

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Presley, Elvis, House

other names/site number NA

**2. Location**

street & number 1034 Audubon Drive NA  not for publication

city or town Memphis NA  vicinity

state TN code 047 County Shelby code 157 zip code 38117

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register.
- other,

(explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
		sites
2		structures
		objects
4	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Historic Residential Resources of Memphis MPS

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/secondary structure

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC /single dwelling

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: ranch

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation CONCRETE

walls WEATHERBOARD

roof ASPHALT shingle

other BRICK

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons Significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or Represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and Distinguishable entity who's components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, Information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations** N/A

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for Religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 year of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT

**Period of Significance**

1956-1957

**Significant Dates**

NA

**Significant Person**

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

Presley, Elvis

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA

**Architect/Builder**

Handwerker, Howard

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):** N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Presley, Elvis, House  
Name of Property

Shelby County, Tennessee  
County and State Shelby, Tennessee

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** .54 acres Southeast Memphis

### UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	3	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	4	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Mike Freeman and Cindy Hazen, owners & Judith Johnson, preservation consultant  
Organization Judith Johnson & Associates date June 15, 2005  
Street & number 176 Windover Cove #1 telephone 901/324-4618  
City or town Memphis state TN zip code 38111

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO) or FPO for any additional items

## Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

Name Mike Freeman and Cindy Hazen  
Street & number 1034 Audubon Drive telephone 901  
City or town Memphis State TN zip code 38117

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Presley, Elvis, House  
Shelby County, Tennessee

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## Narrative Description

The circa 1954 Elvis Presley House is a one-story, irregular plan, frame, traditional Ranch style house with a broad rambling façade and a very low-pitched hip roof sheathed with asphalt shingles replacing the original grey slate roofing material. The house has a cast concrete foundation, a central interior brick chimney and exterior walls of vertical redwood board and batten with painted brick wainscoting wrapped around the front ell and the south side of the house. The eaves have a wide overhang and a dentil molding. Originally the exterior wall cladding was a light shade of green and the red brick was unpainted but at an unknown time it was painted monochrome white. There is an enclosed two-vehicle garage attached to the north elevation of the house. The attached garage contributes to the integrity of the house. Located in the backyard are a pool and a pool house. The front and sides of the property are enclosed in brick and metal fencing, all added by the Presleys.

Two photographs of the home show “before and after” views of the front of the property and document the changes made during the Presley’s occupancy. In one photo taken shortly after they moved in there were neither fence nor trees; the front yard was open and accessible. On the north side of the home was the original open-air carport. The second photo dated February 1957, shows trees being planted. Other changes observable in the photos include the enclosure of the carport and the addition of front and rear garage doors.<sup>1</sup>

Located in the center of the west façade is a bank of four two-over-two double-hung ribbon windows and a single set on the north end. Painted decorative shutters flank all the windows on the facade. The facade ell has paired two-over-two double-hung windows. The northern side of the façade is covered with board and batten siding, while the ell on the southern portion is half board and batten and half brick. The primary entry to the house is a single leaf solid wood door located south of the bank of windows.

The north elevation has board and batten wall cladding and the garage is attached at midpoint on the exterior. The kitchen entry is a cottage door with six lights and there are two single windows on the western end of the garage and one on the east end. The decorative shutters are not found on this elevation.

The south elevation has a brick wall about four feet in length that extends south from the wainscoting on the west façade and again on the southeast corner of the south elevation. The wall plane is irregular, the wall cladding is board-and-batten and the fenestration is varied.

The east elevation is clad in board-and-batten wall cladding and has two large stationary windows separated by a sliding glass door and a single window. Large ornamental shrubs are planted adjacent to the walls.

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<sup>1</sup> *Memphis Press Scimitar*. (Memphis) 28 March 1956 and 11 February 1957.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Presley, Elvis, House  
Shelby County, Tennessee

The linear floor plan of the Elvis Presley House, like most traditional Ranch houses, is open with the public spaces in the north, center and eastern parts of the house, while the south side has four bedrooms and a bath accessed along a southern hallway.

The foyer has painted redwood paneling. The floor is replacement stone veneer that extends down the center hallway that opens both east into the living room or turns in an immediate right angle to open into a more private, southern bedroom hallway. The wall separating the northern entrance hallway from the southern bedroom hallway has built-in closets which retain their original wood shelves on both sides and the ceiling is smooth sheetrock. Two c. 1954 original ceiling light fixtures are square, smoked glass encased in gold painted frames.

There is a small family room located to the north off the entrance hall. With the exception of the north wall that was altered c. 1956 to enlarge the kitchen, this room has not changed since the house was built. The redwood paneling, the red oak floor, the wood paneled air ducts, vaulted ceiling with exposed beams and the oak pocket doors are all original. The original lighting fixtures are recessed into a beam hanging from the ceiling on the east wall.

The family room and the living room appear more spacious because of the 45-degree angle vaulted ceiling with exposed beams extending through both rooms. In the living room, there is a massive brick fireplace original to the house on the northern wall. Alterations to it include painting the brick, a conversion to gas, and covering the hearth with a stone veneer that matches the entrance hall floor. The original paneling was painted at an unknown time and the west wall covered with blue-green wallpaper. Recessed lighting is located in a ceiling beam on the west wall. There are wood interior shutters, date unknown, on the east wall that cover the areas where the east windows were located prior to the den being added in 1956.

The fireplace acts as the northern wall separating center living room area from the northern dining room. Typical of open plans of Ranch houses, the fireplace does not extend the full length of the room. Thus from the rear of the house the two rooms appear to be one large open space. The original red oak flooring is still visible in both rooms, along with wood molding along the floor and ceiling. The remaining dining room walls are papered and have a chair rail. On the west wall is an original swinging door opening into the kitchen. The north wall of the dining room contains a set of two-over-two, double-hung windows. There is brass chandelier hanging in the center of the room; it is not known if it is original.

The kitchen has been somewhat altered over time. Circa 1956, a wall of the kitchen was relocated to expand the kitchen to the south. Other alterations include installations of upscale Coppertone wall oven and stovetop appliances and replacement wooden cabinets and countertops dating to the late 1950s. Probably the Presleys remodeled this kitchen as the owners of the house from 1963-1970 remember the kitchen as it is today.<sup>2</sup> On the panel above the louvered doors concealing a washer and dryer on the north wall is an expensive metal speaker from a built-in

<sup>2</sup> Howard and Martha Hatchet. Oral interview with Mike Freeman and Cindy Hazen., (Memphis) 30 July, 2000.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Presley, Elvis, House  
Shelby County, Tennessee

sound system in that may be original to Elvis as well. The vinyl flooring was recently replaced as is the ceiling fan/light fixture.

Elvis added a den onto the original east elevation of the house, where the dining and living rooms are situated. It was built in two separate stages. Originally in May 1956 there was a small rear porch, which covered maybe a third of the existing area. Next to the porch were a brick patio and a barbeque pit. First Elvis installed hand crank jalousie windows in the porch wall on either side of a rear door. Photographs of the porch with newly installed windows appear in a photographic essay titled *Elvis Presley 1956* by Marvin Israel.<sup>3</sup>

By Christmas Elvis had scrapped the patio and porch and built a six hundred square foot room, twenty feet by thirty feet in size. On the north wall is an original entry leading into the garage and in the northeast corner is a single four-light window. Almost everything here is original; the dark mahogany wall paneling, the two rectangular, glass-and-wood trophy cases on the north and south walls; the acoustic tile ceiling; and Elvis' custom made ceiling fixtures consisting of five panes of smoked glass in a star shaped frame, each holding five light bulbs. The picture windows on the east side are double paned with two sliding glass doors in the center.<sup>4</sup> A replacement wood parquet floor covers the original concrete floor. In the southeast corner of the den is a green marble half-bath with an original green porcelain toilet and vanity, and an original telephone connection. Three of the panes in the four-light bathroom window are etched glass and the fourth is a clear replacement.

A hallway leading to the south side of the house accesses the private spaces of the house. The south wall is papered in a musical note and instrument wallpaper in black, gold, and turquoise. It is believed that the Presleys installed it in October 1956.<sup>5</sup>

In an alcove off the south side of the hallway (in the area between bedrooms #1 and #2 on the sketch plan) are five original shelves, the bottom two concealed by the original sliding doors, an original phone connection and a place for a chair. This hallway alcove opens into the front bathroom with sink and toilet on the west and the tub and shower opposite. Almost everything in this bathroom is original: the sink, countertop, faucet, tile, and shower tub and the theatrical dressing room lights. The square inch floor tiles are arranged in a geometric pattern of gray shades. The four-inch wall gray tiles form a wainscoting and the top half is papered. The countertop is a complimentary color of the tiles. Both the sink and tub are porcelain white.

The westernmost bedroom was the original Elvis bedroom and the only one of his bedrooms in which he was ever professionally photographed. A number of photographs by Alfred Wertheimer and Marvin Israel have been published. On the south wall and west wall are paired, two-over-two

<sup>3</sup> Marvin Israel, *Elvis Presley 1956*. (New York: Harry N Abrams, Inc, 1998), 84-85. Israel was a mentor to photographers Richard Avedon and Diane Arbus, as well as the former art director of *Seventeen* and *Harper's Bazaar* magazines

<sup>4</sup> *Memphis Press-Scimitar*. Memphis, 14 December 1956.

<sup>5</sup> Kay Wheeler. *Growing Up With The Memphis Flash*. (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Tutti Frutti Productions, 1994),158.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

Presley, Elvis, House  
Shelby County, Tennessee

double-hung windows. The flooring is the original red oak and the walls are papered with replacement paper. There is a closet on the eastern wall with sliding doors.

The second and third bedrooms are more in the center of the southern wall. They are identical in size and have paired two-over-two double-hung windows, red oak floors, pocket doors, and sliding door closets. The third bedroom has knotty pine paneling that was painted at an unknown time. It is unknown if the paneling is original. In the hallway there is a closet with sliding double doors adjacent to the door of the master bedroom, on the north side of the hallway.

The easternmost hallway door opens into the master bedroom. It is the largest of the bedrooms and has paired two-over-two double-hung windows on the east and south walls. It has papered and painted sheet rock walls, blown-on ceiling, and a walk-in closet and bath on its north side. The closet has all its original wood fixtures intact. The master bath was remodeled at an unknown time and contains some modern fixtures. The tile, tub, mirror, and light fixture are likely original.

The Presleys installed a five-foot tall wrought iron gate and a brick and wrought iron fence. A row of gold plated musical notes were once welded in the middle of the circle in each panel of the wrought iron fence but musical notes were removed by 1979. The fence is a contributing structure.

In the backyard is a pool installed by Elvis. There is a photograph of the pool under construction. The gunite pool is 50 feet long and 25 feet wide with small blue and white tiles on the deck. It was one of the largest residential pools in the city in 1956. The pool retains integrity and is a contributing structure.<sup>6</sup>

Elvis constructed a small detached building on the north side of the existing pool to house his motorcycles. Later he installed two tile dressing rooms in the back and a tile floor throughout and used it as the pool house. On the ceiling and on two walls is an acoustic fiber, often used in recording studios or for soundproofing. This building retains integrity and is a contributing building.

The house is located on a deep, wooded lot in the Audubon Park Subdivision, a residential subdivision with mainly 100 x 250 foot lots. The house fronts west onto Audubon and is setback behind a mossy, modestly cultivated lawn with large hardwood trees and a painted brick and wrought iron fence with hinged gates. The neighborhood is composed of middle class, one-and two-story houses ranging in age from the early 1950s to the mid-1980s with varying set backs. The property is in good condition and retains integrity.

The current owners have collected period furnishings that help recreate the 1950s feel of the home, based on the historic Wertheimer photographs. The Presleys used the living room as a public room and so there are many period photographs available to allow replacement of many of the Presleys' original furnishings. Elvis modeled one of his most famous costumes, the gold lame

<sup>6</sup> Anne Higgenbotham, *Elvis Presley: His Complete Life Story In Words With More Than 100 Pictures*, (New York. Bartholomew House, Inc., 1956) 29.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

Presley, Elvis, House  
Shelby County, Tennessee

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suit in front of the fireplace. To the left of the fireplace is a red portable 1956 RCA 4-inch television similar to the one in the photographs. Above it was Elvis' first, gold record for the song *Heartbreak Hotel*. Near this television on the west wall Elvis installed a white keyboard organ. The mirror on the west wall today is placed in roughly the same location as the original. In one photo Elvis and Gladys are reading an Elvis fan magazine sitting on the couch under the same mirror. On the same wall is a set of Oriental chalk ware figurines almost identical to the original. In the southeast corner of the room Vernon and Gladys are admiring their favorite portrait photo of their son. This copy is from the photographer, William Speer. Below the portrait is period hi-fi record player. Elvis had a dark wood upright piano in the dining room. During his parties, Elvis always played piano. One picture of the dining room is of Elvis playing the piano in the southeast corner of the room with Vernon and Gladys standing behind him, all singing gospel. The wall and fireplace brick are visible in the photo. The original wallpaper on the top half of the room has been closely matched.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   7   Page   6  

Presley, Elvis, House  
Shelby County, Tennessee

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Sketch plan            not to scale

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Presley, Elvis, House  
Shelby County, Tennessee

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## Statement of Significance

The Elvis Presley House is being nominated to the National Register under criterion B for its national significance because of its association with the American singer, Elvis Aaron Presley, one of the world's most popular entertainers from the mid-to late 20<sup>th</sup> Century. On January 27, 1956, the twenty-one-year-old Elvis' sixth single and his first on RCA Records, "Heartbreak Hotel" / "I Was the One", was released and made the pop charts (it reached #1 in April). The next day Presley's national television debut on The Dorsey Brothers Stage Show marked the beginning of his meteoric rise to international stardom. Presley purchased the house on Audubon in March of that same year with cash.

This property best represents the pivotal 1956-57 period of Elvis's career, when he began his transformation into the "King of Rock 'n Roll" and made his extraordinary impact on popular culture, an impact that is still felt today. Distinct from both his early struggle to break into the rockabilly music industry and his later career of mind numbing B-grade movies and Las Vegas appearances, the events that transpired during Presley's occupancy here include the release of his first RCA single, earning his first gold album, his record shattering initial television appearances his first movie release, and other career benchmarks.

This was a real family home where Vernon, his father, added onto the house; Gladys, his mother, kept a garden in the back yard; Hollywood actress Natalie Wood was a house guest; yet and Elvis and his family were still accessible to his fans and neighbors. Less than a year later, his increasing popularity and security issues resulted in his family's retreat into the seclusion of an isolated gated suburban estate, the better-known Graceland (NR 11/7/91; NHL pending). While Graceland represents Presley significance when he was an established icon, the nominated property best represents Presley's formative year when he actually changed the world of music and pop culture. The Audubon house retains integrity and looks much as it did during Presley's short tenure.

Elvis Presley's accomplishments as an entertainer during the time he lived at the Audubon house include the March release of his first RCA album entitled *Elvis Presley* and having his single "Heartbreak Hotel" reach #1 on the *Billboard Hot 100* chart in April, 1956. *Elvis Presley* was number one on the charts for ten weeks and earned Elvis his (and the world's) first gold record. Ten of his recordings were on the *Billboard's Top 100* Singles Charts during this time with at least six selling more than one million copies in the United States alone. He performed on eleven national television broadcasts. On June 5, 1956 Presley scandalized the audience of the Milton Berle Show with suggestive hip movements while performing his second RCA single "Hound Dog." Television critics across the country slammed the performance for its "appalling lack of musicality," "vulgarity" and "animalism." The reaction was so severe, Presley was obliged to explain himself on a local New York City TV show (Hy Gardner Calling). Shortly thereafter he appeared on The Steve Allen Show dressed in a tuxedo, billed as "the new Elvis Presley" and airing the debut performance of *Hound Dog* to a basset hound, an experience Presley later said he found humiliating. Elvis Presley appeared three times on the Ed Sullivan Show, from September 1956 to

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Presley, Elvis, House  
Shelby County, Tennessee

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January 1957. His first performance on the September 9 telecast broke all viewing records by drawing a television audience of 82.6%, an astounding number then and now.<sup>7</sup>

While living at 1034 Audubon Drive, Presley signed a seven-year contract with Hal Wallis and Paramount Pictures. His first movie, *Love Me Tender*, was released in late November and opened to mass teenage hysteria. The movie placed second among all top-grossing films of 1956. He also began production of his second movie, *Loving You*, and made his first Las Vegas appearance.

Presley's impact on the American youth consumer market was noted on the front page of *The Wall Street Journal* on December 31, 1956 when future Pulitzer Prize-winning business journalist Louis M. Kohlmeier wrote, "Elvis Presley today is a business," and reported on the singer's record and Elvis Presley related merchandise had grossed over \$22 million in sales.<sup>8</sup>

Half a century later, historian Ian Brailsford (University of Auckland, New Zealand) commented, "The phenomenal success of Elvis Presley in 1956 convinced many doubters of the financial opportunities existing in the youth market." Statistics alone cannot measure the effect Elvis Presley's magnetic sensuality, physical grace, and innate sense of style had on the public. He became the primary symbol of the new youth culture in America. He also became one of society's most controversial figures, which would extract a heavy psychological and physical toll on him and his parents. Presley's unique blending of white country and gospel music, black R & B and gospel, white pop music, his particular blend of charisma and talent assisted him in beginning an unpremeditated change in pop music and culture and the mores of American society.

It was love at first sight for millions of the teenagers born during and after World War II. Young women shrieked at the sight of him or at the sound of his voice and became his most ardent fans. They formed clubs, sought to learn every detail about him and conspired to find a way to his presence. At live shows they often stampeded towards him on stage. Elvis often escaped with barely the clothes on his back. Young boys admired him as their rebel leader. They copied his hairstyle, clothing, posture, and slang. Teenagers called his music rock and roll and adopted it as their own.

Peter Jennings heralded Elvis' influence on music and youth culture in his 12-part television series "The Century" airing on ABC in 2000. Choosing just eleven events as the most significant of the century, he devoted an hour to each with the exception of World War II to which he dedicated two hours. Under the title of "Memphis Dreams, Part 7: Innocence and Rebellion" Jennings devoted an hour to Elvis' cultural impact during the period he lived at 1034 Audubon Drive.

The home here at 1034 Audubon Drive where he resided from May 1956 to April 1957 along with his mother Gladys, his father, Vernon, and grandmother, Minnie Mae, is the surviving property

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<sup>7</sup> Ernst Jorgensen, *Elvis Presley A Complete Life in Music*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998) 73.

<sup>8</sup> Louis M Kohlmeier, *Wall Street Journal*, 31 December, 1956, 1.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Presley, Elvis, House  
Shelby County, Tennessee

best associated with him during this important time period. The building retains integrity from this time and meets the registration requirements of the Memphis residential MPS.<sup>9</sup>

## Background of Elvis Presley

Elvis Presley was born in a two-room sharecropper's house in Tupelo, MS on January 8, 1935 to Gladys and Vernon Presley. He was a twin but his brother died at birth. His parents were impoverished but he was surrounded by a large extended family. He was always drawn towards music. In 1948 when Elvis was thirteen and just starting a new school year, his father was fired from his job in Tupelo. In postwar America the northern industries might have been booming but jobs were scarce in the rural South. Vernon, following Gladys's two brothers lead, moved the family to Memphis.

Their first home in Memphis was an overcrowded boarding house. Desperate to escape, they applied for assistance with the Memphis Housing Authority. In May 1949, they moved into public housing at 185 Winchester Avenue #328 of Lauderdale Courts (NR, 7/25/96) where they stayed for three years. It was while living here that Elvis spent his teenage years attending L.C. Humes High School (NR 7/12/04), playing touch football and dating girls. Eventually the Presleys began earning too much money for the strict income limits so they had to move during Elvis' senior year in high school. They finally moved to an apartment on Alabama Street where they lived when Elvis began recording at Sun Studio (NHL 7/31/03), then known as the Memphis Recording Service, and became a local celebrity.

In 1954, using Elvis' earnings the family rented their first home, a modest structure at 2414 Lamar. They then rented a second home in late 1955 at 1414 Getwell. By this time Elvis had signed a contract with his lifelong manager, Colonel Tom Parker, who promptly got him contracts with a RCA, a major recording studio, and a seven-year motion picture contract with Paramount Pictures.

On March 8, 1956, Elvis used his first royalty checks from RCA to purchase his first home, a one-story ranch house at 1034 Audubon Drive. He paid \$29,100 for the four-bedroom, two-bath house with an attached carport. He bought the property from Howard and Ruth Handwerker. Howard Handwerker was employed by a wood product company and had experience in construction. He designed and built this home for his family in late 1953 or early 1954. Photographer Alfred Wertheimer's *Elvis '56 In the Beginning* book states

1034 Audubon Drive was a postwar suburban home that could have been built for any GI-made-good anywhere in the country. The late afternoon sun highlighted a typical American house: pastel green board-and-batten siding, slate-grey tiled roof, red brick trim, white windows decorated with black shutters and a black ranch style front door."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> In 2002 the multiple property submission was amended to extend to 1960 (accepted on 12/12/02).

<sup>10</sup> Alfred Wertheimer. *Elvis '56: In the Beginning*. (New York: Collier Books, 1979), 118.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

Presley, Elvis, House  
Shelby County, Tennessee

To Elvis, the home was a refuge from the demands and the controversy of his career. Unfortunately he was not able to spend as much time as he wanted at Audubon Drive. Whether he was there or not, his home became the epicenter of teen fantasy. The lucky ones who lived nearby were the first to visit their hero's refuge.

In the beginning, the Presleys always responded with southern hospitality to these young strangers for that was how they were taught to be. They were also pleased that anyone would like their boy and so they tried to accommodate all the fans. At certain times Elvis walked along the front wall as his fans eagerly demanded his attention. Many fans were allowed to come inside the house, and even speak to Elvis. Bolder fans knocked on the windows and rang the doorbell at odd hours of the night. In a photo essay titled "Elvis—a Different Kind of Idol: Presley's Impact Piles up Fans, Fads, and Fears," *Life Magazine* published a photo of several young girls picking blades of grass. In the same photo essay, a photo shows five girls kneeling with their ears pressed to his bedroom wall at the front of the house.<sup>11</sup>

More and more fans began to invade the privacy of 1034 Audubon Drive. In 1956, south of the Presley's home was a vacant lot so it was easy for the teenagers to climb the brick fence and peer into the windows of his front bedroom and the bathroom located only ten feet away from the property line. To protect their son, the Presleys erected a brick and wrought iron fence around the front and the bedrooms of the property and installed a front gate, but this was not tall enough. By November Vernon and Gladys switched to the front bedroom and Elvis moved to the back master bedroom presumably because the back of the house was quieter. The new location of his bedroom did not remain a secret for very long and soon the fans were banging on the windows of that bedroom as well.

Part of the excitement was that each day brought the potential of a great adventure. No one was certain what Elvis would do next. Would he drive home another new Cadillac? He brought a yellow one first, then a blue, and finally the pink; then he switched brands to a white Lincoln Continental. Would he ride his Harley Davidson motorcycles and allow young admirers to ride with him again? Would he fly in a helicopter to the vacant lot next door, as he did once, and make a dramatic exit to the cheering fans? Would he bring home a young starlet? Natalie Wood came to visit at 1034 Audubon but was afraid to venture outside because of the crowds. Presley was not only impacting popular culture, he was, in effect, learning how to become a popular icon himself.

The growing crowds blocked the neighbors' driveways and then the entire street. The police were often called to keep traffic moving. Yet, Elvis was reluctant to discourage any of the fans from coming to Audubon Drive as they had made him what he was. He graciously reasoned if the fans had not bought the records and the tickets, he could not afford such a fine house. However, this life-in-a-fishbowl situation soured the neighbors towards the Presleys. The men of the neighborhood gathered to ask Vernon how much the family was in debt on the home with the

<sup>11</sup> Photo Essay, "Elvis—a Different Kind of Idol: Presley's Impact Piles up Fans, Fads- And Fears," *Life Magazine*, 27 August, 1956, 28-31.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 11Presley, Elvis, House  
Shelby County, Tennessee

intent to offer them full payment if the Presleys agreed to move. Instead they found out that the Presleys owed nothing on the house as Elvis had paid cash for it.<sup>12</sup>

This generosity of time and energy extended to press photographers and writers. Many worked for special magazines devoted to him. In 1956, photographer Alfred Wertheimer was assigned by RCA to take publicity shots of the twenty-one-year-old singer. Sensing something unique about Elvis, on his own, Wertheimer spent an entire year photographing Elvis including their new home at 1034 Audubon Drive. He was were allowed to capture such intimate moments as Elvis kissing his mother as she hands to him a clean pair of underwear.

In perhaps the most famous photo, Elvis is captured sitting on his motorcycle looking down in a moody pose. The image has become a symbol of the star and of his time. Another photograph taken in the backyard pool shows a water level only about knee deep to Elvis. According to the photographer Vernon could not start the pool pump so in order to put some water into the massive pool he rigged a garden hose from the kitchen sink, through the house and into the pool. In 1979 these photographs immortalizing the house were published in a book *Elvis' 56: In the Beginning*. *Elvis '56: In the Beginning* was also released as a documentary in 1987, illustrated with Alfred Wertheimer's photographs. Narrated by Levon Helm, it closes with this statement about Elvis: "We would never get that close to him again."<sup>13</sup> That was certainly the case when he moved away from 1034 Audubon Drive.

It became increasingly obvious that it would take more than the two strands of barbed wire on the top of the fence installed by the Presleys (which remain there today) to keep the world at bay. Gladys complained to one of the neighbors that she could not sleep well for all the people ringing the doorbell or knocking on the windows. According to the former neighbor, the rural bred Gladys did not care for the swimming pool in the backyard. Instead she was proud of her vegetable garden, which was to the right of the pool.

By the end of the year rumors circulated that Elvis Presley was buying a large farm well out of the city. Finally in March 1957, he bought a fourteen-acre estate just south of town with a two-story southern colonial home that was placed well away from the highway. The property was already called Graceland and the Presleys swapped 1034 Audubon Drive and some cash for Graceland. The owner of Graceland, Ruth Brown Moore took possession of 1034 Audubon Drive and rented it to another relative.

Though their time at the Audubon house was brief, the Presleys made substantial changes to the home such as adding landscaping, the den, and the pool that are visible today. Clearly they had intended to stay for a significant time until the youthful fans drove them away. Their lives altered considerably soon after they moved from Audubon Drive. Elvis received his draft notice at

<sup>12</sup> Billy Smith, "The Audubon House," *Elvis: The Record*, June 1979, 10.

<sup>13</sup> *Elvis '56: In the Beginning*. Prod. Alan and Susan Raymond. 60 min. Warner Home Video, 1987, videocassette.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

Presley, Elvis, House  
Shelby County, Tennessee

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Christmas later that year and went into the Army in March, 1958. Elvis' beloved mother Gladys would die in the summer of 1958.

In all eight families owned 1034 Audubon between 1957 and 1998. The current owners, Mike Freeman and his wife, Cindy Hazen purchased the home in 1998 and reside there today. .As devoted Elvis fans, authors and historic preservationists, their goal is to preserve what is original and restore the home to the way it looked in 1956.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 13

Presley, Elvis, House  
Shelby County, Tennessee

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

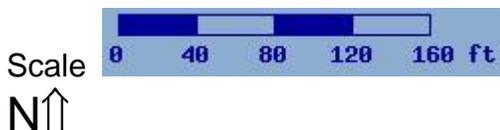
Section number 10 Page 14

Presley, Elvis, House  
Shelby County, Tennessee

## Boundary Description and Boundary Justification

The boundary of the Elvis Presley House is shown as a solid line on the accompanying assessor's map. It is parcel 058126 00017.

The boundaries are determined by the original boundaries of the parcels in the 1953 Audubon Park Subdivision.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number photos Page 15

Elvis Presley House  
Shelby County, Tennessee

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Photo List                      Date: June 2005

Photographs by:    Judith Johnson  
1034 Audubon Drive  
Memphis, Shelby County, TN  
Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Photo 1 of 28  | View of fence, front yard and west façade of house    |
| Photo 2 of 28  | West façade   |
| Photo 3 of 28  | View of façade and north elevation                    |
| Photo 4 of 28  | View of south and east elevations                     |
| Photo 5 of 28  | Swimming pool and east (rear) elevation               |
| Photo 6 of 28  | East elevation of garage and rear north elevation     |
| Photo 7 of 28  | West and south elevations of pool house               |
| Photo 8 of 28  | Interior view of entry hall                           |
| Photo 9 of 28  | Interior view of family room                          |
| Photo 10 of 28 | Interior view of southeast corner of kitchen          |
| Photo 11 of 28 | Interior view of northwest corner of kitchen          |
| Photo 12 of 28 | Interior view of southwest corner of living room      |
| Photo 13 of 28 | Interior view of northwest corner of living room      |
| Photo 14 of 28 | Interior view of northeast corner of living room      |
| Photo 15 of 28 | Interior view of northwest corner of dining room      |
| Photo 16 of 28 | Interior view of southeast corner of dining room      |
| Photo 17 of 28 | Interior view of southwest corner of den              |
| Photo 18 of 28 | Interior view of northwest corner of den              |
| Photo 19 of 28 | Interior-den ½ bathroom                               |
| Photo 20 of 28 | Detail-den display cases                              |
| Photo 21 of 28 | Detail-den light fixture                              |
| Photo 22 of 28 | Interior-bedroom hallway                              |
| Photo 23 of 28 | Interior-hall bathroom                                |
| Photo 24 of 28 | Interior-hall telephone stand and bookcase            |
| Photo 25 of 28 | Interior-Bedroom #1-original Elvis bedroom            |
| Photo 26 of 28 | Interior-Bedroom #2                                   |
| Photo 27 of 28 | Interior-Bedroom #3                                   |
| Photo 28 of 28 | Interior-Master bedroom-2 <sup>nd</sup> Elvis bedroom |