

**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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name Johnston, Stephen, House

Other names/site number Norton, Elijah, House; Brickstone Manor; Norton Heights

Name of related Multiple Property Listing N/A

## 2. Location

Street & number 14850 North Bethel Road

N/A
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 not for publication

City or town Platte City

x
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 vicinity

State Missouri Code MO County Platte Code 165 Zip code 64079

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this X 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 forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria: \_\_\_ A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles, Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- \_\_\_ entered in the National Register
- \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ removed from the National Register
- \_\_\_ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Stephen Johnston House  
Name of Property

Platte County, Missouri  
County and State

**5. Classification**

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		<b>Total</b>

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

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

DRAFT

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

MID 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Stone  
walls: Brick  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof: Asphalt  
other: Metal  
\_\_\_\_\_

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUATION PAGES**

Stephen Johnston House  
Name of Property

Platte County, Missouri  
County and State

**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 whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1848

**Significant Dates**

1848

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUATION PAGES

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Property Owner

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Stephen Johnston House  
Name of Property

Platte County, Missouri  
County and State

**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 39.363857 -94.736632 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

2 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)  
\_\_\_\_\_ NAD 1927 or \_\_\_\_\_ NAD 1983

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (On continuation sheet)

**Boundary Justification** (On continuation sheet)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Susan Jezak Ford  
organization Citysearch Preservation date November 20, 2014  
street & number 3628 Holmes Street telephone 816-531-2489  
city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64109  
e-mail citysusana@gmail.com

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Photographs**
- **Owner Name and Contact Information**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**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 listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

**Photographs**

**Stephen Johnston House**  
Name of Property

**Platte County, Missouri**  
County and State

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log:

Name of Property: **Stephen Johnston House**

City or Vicinity: **Platte City**

County: **Platte County** State: **Missouri**

Photographer: **Susan Jezak Ford**

Date

Photographed: **June 11, 2014**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 7: Johnston House, west façade, camera facing northeast.
- 2 of 7: Johnston House, northwest elevation, camera facing southeast.
- 3 of 7: Johnston House, northeast elevation, camera facing southwest.
- 4 of 7: Johnston House, south elevation, camera facing north.
- 5 of 7: Johnston House interior staircase, camera facing east.
- 6 of 7: Johnston House interior south parlor, camera facing southeast.
- 7 of 7: Johnston House interior north parlor, camera facing northeast.

### Figure Log:

Include figures on continuation pages at the end of the nomination.

- Figure 1. House's site plan with photo locations. Page 2.
- Figure 2. South side of garage. Page 4.
- Figure 3. Interior floor plan with photo locations. Page 5.
- Figure 4. Site plan of property. Page 7.
- Figure 5. Map of local I-houses. Page 11.
- Figure 6. Hugh Swaney house. Page 11.
- Figure 7. Lewis Pence house. Page 12.
- Figure 8. Isaac Parker house. Page 13.
- Figure 9. 1877 Atlas, Section 32. Page 16.
- Figure 10. 1907 Atlas, Section 32. Page 17.
- Figure 11. Circa 1985 photograph of the west façade. Page 19.
- Figure 12. Circa 1985 photograph of the south elevation. Page 19.

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Continuation Sheet

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Stephen Johnston House
Name of Property
Platte County, Missouri
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Summary**

The Stephen Johnston house is an impressive pre-Civil War house located on rural land east of Platte City, Platte County, Missouri at 14850 North Bethel Road. The house is located in the southeast quarter of the northeast quarter of Section 32, Township 53 North, Range 34 West. The house is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a locally significant example of a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century house. Built around 1848, the two-story red brick I-house retains its original T-shaped symmetrical form, building materials and fenestration patterns. Under the care of its current owners, the historic house has been stabilized and restored to its historic appearance with Greek Revival detailing. Missing windows have been replaced by custom wood double-hung windows and a missing south porch has been replaced. Original interior details—moldings, floors and fireplaces—have been restored. Further modern improvements include the addition of new electricity, HVAC, insulation and the opening of closed fireplaces, as well as addition of a missing two-story front portico and north blocks that include bathrooms and a sunroom.

Architectural Description

The Johnston house is oriented to the west, facing away from Bethel Road. The house sits on a hill surrounded by farmland facing an arm of Clear Branch Creek (figure 4). The two-story T-shaped house is of soft brick construction placed on a stone foundation. The orange brick—likely fired on-site—is set in a common running bond with headers in every sixth row. All walls are three bricks thick. Interior roof rafters and roof sheathing is native walnut and the roof is clad with asphalt shingles. The house was vacant during most of the 1960s and 1970s, resulting in severe deterioration. The house underwent significant restoration between 1991 and 1995. During the early 1990s, all deteriorating windows were replaced with one-over-one double-hung wood frames.<sup>1</sup> Unless noted, simulated muntins replicate the original nine-over-nine pane configuration on all windows. The original disintegrating stone headers and sills were replaced with concrete in the original dimensions. A two-story garage (photograph 3) was built adjacent to the east side of the house in 1996. A brick passageway connects the two structures. The house retains its original Greek Revival west entrance door, transom and sidelights. Other original extant Greek Revival detailing includes the west dentilled architrave and interior moldings.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The wood replacement windows were custom made by Marvin Windows. Each window has a unique dimension.

<sup>2</sup> Exterior entablatures are now steel, replicated in the 1990s to match the original rotting woodwork.

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Stephen Johnston House
Name of Property
Platte County, Missouri
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

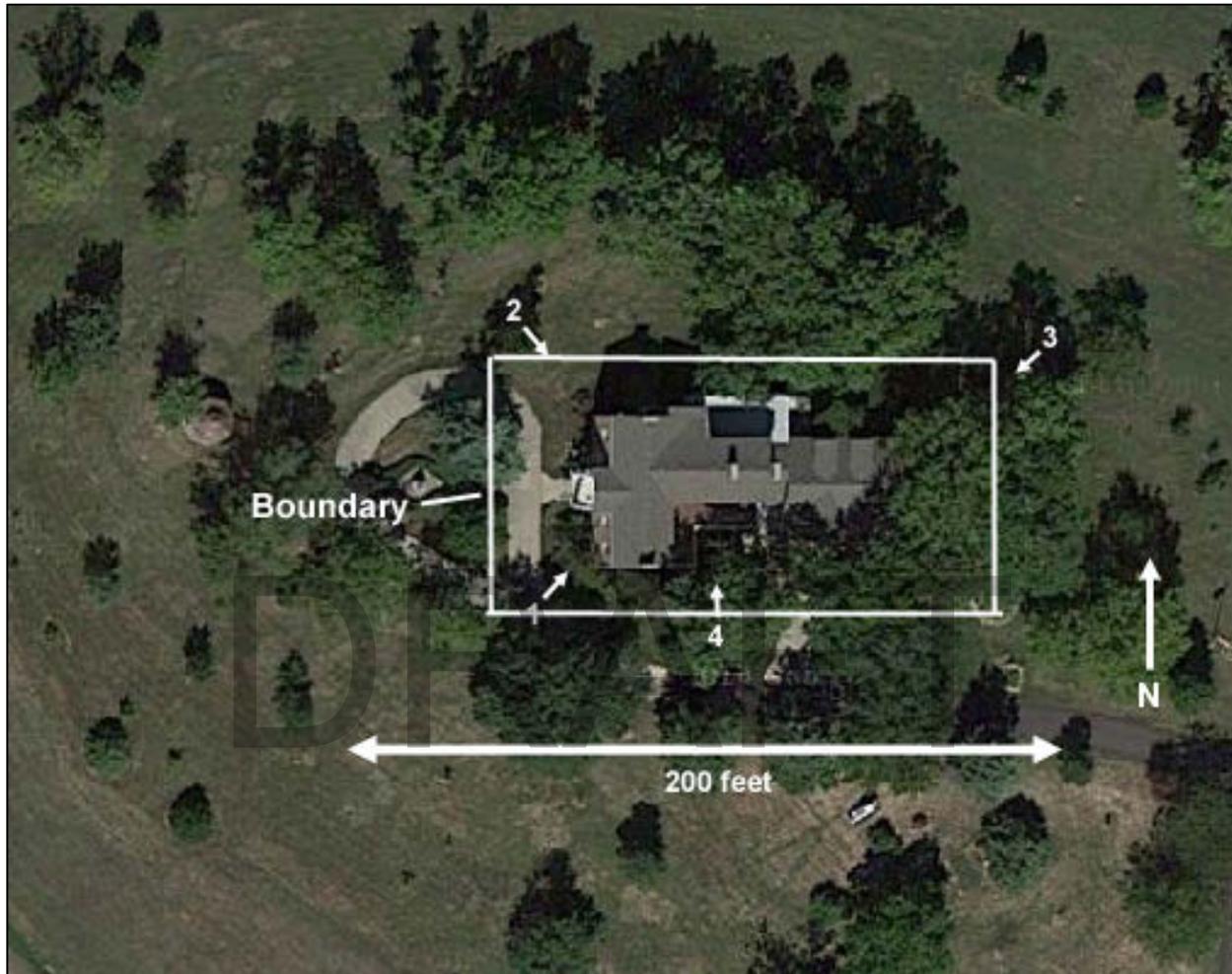


Figure 1. House's site plan with photo locations. Photos 5, 6 & 7 are interior shots, Figure 3. (Googlemaps.com accessed 16 July 2014; coordinates 39.363857, -94.736632)

The side-gable **west façade** (photograph 1) is five bays wide. Bays one, two, four and five have double-hung windows in both stories. The cornice has a simple entablature with an original architrave of triangular dentils. The central bay contains the house's original entrance, consisting of a paneled entrance door, three-paned sidelights and a three-paned fixed transom. Wide wood molding, also original, surrounds the entrance. The second story of bay three contains a multi-paned door fronted by a modern wrought iron balcony. A modern steel two-story entry porch now fronts bay three, placed atop a concrete pad. Two fluted Doric columns and two engaged fluted columns support the porch's pediment. The porch has a wide cornice, pediment and ceiling that resemble tongue-and-groove siding. The porch is approached by three steps with wrought iron railings.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The entire porch is steel. When the current owners acquired the property, the original porch was missing and the wood floor was beyond repair. The current owners were unable to find historic photographs of the house. The

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Stephen Johnston House
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Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

The **north elevation** (photograph 2) contains the north walls of the original house, additions and the north wall of the garage. Viewing the house's north five bays from west to east, bays one and two contain the gable end of the façade. Metal west and east cornices wrap around the corners of the bays, follow the gable and terminate at the interior chimney that rises above the roofline. Bay one is a solid brick wall. Bay two has one window in the first story and one window in the second story. Bay three extends forward from the wall of the original house and consists of a brick wall with a sloped roof.<sup>4</sup> Bays four and five consist of the north side of the house's ell fronted by a 2009 sunroom.<sup>5</sup> The ell's second story bays contain double-hung windows. The one-story sunroom is clad in metal siding and has an upper wood composite balustrade. The room's north wall has ten fixed-pane windows topped with fixed transoms. The windows and transoms have false muntins to create ten-pane and four-pane configurations. The sunroom's east wall has a door and three windows topped with fixed transoms. The room extends east to cover the north side of the connection between the house and the 1995 two-story garage. The north wall of the garage is a brick wall. Two gable dormers project from the north garage roof.

The **east wall of the house's gable-end ell** (photograph 3) is a solid brick wall with an end chimney that rises above the gable. The gable east end of the 1995 garage is a solid brick wall.

The **south** elevation (photograph 4) contains the south walls of the original house, the garage and the side-gabled connection between the house and garage. Viewing the house's south elevation from west to east, bays one and two match the gable end in the north elevation's bays one and two. The east wall of the west portion of the house has windows in the first and second stories at the northeast juncture. The south wall of the house's east ell is three bays wide. Viewing from west to east, bay one has doors in the first and second stories. Bays two and three have windows in both stories. An interior chimney rises from the roof between bays two and three. A flat porch projects from the south and east walls of the juncture.<sup>6</sup> The porch sits atop a concrete deck. Square steel piers with recessed panels support a plain entablature topped by a simple wood composite balustrade. Brackets—two on the east wall and three on the south wall—support the porch. The first-story ceiling of the porch is paneled wood with suspended fans and lights. The brick connection between the house and garage (figure 2) has a double east entrance topped with a multipaned fixed

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current porch was built around 1991, designed by viewing historic Greek Revival homes and following faint shadows found in the west brick façade, now covered by engaged columns.

<sup>4</sup> This is a circa 1993 addition containing bathrooms in both stories. The east wall of the addition is a solid brick wall.

<sup>5</sup> The northeast juncture originally contained a one-story porch. This porch was missing when the current owners acquired the property.

<sup>6</sup> In 1991, the south porch had a concrete block bathroom in the juncture running along the west wall and a very deteriorated east extension. The current south porch replaced the configuration.

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Stephen Johnston House

Name of Property

Platte County, Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

transom. The south wall of the garage has three garage doors, two gable dormers and an east doorway. Two original cisterns are located on the southeast corner of the house and an original well is located northeast of the house.



Figure 2. South side of garage. (Susan Jezak Ford, June 2014)

Interior

The formal entrance to the **interior** of the house (figure 3) is from the west porch. Most interior walls are wallpaper over original plaster containing animal hair. All floors are original six-inch planks of pine or fir. The house retains its original wood Greek Revival interior moldings with Tuscan pilasters around doors and windows. Unless noted, the heavy are painted pine. Original raised wood panels are located under each window and baseboards are 13 inches wide. The shallow fireplaces have original spruce mantels and either historic brick or modern tile surrounds.<sup>7</sup> Three of the fireplaces have original circular vents located in the first-story ceilings and in the second-story floors for the circulation of heat. Ceilings—approximately 12 feet tall—have been slightly lowered to accommodate ductwork.

<sup>7</sup> All interior wood molding is original to the date of construction.

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N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Figure 3. Interior floor plan with photo locations.  
(Circa 2008 drawing by Bill Brown)

The open west stairwell (photograph 5) is located inside the west entrance. The house's original main staircase rises from the north wall to circle the east and south walls. The staircase has spruce treads and risers; the balustrade with turned spindles is native walnut. An original east wood and glass door leads to the south porch. Two parlors are accessed from the stairwell. The south formal parlor (photograph 6) has a south fireplace with a brick surround and replacement tile hearth. The room has milled moldings surrounding the windows and door. The floor is carpeted. The north family parlor (photograph 7) has a north chimney with a replacement tile surround and hearth. Like the formal parlor, this room also has milled moldings and a carpeted floor.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The house's original planked floors are still extant beneath the carpets.

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N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

The dining room is located east of the stairwell. The room has a west door leading to the family parlor, a south door leading to the south porch, an east door leading to the kitchen and north doors leading to the bathroom and sunroom additions. An original pass-through window is located in the east wall between the dining room and the kitchen. The dining room has an east fireplace with a tile surround and hearth. An enclosed walnut stairway is located along the room's west wall. Moldings in this room are simpler than the woodwork in the parlors, with dog-eared moldings surrounding the windows and doors.

The house's kitchen is east of the dining room. The kitchen has been modernized with an island and new cabinets on the west, south and east walls.<sup>9</sup> The floor is tile. An original north window opening provides a view into the north sunroom. The house's two modern first-story rooms—the sunroom and the bathroom—are located on the north side of the house, filling a space once occupied by an exterior porch. The sunroom that overlooks the farm's acreage is accessed from the dining room and the connecting room between the house and garage. Windows line the west and north walls and the floor is carpeted.

The passageway between the house and modern garage has brick walls. The east wall is the original exterior wall of the house. The new walls are sheathed in historic bricks that closely match the brick of the original house. The ceiling is tongue-and-groove wood and the floor is tile.

The house's second story floor plan mirrors the historic room divisions of the first story. Bedrooms are located above the parlors, the dining room and the kitchen. The original nine-foot door in the central landing leads to the small west second-story balcony. Doors in the east bedroom lead to the north second-story bathroom and the south porch balcony. Second-story original woodwork is very simple around windows and paneled doors. The house has a partial stone basement under the east ell. A crawl space is located under the west portion of the house.

The Johnston house, despite its age, years of neglect and subsequent rehabilitation, retains its architectural integrity. The original T-shaped form and room configuration remain relatively unchanged. Most of the house's historic building materials—exterior soft brick, walnut trusses, wood floors, fireplace mantels, grand staircase and heavy interior wood moldings—are still in place. The house has received updates to add modern plumbing, a north sunroom and to replace the severely deteriorated windows, but many original features have been preserved. Exterior replacement features fit well with the I-house form and the Greek Revival style, but are differentiated from the old, as recommended in the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The west front porch is built in a design consistent with southern versions of the Greek Revival style, similar to the 1855-56 "Woodneath" Elbridge Arnold Homestead in Clay County (National Register, 2/17/1978).

<sup>9</sup> The cabinets on the east wall cover the former fireplace.

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Platte County, Missouri
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N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

The Johnston house retains its exterior and interior appearance as a pre-Civil War vernacular dwelling.

Site

The Johnston house sits atop a hill on its original 160 acres (figure 4).<sup>10</sup> The property slopes away from the house on all sides. Plowed fields are located west and north of the house. A curving blacktop drive leads from Bethel Road to the house. Ponds are located south and east of the house and the property contains a mineral spring noted in William Paxton's *Annals of Platte County, Missouri*.<sup>11</sup> Three 1978 non-contributing outbuildings are located southwest of the house. A creek and wooded areas run along the west edge of the property. The site is within an area that is rapidly developing. Platte City and Interstate Highway 29 are located three miles west of the property. The Shiloh Springs Golf Course is just east of the property and housing developments are located south of the property.



Figure 4. Site plan of property. (Bing.com/maps accessed 27 August 2014)

<sup>10</sup> Portions of the original farmstead were deeded off and repurchased after Stephen Johnston bought the property in 1848. The original quarter section now has a single owner.

<sup>11</sup> W.M. Paxton, *Annals of Platte County, Missouri* (Kansas City, MO: Hudson-Kimberly Publishing Co., 1897, 1960), 733.

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Stephen Johnston House
Name of Property
Platte County, Missouri
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

## Summary

The Stephen Johnston House, 14850 North Bethel Road in Platte County, Missouri is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, significant at the local level in the area of Architecture. The house embodies the distinctive characteristics of a rural, locally built I-house. It stands out in Platte County as an early, vernacular example of the form, which is emphasized by its local materials and modest construction. Built around 1848 for merchant and farmer Stephen Johnston, the house is one of the area's earliest extant examples of an I-house, exhibiting the type's character-defining features in its original exterior form and interior floor plan. The house retains its side-gabled entrance, two-story hall-and-parlor plan and rear kitchen ell, as well as original exterior and interior materials. The house has been restored to its original use as a single family home and continues to be well maintained. It retains its architectural integrity as a straightforward example of a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century rural Missouri home on a working Platte County farm. The period of significance is 1848, the year of construction.

## Elaboration

### Architecture

The Johnston house is an early local example of the I-house form, a common rural design that is defined by its width of two rooms surrounding a central entry, two-story height and one-room depth. As is common with the type, the Johnston house contains a rear two-story ell, creating a T-shaped building. The I-house was a common form in the south and midwest from the mid-1800s into the 1930s.<sup>12</sup> In Missouri, the form was also frequently built of brick along the Missouri River and in Platte County, where a few extant examples of brick I-houses remain. The Johnston house is ornamented in the Greek Revival style, the most common architectural style in this country from around 1830 to 1860. The I-house form lent itself well to Greek Revival adornment with its low-pitched roof and symmetrical façade.<sup>13</sup> Original Greek Revival details present in the house's interior include wide moldings, wood panels under each window, Tuscan pilasters and dog-eared moldings. Exterior Greek Revival elements include an original front door surrounded by an original transom and sidelights. The house's exterior includes recreated exterior elements of the style. These include a wide, classically inspired entablature and a full height entry porch supported by columns.<sup>14</sup>

The Johnston house closely resembles a dwelling type built east of Platte County along the Missouri River Valley identified by Roger Maserang as the Greek Revival I-house. According

<sup>12</sup> Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Knopf, 2013), 142.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>14</sup> The entablature and the porch are steel. The entablature matches the house's original deteriorated wood trim. The modern porch was inspired by pre-Civil War porches in Missouri and in the southern United States.

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Stephen Johnston House
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N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

to the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), "Antebellum Resources of Johnson, Lafayette, Pettis and Saline Counties, Missouri," the Greek Revival I-house is a rectangular, two-story building of frame or brick construction with a parallel orientation and often a side-gabled roof. One-room depth is an essential element of this style. Traditionally the form has a central hallway serving as the primary entrance flanked by two rooms of similar size. The central hallway usually has a staircase leading to the second floor. "To be considered a Greek Revival I-House, some combination of shouldered architraves, sidelights and transom, boxed cornices, classical pilasters, porticos supported by columns, entablatures with raking cornices, etc., would be present."<sup>15</sup> Most of these elements—the form, room depth, layout, exterior and interior molding—are original elements to the Johnston house, placing it clearly within the Greek Revival I-house sub-type.

The document goes on to state that many Greek Revival I-houses have a rear ell of two stories originally containing a kitchen and dining room in the first story and bedrooms in the second story. Some ells, Maserang writes, are placed directly behind the main block's central passage, creating a T-shaped extension. Ells are often lower in height than the main block of the house.<sup>16</sup> The ell of the Johnston house meets this description offered by Maserang, further supplementing its identity as a Greek Revival I-house.

The MPDF description fits the Johnston house, a simple, vernacular version of a Greek Revival home. The house's on-site construction and rural location may explain the plainer exterior ornament of local materials, such as locally fired brick, simple window headers and sills and hand-carved dentil molding placed only on the house's façade. The Missouri Greek Revival I-houses are also more likely to have pairs of end chimneys, as seen on the Johnston house's façade.<sup>17</sup> Ell chimneys are usually located at the end wall or in the center near the kitchen, the location of the Johnston house's rear chimneys. The house also has some of the showier elements of the Greek Revival style, such as the original entrance door with a transom and sidelights. Interior ornament includes original carved wood moldings, dog-eared architraves, paneled doors and vents in the floors and ceilings.

The Folk I-house evolved from English forms and was often used for midwestern farmhouses to symbolize economic achievement. The straightforward form of the I-house was especially adaptable to adornment. Greek Revival is the most common antebellum plantation style in Missouri for houses built from the 1830s through the 1860s, the same period that I-houses were popular in the region.<sup>18</sup> The Greek Revival I-house combined the culmination of classical tradition with a then-popular style. Mary Mix Foley writes, "As

<sup>15</sup> Roger Maserang, *National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form*, "Antebellum Resources of Johnson, Lafayette, Pettis and Saline Counties, Missouri" October 1997, F2.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., F3.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., F3.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., F2.

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Continuation Sheet

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Americans pushed beyond the Allegheny Mountains, the log cabin was their first frontier home; but as permanent settlements took shape or prosperity came to struggling plantation owners, the Greek Revival house became the fashionable choice.”<sup>19</sup> Stephen Johnston was a rising Platte County businessman and farmer. His choice a new I-house with Greek Revival detailing was a logical choice to communicate his status to his community.

The Greek Revival style was often used for prominent homes in Platte and Clay counties, as well as those found in the area known as “Little Dixie” along the Missouri River. The nickname refers to the local similarities to plantation housing of the upper South. The plantations of Missouri’s Little Dixie depended on slave labor, but not in the numbers typical of the deep south. The farmers of the Little Dixie region usually owned 20 slaves or less and had farms smaller than those in the south. Masters usually worked alongside their slaves, typically growing and harvesting hemp, so that their families could rise from subsistence farming to commercial farming.<sup>20</sup> The Greek Revival style began declining in east coast urban areas in the 1840s, often replaced by the Gothic Revival or Italianate styles. In the middle of the country and in rural areas, the Greek Revival remained a dominant building style into the early 1860s.<sup>21</sup>

#### Platte County I-Houses

Platte County has several extant examples of brick I-houses that are similar to the form of the Johnston house, yet display the adaptability of the type (figure 5).<sup>22</sup> Each structure has unique architectural details, displaying the variety of ornament used on the form. The nearest example is the circa 1850 Hugh Swaney house at 15363 North Winan Road, one mile east of the Johnston house (figure 6). The Swaney house has the character-defining elements of the Johnston house, including a symmetrical façade, soft brick construction and end chimneys. The Swaney façade also has the unusual triangular dentil molding in the architrave. The house differs from the Johnston house with its L-shaped form and a one-story front porch.

<sup>19</sup> Mary Mix Foley, *The American House* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 135.

<sup>20</sup> Maserang, E3.

<sup>21</sup> McAlester, 264.

<sup>22</sup> Each known example of the form in Platte County post-dates construction of the Johnston house.

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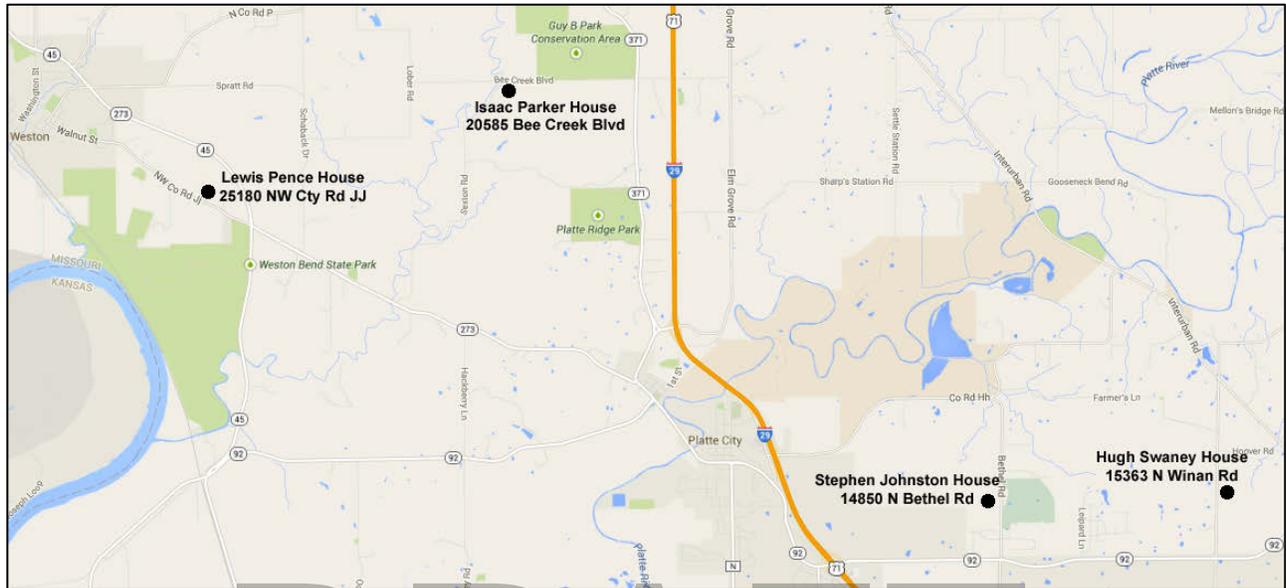


Figure 5. Map of local I-houses.



Figure 6. Hugh Swaney house. (Susan Jezak Ford, August 2014)

The 1849 Lewis Pence house at 25180 NW County Road JJ, Weston (figure 7) offers another version of a local I-house with Greek Revival details. The Pence house has high-style details that include a center pavilion with a triangular pediment, vertical grooves in the brick, interior chimneys and a one-story front porch containing an upper balustrade and supported by multiple piers.

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**Figure 7. Lewis Pence house. (Susan Jezak Ford, August 2014)**

The 1879 Isaac Packer house at 20585 Bee Creek Boulevard, rural Platte County (figure 8) further displays the adaptability of the I-house. This later example of the simple form has the addition of a full front porch supported by Corinthian columns, presenting the appearance of a grand house. William Paxton recorded on July 30, 1879, "Isaac Packer's fine brick house is complete,"<sup>23</sup> indicating the impressive impact of the house on the local community.

<sup>23</sup> Paxton, 685.

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**Figure 8. Isaac Parker house. (Susan Jezak Ford, August 2014)**

The Johnston house clearly falls into the I-house type, an especially adaptable vernacular form. Constructed as a brick house, the Johnston home fits well with local examples that combined the form and material. The I-house was typically customized to an architectural style upon construction. The form was also frequently modified as a family prospered or as styles changed. Architectural historian Leland Roth elaborates, "The basic I-house form could be trimmed with broad classical entablatures, or with dripping Gothic bargeboards."<sup>24</sup> The Johnston house, an early local example of the form, displays the simplicity of the I-house form with simple architectural details well suited to the form. The well-preserved house is significant locally as an early vernacular example of the I-house form.

### History

Jesse Eads was awarded a Platte Purchase Land Grant for 160 acres in the northeast quarter of Section 32 in 1838. Stephen Johnston purchased the property, plus an additional 160 acres from Eads on February 23, 1848 for \$3000.<sup>25</sup> Johnston was a well-known and respected farmer and merchant. It is likely that construction of his plantation home began shortly after he acquired the property.

<sup>24</sup> Leland M. Roth, *American Architecture, A History* (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2001), 204.

<sup>25</sup> Platte County, Missouri Recorder of Deeds records.

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According to Platte County tax records, the taxable property of Jesse Eads was valued at just \$175 in 1847. In 1849, the property of Stephen Johnston was valued at \$2380. The record of Johnston's "property" included four slaves valued at \$1500, but could also indicate improvements to the farm after he purchased it.

The house was likely built by local labor. All available research on brick Greek Revival I-houses in Missouri's Little Dixie area indicates that the bricks for these houses were made by slaves and fired in kilns on site.<sup>26</sup> This was probably the method used for Johnston's bricks. The house was built in the south central portion of the 160 acres facing west toward a branch of the Clear Branch Creek. Due to the topography of the area, the creek was likely the route used through the region. With a west façade, the Johnston family could easily see the approach of travelers.

According to William Paxton's *Annals of Platte County, Missouri*, Stephen Johnston was born in 1815 and opened a general store in Martinsville with James H. Johnston, no relation to Stephen. The business moved to Platte City in the spring of 1840, where the partners prospered and invested in land. He married Malinda D. Clark (1824-1851) in 1844. She died in 1851, leaving three sons—William, Robert and Stephen. Stephen Johnston, Sr., later married Georgia A. Boyd (1834-1878) in 1853.<sup>27</sup> The 1850 Federal Census lists Stephen Johnson<sup>28</sup> as a farmer and merchant, age 33 and born in Kentucky. His family included wife Malinda, age 26, William, 5 and Robert, 1. He owned 400 improved acres of land and 500 unimproved. The cash value of his farm was \$18,000, which included nine horses, six milch cows, eight oxen, 26 cattle, 26 sheep and 50 swine. The farm produced 200 bushels of wheat, 2500 bushels of Indian corn, 440 bushels of oats, 78 pounds of wool and 1092 pounds of butter.

Johnston owned nine slaves in 1850 and 17 slaves in 1860.<sup>29</sup> Slave ownership was very common in the agricultural region of Platte County, although in smaller numbers per owner than in the South. Johnston, with his Kentucky roots, fits into the most common demographic of the typical Platte County owner—born in Kentucky, a supporter of the Union and yet an owner of fewer than 20 slaves.<sup>30</sup> It is likely that Johnston's slaves assisted in the construction of the house, as well as with other farm work. Stephen and Georgia

<sup>26</sup> Maserang, F3.

<sup>27</sup> Paxton, 393.

<sup>28</sup> The 1850 and 1860 censuses list Stephen Johnson, instead of Johnston, as living in Carroll Township, Platte County, Missouri. This is likely a recorder error or misspelling. Other names and dates listed with Johnson in the census records match those listed in other records regarding the Johnston family. The names are used interchangeably in this document according to the source.

<sup>29</sup> Federal Census Slave Schedules, 1850 and 1860, Platte County, Missouri. Accessed at [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com).

<sup>30</sup> H. Jason Combs, "Early Settlement of a Frontier Community: The Platte Purchase, 1836-1850" (PhD dissertation, University of Nebraska, May 2000).

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Ann<sup>31</sup> Johnston's children included John, Charles, Minnie and Emma. The 1860 census also lists two farm hands living in the household. Stephen Johnston died in his home three miles east of Platte City on April 25, 1865.

Johnston was well respected in Platte County. He assisted in the platting of Platte City and was one of the town's first landowners, purchasing a lot for his general store. He was appointed postmaster on May 14, 1849. An 1885 record describes Johnston:

"...An old and successful merchant of Platte City, one of the first to engage in business here, and he continued merchandising at this place until about the close of the late war, when his mercantile career was closed on account of failing health. He died soon afterwards, in the fall of 1865. He was strictly a business man and allowed nothing to divert him from his business affairs, neither politics nor any of the other interests which often draw men off from their regular pursuits."<sup>32</sup>

Upon Johnston's death, the farm and all property went to his wife and children. The 1870 census lists Georgia Ann, her four youngest children and two servants living in the household. The 1877 atlas shows Mrs. G. Johnston as living on 105 acres in the northeast quarter of Section 32 (figure 9). Georgia Boyd Johnston died in 1878 in Kansas City.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Johnston's second wife, Georgia Ann, is listed as George Ann in the 1860 census.

<sup>32</sup> *History of Clay and Platte Counties, Missouri* (St. Louis: National Historical Company, 1885), 947.

<sup>33</sup> Paxton, 393.

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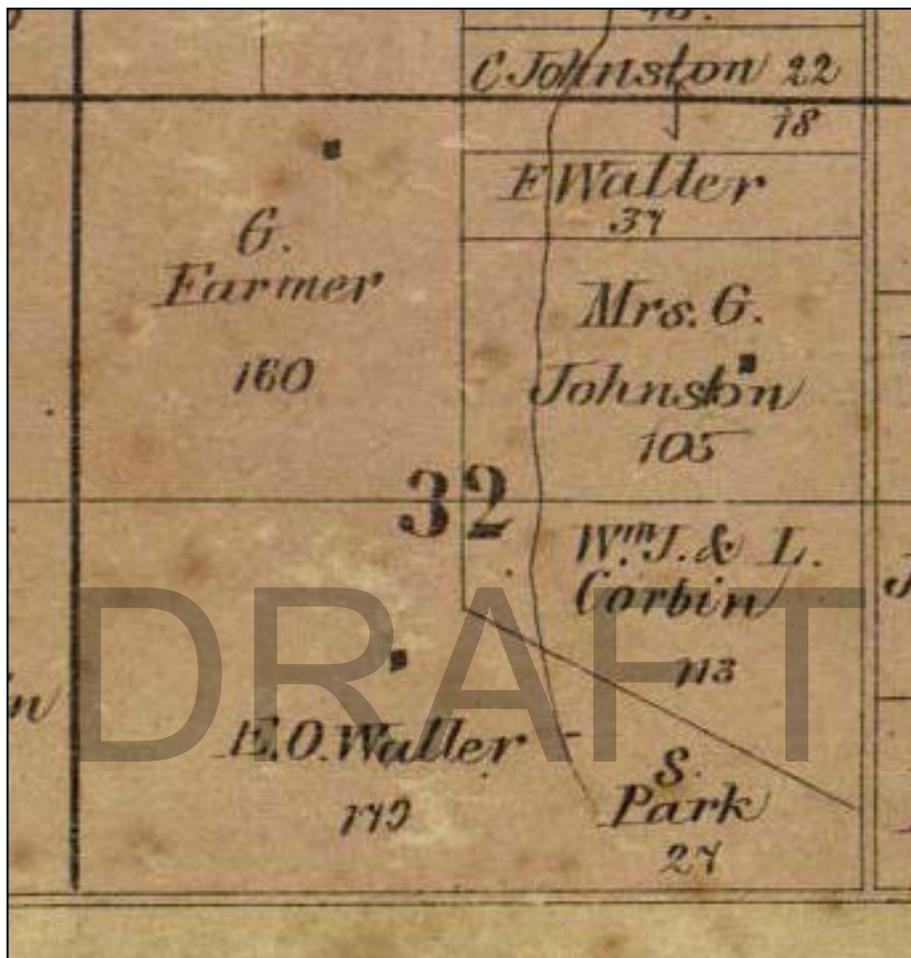


Figure 9. Section 32 in the 1877 atlas.<sup>34</sup>

Elijah Hise Norton purchased the property on April 1, 1879. Norton was a prominent local figure. He arrived in Platte City in January 1845<sup>35</sup> and soon established himself as an attorney and an ardent Democrat. He was appointed County Attorney in October 1850 with an annual salary of \$100.<sup>36</sup> He served as judge of the Missouri circuit court from 1852 to 1860. He was elected as a Democrat to the Thirty-seventh Congress, serving 1861 to 1863.<sup>37</sup> Missouri State Supreme Court Judge H.M. Vories resigned in September 1876 and Norton was appointed to his place on the bench.<sup>38</sup> He was elected to the position in

<sup>34</sup> Edwards Brothers, *An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Platte County, Missouri* (Philadelphia, PA: Edwards Brothers, 1877).

<sup>35</sup> Paxton, 68.

<sup>36</sup> Paxton, 127.

<sup>37</sup> Biographical Directory of the United States Congress.

<http://bioguide.congress.gov/>

<sup>38</sup> Paxton, 627.

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November 1878.<sup>39</sup> After completing his term in 1888, he returned to his home and farm and to his personal law practice and to serve as president of the local bank.<sup>40</sup>

Elijah Norton and his second wife, Missouri, indentured the 160 acres with the house to his son, Presley M. Norton, in August 1882, likely as a wedding gift. Presley McCurty Norton, born in 1854, married Mary L. Darnall December 28, 1882. Mary died in 1896 and Presley married Eva Waples March 7, 1901.<sup>41</sup> Federal census records list Presley Norton as a general farmer until 1930. In that year, he is listed as having no occupation and not living on a farm.<sup>42</sup> Eva Norton died in 1937 and Presley Norton died in 1939.<sup>43</sup>

No evidence has been found to show that Elijah Norton lived in the Johnston house, although the property was described by William Paxton as Judge Norton's farm.<sup>44</sup> The 1907 Platte County atlas shows Elijah Norton as the owner of multiple parcels of land in the vicinity, several with buildings (figure 10). A 1905 *Kansas City Star* article notes that Norton lived just three-quarters of a mile from Platte City.<sup>45</sup>



Figure 10. Section 32 in the 1907 Atlas.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 668.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 918.

<sup>41</sup> Missouri Marriage and Death Records, [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com). Accessed 13 November 2014.

<sup>42</sup> Federal census records, 1880, 1910, 1920, 1930. [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com). Accessed 13 November 2014.

<sup>43</sup> Presley Norton; Eva Norton. [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com). Accessed 13 November 2014.

<sup>44</sup> Paxton, 733.

<sup>45</sup> "An Old School Gentleman" *The Kansas City Star*, 15 March 1905.

<sup>46</sup> Geo. A. Ogle, *Standard Atlas of Platte County Missouri* (Chicago: Geo. A. Ogle, 1907).

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Robert Patterson Clark Wilson notes Norton's collection of Platte County property in a memorial address to the Missouri State Bar Association:

A short time after leaving the Supreme bench, Judge Norton practically retired from the practice of law, and returned to his farm. Here upon his almost baronial estate of more than a thousand acres of fertile bluegrass land, surrounded by his flocks and herds, broad reaches of golden grain, and countless ranks of tassled corn, he passed the evening of his well-spent life in communion with Nature and Nature's God, and was content.<sup>47</sup>

Elijah Norton's Platte County acreage was gradually sold off, but the Johnston house and 160 acres remained in the Norton family. The property was rented for many years until Mary Hise Norton, the single daughter of Presley Norton and granddaughter of Elijah Norton, returned to live on the farm in 1947. A cinderblock bathroom and garage addition was added to the south porch (figure 12) around that time. She stayed there until her death in the 1960s. Joe Bill and Lila Belle Nash purchased the property from her estate in 1978. At that time the house had been vacant since the 1960s and the historic outbuildings had been gone since the 1930s. The Nashes added a new roof and gutters to the house and built the farm's current outbuildings. The Nashes deeded the property to their daughter and son-in-law, Jo Karen and Bill Brown, in 1991. The Browns began five years of extensive renovations. The missing front porch (figure 11) was replaced, following shadows in the west brick and taking cues from other antebellum houses.<sup>48</sup> Custom wood windows were installed throughout the house. The cinderblock additions were removed from the south side and the deteriorated south porch (figure 12) was replaced. The north bathrooms were added, along with new electricity, HVAC and insulation. Original interior woodwork was stripped and repainted. Original floors were refinished. In 1994, fireplaces that were closed during the 1930s and 1940s were repaired. The Browns moved into the renovated house in December 1994. They added the garage in 1996 and the north sunroom in 2009.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Robert Patterson Clark Wilson, "Memorial address on the life and character of Judge Elijah Hise Norton, delivered before the Missouri State Bar Association, at St. Louis, September 24, 1914" (Kansas City: Press of Frank T. Riley Pub. Co., 1914).

<sup>48</sup> No historic photographs of the house have been located.

<sup>49</sup> Bill and Jo Karen Brown, interview with author, 11 June 2014.

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Figure 11. Circa 1985 photograph of the west façade. (Brown family photograph)



Figure 12. Circa 1985 photograph of the south elevation. (Brown family photograph)

Conclusion

The Stephen Johnston house retains its architectural integrity in design and materials as a locally significant property, making it eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C. The house fits well within the I-house type, as well as the sub-type of a Missouri

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Greek Revival I-House. It retains its symmetrical façade, T-shaped form, original fenestration patterns and placement of chimneys. The interior retains its original room configuration and the original woodwork. The house's form and ornament convey the status of the original owner as a rural man of importance with southern roots. Its significance is supported by the integrity of its setting on the working farm of 160 acres originally associated with the house. Despite its age and recent alterations, the house remains today as simple vernacular, yet impressive Platte County home eligible for listing in the National Register.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary includes a perimeter 25 feet from the house.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the extant Stephen Johnston house, the only extant historic structure remaining on the property.

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**Photograph 1. West façade (Photograph by Susan Jezak Ford)**



**Photograph 2. Northwest elevation (Photograph by Susan Jezak Ford)**

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**Photograph 3. Northeast elevation (Photograph by Susan Jezak Ford)**



**Photograph 4. South elevation (Photograph by Susan Jezak Ford)**

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Photograph 5. Interior main staircase (Photograph by Susan Jezak Ford)

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Photograph 6. Interior south parlor (Photograph by Susan Jezak Ford)



Photograph 7. Interior north parlor (Photograph by Susan Jezak Ford)













