

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received AUG 1 1984  
date entered AUG 30 1984

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

1. Name

historic Berlin Historic District

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number See Inventory 4.5.431 N/A not for publication

city, town Berlin N/A vicinity of

state Tennessee code 047 county Marshall code 117

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Ownership

street & number N/A

city, town N/A N/A vicinity of state N/A

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Marshall County Courthouse

street & number Public Square

city, town Lewisburg state Tennessee 37091

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date N/A N/A  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state N/A

## 7. Description

|  |  |   |   |                      |
|--|--|---|---|----------------------|
| <b>Condition</b>                         |  | <b>Check one</b>                              | <b>Check one</b>                                  |                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |                      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved         | date <u>pre-1900</u> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed               |   |   |                      |

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

The Berlin Historic District is composed of thirteen historic and architecturally significant structures and a number of ancillary outbuildings which together form the village of Berlin (population 20) in westernmost Marshall County, Tennessee. The district is an intact collection of primitive and simple buildings which together illustrate the various vernacular styles and forms which developed on the county's western edge. The district includes log and frame structures which are related and form the heart of the much declined, but historically important village of Berlin.

The village is located at the base of the northeast face of Berlin Hill, about seven miles north of the Marshall County seat of Lewisburg, and one mile east of the Maury County line. The Big, or Berlin Spring, around which the settlement developed, flows from a wide cave mouth in a limestone bluff in the west side of the hill, and is the headwater of Cedar Creek, a tributary of the Duck River. Berlin is located on the Lewisburg-Franklin Pike, U. S. Highway 431, at its intersection with the Sowell Mill Pike, an old road to Columbia, and the road to the nearby hamlet of Verona.

The earliest buildings within the district are log structures. The Finley Farmstead (1856) composed of a number of log structures, includes a single-pen cabin residence with rear additions, a log smokehouse, and other agricultural structures. A small cabin on the Allen farm is thought by area residents to have been an early residence, but appears to have been used only for some agricultural purpose. The Ownby Barn (ca. 1850) on Cedar Creek is a somewhat larger log structure with a gable roof and two frame shed additions to the sides.

The majority of structures within the district are of frame construction. The earlier residences follow the one-story central passage plan, an established building form in the Duck River Valley. The Ewing-Allen House (ca. 1840) and the Lunn House (1840s), the two earliest frame houses, both feature central porticos with gable returns, heavy limestone chimneys, and original rear ell sections. The Methodist Parsonage (ca. 1920) is a one-and-one-half story vernacular dwelling with a half-hipped porch decorated with gingerbread trim, and the Ownby place is a frame cross-gable cottage from the early twentieth century.

While the majority of buildings are residential, the district includes two simple country stores from the early part of the century, the old blacksmith's shop (1850s), a small doctor's office (1850s), and the 1857 Berlin Methodist Church, a plain country chapel with a pedimented front. Agricultural structures include hay and cattle barns, cribs, chicken coops, and smokehouses.

The Berlin Historic District includes the village around the Big Spring, buildings along the two pikes and Cedar Creek, and the interesting Finley Farmstead on a lane opposite the Methodist church. Properties have been listed in the inventory based on current ownership, and by architectural and historical interrelationships. Buildings within the district exemplify the historic development of vernacular architecture in the central part of the Duck River Valley.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Continuation sheet Berlin Historic District Item number 7 Page 2

The majority of the buildings in the district are listed in the inventory as contributing structures for their historic or architectural merit which contributes to the significance of the district. One building, the Hardison Grocery (ca. 1940), is listed as non-contributing, as it is less than fifty years old and of limited architectural or historical significance. The inventory numbers correspond to those on the accompanying tax map.

1. Allen Farm Cabin. Sowell Mill Pike. Ca. 1830. Small single pen cedar log structure; saddle notching; vertical batten door with strap hinges; rear frame shed addition; tin gable roof. Although thought by area residents to have been a crude cabin residence, unchinked walls and no chimney suggest that the structure served as a crib or other agricultural structure. (C).
2. Berlin Methodist Episcopal Church South. Sowell Mill Pike. 1857. Plain rectangular chapel; pedimented front; two six-panel doors with four-light transoms on south, or front; elevation; 6/6 sash windows; modern gabled education wing recessed at rear of west side; two privies on property. (C).
3. Ewing-Allen House. Sowell Mill Pike. Ca. 1840. Three-bay, one-story, L-shaped central passage plan; weatherboarded; stone chimneys at east and west gable ends; central portico with gable returns, supported by chamfered posts; 4/4 rounded-arch sash windows; shed additions; moved about 3000 feet from U. S. Highway 431; small frame smokehouse, ruins of a turn-of-the-century tenant house, two twentieth century framed barns with monitor roofs on property. Also on house lot is Doctor Ewing's medical office, a small frame gabled one-room structure which was moved to the property prior to 1900.(C).
4. Finley Farmstead. Sowell Mill Pike. 1856. Single-pen log structure, partly covered with fieldstone; tin gable roof; gallery supported by cedar log posts; rear ell addition; stone chimneys on east gable end and rear ell; log smokehouse; shallow gabled roof tobacco barn with bonnet; chicken coop on property. House lot enclosed by cedar rail fence. (C).
5. Thomason House. Sowell Mill Pike. Ca. 1920. Three-bay frame saddlebag plan tenant house, covered with brick tarpaper; gable roof; brick flue; shed porch supported by square posts; two small frame shed outbuildings. Vacant. (C).
6. Berlin Blacksmith Shop. U. S. Highway 431. Ca. 1850. Small shed structure of diagonal sheathing; cedar log sill; vertical batten and glass panel doors; tin shed roof. (C).
7. Berlin Spring (The Big Spring). U. S. Highway 431 at Sowell Mill Pike. The head of Cedar Creek, the spring flows from the mouth of a cave twelve feet tall and twenty-five wide on the west side of a limestone bluff on the north face of Berlin Hill. A grassy meadow at the edge of the park, surrounded by limestone crags and boulders, was the site at which James K. Polk kicked off his 1844 campaign for the Presidency. (C).

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Continuation sheet Berlin Historic District Item number 7 Page 3

8. Hardison Grocery. U. S. Highway 431. Ca. 1940. One-story, rectangular, shotgun plan store; single-leaf batten door centered between paired 1/1 windows; gable roof; frame shed garage section at rear; small frame barn on property. (N).
9. Lunn House. U. S. Highway 431. Ca. 1840. One-story, three-bay, central passage plan; weatherboarded; central portico with gable returns and dentilled entablature supported by square columns with molded capitals; 4/4 4ounded-arch windows with rounded-arch shutters; stone chimneys at north and south gable ends; frame ell addition. Monitor barn on property. (C).
10. Methodist Parsonage. U. S. Highway 431. Ca. 1920. One-and-one-half story; weatherboarded; four-by-two bay; stone chimney on north gable end; brick interior flue; one-story half-hipped porch with sawtooth trim supported by bracketed turned and chamfered posts; rippled tin roof; cinder block outbuilding of chaste design. (C).
11. Ownby Log Barn. U. S. Highway 431. Ca. 1850. Single crib barn of cedar logs; saddle notching; weatherboarded loft with shuttered opening on front; tin monitor roof; vertical board shed additions at north and south ends. (C).
12. Ownby Place. U. S. Highway 431. Ca. 1900. One-story; three-by-two bay; L-shaped; weatherboarded; cross-gable roof with gable returns; shed porch supported by square posts; rear shed addition; chicken coop at rear. (C).
13. Ownby Store. U. S. Highway 431. Ca. 1900. One-story, rectangular shotgun plan frame store; covered with cove weatherboarding; batten door centered between 4/4 sash windows on front; shed addition on north side; used as residence. (C).

## 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 checked="" 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/<br>humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering                       | <input type="checkbox"/> music                          | <input type="checkbox"/> theater                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy                     | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation          |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–     | <input type="checkbox"/> communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> industry                          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)         |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> invention                         |   |  |

**Specific dates** ca. 1830–ca. 1940      **Builder/Architect** Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The western Marshall County community of Berlin is nominated under National Register A, B, and C for its significance to Marshall County and Tennessee in architecture and state and local history. The community is a collection of some of the best early vernacular architecture in the area predating the formation of Marshall County in 1836. Berlin Spring was a popular resort and picnic area in the nineteenth century and the scene of political speeches by James K. Polk and Andrew Johnson. Although the community has much declined in the twentieth century, the district retains its architectural integrity and sense of time and place, and conveys an environmental character that is rapidly disappearing in Marshall County. The architectural significance of the district is derived from the concentration of nineteenth century structures of varying design quality with a few early twentieth century structures contributing to the overall character of the community.

The land upon which Berlin is located was originally part of a grant of 1200 acres to James Watt of Iredell County, North Carolina, for services to the state during the Revolution. It is not known if Watt ever came to the area. Following his death, the Maury County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions divided his land into 190 acre tracts for division among his heirs.

In 1806, the Dearborn Treaty opened up all Indian lands south of Duck River for legal settlement. A number of families moved into the area, often without compensating the North Carolina property owners. In 1819 Frederick Fisher of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, a private in Colonel Campbell's Regiment who was disabled after receiving a severe wound at the Battle of King's Mountain, was apparently living in the area. Census records and pension roles indicate that he was living in Berlin on \$3.33 a month, and that he had difficulty in receiving even these small payments. James K. Polk was his lawyer, and managed his estate. Fisher died in 1846 and is buried in the Andrews-Liggett cemetery north of the village. Other Revolutionary veterans who lived here were John Field of Rockingham County, North Carolina, and John Fendell Carr of the Virginia Regiment of the Continental Line.

In 1836 Marshall County was created by the General Assembly, and the Berlin area was a part of the eastern edge of Maury County which went into the new county. There were attempts from this time until the Civil War to incorporate the village, ostensibly to improve roads or local security, but were only schemes to add a few more saloons or "tippling houses" to the community.

The Big Spring, headwater of Cedar Creek, is the area around which the village developed. The spring has always been a most important spot in the community. The area has been used for picnics and weddings, and the Berlin Methodist Church long performed its baptisms here. Presidents James K. Polk and Andrew Johnson spoke here, as did Governors Robert Love Taylor, Alfred Taylor, Benton McMillan, James B. Frazier, and James C. Jones, Senators A. O. P. Nicholson and Edward Ward Carmack, Congressmen George W. Jones, M. P. Gentry (United

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approximately 100 acres

Quadrangle name Verona, Tennessee

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

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

B 

|      |   |         |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1    | 6 | 5       | 1 | 5 | 4 | 7        | 0 | 3 | 9 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 7 | 0 |
| Zone |   | Easting |   |   |   | Northing |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

C 

|      |   |         |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1    | 6 | 5       | 1 | 4 | 4 | 4        | 0 | 3 | 9 | 3 | 0 | 8 | 4 | 0 |
| Zone |   | Easting |   |   |   | Northing |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

D 

|      |   |         |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1    | 6 | 5       | 1 | 4 | 7 | 0        | 0 | 3 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 0 |
| Zone |   | Easting |   |   |   | Northing |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

E 

|      |   |         |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1    | 6 | 5       | 1 | 5 | 9 | 0        | 0 | 3 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 0 |
| Zone |   | Easting |   |   |   | Northing |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

F 

|      |  |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|------|--|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|      |  |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

G 

|      |  |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|------|--|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|      |  |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

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 Richard Quin, Historic Preservation Planner

organization South Central Tennessee

Development District

date April 27, 1984

street & number 805 Nashville Highway, P.O. Box 1346

telephone (615) 381-2040

city or town Columbia

state Tennessee 38401

# 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 7/23/84

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the  
National Register

date

8/30/84

*for Melvyn Byers*  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Continuation sheet Berlin Historic District Item number 8 Page 2

States and Confederate), James W. Richardson, and W. C. Houston, and Judges W. M. Polk, Terry H. Cahal, Harvey Watterson, James H. Thomas, Mat Martin, W. M. Martin, and Barclay Martin. Polk was popular in the community; as a legislator he had been responsible for the appointment of Samuel Ewing, a local favorite, as the village's new postmaster. In 1844 he kicked off his campaign for the Presidency at Berlin Spring.

At the outset of the Civil War Berlin was a lively and prosperous place, nearly self-sufficient. There was a blacksmith shop, a livery stable, a water mill on Cedar Creek, a steam grist mill, a tanyard, a store, and a saloon. Businessmen included Fletcher Phillips, Will Rone, Calvin Hardison, and George Patton. In 1857 there were 121 families in the area. Property was valued at \$128,829 for the farm families, and included 150 slaves, 336 horses, 113 mules, and 731 cattle.

The Civil War brought change and some ruin to the village. Two local soldiers are buried in the Wells cemetery at South Berlin, and a grave on the Leonard Place is the last resting place for a boy murdered by Confederate soldiers during the war. Berlin began a gradual decline in population and today consists of only some twenty residents.

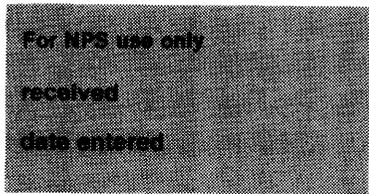
By the turn of the century, the Big Spring had become a very popular spot. The spring and the surrounding park-like area were enclosed and used for a number of events, including school reunions, curcuses, and side shows. When Bonnie Parker of Bonnie and Clyde fame came to Berlin with a road show in the 1920s, her target shooting act drew critical acclaim. Independence Day celebrations were long held at the spring, including picnicking, baseball games, pig chases, and greased-pole climbing. Schoolboys would drop apples down sinkholes and caves on the south side of Berlin Hill, and run to the bottom to watch them bob out of the spring. The annual Old Folks Day picnic was held the 4th Saturday of May.

The Big Spring was also a popular courting spot; couples would rent buggies in Lewisburg and ride out to the spring for the day. When the narrow-gauge Duck River Vally Railway was extended through South Berlin, vacationers from Columbia often visited the area. Today nature has largely reclaimed the area, and briars and small trees stand where Polk opened his bid for the White House.

The respect for tradition in this rural community, and the slow rate of growth in this part of Marshall County, together are undoubtedly responsible for the preservation of this unique collection of vernacular building types. Several log structures typify the earliest construction within the area, and more complex frame structures project the higher levels of construction made possible by the introduction of the sawmill. Although some of the structures within the district are deteriorated, all have retained their original character over the years.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Berlin Historic District Item number 9 Page 2

---

Bibliography

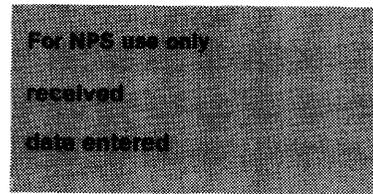
Allen, Mrs. Thomas. Personal interview. February 1984.

Andrews, Bill. "James K. Polk Opens His Campaign at Berlin Springs." (Columbia)  
Daily Herald. 17 July 1976, Supplement.

Phifer, Nancy. Personal Interview. February 1984.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Berlin Historic District Item number 10

Page 2

Verbal Boundary

The Berlin Historic District consists of 100 acres of land whose configuration is irregular in shape. Most of the properties within the District are located near the intersection of U. S. Highway 431 and Sowell Mill Pike. The Finley Farmstead, located west of Finley Road and the Berlin Spring (Big Spring), located near the corner of U. S. Highway 431 and Sowell Mill Pike are also included in this nomination. This boundary includes enough land to contain the remaining historic structures associated with the town of Berlin and preserve its historic integrity.

