

BOONE'S LICK HERITAGE QUARTERLY



Historic Howard County Courthouse, built in 1887. Photo By Jerry Benner

Architectural Gems in the Boonslick: The Kivett Stack House

Historic Courthouses of the Boonslick

**BHS Summer Meeting at Ashby-Hodge Gallery
*Preview of Coming Events: Fall Banquet, Special Issue***

VOL. 13 No. 2 — SUMMER 2014

BOONSLICK HISTORICAL SOCIETY PERIODICAL

A Boonslick Don Quixote ...

In this issue of the *Quarterly*, we return to the subject of disappearing historic architecture. Like a modern-day Don Quixote, architectural historian Brett Rogers is again astride his trusty Rocinante, riding through the Boonslick and tilting at the windmills of apathy, indifference and economic opportunism blind to cultural heritage. In his current essay (page 4), he draws our attention to an endangered architectural species known as the “stack house,” one of which still stands in Howard County but is in peril of disappearing. The “Kivett stack house,” Rogers says, “stands as a rare and valuable vernacular form in the Boonslick—a true architectural gem.”

Rogers’ last essay on the subject appeared in the Summer 2013 issue of the *Quarterly* when he wrote about “Shotgun Houses of the Boonslick.” The current piece is a continuation of his commitment to produce a series of articles for the magazine about these endangered and disappearing historic forms of architecture whose stories are central to our cultural heritage.

Continuing the theme of important architecture is the article and photo spread “Courthouses of the Boonslick,” featuring the artistic digital photography of Jerry Benner of Ferguson, a retired educator and professional photographer with strong ties to Howard County. Benner’s courthouse images are part of a larger work currently being exhibited in The Ashby-Hodge Gallery of American Art on the campus of Central Methodist University in Fayette. It is titled “Courthouses of Missouri: A Photographic Study by Jerry Benner.”

The show features artistic digital representations of what are often referred to as the architectural icons of Missouri’s 114 county seats of government—the county courthouses. The show also includes the historic St. Louis Courthouse near the Gateway Arch. The exhibition is the culmination of a 10-year project that began in 2004 motivated partially by Benner’s weekly road trips from home to CMU at Fayette and back while teaching photography at the University.

The summer meeting of the Boonslick Historical Society will be held at The Ashby-Hodge Gallery on July 20, between 3

and 5 p.m. Benner will be present to talk about his courthouse exhibition. Gallery Curator Denise Gebhardt, a member of the BHS Board of Directors, and Gallery Supervisor of Collections Dr. Joe Geist, also will be present to discuss the exhibition and the history of the Gallery.

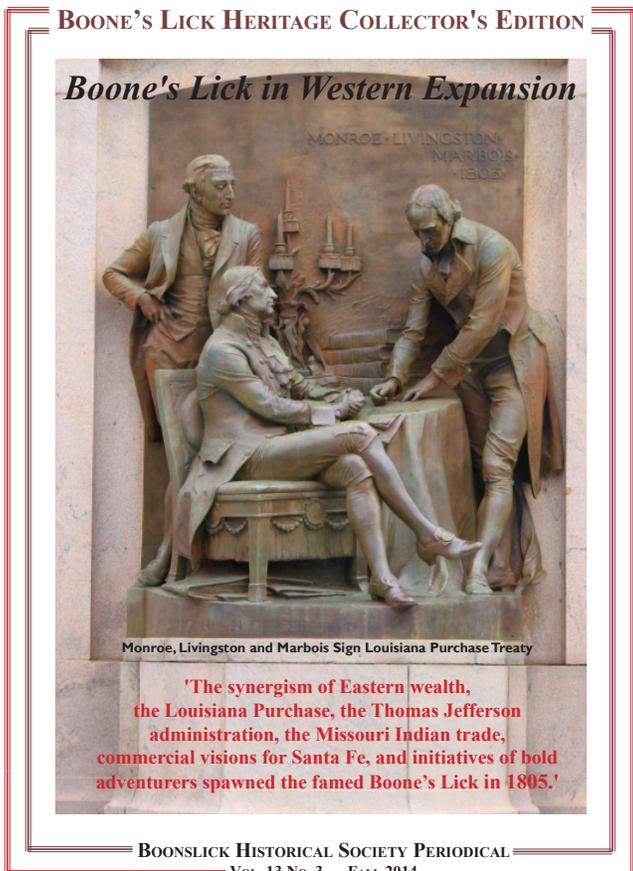
The fall meeting of the Boonslick Historical Society will be held November 8, when members of the Boone’s Lick (Historic) Road Association will join the Society in a joint dinner at the Huston Tavern (1834) in Historic Arrow Rock in Saline

County. The program will be presented by Missouri historian Lynn Morrow, who recently retired as the long-time director of local records preservation for Missouri State Archives. The title of his presentation is “Boone’s Lick in Western Expansion.” As Morrow notes, “The synergism of Eastern wealth, the Louisiana Purchase, the Thomas Jefferson administration, the Missouri Indian trade, commercial visions for Santa Fe, and initiatives of bold adventurers spawned the famed Boone’s Lick in 1805.”

Morrow will discuss these unfolding events that brought Morgan and Nathan Boone into a commercial salt industry with Philadelphia’s Bryan and Morrison Trading Company, the most influential American firm in Missouri’s trans-Mississippi West. Of the six Morrison brothers who came West, William, the eldest, administered the family business from Kaskaskia, Illinois, assigning James, Jesse, nephews, and others to implement their strategic

economic reach. Boone’s Lick salt became crucial in the Osage Indian trade, Missouri River commerce, and for support of federal and Missouri militia troops in the War of 1812.

We would also note that Morrow’s presentation will be drawn from the *Boone’s Lick Heritage Quarterly’s* planned Fall 2014 Collector’s Edition, where readers can peruse his longer essay that surveys the topic from the mid-1790s to the mid-1830s. This special edition will be 32 pages or more and will include previously unpublished documents and information regarding this period of Missouri Territory and statehood history.



The *Quarterly* will publish a Collector's Edition on Boone's Lick Region history in the fall.

— Don B. Cullimore

Boone's Lick Heritage Quarterly is published four times a year by the Boonslick Historical Society, P.O. Box 426, Boonville, MO 65233.

We encourage our members and others interested in history to contribute articles or other information of historical interest, including family histories, pertaining to the region. Please address all contributions and correspondence related to the periodical to the editor, Don B. Cullimore, 1 Lawrence Dr., Fayette, MO 65248, or email to: don.cullimore40@gmail.com, phone: 660-248-1732. Editorial guidelines may be obtained from the editor. Publication deadlines are February 1 for the March (Spring) issue; May 1 for the June (Summer) issue; August 1 for the September (Fall) issue; and November 1 for the (Winter) December issue.

The Boonslick Historical Society was founded in 1937 and meets several times a year to enjoy programs about historical topics pertinent to the Boonslick area. Members of the Society have worked together over the years to publish historical books and brochures and to mark historic sites. They supported the founding of Boone's Lick State Historic Site, marked the sites of Cooper's Fort and Hanna Cole's Fort and have restored a George Caleb Bingham painting of loan to The Ashby-Hodge Gallery of American Art at Central Methodist University, Fayette.

Membership dues are \$15-Individual, \$25-Family, \$50-Sponsor, \$250-Patron, \$500-Life. The dues year is January through December. Receive our publication, *Boone's Lick Heritage Quarterly*, and attend annual Society events highlighting the region's history. To become a member, send a check made out to the Boonslick Historical Society, P.O. Box 426, Boonville, MO 65233.

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The Kivett stack house in 1954 with residents May Kivett and grandson Randall.

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Classic Hall on the CMU campus in Fayette houses The Ashby-Hodge Gallery of American Art, location for the summer BHS meeting.

Courthouses of the Boonslick Photo Exhibition

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Photographer Jerry Benner of Ferguson, Missouri, spent a decade creating the artistic photo exhibition of Missouri's 114 county courthouses now on display in The Ashby-Hodge Gallery.

Cover Photo: *Howard County Courthouse. The county was founded in 1816 and known as "The Mother of more than 30 Missouri Counties." It was named for Benjamin Howard, governor of Louisiana (later Missouri) Territory, 1810-1812.*

Photo by Jerry Benner

Architectural Gems in the Boonslick: The Kivett Stack House

By Brett Rogers

Located in the gently rolling hills south of Boonesboro in western Howard County, the Kivett stack house is one of the last examples of a vernacular form that has all but vanished from central Missouri. According to the family's oral history, the house was constructed by John S. Kivett, a craftsman-farmer, shortly after the turn of the 19th century, on recently purchased land that had previously belonged to John S.'s in-laws. This simple and unpretentious folk structure was home to three generations of the Kivett family, beginning with John S.'s son, Earl, until it fell into disuse in the early 1990s.

To understand the significance of the Kivett house, it's important to know something about this architectural form. The typical stack house is characterized by a single-pen or single-pile rectangular or slightly rectangular unit. Most stack houses deviate little from the standard 16' by 16' exterior dimensions that constitute the basic building block of Southern vernacular architecture. The single-pen module is then stacked to a height of 2-3 stories and is capped with a side-gable pitched roof; the distinctive vertical stacking of room units gives the form its obvious name.¹ In Missouri, the stack house was sometimes viewed as an abbreviated version of a central-hall I-house, since it is one room deep and one room wide, as opposed to the typical central Missouri I-house, which is one room deep and two rooms wide. With the exception of log cabins, the one-room plan is somewhat unique in the Southern architectural vocabulary—a vocabulary that was transplanted and that flourished in rural and small-town Little Dixie.² A typical stack house has a central doorway, a single chimney in the north gable of the structure, a small attic, and a narrow, boxed stairway (winder) in the corner of the main room, with closet space below. When additions appear on Missouri stack houses, as they often do, they are nearly always on the back wall of the structure.³

As early as the late 18th century, the stack house was a common building form in the mid-Atlantic states, as far north as Delaware and New Jersey.⁴ By the mid-19th century, it was a prevalent vernacular form in the upper South as well. Architectural historian Howard Marshall notes that stack houses in central Missouri were built primarily by people of English stock who migrated to the Little Dixie region from the tidewater areas of Virginia, Maryland, and central Kentucky.⁵ Like the shotgun house, a later Southern introduction to Missouri, stack houses appear in both rural and urban settings, although their relatively narrow façades are more suited for residential lots than for mid-Missouri farmsteads. In fact, numerous urban examples have been documented in places such as Annapolis, Maryland, Alexandria, Virginia, Asheville, North Carolina, as



The Kivett stack house, December 1954. May and Randall Kivett in the foreground, with family dog. Photo courtesy Randall Kivett

well as in small towns throughout central and southern New Jersey, where they are alternately referred to as “one-over-ones” and “bandbox” houses.⁶ The stack house nevertheless became a part of the rural and small-town architectural vocabulary of Little Dixie, though it was never an extremely common one. It seems to have been more prevalent in the hills along the Missouri River and was considerably less common in the central and northern portions of the region.⁷

The Kivett family had deep roots in Little Dixie. In 1817, John M. Kivett and his family migrated from Randolph County, North Carolina, and settled in the hills above the Missouri River near what would become the community of Boonesboro just a few years later. By the 1850s, other

Brett Rogers is an architectural historian with deep roots in Little Dixie. He teaches at Columbia College and lives in Boonville.

members of the North Carolina Kivett family had arrived, most notably John M.'s nephew, John S. Kivett, carpenter and probable builder of the Kivett stack house. Still in his 20s when he arrived in 1856, John S. settled on an 80-acre parcel that adjoins the site of the stack house. In the spring of 1854, he married Elizabeth (Lizzie) McCart, daughter of neighbor John S. McCart, an early migrant from Kentucky. John S. and Lizzie raised seven children, some of whom also procured land and took up farming. Descendants of John S. and Lizzie still live in the Boonesboro area today.⁸

In 1906, John S. Kivett purchased 148 acres from his brother-in-law, Joseph McCart, and Joseph's wife, Eva.⁹ Located about 1½ miles south of Boonesboro, in Franklin Township, on the main road linking Boonville and Glasgow, the farm adjoined Kivett's 80 acres, directly to the north.¹⁰ The land was the original John S. McCart farm, where Lizzie (nee McCart) Kivett, the second of seven children, had been raised. Historical atlases for 1875 and 1896 indicate that the McCart farmstead was located on the same site as the later Kivett stack house.¹¹ Census records indicate that an aged and widowed John McCart, his son Joseph, and daughter-in-law, Eva, were still living on the property at the beginning of the 20th century.¹²

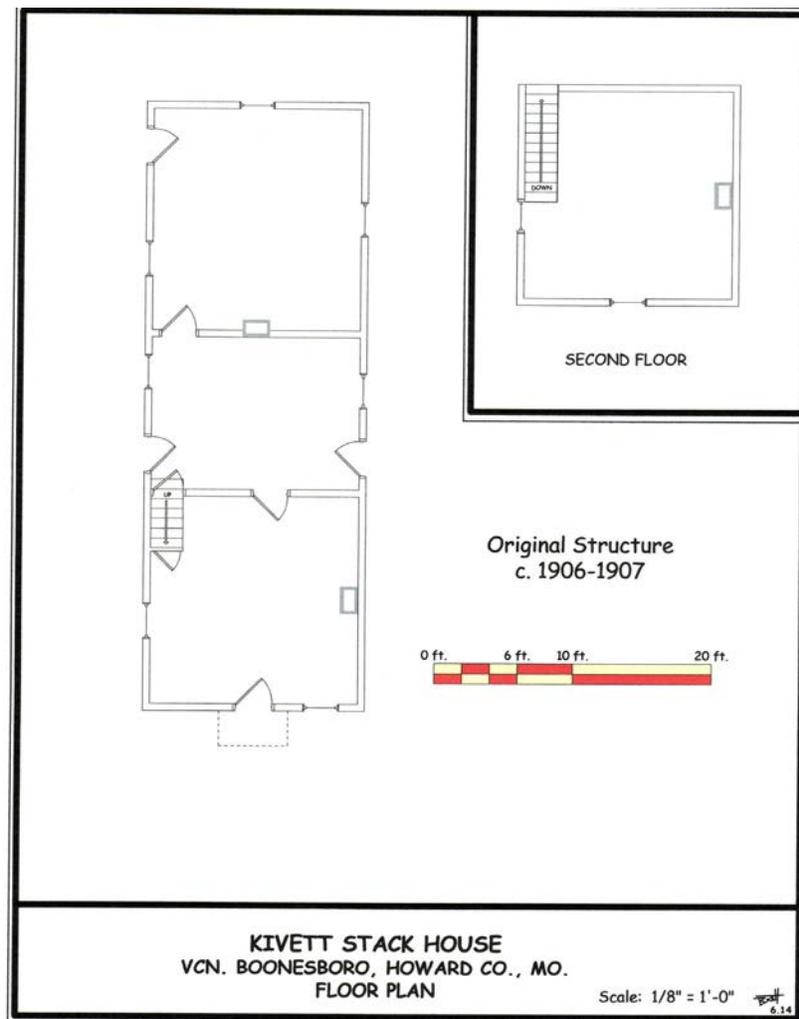
The fate of the McCart's house is unknown, but it likely burned or was intentionally razed. The Kivett house was likely constructed around 1906-1907 on John and Lizzie's newly acquired land. It is a fine and relatively late example of a frame stack house with a contemporaneous ell. The oral family record strongly maintains that John S. Kivett was the primary architect and builder of structure, sometime around 1900. Supporting this claim, census information for 1900

and 1910 lists John S. Kivett as "farmer and carpenter."¹³ Also supporting the claim is family oral history maintaining that John S. Kivett built at least five stack houses in the Boonesboro area—or, as the Kivett family called them, "story-and-a-half" houses—all identical to this one.¹⁴

However, some questions remain unanswered: We don't know why, precisely, John S. built the Kivett stack house. Although it's not impossible, it seems unlikely that he would have built the house for the McCart's prior to his land purchase. There is also the question of whether John S. could have been the primary builder, since he was over 70 years old at the time the house was erected. It seems more plausible that he designed and

oversaw the construction of the house. Other family members likely provided the necessary labor and assistance; John's eldest son, John Henry, was a well-established carpenter in the area.¹⁵ It is possible that the house was intended for John's youngest son, Earl. Earl S. Kivett had married Lydia May Duran in 1904 and at the time his father purchased the McCart property, was apparently living on and working the Kivett farm.¹⁶ In the summer of 1910, Earl purchased the former McCart property from his father for approximately \$500 more than John had paid for it four years earlier and with slightly less acreage.¹⁷

The sales price suggests that the stack house was on the property at that time; Earl and Lydia (called May) may have already been occupying the house prior to the land transfer. Why John S. Kivett built in this style is also something of a mystery; as mentioned. John was originally from central North Carolina and likely would not have been particularly familiar with the stack house form. Interestingly, for his own family, John S. had constructed a modest I- house.¹⁸



Close examination of the current structure supports a probable construction date of 1906-1907. Two-over-two windows were still widely available, despite the increasing availability of larger, one-over-one sashes after the turn of the century. In addition, the original door hardware that remains is simple but distinctly late-19th-century Victorian. The Kivett example exhibits characteristics of the typical stack house, with some distinct differences. The main unit measures 16' by 16', with approximately 15' by 15' room dimensions in the main part of the building. The door is centrally located in the façade, with two-over-two windows flanking the main door on the north and a single centrally located window above the door on the second floor, with offset windows on the south side of both stories. The simple frame structure was originally sheathed in clapboard and had shake shingle roofing. The chimney, with flues originally serving small wood stoves in both rooms, is on the north side of the building. Unlike the typical Missouri stack house that grew over time, the 28' ell on the rear (west side) of the main structure appears to be contemporaneous, or nearly so, and access to the upstairs room extends through the ell rather than the typical winder stair in the corner of the main room.¹⁹ Door, window

and baseboard trim, along with windows, are all completely consistent throughout all four rooms. If the ell was not actually built at the time of initial construction, it was added no later than the beginning of Earl's tenure. (Space was undoubtedly at something of a premium at that point, as Earl and May started a family). The ell consisted of a 15' x 15' kitchen and a 12' x 15' living room and was the center of family activity.²⁰ There is no indication that the distinctive main structure served as anything but upstairs and downstairs bedrooms: family living space in the ell shifted the orientation of the building to the south, rather than toward the

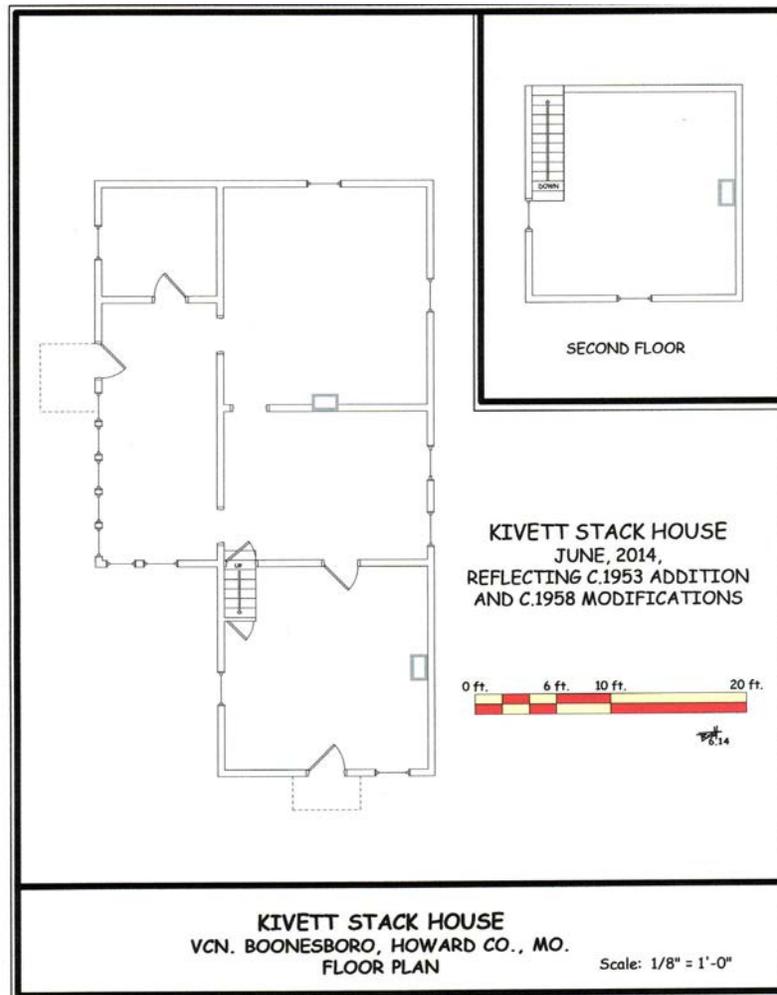
highway in front. A main door in the kitchen offered access to the well and various dependencies: smokehouse, wash-house, root cellar and outhouse. With the possible exception of the root cellar, the outbuildings, still in situ, appear to be contemporaneous to the structure.

Marshall suggested that the Missouri stack house tended to retain more Anglo-Eastern vernacular characteristics, in that it seldom included a porch or porches, and the Kivett example fits this thesis.²¹ Porches were never constructed on

the Kivett house, either on the main structure or on the ell. A small, uncovered concrete stoop was poured at the main entrance, and similar stoops once stood at the ell entrances. Perhaps more than any other characteristic of the house, the lack of a porch highlights its Anglo-colonial roots. With rare exception, other transplanted Southern vernacular house types in Little Dixie had porches, the one distinctly African-American contribution to American vernacular architecture.

The Kivett stack house remained in use through the early 1990s. Earl and May Kivett had only two children—one still-born. They raised their one child, John Thomas or "J.T." (b.1912), who

lived all but six months of his life in the family home.²² Earl farmed the family farm until his death in 1928.²³ J.T. married Opal Thomas in 1932, and the couple started their own family: daughter Norma Jean (1932-2007) and son Randall (b.1950), were raised in the house. With a third generation of Kivetts, there was an obvious demand for space, and in 1953, a 9' addition was built on the south side of the ell; it included a 6' X 9' pantry that adjoined the kitchen on the southwest corner of the ell and necessitated a relocation of the kitchen door as well as several fenestrations. The new (unheated) addition functioned as a third bedroom. This late



addition coincided with sheathing of the original clapboard exterior with roll asphalt.

May Kivett died in 1955, and in 1958 the pantry was enlarged and converted into the home's first indoor bathroom, with access through the new addition.²⁴ The pantry doorway was closed off, and the house was plumbed for running water—a luxury that May and Earl never knew. J.T. Kivett, his wife, and their two children continued to live in the house, making only modest and necessary improvements to the structure, most notably, the later addition of steel siding and electric heat. By the 1970s, both children had moved out of the structure; Randall built a new house on the property within sight of the original family home and continued to work his father's farm. J.T. Kivett died in the house in 1993; Opal survived him by three years. At that point the house was abandoned as a residence and converted to storage space.²⁵ At present it is rapidly deteriorating and endangered by the elements. Despite its current condition, the Kivett stack house stands as a rare and valuable vernacular form in the Boonslick—a true architectural gem.



Recent photo of the Kivett stack house, now painted white, built shortly after the turn of the 19th century.
Photo by Brett Rogers

NOTES

¹John Jakle et al., *Common Houses in America's Small Towns* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 219. Also, Howard Wight Marshall, *Folk Architecture in Little Dixie: A Regional Culture* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1981) 57 ff.

²Marshall, 60. In reference to the stack house Marshall notes: "the one-room plan is, in fact, the most remarkable aspect of this building. Virtually every other early brick house in the Boonslick, or Missouri for that matter, is of either the hall-and-parlor or central-passage variety." Additionally, it should be noted that the general form and design of the Urial S. Wright building, one of the oldest brick structures remaining Fayette, is closely identified with the stack house building type. See: National Register of Historic Places, Dr. Urial S. Wright Office, Fayette, Howard County, Missouri, National Register #87001727. In his *Vernacular Architecture in Rural and Small Town Missouri: An Introduction* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Extension Publications, 1994), Marshall identifies this two-room, two storey building as an early I-house, rather than a stack house as suggested in the nomination.

³Ibid. Although the rear extension is the norm in Missouri, a significant number of documented examples of stack houses in mid-Atlantic states reflect horizontal development as well. See: National Park Service, (March 2005). Appendix II: "Stack Houses." In *Historic Themes and Resources Within the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route; Southern New Jersey and the Delaware Bay: Cape May, Cumberland, and Salem Counties* http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/nj2/app2.htm.

⁴National Park Service, (March 2005). Appendix II: "Stack Houses."

⁵Marshall, 59-60.

⁶National Park Service, (March 2005). Appendix II: "Stack Houses." Historians note that the stack house form is an architectural cousin of the typical 18th and 19th century row house of northeastern cities, which made complete use of narrow urban lots and emphasized frontal verticality and depth.

⁷Marshall, 60.

⁸See: Migrations in the 1800s from NC to Howard County, Missouri, John M. Kivett (30 May 1786 - 30 May 1872) and Charina (or Catherine) Amick (17 Jan 1792 - 13 Aug 1875), hosted by Peter Kivett Family Association, Inc. <http://www.pkivfa.org/Howard%20Co.html>. John S. Kivett and Elizabeth "Lizzie" McCart, "Descendants of Peter Kivett, <http://www.webpak.net/~cdm2/kivett/pafg13.htm#9895>. John S. Kivett, Ancestry.com data base, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~djwm/html/fam00468.htm>. "Cuyvette/Kivett," Ancestry.com, Message Boards, <http://boards.ancestry.com/thread.aspx?mv=flat&m=110&p=localities.northam.usa.states.northcarolina.counties.randolph>. Also, Randall Kivett, interview by author, May 9, June 2, and June 9, 2014.

⁹Deed of Sale from Joseph S. and Eva McCart to John S. Kivett, 1, February, 1906, Howard County, Missouri, Deed Book 78, page 180. County Recorder's Office, Fayette, Missouri.

¹⁰McCart purchased his farm in the early 1850s, and it remains in the family (Kivett) to the present. Deed of Sale from William Gragg to John S. McCart, 17, January, 1853, Howard County, Missouri, Deed Book 3, page 71. County Recorder's Office, Fayette, Missouri. Deed of Sale from Stephen Smith to John S. McCart, 20, December, 1852, Howard County, Missouri, Deed Book 3, page 84. County Recorder's Office, Fayette, Missouri.

¹¹Illustrated Atlas Map of Howard County, MO. 1876 (St. Louis: Missouri Publishing Company, 1876) 29. Standard Atlas of Howard County, Missouri, 1897 (Chicago: Geo. A. Ogle & Co., 1897) 38. This is in T49 R17 S10.

¹²Twelfth United State Census, 1900, Franklin Township, Howard County, Missouri; p. 99, family 106, lines 11-13; June 22, 1900, USGenWeb Archives, <http://www.usgwarchives.net/mo/howard/census/1900/64-26a.gif>.

¹³Kivett interview, June 2, June 11, 2014. Thirteenth United State Census, 1911, Boone's Lick Township, Howard County, Missouri; p. 233, family 86, lines 967-977; June 1, 1911. USGenWeb Archives, <http://>

www.usgwarchives.net/mo/howard/census/1911/64-36a.gif.

¹⁴Kivett interview, June 2, 2014. Originally located between Boonesboro and Glasgow, but no longer extant, the "old Wells place," examined by Howard Marshall in the late 1970s (see Marshall, 61), is thought to be one of John Kivett's five stack houses. Part of one other structure may remain in Boonesboro today as part of a larger building and merits further examination. Given the rarity of the form, it is likely that Kivett constructed the majority of stack houses built in Howard County.

¹⁵John S. Kivett and Elizabeth "Lizzie" McCart, "Descendants of Peter Kivett," <http://www.webpak.net/~cdm2/kivett/pafg13.htm#9895>.

¹⁶Marriage record of Earl E. Kivett and Lydia May Duren, 12 October 1904, Howard County, Missouri, Notarial Record Book 3:36, County Clerk's Office, Fayette.

¹⁷John S Kivett purchased his father-in-law's property for \$4001.49 and sold it to his son, Earl E. Kivett in 1910 for \$4,500. Deed of Sale from John S. Kivett to Earl E. Kivett, 1, August 12, 1910, Howard County, Missouri, Deed Book 92, page 43. County Recorder's Office, Fayette, Missouri. Moreover, John retained a small eight-acre triangle between the two properties that included a live spring.

¹⁸Kivett interview, June 2, 2014. The John S. Kivett house was an I-house (saddlebag type) with second storey loft. It was maintained by a series of owners until it burned in the 1960s. Photographs of the John S. Kivett house in the collection of Randall Kivett.

¹⁹Evidence suggests that a winder stair was never built and that the narrow stairway granting access to the upstairs from the ell is original and contemporaneous to the original structure.

²⁰Kivett interview, June 9, 2014.

²¹Marshall, 60.

²²Kivett interview, June 2, 2014.

²³Certificate of Death: Earl E. Kivett. Filed 22 February 1928. Missouri State Board of Health, Div. of Vital Statistics, Reg. Dist. No. 377, File No. 4730. Informant: May Kivett, Boonesboro, Missouri. Missouri Digital Heritage, Death Certificates, 1910-1963, http://www.sos.mo.gov/images/archives/deathcerts/1928/1928_00004908.PDF.

²⁴Certificate of Death: May Duren Kivett. Filed 22 June 1955. Missouri State Board of Health, Div. of Vital Statistics, Reg. Dist. No. 3017, File No. 18110. Informant: John T. Kivett, Franklin, Missouri. Missouri Digital Heritage, Death Certificates, 1910-1963, http://www.sos.mo.gov/images/archives/deathcerts/1955/1955_00018108.PDF. Kivett interview, June 2 and 9, 2014.

²⁵Kivett interview, June 9, 2014.

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Migrations in the 1800s from NC to Howard County, Missouri, John M. Kivett (30 May 1786 - 30 May 1872) and Charina (or Catherine) Amick (17 Jan 1792 - 13 Aug 1875), hosted by Peter Kivett Family Association, Inc. <http://www.pkivfa.org/Howard%20Co.html>.

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BHS Summer Meeting July 20 at Ashby Hodge Gallery

Missouri Courthouses Focus of Digital Photography Artistry

The Boonslick Historical Society summer meeting will be held from 3 to 5 p.m., July 20, at The Ashby-Hodge Gallery of American Art at Central Methodist University in Fayette. The Gallery is located in Classic Hall on the southeast corner of the campus. The public is invited to attend.

Currently being featured is a historically significant exhibition titled "Courthouses of Missouri: A Photographic Study by Jerry Benner." Society treasurer Denise Gebhardt is curator of the Gallery and will be present to talk about its current show and other permanent works. Benner also plans to attend the Summer Meeting and discuss his work, which includes the courthouses of the Boonslick Region.

The exhibition includes digital representations of what are often referred to as the architectural icons of Missouri's 114 county seats of government—the county courthouses. The show also includes the historic St. Louis Courthouse near the Gateway Arch and the historic courthouses of the Boonslick Region. Works from other photographers and the Gallery's permanent collection also will be on display.

Artist-photographer Jerry Benner of Ferguson, Missouri, is a 1966 CMU alumnus who came back to campus as an adjunct professor of photography in 2001 and taught until retiring in 2012. This latter career followed an earlier retirement that capped a 36-year career as an educator in the Parkway School District of St. Louis, where Benner taught English, social studies, photography, photojournalism, audio and visual production. In addition to his B.A. in Political Science from Central, Benner also holds an M.A. in Communications from St. Louis University. He met his wife, Ruth, when they were students at Central.

The courthouse photography exhibition is the culmination of a 10-year project that began in 2004 motivated partially by Benner's weekly road trips from home to CMU at Fayette



Photographer Jerry Benner, a portrait by his daughter, Emily Benner, also a professional photographer.

and back while teaching photography at the University. ["My wife and I] love to travel; we are both lifelong residents of Missouri," Benner says, adding that they decided "what could be better than to visit all 114 counties, plus the city of St. Louis, and photograph the symbol of each county, the courthouse."

The photographic project began with the historic Howard County Courthouse and those in surrounding counties in the Boonslick Region of mid-Missouri in 2005 and took until 2013. It went "from the hills of central Missouri to the plains of the northern counties to the swamps and cotton fields of the southeast to the Ozarks," Benner says. "This is a diverse state. I cannot imagine any other state with this diversity of life styles and terrain."

Benner's artistic approach to the project was to photograph each courthouse "in the most flattering manner." The raw images were then processed in the digital-world equivalent of a darkroom, using Photosho and Adobe Lightroom. In some cases parked cars, debris on lawns and other intrusive elements were removed or altered. "Therefore, the image you see is probably more ideal than the actual structure," Benner explains.

Benner's exhibition is a masterful sequel to another recent exhibition at The Ashby-Hodge Gallery in the summer of 2011, when the works of highly acclaimed Missouri artist Billyo O'Donnell were displayed. Arranged by former Gallery Curator Dr. Joseph Geist, now supervisor of Gallery collections, the show was titled "Plein Air Paintings Representing 114 Counties in Missouri by Billyo O'Donnell." It featured landscape oil-on-canvas paintings of rural scenes and rustic structures found throughout the state.



The recently restored Classic Hall, circa 1911, on the CMU campus is the new home of The Ashby-Hodge Gallery of American Art. Photo by Don Cullimore

Historic Courthouses of the Boonslick Region

Photographs by Jerry Benner

Missouri's historic courthouses are a cultural treasure that represents significant architectural styles and preferences of the past. They also serve as storehouses of important historical documents – early road petitions, bridge projects, tax records, land deeds, marriages, deaths, legislative actions, civil and criminal court actions, etc. – that tell the story of Missouri going back to the early 19th century.

Photographer Jerry Benner's decade-long effort to record artistic digital images of the state's 114 county courthouses includes historic structures in the extended Boonslick Region, from St. Charles County to Lafayette County. The latter is location of the oldest, continually-in-use courthouse, which dates to 1847. Historic courthouses still standing in other Boonslick Region counties include those in Boone, Callaway, Cooper, Howard (photo on the cover), Saline and St. Charles. Many of the current courthouses were preceded by earlier structures that often fell victim to fire. All 114 county courthouses are represented in the Benner exhibition now on display at The Ashby-Hodge Gallery of American Art on the CMU campus in Fayette.



CAPTIONS CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT

St. Charles County: founded in 1812 and named for Saint Charles Borromeo, an Italian cardinal. The old courthouse (pictured) was built in 1912 and was later replaced. St. Charles County is considered the starting point of the historic Boone's Lick Road/Trail, circa 1816, which ended at Old Franklin in Howard County.

Cooper: County established in 1819, named for Capt. Sarschel B. Cooper, who built Cooper's Fort near Boone's Lick, and his brother, Col. Benjamin Cooper. The current courthouse built in 1912.

Montgomery County: founded in 1818 and named for Richard Montgomery, a Revolutionary War general.

Audrain County: founded in 1836 and named for Col. James Hunter Audrain, who fought in the War of 1812 and later was a state legislator.



Lafayette County: founded in 1821 and named for Marquis de La Fayette, French aristocrat and military officer who served with the Continental Army during the American Revolution. He is also the namesake for the town of Fayette in Howard County. The courthouse was built in 1847.



CAPTIONS CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE RIGHT

Saline County: founded in 1820 and named for local salt springs. The courthouse was built in 1882.

Callaway County: founded in 1821 and named for James Callaway, grandson of Daniel Boone. The current courthouse was built in 1938.

Howard County: founded in 1816 (see p. 3)

Boone County: founded in 1821 and named for Daniel Boone. The current courthouse was built in 1906.

Boonslick Historical Society

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One of Jefferson City's oldest residential structures is the Parsons House. Located in the Capitol Avenue Historic District, the National Register nomination touts the home, built about 1830, as the oldest house in the district. The home reportedly was the site of an 1840 wedding of Meriwether Lewis Jefferson, a kinsmen of the president, to a Mary Ann Parsons.

Photo by Don Cullimore