

Maury Christmas

*Historic Home Tour
Vol. 9, No. 1*

December 5 & 6, 2025



PRESENTED BY

MAURY COUNTY
APTA



features

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Volume 9, Number 1
December 2025

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Haywood Photography

Cover Photo



Above, St. John's Episcopal Church in the Ashwood Community. Below, the Athenaeum Rectory, HQ for the Maury Christmas Historic Homes Tour



Welcome to Maury County

As President of the Maury County Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities (APTA), it is my distinct privilege to welcome you to Maury County, Tennessee for our annual tour of homes!

I'm thrilled to announce we have another amazing tour lined up for 2025! This tour will feature three of our favorite sites— The Athenaeum, the Polk Home, and Elm Springs. The tour will also feature several privately-owned homes, two of which have not been on tour for several years, and one making its tour debut!

Remember to shop with our local merchants and visit our locally-owned restaurants while taking the tour. Your tourism dollars make a difference in our local economy— thank you for deciding to spend your time, and money, with us.

I think you're really going to enjoy this tour, and I hope to see you along the route!

Kayla Southern
Maury County APTA, President



Maury County APTA President Kayla Southern outside of the Ryman Auditorium, August 2025.

About the tour

The Maury Christmas Historic Home Tour is a Maury County tradition. The tour began in 1951 as the “Majestic Middle Tennessee Tour of Homes” and was held each year in the Fall. Since that time, the tour has evolved into a two-day event taking place annually on the first weekend of December.

Here's how the tour works:

1) Purchase tickets. Tickets may be purchased at Tour Headquarters (the Athenaeum) or at any of the other ticket locations (the Maury County Visitor's Center and Elm Springs).

2) Go tour! This tour is geared towards YOU. Once you have your ticket, you can go to whichever participating site you please. You can visit just a few of the sites or go to all— the choice is yours.

Tour tickets are \$25.

For more information about the tour, call Tour Headquarters at (931) 797-3316 or visit the tour website, www.MauryChristmas.org.

The Maury Christmas Home Tour is the annual fund-raiser of the Maury County Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities (APTA). Proceeds from this event go toward the operating costs and continued maintenance of the historic Athenaeum. The Maury County APTA and the Maury County Visitor's Bureau are proud sponsors of the 2025 Maury Christmas Historic Home Tour.

Elm Springs

Elm Springs is a Greek Revival mansion built in 1837 by master builder Nathan Vaught. It is situated on the old stage road that led from Pulaski to Franklin. James and Nathaniel Dick, wealthy cotton merchants of the N & J Dick Company of New Orleans had the house built for their sister Sarah Todd and her husband Christopher, formerly of Virginia. During the War Between the States, the Todd's youngest daughter Susan and her husband, attorney and Tennessee State Senator A. M. Looney occupied the home. He commanded the famous Company H of the Maury County Grays.

Looney was an outspoken Southerner, and this almost resulted in the loss of Elm Springs. In November of 1864, Confederate Units of the famed Army of Tennessee began the march north for Nashville in what would be known as the Franklin-Nashville Campaign. The Federal Army, which had occupied Maury County for several months, was preparing defensive positions ahead of the oncoming Confederate troops under Gen. John B. Hood. Their line of defense extended from the Mooresville Pike to the Mt. Pleasant Pike. As Union forces under the command of Major-General John M. Schofield began their hasty withdrawal from Columbia, many of Maury County's majestic antebellum homes fell victim to the torch. Many houses were burned during those days and Elm Springs was slated to be destroyed also. In an act of retribution, the historic home of Confederate Lieutenant Colonel A. M. Looney was selected to be destroyed by fire as the last Union troops left Columbia. Re-

sponding to pleas of assistance from local citizens, Confederate Brigadier General Frank C. Armstrong dispatched a squad of mounted infantry to insure the safety of Lt. Col. Looney's home and property. A Union soldier placed a burning broom under a stairwell, but a servant removed it before it could do any major damage. Fires were started that might have burned the house except for the opportune arrival of Confederate troops who extinguished the flames.

A family cemetery is located south of the house, where the last burial was in 1994. Confederate Naval Lieutenant Simeon Cummings was laid to rest in Southern soil after being buried in South Africa for over 130 years.

The Akin family acquired the property about 1910, and in 1985 the Gillham family purchased it and restored it to near-original state. The house and property were purchased in 1992 by the Sons of Confederate Veterans. In 2020, a room-by-room restoration project began. The farm office/study and the dining room have been returned to their near-original appearances. Work has also begun on the grand entry hall of the home, so if you have not been to Elm Springs in a few years, be sure to visit!

The National Confederate Museum will also be on tour. Built on the grounds of Elm Springs, the museum takes visitors through the founding of America, the War Between the States, Reconstruction, and modern-day Southern history.



Elm Springs

President James K. Polk Home

James Knox Polk was born in North Carolina in 1795, and when he was ten years old, his family moved to Maury County. A historical marker on Highway 31 indicates the site a few miles north of Columbia. While young James was attending the University of North Carolina in 1816, his father built the only residence in existence today in which the eleventh president lived other than the White House. Old accounts indicate that the structure was the first brick residence built in Columbia.

Sarah Childress of Murfreesboro married James K. Polk in 1824, and the following year, he was elected to the first of seven terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. He was the only President who ever served as Speaker of the House. In 1839 he returned to Tennessee and served a two year term as governor. Under his leadership as president, the United States was extended from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans. The Polks had no children, and Mrs. Polk often served as her husband's personal secretary.

The house is a museum of Polk's life, as the furnishings are those used by him and Mrs. Polk in the White House while some were used in his law office. Several

portraits are on display throughout the house, in addition to china, silver, crystal, and candelabra used for state dinners. Other buildings include the kitchen and Polk's Sister's house serves as the site's visitor center with a museum and a shop.

The museum at the "Sisters House," or welcome center, has been recently updated to include new exhibits and storyboards, so be sure to visit and see the changes!

The gardens features the fountain from Polk Place, the Polks' Nashville home. There are also statues representing the "Four Seasons." These are original to the Columbia Institute—a girls' school that burned in 1959.

In addition to the Home Tour, the President James K. Polk Home & Museum will be holding another special event in December, "Garden Lights at the Polk Home." This will be the site's first-ever tour of lights. Guests will stroll through the gardens which will be sparkling with lights, festive scenes, and picture-perfect moments for the entire family. This is a ticketed event held every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday in December, 5—9pm each night.



The Ancestral Home of President James K. Polk

St. John's Episcopal Church

The sons of Col. William Polk— Lucius Junius of Hamilton Place, Leonidas of Ashwood Hall, Rufus King of Westbrook, and George Washington of Rattle & Snap— divided the tract of land which their father won from the governor of North Carolina in a game of chance called “rattle and snap.”

In 1839, they decided to build a family chapel in traditional English fashion. Since they were of the Episcopal faith and Leonidas Polk was already an Episcopal rector, they chose the name St. John's. Leonidas gave six acres of his own property for the church and cemetery.

The brothers contributed building materials and slave labor; the construction was supervised by Leonidas, the elder brother. Building began in 1839 and the church was dedicated in 1842. Clay for the bricks was dug from a deposit at the rear of the church. Stone came from a nearby quarry; timber for the woodwork was cut from local forests. A large cherry tree provided the wood for the alter rail, chancel screen, and pulpit.

St. John's is a beautiful edifice in Gothic Revival style, rectangular in design, with projecting front belfry tower and sacristy at the rear. There are four lancet glass windows on each side. According to contemporary records, the family servants sat on the floor at the front of the church or in the balcony during worship services. It was said that this was the one place where “all were one before God.” At the entrance drive are stone pillars capped with stone acorns, the Polk family symbol, which were originally at Ashwood Hall.

One of the most touching stories about the church involves three Confederate generals who were laid to rest here after the Battle of Franklin in 1864. General Patrick Cleburne is said to have remarked as he passed by prior to the battle, “It is almost worth dying to be buried in such a beautiful spot.” He and two other generals killed at the Battle of Franklin did rest here temporarily until their remains were removed to their home states. The remains of Lt. J. H. Marsh of Harde- man County, an aide to Gen. Otto Strahl, still rest at St. John's. Both Marsh and Strahl were killed at Franklin.

Editor's Note: This site was requested for the 2025 Home Tour since plans are being made to develop the land across from St. John's Church, forever changing the landscape of the area.



St. John's Episcopal Church

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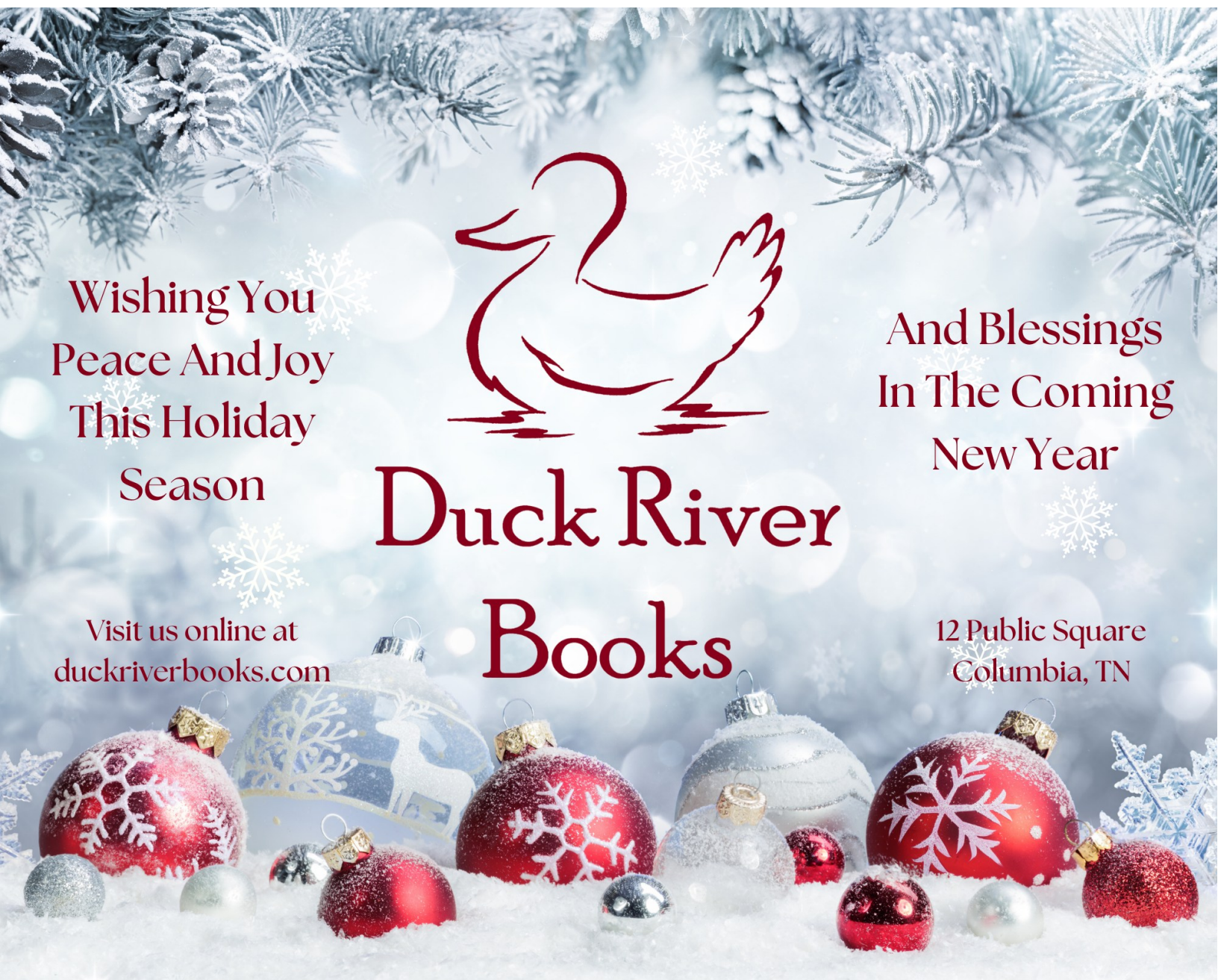


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12 Public Square
Columbia, TN



The Wallace Home

This brick American Foursquare located at 804 West Seventh Street in Columbia, has been owned by just three families in its 110-year history. It was built for the Coffey family in 1915, who occupied it for nearly 70 years before selling to Raymond and Lucile Hamilton in the early 1980s.

Chip and Kim Wallace purchased in 2021 and undertook a nine-month renovation before moving their family there in 2022. Chip and Kim were attracted to the home for its wraparound front porch, 10' ceilings on both levels, and large-scale rooms with oversized windows.

The home features five bedrooms and 3 ½ baths, with approximately 4,000 square feet of living space. The two front parlors are typical for the period. Most of the hardwood floors are original, including 1" oak boards on the main level and wider heart pine upstairs. With the exception of the staircase, the interior trim is new but in the style of the period. The lead-glass windows in the dining room and upstairs hall bath were built for the spaces. The home has four fireplaces, two of which are still operable. The new kitchen is a combination of the original kitchen and a former back porch that had been enclosed during an earlier renovation.

The home is furnished primarily with antiques, especially primitive American pieces, many of which were inherited from Chip's grandparents. Chip and Kim and their two children love doing modern life in an historical home. They also look forward each year to the Mule Day Parade and Christmas Parade, both of which pass by out front.

The Wallaces are honored to be the current stewards of 804 West 7th Street and hope to ensure it prospers for at least another 110 years.

Editor's Note: 2025 will be the first time this site has been a part of the Maury Christmas Tour! The Maury County APTA would like to thank and applaud the Wallaces for graciously opening their home for this year's tour.



The Wallace Home

St. Peter's Episcopal Church

St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 311 W. Seventh Street, was formally organized June 16, 1828 and held worship services in the Columbia Masonic Lodge until the beginning of the construction of its own building in 1831. Construction moved slowly and the building was not complete when the first rector, the Rev. Daniel Stephens, resigned to become a missionary to the western part of Tennessee.

Leonidas Polk became the second minister and the church was consecrated on April 17, 1835. James Hervev Otey, who was elected the first Bishop of Tennessee in 1833, played a considerable role in the history of St. Peter's. He moved to Columbia in 1835 and was the co-founder of the Columbia Female Institute, Ravencroft Seminary, and builder of Mercer Hall. He later served as rector of St. Peter's from March 18, 1839 until January 1, 1842 and, again, from June 3, 1844 to January 1, 1848.

James K. Polk, 11th President of the United States, was known to have attended services in the original church.

By 1860, church members decided a new church was needed. On September 5, 1860, the cornerstone of the present church was laid. The church was completed enough for the first worship services to be held in June 1861 just three months after the start of the War Between the States.

A year later, the church was being used by the Federal Army as a provost marshal's office. The church continued to hold services until December 1863 when it was closed by military order and did not open for 18 months. In addition to being used as a provost marshal's office, it was also used as a hospital, tending to sick and wounded Federal soldiers.

After the war, the church was restored. On June 4, 1871, the present church was finally consecrated. A parish house was completed in 1924. A two-story Sunday School and parish office was added in 1964. The site was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.



St. Peter's Episcopal Church on West Seventh Street in Columbia, Tennessee

Shadowlawn

Archelaus Madison (A. M.) Hughes was born in Stokes County, North Carolina on November 21, 1811, the son of William and Alice Hughes.

In 1851, he bought fourteen acres from the estate of Patrick Maguire and began construction of a Federal-style house, a house he called “Elmwood.” Construction took three years. The fourteen-acre Hughes plot faced Hampshire Pike and extended southward to Mt. Pleasant Pike.

In 1859, the railroad came to Maury County and bordered the property on the west. (Note: The arrival of rail was a big to-do, and the Hughes Family threw a large garden party on the date the first train arrived in Columbia, as it would go by their property— today, the home is a block away from the railroad.)

In 1909, the house was sold to John F. Stephenson, who added four large rooms and a front porch which was removed by later owners. Stephenson was also an owner of the Hampshire Pike toll road.

Charles Frederick Mather-Smith bought the place in the early 1930s. His family also had homes in Illinois and Florida. In 1927, Grace Mary Mather-Smith, daughter of Charles, married Canadian-born Etienne de Pallisier de Bujac, more widely

known as Bruce Cabot, an actor who was the hero of *King Kong* and a great friend of another actor, John Wayne. Jennifer, the daughter of the de Bujac’s, spent much time with her grandmother in Columbia. Mrs. Mather-Smith carried on the long tradition of lavish social gatherings on the spacious lawn of this old home and gave the place a new name— Shadowlawn.

After the Mather-Smiths, the home went to John Walton, and then to Millard and Adeline “Addie” Armstrong Queener.

The Queeners had three children— Aleyne Queener Massey, Lucille Queener Courtney, and Elizabeth Queener. Lucille and her husband, Robin Courtney, son of former Congressman Wirt Courtney of Williamson County, made this their home for many years. It is now the home of their daughter, Gale, and her husband Richard “Dick” Moore.

Editor’s Note: It has been several years since this home has been on the Maury Christmas Tour. Please be sure to visit this wonderful home and to thank the Moores for opening the doors of this historic gem!



Shadowlawn

Arkland

Jane H. Y. Dorsett Greenfield, third wife and widow of Dr. Gerrard Truman Greenfield, built Arkland on a hill just east of Williamsport in 1850. The name eluded to the high mountain upon which Noah's ark came to rest after the flood.

Jane Dorsett Greenfield was the daughter of Col. Fielder and Martha P. Dorsett of Nottingham, Maryland. Fielder Dorsett was of Upper Marlboro Maryland as of 1795, where he was listed with unclaimed mail. Jane H. Y. Dorsett Greenfield was born there on November 4, 1802, and died in Maury County on January 20, 1874.

She brought her nephews, Dr. Walter Dorsett and Thomas J. Dorsett, to Maury County after the death of their father. They were the sons of Thomas and Harriett Clagett Dorsett of Anne Arundel County. Mrs. Greenfield's brothers, Thomas J. Dorsett and Samuel H. Dorsett, were memorialized in Congress in 1847 during James K. Polk's administration as heirs of Fielder Dorsett, "late of Nottingham, Maryland, deceased."

Dr. Walter Dorsett was the father of Dr. Marion Dorsett, who found the cure for hog cholera, a disease which had plagued farmers for hundreds of years. Dr. Marion Dorsett's home stood where the St. Peter's Parish House stands today.

Greenfield Bend of the Duck River was named for Capt. Thomas T. Greenfield, a Revolutionary War soldier, who was born in St. Mary's County, Maryland in 1744, and came to Maury County with his son, Dr. Gerrard Truman Greenfield, who was born in Maryland in 1783 and died on February 14, 1847 in Maury County. He was a founder of St. Peter's Episcopal Church and the Williamsport Episcopal Church.

In 1812, Dr. Greenfield bought the land in the area known as Greenfield Bend from Joseph Hopkins, whereon he built a house which was called Green Plains. It no longer stands, so the only remaining residence connected with this early family is Arkland. The Otey Porter family resided here for many years. It is currently the home of John and Elizabeth Colley.

Editor's Note: This home fits into the category of a "piano style" home, with the front of the home resembling an old square grand piano. As you will note when visiting, the home is well-hidden, and far from the road, as it has always been. In 1870, a newspaper article read, "Jeff Dorsett lives on such a high hill and has so many big trees in the yard that only 8 Yankee soldiers were at his house during the entire war." Watch for the red "Home Tour" sign on Williamsport Pike and follow the long driveway to Arkland. It has not been on the tour for several years, so be sure to thank the Colleys for opening their home!



Arkland

Tour HQ— The Athenaeum

The historic Athenaeum Rectory in Columbia, Tennessee is an architectural oddity in Maury County. The style of construction is very unique and is called “Moorish-Gothic.” The home was built to resemble the castle-like Columbia Female Institute that was located next door.

This was very fitting, actually, since the home would go on to house the first headmaster of the Institute, the Reverend Franklin G. Smith and his family, in 1837.

The home was commissioned in 1835 by Samuel Polk Walker, a nephew of President James K. Polk. The design of the home is believed to have come from the architectural firm of Drummond & Lutterloh. The firm designed the Institute. Maury County’s “Master Builder,” Nathan Vaught is given credit for the actual construction of the home.

In 1852, Rev. Smith left his post at the Institute and founded his own school, the Columbia Athenaeum, from which the home derives its name. Smith would operate his school until his death in 1866, at which time, his wife became principal. When Mrs. Smith died, their eldest son Robert became principal and operated the school until 1904 when he sold the property to the City of Columbia for use as a public school.

The family retained the rectory as their private residence. The home was passed from the eldest Smith son, Robert, to his son, Franklin Gillette “Lette” Smith, II. When Lette died without any heirs in 1919, the home was sold at public auction. Lette’s aunt, Clara, came to the auction in hopes of buying the family home. Once Clara raised her hand to bid, no one else bid against her and she was able to buy the



Athenaeum. Clara's daughter, Carrie Smith, lived in the home until her death in the 1970s.

The remaining Smith descendants, now living in Texas, decided to donate the property to the Maury County Chapter, Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities (APTA). The Maury County APTA has operated the site as a historic home and museum since 1974.

The APTA has several fund-raisers throughout the year to help preserve the Athenaeum for future generations. The Maury Christmas Tour is one of those fund-raisers.

While in Columbia during the tour, be sure to stop by the Athenaeum Rectory. This tour is one of the many annual fund-raisers which allows the Athenaeum to continue operating.



Acknowledgements

It takes dozens of volunteers to make the Maury Christmas Historic Home Tour happen each year. Not only is the tour dependent on home owners willing to voluntarily open their homes, dozens of volunteers are needed to serve as docents and ticket-checkers at each of the historic sites. To all of our homeowners and docents— thank you!

There are many other volunteers that work behind the scenes. This magazine, for example, and your home tour brochure were put together for free by an Athenaeum volunteer. All of the photographs (except for the image of the Wallace Home) were taken by Chris Haywood of Haywood Photography, who volunteered his time and talent to producing high-quality images to help promote the tour. Thank you for your assistance, Christopher Haywood! To see more of his photography, please visit: seehaywoodphotography.mypixieset.com.

Several of the narratives in this magazine were written by Alice Algood and published in *Historic Maury County: Places and People* by the Maury County Historical Society. The Maury County Historical Society has long been a friend of this tour and many of the

Society's members are volunteer docents during the two-day event. To learn more information about the Historical Society, and to shop their selection of local history books, please visit: www.historicmaury.com.

The Maury County Convention & Visitors Bureau (Experience Maury) sponsored this year's tour. Their sponsorship helps keep our ticket prices low, so that more people can hopefully come and experience what Maury County has to offer. Maury County's Visitors Center also serves as one of the tour's ticket locations. Thank you to the Maury County CVB for your support!

Lastly, thank you to all of the Maury County APTA Board Members that put countless hours in on making this tour a success. But, most importantly, "thank you" goes to all of those who purchased home tour tickets this year and are reading this magazine!

Next year's tour is scheduled for December 4th and 5th, 2026. We hope to see you next year!



Columbia Academy

The core of the Columbia Arsenal were buildings erected with Bowling Green limestone, imported from Warren County, Kentucky, where the white-stone industry had flourished since the early 1800s. When built in 1888, the arsenal was one of only eleven in the United States. During the Spanish-American War, harness and leather goods for the war effort were manufactured by the troops stationed there. The eight-thousand-dollar estimated cost of the iron fence which encloses the sixty-seven acres eventually cost more than twenty thousand dollars. After expending more than half a million dollars on the plant and using it for approximately fifteen years, the federal government determined the facility was no longer needed, but a use for the property was undetermined.

The citizens of Columbia felt it should be used for educational purposes. Representatives in the U.S. Congress from Columbia — Sen. Edward W. Carmack and Rep. Lemuel Padgett— led the effort to transfer the property to a newly formed Columbia Military Academy Board of Trustees, which was done on April 23, 1904.

Several years previously, Sims Latta, from whom the U.S. Government acquired the sixty-seven acres, had purchased Buena Vista, the former home of Dr. William J. Polk (1799—1860), the son of Col. William Polk and his

first wife, Griselda Gilchrist. Dr. Polk moved to his site in 1834 and erected a large, beautiful home on it. From Buena Vista, Antionette Polk, his niece, made a famous dash on horseback down Mt. Pleasant Pike to warn the Confederates encamped at her home, Ashwood Hall, that the Union Army was in Columbia.

As a result of the anti-military attitude produced by the Vietnam War, many prep school military academies were unable to recruit enough students to sustain them. When the number of boarding students dwindled, the ROTC unit was removed, and the military academy did not have the support to continue.

In 1979, the Churches of Christ in the area were deeded the property. The new board of Columbia Academy assumed the indebtedness and the operation of the school, which is thriving as a Christian institution. New buildings have been erected, but the substation stone structures remain as solid today as when they were built one hundred and forty years ago.

Editor's Note: Three buildings will be open for the tour— 1. Academy Hall; 2. The Guard House; and 3. Old Main. Since Old Main contains class rooms, it will only be open for tours on Saturday, December 6th.







Columbia & MOST WONDERFUL WEEKEND

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