not wash out. “