

OAK HALL

MR. AND MRS. JAMES HAZARD WILSON III (JO ANN)

1706 WILSON PIKE  
BRENTWOOD, TN 37027

(615) 370-0583

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Oak Hall

and or common Century Oak

2. Location

street & number 1704 Wilson Pike

N/A not for publication

city, town Brentwood X vicinity of

state Tennessee code 047 county Williamson code 187

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mrs. Samuel Madison Stubblefield

street & number 1704 Wilson Pike

city, town Franklin N/A vicinity of state Tennessee

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Williamson County Courthouse

street & number Public Square

city, town Franklin state Tennessee

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Williamson County Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1982  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Tennessee Historical Commission

city, town Nashville state Tennessee

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located on the east side of Wilson Pike near Brentwood (pop. 9,608) in Williamson County, Tennessee, Oak Hall is a two story red brick residence built in 1845 for Samuel S. Wilson. Rectangular in plan, the five bay residence sits on a limestone foundation and is surmounted by a hip roof with ridge. Originally constructed with three stories and a parapet roofline, the third story was demolished in 1920 when the house was struck by a tornado. The interior retains much of its original woodwork including a central spiral stairway and elaborate molded door casings. A detached kitchen is also located within the boundaries of the nominated property. Having undergone few recent alterations, Oak Hall retains much of its architectural integrity.

The east facade is a symmetrical design with each story displaying a central entry flanked by two windows. Both entries are comprised of a double leaf paneled door surrounded by shouldered architrave molding, glass and paneled sidelights, and a transom light. The 6/6 double hung sash windows are capped by polished limestone lintels with corner blocks. Many of the windows retain their original hinges for shutters. A one story trabeated wood porch, constructed in 1950, covers the main entry. The original porch was embellished with a second story balustrade and pilasters.

The north and south elevations are identical in design. Two exterior end chimneys are found on both elevations. A one story frame addition, attached to the east elevation, is visible from both sides.

Fenestration on the second story of the east elevation consists of four 6/6 double hung sash windows identical to the windows on the facade. Two additional windows are found on the north corner of this elevation. A one story shed roof frame addition covers the remainder of the east elevation.

The interior plan is defined by a central hall with two rooms on each side. Floor and ceiling joists are poplar, as is most of the flooring. Only the floors in the dining room and southeast parlor are oak. Ceilings are 12'8" tall while the plastered walls are 12" thick. All of the window and door casings are comprised of shouldered architrave trim. Windows on the first story also have paneled aprons. All of the interior doors retain their original hardware while each room contains a fireplace faced with polished limestone and lined with brick.

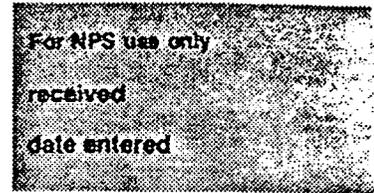
One outstanding feature of the interior is a spiral stairway located in the central hall. Leading to what was once the third story ballroom, the open string stairway is composed of a simple balustrade and a mahogany handrail. Sawn ornamental scroll brackets below the treads further enhance the finely proportioned stairway.

Openings framed by Ionic pilasters and a molded entablature with a denticulated architrave separate the first story rooms on each side of the central hall. Above the second story is what was once the ballroom. The open space is 25' wide and runs the length of the house. After the 1920 tornado demolished the ballroom, the walls were not refinished.

Electric wiring was installed in the 1940s. At this same time the second story northeast bedroom was divided and closets and bathrooms added. A 12'x37' basement (the same dimensions as the central hall) was excavated in 1950. Central heating was also installed then.

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Oak Hall is surrounded by mature trees and a fruit orchard. East of the residence is the original kitchen. The two story brick building is 20'x17' and is capped by a low pitch gable roof sheathed with metal. An exterior end chimney is situated on the south elevation while entries are found on the north and east elevations. Fenestration on the kitchen is identical to that on the main house. The original iron fireplace cranes are extant. Two cisterns are also located within the boundaries of the nominated property.

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## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1845-1933 **Builder Architect** unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Oak Hall is being nominated under National Register criteria B and C for its local historical and architectural significance. Built in 1845 by James Hazard Wilson II for his eldest son Samuel, the house is important for its association with the Wilson family, prominent landowners and developers in Williamson County. Architecturally the house is a good example of antebellum residential design, displaying Greek Revival entries and polished limestone lintels on the exterior. The interior retains much original woodwork, including moldings, door casings with an Ionic motif, and a three story spiral stairway. The original kitchen building is also included in the nomination. Although the roof of the main house was altered in 1920, there have been no other major alterations and Oak Hall retains its original character.

James Hazard Wilson II (1800-1869) was a prominent businessman and landholder in Middle Tennessee. He owned property in Tennessee, Louisiana, Arkansas and Texas and operated a steamboat line on the Mississippi River. In 1821 he married his cousin Emeline. She was the daughter of Samuel D. Wilson, one of the first Secretaries of State in Texas. Wilson built Ravenswood (NR 983), his own residence, on Wilson Pike in 1825. He helped build a suspension bridge in Nashville and during the Civil War outfitted an entire company. At one time he was estimated to be worth two million dollars.

Samuel S. Wilson (1823-1851), James' eldest son, married Lucy Ann Marshall (1829-1871) in 1845. Lucy was the daughter of Joseph H. and Frances Marshall who operated the old City Hotel in Nashville. James built a residence along Wilson Pike for Samuel and Lucy. Known as Oak Hall because of the ancient white oaks that surrounded it, the house originally had three stories with parapeted gable ends. Oak Hall contains excellent woodwork such as the spiral stairway and Ionic pilasters. A detached kitchen was also constructed at this time. Oak Hall was the second of three houses James H. Wilson II built on Wilson Pike. In addition to Ravenswood and Oak Hall, James had Inglehame built in 1858 when his son James H. Wilson III was married.

In addition to managing his own estate, Samuel had the responsibility of managing his father's vast plantation holdings in Tennessee while James traveled to properties outside the state. Samuel and Lucy had two daughters Lulie Byrd (1850-1909) and Anna Mae (1851-1866). Samuel died of a heart attack in 1851 while attending the funeral of his grandmother.

In 1853 Lucy married Franklin Sterling Wilson (1831-1871), Samuel's brother, and they continued to live at Oak Hall. They had two children. Their daughter Frances Emeline Mobley Wilson Carr (1864-1933) continued to live at Oak Hall until her death.

An interesting story is told concerning Oak Hall during the Civil War. When Federal troops were in the area, Franklin supposedly led several of his (blindfolded) thoroughbred horses up the circular stairway and hid them in the ballroom.

The family Bible records that James H. Wilson II died at Oak Hall in 1869.

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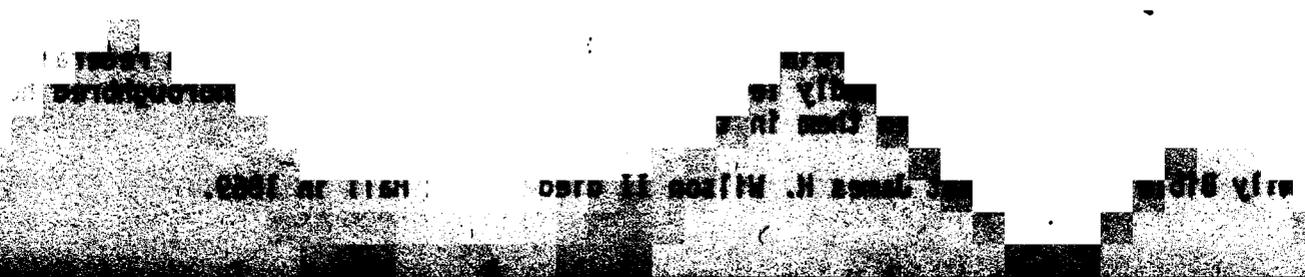
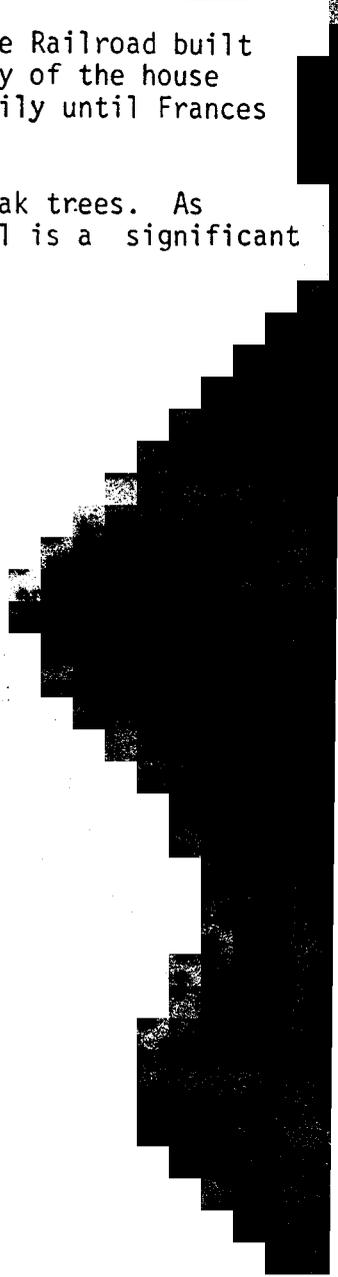
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Most of the oak trees were lost in 1912 when the Louisville and Nashville Railroad built a line through the front yard. In 1920 a tornado damaged the third story of the house and the present hip roof was built. Oak Hall remained in the Wilson family until Frances Carr's death in 1933.

Today the house is known as Century Oak for one of the remaining large oak trees. As one of three houses near Brentwood built by Samuel H. Wilson II, Oak Hall is a significant architectural and historical resource in Williamson County.



## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1.3 acres

Quadrangle name Franklin, TN

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 

1	6	5	2	0	7	9	0	3	9	7	9	6	3	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

B 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

C 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

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H 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mrs. Sam Stubblefield

organization N/A date October 30, 1985

street & number 1704 Wilson Pike telephone 794-8316

city or town Franklin state Tennessee

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

Deputy  
State Historic Preservation Officer signature Herbert L. Hays

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission date 2/5/86

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
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Continuation sheet Oak Hall Item number 9 Page 2

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

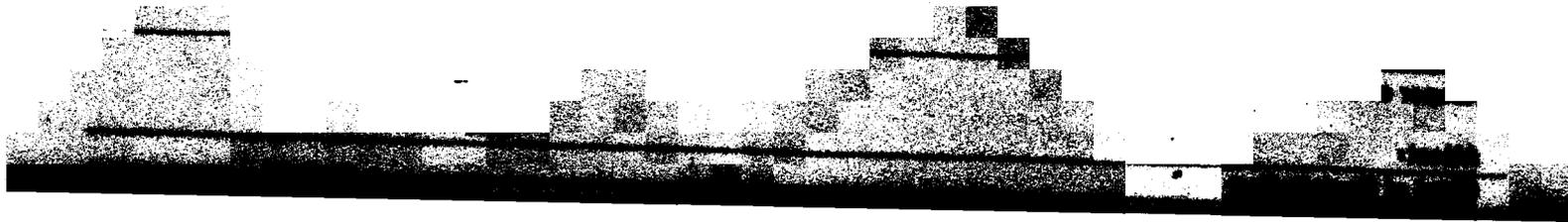
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Williamson County. Will Books. Williamson County Courthouse. Franklin, Tennessee.

Office for the National  
Historic Sites  
National Park Service  
Washington, D.C.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property is 1.3 acres in size and trapezoidal in shape. It is bounded on the west by the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. The southern boundary begins at a fence located approximately 75' from the driveway; the boundary continues in an easterly direction along the fence approximately 375' until it intersects with another fence; the boundary then turns and moves in a northerly direction along the fence approximately 300'; the boundary then turns and moves in a westerly direction along an imaginary straight line approximately 425' until it reaches the railroad. (See tax map). This includes enough land to protect the historical setting and architectural integrity of Oak Hall.

## OAK HALL

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The family Bible records that James H. Wilson II died at Oak Hall in 1869.

Most of the oak trees were lost in 1912 when the Louisville and Nashville Railroad built a line through the front yard. In 1920 a tornado damaged the third story of the house and the present hip roof was built. Oak Hall remained in the Wilson family until Frances Carr's death in 1933.

# Oak Hall history holds many sad tales

By Lauren Lexa  
Staff Writer

Oak Hall, a three-story Georgian mansion built almost 150 years ago, received its bronze plaque recently commemorating its historical standing.

The plaque, placed at the home by the Claredon chapter of the Colonial Dames of the 17th Century, was one of the final touches to this year's saga of the home, now owned by Jimmy Wilson, a descendant of the original builder, and his wife Joanne.

Built in 1845 by James Hazard Wilson II as a wedding gift to his son, Samuel and wife Lucy Anne Marshall, the home was centered in a grove of oaks, and had parapet walls extending above the roof line that tied together twin chimneys on either side of the home.

Inside the home's wide entry hall with poplar floors was the only free-standing, three-story, mahogany and cherry spiral staircase in the county, which led to a third floor ballroom.

James Hazard Wilson's own home was just a short distance from Samuel and Lucy's. The elder Wilson's home on Wilson Pike, Ravenswood, was named after family friend Sam Houston, who was called "The Raven" by the Indians. Houston served as best man for James Hazard Wilson's wedding.

The antebellum home displays Greek Revival entries and polished limestone lintels on the exterior, and Ionic pilaster woodwork design throughout the house. The original outbuilding kitchen follows the structural design of the house, and is one of the very few of this era that has two stories.

The first tragedies associated with

the home occurred six years after Samuel and Lucy's marriage when Samuel died. Two years later, the elder Wilson convinced Samuel's widow to marry Samuel's younger brother, Franklin, and continue living at the homeplace.

Then came the years of the Civil War. When Union forces moved into the area, the days of hoop-skirted women winding their way up the stairway to the ballroom ended.

But, the ballroom did not go unused. Franklin Wilson refused to allow his prize thoroughbred horses to be captured, so on more than one occasion, the horses were blindfolded and led up the circular stairway to the ballroom.

The game of hide-and-seek took its toll on the magnificent stairway,

however. The weight of the horses caused the stairs to tilt inward toward the center by more than three inches.

Then, soon into the 19th Century, the house experienced its next woe. A 1904 storm blew away the roof and walls of the ballroom, and four of the home's 12 fireplaces. Although the ballroom floor remained intact, the hip roof replacement was lower than the original 13-foot ceilings.

Beginning in 1912, a railroad line was built through the front of the Wilson estate by the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, and 22 of the grand oaks were removed. Because of the one surviving oak, the homeplace became known as Century Oak, and until the 1950s, tethering rings for horses could still

be seen in the old tree. Experts estimate that the tree is at least 250 years old.

The home passed out of the Wilson family in 1914 and was sold to the Carr family, who in turn sold the home to the Potter family. The Potters rented the mansion to the McArthurs, and McArthur is the

only occupant of the home who lost his life at the railroad crossing.

In the early 1950s, the home was purchased by Samuel Madison Stubblefield and his wife. Mrs. Stubblefield and the home's current owner, Jimmy Wilson, worked together to get the house place on the National Register of Historic

Places.

The Stubblefields lived in the home for more than 30 years, and Mrs. Stubblefield's new home is just on the other side of the railroad tracks from Oak Hall.

"I think the Wilsons had a good time here, and we intend to, too," said Jimmy Wilson.



Photo by Lauren Lexa

Jimmy Wilson reads the history of Oak Hall from the bronze commemorative plaque while Marguerite Rippey of Nashville, state chairman of historical sites for the Claredon chapter of the Colonial Dames of the 17th Century looks on.



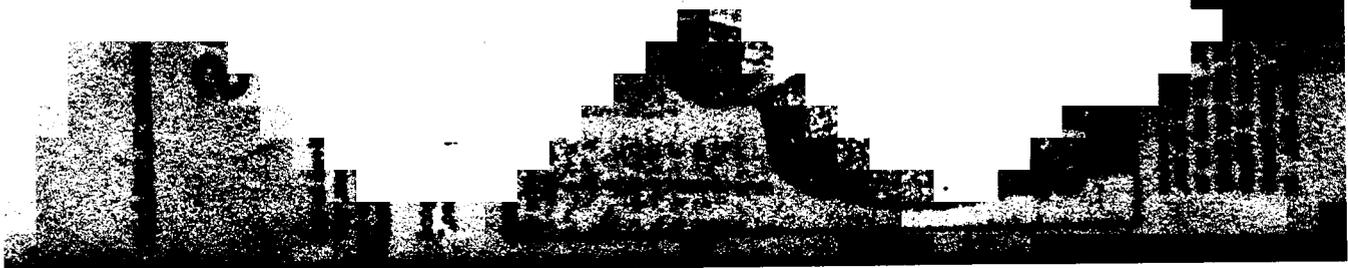
Photo by Lauren Lexa

The historical marking of Oak Hall on Wilson Pike, built by James Hazard Wilson II for his son, Samuel, had a special meaning to Joanne and Jimmy Wilson, on left and right, as well as to Vernon Sharp, Mrs. Sam Stubblefield, and Mrs. Vernon Sharp. Mrs. Stubblefield and her family lived in Oak Hall for more than 30 years. The Sharps live in Ingleham at the corner of Wilson Pike and Split Log Road, which was built by James Hazard Wilson II for his son, James Hazard Wilson III. James Hazard Wilson II's home, Ravenswood, which is also on Wilson Pike, is owned by Mr. and Mrs. Reece Smith, not pictured.

## OAK HALL

Oak Hall was built in the 1840's by James Hazard Wilson II for his son Samuel Wilson and his wife Lucy Ann Marshall. The house was originally a three story structure with twin chimneys tied together with parapet walls extending over the roof. The present hip roof was added in the 1920's when the original roof was blown away by a storm. The house features a circular staircase that winds to the third floor ballroom. It is said that the Wilsons blindfolded their horses during the Civil War and led them to the ballroom to hide them from the raiding Federals. Of the original 12 fireplaces, 8 are still in use. The parlors are connected with carved arches formed by Ionic panels. The walls are 12 inches thick and the ceilings are 12 feet, 8 inches high. The original two story brick kitchen can still be seen in the yard. The house is owned by James H. Wilson IV, a descendant of the builder.

## Brentwood Brochure



# The romantic saga of Oak Hall takes a happy turn with this generation

By Lauren Lexa  
Staff Writer

Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. once said that the worst thing about a modern, stylish mansion is that it has no place for ghosts.

The ghosts of Oak Hall, a three-story Georgian mansion built more than 20 years before Holmes made his comment, have not been discovered. But Holmes' mistake was not including romance in his comment published in 1872 in "The Poet at the Breakfast Table." The romance surrounding Oak Hall more than compensates for a lack of apparitions.

Oak Hall has all the essential elements for the setting of a romantic novel, beginning in 1845 with a close, prominent family, a tragic death, and the suspense and drama of surviving through the Civil War.

Later chapters in the history of the home, now close to 150 years old, the ownership passing out of the family's hands, a losing battle with the railroad, and impending destruction from progress and vandalism.

But this romantic drama has a happy turn, if still an uncertain ending. Closing out this segment of the story is the rescue of the home by the fourth generation descendant of the original builders.

The Oak Hall home and estate was a wedding gift to Samuel Wilson and his wife, Lucy Ann Marshall, from Wilson's father, James Hazard Wilson, the builder of Ravenwood, which stood just a few miles away.

Family lore holds that Samuel was not only the oldest son, but also Wilson's favorite. Because of this, the wedding gift was a grander

home than Wilson's own. Centered in a grove of oaks, the home was three stories tall, but from the outside had the illusion of even more height and grandeur due to the parapet walls extending above the roofline that tied together twin chimneys on either side of the home.

Inside the home's wide entry hall was the only free-standing, three-story, mahogany-railed spiral staircase in the county, which lead to the third floor ballroom.

The first tragedies associated with

the home occurred six years after Samuel and Lucy's marriage when Samuel died. Two years later, the elder Wilson convinced Samuel's widow to marry Samuel's younger brother, Franklin, and continue living at the homeplace.

Then came the years of the Civil War. When Union forces moved into the area, the days of hoop-skirted women winding their way up the stairway to the ballroom for dances ended. However, the ballroom did not go unused during the war.

Franklin couldn't see surrendering

his prize thoroughbred horses to the Union soldiers, so on more than one occasion he blindfolded the horses and led them up the circular stairway. Ceilings 13-feet high sufficiently muffled the animals' movements in the ballroom, and the horses were never seized.

The only casualty of the game of hide-and-seek with the Union soldiers was the magnificent stairway. The weight of the horses caused the stairway to tilt in toward the center more than three inches.

Soon into the 19th Century, the house experienced its next woes. A 1904 spring storm blew away the roof and walls of the ballroom, and four of the 12 chimneys. Although the ballroom floor remained intact, the hip roof replacement was lower than the original 13-foot ceiling.

Then, beginning in 1912, a railroad line was built through the front of the estate grounds by the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, and 22 of the grand oaks were removed. Because of the one surviving oak, the homeplace became known as Century Oak, and until the 1950s, tethering rings for horses could still be seen in the old tree.

The home passed out of the Wilson family to the Carrs, who in turn sold the home in the 1930s to the Potters. The Potter family rented the home to the McArthurs, and McArthur is the only occupant of the home who lost his life at the railroad crossing.

The home was purchased from the Potters in the early 1950s by Samuel Madison Stubblefield and his wife, who were responsible for getting the home placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Stubblefields also modified the

former ballroom by cutting a hole in a low portion of the ceiling so that their son, Royce, could signal across the fields to one of the Prim children, whose family was the Stubblefield's closest neighbor.

The Stubblefields lived in the home for more than 30 years before selling the property to local developers, whose original plans were to turn the old mansion into a clubhouse for the proposed residential subdivision facing Wilson Pike, or to tear the home down.

In 1985, James Hazard Wilson's great-great-great-grandson, Jimmy, and wife Joanne, learned that there was a possibility that the old mansion would be torn down, and they made arrangements with the developers to purchase the home.

Ordinarily in a romantic story, the return of a descendant of the family to the homeplace would signify the end of the novel. In Oak Hall's saga, the return was not the sign of a happy ending.

The developers of the subdivision found out that there was a question about the engineer's seal used on the subdivision plat. Work on the development came to a standstill. In summer, an old barn near the home was burned by vandals.

City commissioners granted a re-subdivision of the Oak Hall property prior to the submittal of a new plat for the development so that Jimmy

and Joanne could begin renovating the historic home and prevent any further destruction.

The Wilsons plan to have the major renovations of the home, and a two-story outbuilding used originally as a kitchen, completed by April 15 because the home is scheduled for the Heritage Foundation's tour.

The couple budgeted \$50,000 for the renovations, and have gone 50 percent above that, to date.

"When I first came in the house after they started the work, I just cried," Joanne said.

She had previously only seen photographs of the inside of the home. But, on her first visit inside,

she took in trails of outdated, partially removed wallpaper, work, and even areas where original slats supporting the and floors were exposed.

Even the spectacular stair braced with the latest technique correct the slant and add additional support.

"One thing I asked was 'how does the train come by,'" Jo said. "They said 'Oh, a coup times.'"

During one of their first days working at the house, the train passed by six times. The Wilsons decided to enclose the proper chain-link fence not only to keep vandals out, but to keep their kids in. Jimmy can now even

how long the train is by its

Also, for the children's protection the Wilsons are putting in fire doors at the second and third landings to put a damper on temptation to slide down the banister.

Two years from now, the home will undergo additional changes. The front of the house will be the back, a duplicate porch and columns will be added to the which will become the front. An outbuilding will be connected to the main house by a breezeway.

Despite all the modern conveniences being installed home, the third floor ballroom where Jimmy feels most

"I get better vibes of sentimentality up here," he said. "Just look at this."

Jimmy swept his arms across the expanse of the former ballroom, pointed out messages scrawled ago on the walls like the one October, 1848, which reads " \$1.20 in the bank today and I to take it out."

The ballroom, with its trap door flash messages across the landscape neighbor's home, will eventually become a library for the couple's genealogy work.

"Can you imagine cutting a hole in the roof for the trap door like that," asked Joanne.

"I think the Wilsons had a good time here, and we plan to, too," Jimmy added.