

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Byrd, Abraham, House

other name/site number N/A

2. Location

street & town 2832 County Road 442 N/A not for publication

city or town Jackson X vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Cape Girardeau code 031 zip code 63755

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Mark A. Miles May 09, 2007  
Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Byrd, Abraham, House  
Name of Property

Cape Girardeau County, MO  
County and State

**5. Classification**

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

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

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	Total

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

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

N/A

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Function**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

**Current Function**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in Use

**7. Description**

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

Other: I-House

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Limestone

walls Limestone

roof Metal

other

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

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

Byrd, Abraham, House  
Name of Property

Cape Girardeau County, MO  
County and State

### 8. Description

#### 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.

#### 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

#### Narrative Statement of Significance

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

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

#### Bibliography

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

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

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

#### Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

#### Period of Significance

1827

#### Significant Dates

1827

#### Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

#### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

#### Architect/Builder

Unknown

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

#### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Byrd, Abraham, House  
Name of Property

Cape Girardeau County, MO  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** less than an acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 1/6 2/6/1/2/1/5 4/1/4/8/1/8/1  
Zone Easting Northing

2 / / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

3 / / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

4 / / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Property Tax No. 09-500-15-00-0010

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Terri L. Foley, Historic Preservationist  
organization Terri L. Foley Consulting date 10-22-2006  
street & number 1615 Themis telephone 573-332-1530  
city or town Cape Girardeau state MO zip code 63701

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

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

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

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

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

**Property Owner**

name/title James Hickam  
street & number 2802 County Road 442 telephone 573-243-5930  
city or town Jackson state MO zip code 63755

**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. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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**Byrd, Abraham House  
Cape Girardeau County, MO**

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### **SUMMARY:**

The Abraham Byrd House, 2832 County Road 442, near Jackson, Cape Girardeau County, Missouri is a two-story I-house constructed for Abraham Byrd in 1827. It is located on less than one acre of rural pastureland. The building has a rectangular footprint that measures 40' x 24' and sits on a rough-cut limestone foundation. At the southwest corner of the rear of the house is the foundation remains of the kitchen that measures 20' x 10' and is considered a contributing site. The house was constructed with rough-cut limestone blocks. It has a modern raised-seam green metal roof, and exterior end limestone chimneys. The house features a symmetrical façade with a wood panel door located on the first and second levels. All elevations have two-over-two double hung windows. The interior maintains its original or early layout, and most of its historic finishes, notably its stenciled ceiling, plaster walls, cypress wood floors and wood trim. The Abraham Byrd house is significant in architecture as a rare limestone residence located in a rural area in Cape Girardeau County, Missouri. The building, both interior and exterior, retains a high degree of historic integrity and conveys its significance as an early 19<sup>th</sup> century vernacular farmhouse designed as a central passage I-house type.

### **ELABORATION:**

#### Setting:

The Abraham Byrd House is located west of Jackson and Fruitland, Cape Girardeau County, Missouri, in a rural area approximately 0.7 miles west of the intersection of County Road 442 and 439. The setting is farm land with scattered mature trees. Nearby are Byrd and Horrell creeks. Across the road to the north is open pastureland. In the surrounding area are scattered residential buildings and farms. Directly out the back door on the south elevation is the contributing foundation of the kitchen. The property has mature hardwood trees and some foundation plants. This area of Cape Girardeau County, Missouri still retains its rural and agricultural character.

#### **Primary (North) elevation:**

The three-bay front or north façade has a central wood panel door entrance centered on the first level. Above the door is a large limestone header block with the words "A.B. OCT – 1827" carved into it. Indicating Abraham Byrd built or completed the house in October of 1827. On either side of the door is a two-over-two double-hung window with large limestone headers and limestone sills below. Directly to the west of the main door is a limestone shelf that is approximately eighteen inches in width and depth, and about 32 inches from the ground. The center of the shelf has a circular depression. (see photo #3) The current owner was told by relatives that once occupied the residence

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that the shelf was used to hold a water bucket. The façade is divided horizontally by the timber remains of a porch that once divided the first and second level. Rough hand-cut limestone, quarried from the nearby Byrd creek, is laid in horizontal rows. The rough-cut limestone blocks vary in size and shape. The second level is symmetrical with the first level. A second wood panel door, minus the wooden screen door, is located directly above entrance. The windows on either side of the door are two-over-two double-hung but are smaller in size than the lower level windows.

### **East & West elevations:**

The east and west elevations are nearly identical. Located on the east and west elevations are large limestone chimneys that rise above the side gable roof line. On the first level of both elevations are two-over-two double-hung wood windows on either side of the stone chimney. The second level of the west elevation has two different styles of windows. On the east side of the chimney is a smaller four-over-two double-hung wood window with the west side having a two-over-two double-hung wood window as on the first level. Directly above the two-over-two window in the top of the gable end is a very small window. All of the windows have limestone headers and sills.

Access to the basement is located on the south corner of the east elevation through double doors at ground level. A set of eight stone steps leads to the basement which has a dirt floor. On the north and south elevation walls of the basement level there are a total of four openings used for ventilation.

### **Rear (South) elevation:**

The south elevation on the first level is comprised of two wooden doors and one window. Centered in the elevation is a wood panel door without a wood screen door. It has a large stone header. To the east of the door is a two-over-two double-hung wood window with a stone header and sill. To the west of the door is another wood panel door that is set into the stone. It has a large stone header. Dividing the first and second level, like on the east façade, are timber remains of a porch. Directly above the window and the north door on the first level are two-over-two double hung wood windows. The center of the second level does not contain an opening. To the southwest of the elevation is the contributing kitchen foundation that measures 20' x 10'.

### **Interior:**

The interior of the building retains most of its original layout and much of its historic interior finishes. Plumbing has never been installed in the building. At one time superficial electrical wiring was installed but since has been disconnected. Currently

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the building is used for storage. Overall, the interior has seen some damage due to the lack of temperature control, and moisture penetration to the plaster caused by deterioration of the old roof. The roof was replaced in 2004 to prevent further damage. There are plans to rehabilitate the interior in the future.

Historically, the central passage I-house layout of the first floor was divided into three separate areas; east parlor, hallway, and west parlor. All interior wall surfaces are plaster. All floors are wood planks. An entry foyer is located in the center with an open oak staircase located on the northwest side. Located at the each end of the hall are the front and rear entrance doors. The hallway has a green bead board wainscoting approximately three feet in height with a chair rail trim. Directly to the east of the foyer is a parlor. Centered on the east wall of the parlor between the windows is a large fireplace that is flush with the plaster wall and trimmed out in a wood panel. The fireplace was bricked in several years ago.

The building's most exceptional interior feature is the hand-painted ceiling in the parlor. The design in the center of the room is a square with a flower motif in the center of the circle, encompassed by a larger this circle. Located at the four corners of the square is another flower motif. The square is set inside of larger square with center triangle points on each side. On the outside of the square, located on each side of the triangles, are half circle designs. The rest of the ceiling is covered in a design that is single line with two lines that shoot off from the main line, similar to the appearance of a chicken's foot print. Around the edge of the room is a painted boarder done in a floral pattern. (see photo # 12 & 13) Part of the painted design is peeling.

The room located to the west of the hall has historically been used as a living space. In the 1940s, the kitchen addition on the south elevation was torn down due to disrepair and the west room was used as a kitchen. The only change made to accommodate a kitchen was the addition of a stove. A new exterior kitchen addition was built again shortly on the south elevation. The kitchen addition was removed in the mid-1990s due to it deteriorated condition. On the west wall centered between the windows is a large fireplace with a wood mantle like the one in the east room. This fireplace is still serviceable but hasn't been in use since the mid-1990s. The ceiling is void of any decorative paint detailing.

The second level has four rooms. One the east side of the house directly above the east parlor is a large room trimmed in a chair rail that is painted green like the east parlor room. It has two windows on the east wall, one on the north wall and one on the south wall. Historically, the room was used for dances. Directly to the west of this room is a small bedroom with one window on the south wall. On the west side of the house is a room located on the northwest side with one window on the west wall. Another room

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**Byrd, Abraham House**  
**Cape Girardeau County, MO**

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with access through the northwest room is located on the north side of the house with a window on the north wall.

### **Integrity:**

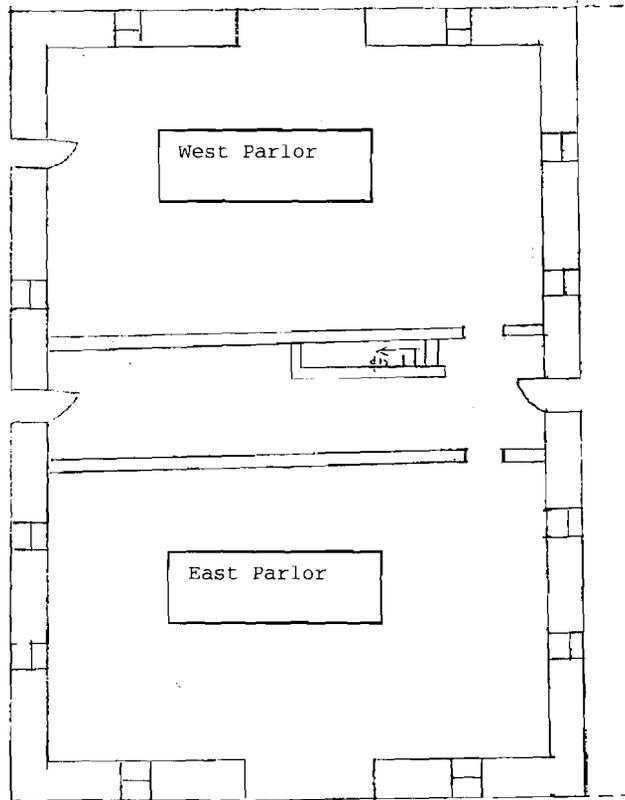
The building retains a high degree of integrity and only a few changes have occurred to it. Currently, the only visible change is the removal of the old tin roof with the replacement of the green metal roof. While the roof is not original to the building, it does not harm the integrity of the building. Located on the north and south elevation were porches that were two-story in height and were full-width across the house. These porches were destroyed by a tornado in 1927. The absence of the porches does not compromise the integrity of the building. The wood timber remains located within the exterior walls provide the visual sense of the porches. The interior has experience few changes. While electricity was added at one time, it was very basic and has been disconnected. Slight deterioration from lack of temperature control and moisture infiltration to the interior has occurred but overall, the Byrd House retains a high level of integrity, feeling and association.

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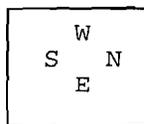
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Not to  
scale



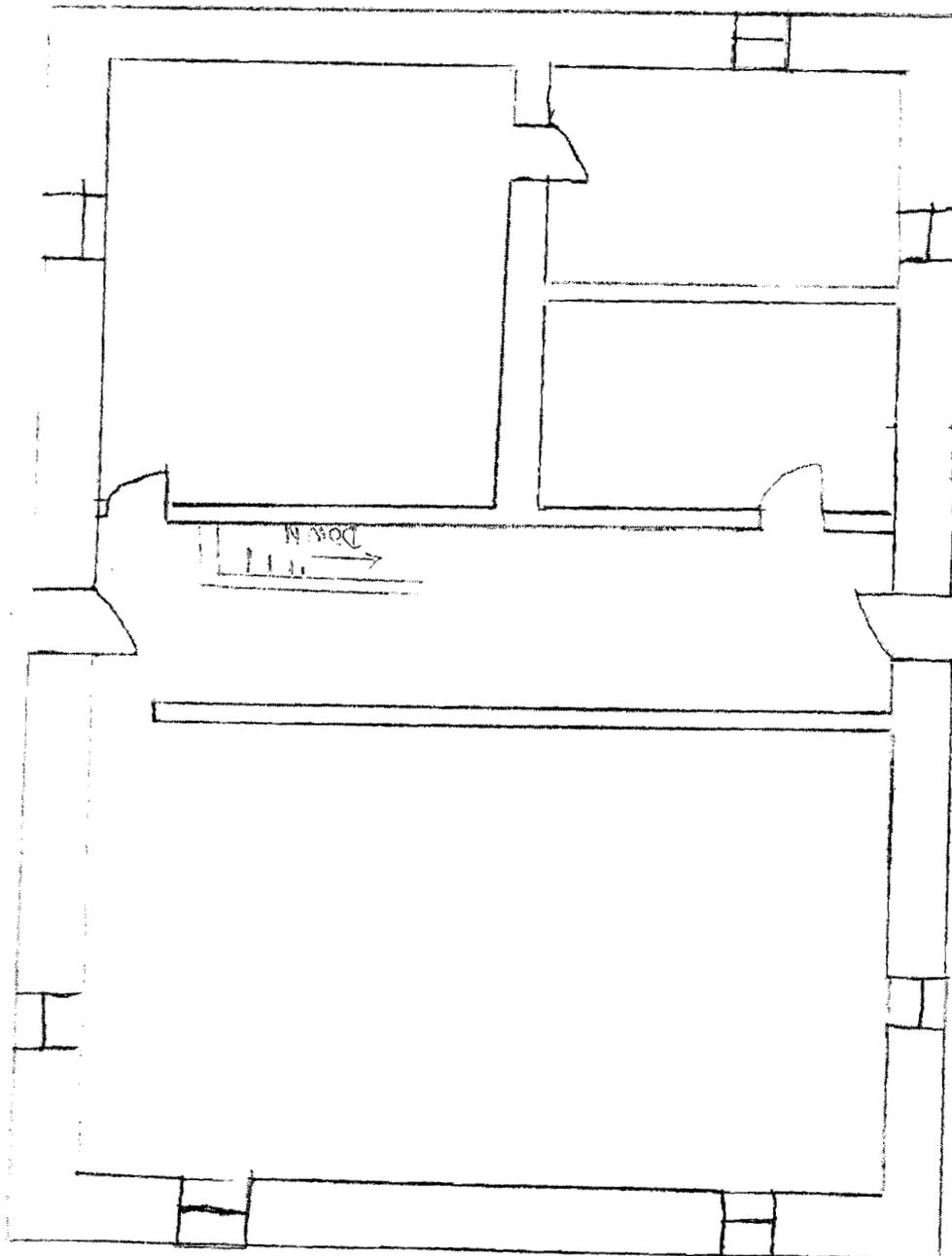
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**Byrd, Abraham House**  
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Second Floor Plan



NOT TO SCALE

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**Cape Girardeau County, MO**

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### Summary:

The Abraham Byrd House, 2832 County Road 442, Jackson, Cape Girardeau County, is locally significant under the National Register of Historic Places Criteria C in the area of ARCHITECTURE. The Byrd House was built in 1827 for Abraham Byrd, an early pioneer, prominent local farmer, Missouri State Representative and a presidential elector. The building served as the residence of the Abraham Byrd family and was constructed on land that Byrd obtained from a Spanish Land Grant.<sup>1</sup> This large home is an excellent example of a Missouri vernacular farmhouse designed in the I-house type. The Abraham Byrd House is significant in terms of architecture as a 1827 central-passage type I-house built with large rough-cut limestone blocks, side gable roof, and its exceptional interior hand-painted detailing on the parlor ceiling. The house represents rural vernacular building traditions that endured in the built environment due to the simplicity of its style, the flexibility that it offered, and to the lifestyle that it served. The period of significance of the house is 1827, when the house was completed.

### Elaboration:

#### Architectural History

The I-house type has achieved recognition as a time-honored building type in American architectural and landscape history. The I-house endured a long-lived tradition in the built environment due to the simplicity of its style, the flexibility that it offered, and to the lifestyle that it served. I-houses originated in England. There, it displaced the medieval long house and the stone tower house in Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Britain. It became the symbolic dwelling of wealthy landowners from the late fourteenth to the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> In the United States, its origins can be traced to the Elizabethan farmhouse of the seventeenth-century New England.<sup>3</sup>

By the late eighteenth century the I-house became a symbol of success in small towns and rural regions in America.<sup>4</sup> After it first appeared in New England, it spread westward and continued to be diffused southward then spread toward the Middle Atlantic States. Movement of the I-house continued and became popular in the Cotton South, Upper South, Ohio Valley, the Great Lakes vicinity and in the Middle West. It was highly embraced in Indiana, Iowa and Illinois and soon evolved into the most recognized folk

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<sup>1</sup> History of Southeast Missouri. Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1888, 276.

<sup>2</sup> Howard Wright Marshall. Vernacular Architecture in Rural and Small Town Missouri: An Introduction. 1994, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Fred W. Peterson. Homes in the Heartland: Balloon Farm Frame Farmhouses of the Upper Midwest, 1850-1920. Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1992, 75.

<sup>4</sup> Marshall, 11

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house in architecture. It is because of the popularity of the building type in the states of Iowa, Indiana and Illinois, that the I-house received its name. It is called the I-house because of the majority of I-houses can be found in states that begin with the letter "I."<sup>5</sup>

The popularity of the I-house started to decline in the late nineteenth century. The reason for the decline can be attributed to several factors. In this time period the United States experience one of the largest building booms ever. Balloon framing became very popular and was viewed as an efficient and economical way of construction for new buildings.<sup>6</sup> Balloon framing allowed for more flexibility in floorplan and style. There was a new demand by lumberyards and pattern books to produce more fashionable house plans.<sup>7</sup> Pattern books were readily available for individuals getting ready to build. The books made it easy for a builder or an individual to find a building style, with pictorial designs and sensible specifications.<sup>8</sup> Another factor for some people was that the I-house represented at time in history they wanted to forget. To some, the I-house represented the older pre-Civil War landowners and slave society. These factors contributed to the decline of the I-house.<sup>9</sup>

In the United States, the I-house did not gain recognition until the 1930s by architectural historians. It was first characterized by historians in Indiana then recognized again in the mid-1930s in Louisiana. The I-house was brought to Louisiana by settlers from Illinois, Missouri and Kentucky. Although I-houses varied in building materials, placement of the chimneys, floor plans, and porches, they all had in common side gables, two room length, one room depth and two-story height.<sup>10</sup>

The primary characteristics that distinguishes the I-house from other folk houses or vernacular houses is the use of a basic plan. I-houses have side-facing gables, are one-room deep and two rooms in width and full two stories in height. However, there are I-houses that were built as one and half stories.<sup>11</sup> Dimensions of the I-house can vary but generally comply to a distinct specification. The typical exterior size can be measured as sixteen to twenty-four feet in depth by twenty-eight to forty-eight feet in width by a height of twenty to twenty-four feet.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> William Lynwood Montell and Michael Lynn Morse, Kentucky Folk Architecture. Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1976, 32.

<sup>6</sup> Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1986, 434.

<sup>7</sup> Marshall, 12.

<sup>8</sup> Upton and Vlach, 434.

<sup>9</sup> Marshall, 12.

<sup>10</sup> Upton and Vlach, 7-8.

<sup>11</sup> Marshall, 49 and 56.

<sup>12</sup> Allen G. Noble. Wood, Brick, and Stone: The North American Settlement Landscape, Volume 1: Houses. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984, 52.

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Two geometric principles can be distinguished in the I-house, symmetry and axially. The geometric principle of symmetry consists of a balance on the centerline with a center door. The principle of axially embodies of the concept of the door placement in the middle with equal number of windows on either side. Often this principle entails a three-bay façade.<sup>13</sup> However, some I-houses were built with two front doors and were known as the Saddlebag type.<sup>14</sup> Another type, known as the two-thirds I-house was also built in the urban areas of Missouri, verses the countryside.<sup>15</sup>

The I-house has four sub-types that can be differentiated. The Abraham Byrd House is a Sub-type one, a central passage type. A Sub-type one floor plan is composed of two rooms that are divided by a central hallway. The two rooms located on the first floor are normally found to be of equal size with gable-positioned fireplaces that are encased within the house walls.<sup>16</sup> Each I-house has some variation in detail when compared to another. The variation is attributed to the freedom and flexibility that the I-house provided to the builder. Each I-house displays the individual personality of the builder.<sup>17</sup> Individual personality can be seen in the Byrd House with the stone construction, the rarest form of vernacular construction in Missouri and in the details such as the stone water bucket shelf. Log, frame and brick construction were more common in Missouri.<sup>18</sup>

In Missouri, farmers that moved westward from Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee region, like the Abraham Byrd family, traditionally built I-houses.<sup>19</sup> More affluent farmers, some of who were slaveholders, generally built I-houses. The I-house type was considered the stately house or mansion built by farmers. Those farmers that were slaveholders were more likely to build the I-house type or the "farmer's mansion" as it became known.<sup>20</sup> The Byrd family represents a typical antebellum I-house owner/builder. At the time of Abraham Byrd's death he owned 18 slaves valued at \$8,000. The property was considered to be a working plantation.

Although not a common feature of the vernacular I-house, a decorative painted stenciled interior could be found in some I-houses, especially those of the wealthy landowners. The painted stenciled interior can be associated with the shift of the I-

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Carter and Bernard L. Herman. Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, IV. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991, 81.

<sup>14</sup> Marshall, 48.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>16</sup> Noble, 53.

<sup>17</sup> Marshall, 62-68.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>19</sup> Biography of Historic Cape Girardeau County. A project of the Bicentennial Commission of Cape Girardeau, MO., Articles collected and arranged by Jess E. Thilenius.

<sup>20</sup> Marshall, 62.

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house from the New England to the rural southern and Mid-west States. Usually, these decorative detailing of the interior was done by traveling painters.<sup>21</sup> It is unknown who painted the elaborately designed ceiling for Abraham Byrd. However, with the family origins from the Tennessee, and Virginia area, it could be assumed the painted ceiling is a vernacular tradition they brought with them to Missouri.

The overall layout of an I-house in relationship to the land had a purpose, as did the landscaping that surrounded the home. I-houses were often constructed with the long side parallel to the road.<sup>22</sup> Generally these houses were situated with groves or lines of trees to protect the house from any prevailing northwest winds during the winter. The yard that surrounded the house typically was landscaped in cultured plants, associated with the folk art form that is commonly associated with I-houses. Some of the preferred plants included the lilac, rose, spirea, and many others. Shade trees are commonly found surrounding the houses. Families used the many shade trees to trap the wind and to cool the area in which they resided. It was very commonplace to find a mixture of various fruit trees among the shade trees, which provided a source of food for the family. The front yard would contain various shrubs. The Abraham Byrd House is an excellent example of how historically, I-houses were designed to be built within a certain area of the farmer's property, with the tradition landscape around that provide protection from the winds, trees for cooling in hot weather, and trees to provide food. The tree lines, shade trees, fruit trees, various flowering plants and shrubs can be detected.<sup>23</sup>

### **History and Background**

The Abraham Byrd House, built in 1827, was constructed on land that Byrd obtained in a Spanish Land Grant, Survey No. 223 in early 1800s.<sup>24</sup> Byrd was a slaveholder. Local lore has it that the stone I-house was built by his slaves. The limestone was quarried from nearby Byrd creek.<sup>25</sup> The Byrd house was constructed of entirely rough cut limestone with mortar between the stones. The stones are roughly squared and designed to lie in horizontal courses. One of two masonry techniques used in stone houses in Missouri. Like some of the Missouri-German stone houses, the Byrd House has a *Hauspruch*, or the owner's name and date above the main entrance.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Anne-Leslie Owens. "Perspectives on the Tennessee Landscape: The Vernacular Painted Interior in Tennessee," Border States: Journal of the Kentucky-Tennessee American Studies Association, 1977, No 11.

<sup>22</sup> Sally McMurry. Families and Farmhouses in Nineteenth-Century America: Vernacular Design and Social Change. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, 32.

<sup>23</sup> Montell and Morse, 50.

<sup>24</sup> Abstract of property. On file with Jim Hickam.

<sup>25</sup> Biography of Historic Cape Girardeau County.

<sup>26</sup> Charles van Ravenswaay. The Arts and Architecture of German Settlements in Missouri: A Survey of

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The Abraham Byrd House is one of three stone I-houses known to exist in Cape Girardeau County. One of the houses was built by Stephen Byrd, the brother to Abraham, after 1827. The Stephen Byrd House was part of a HABS survey that was completed in the Cape Girardeau County area. Later it came under the ownership of Washington University in St. Louis and fell into disrepair. It was purchased by the State of Missouri, through the revolving fund and later sold to the current owners who have renovated the structure and built an addition to rear of the home. The other stone house is located at 119 N. Missouri Street, Jackson, Missouri and is referred to as the "Rock House." It has undergone exterior changes, with a wrap-around curved porch supported round columns that replaced the two-story centered porch with square columns. A dormer in the roofline was also added. Out of the three stone I-house mentioned above, the Abraham Byrd House has retained more of its original workmanship, design, and association.

Currently, the Byrd House is surrounded by rural landscape. It is an excellent local example of a vernacular farmhouse designed in the I-house type. It is a Sub-type One I-house, as can be seen with the side gable roof line, the central hallway, and gable end chimneys. On the north and south elevation were porches that ran the width of the house and were two-stories in height with a roof that was an extension from the main roofline. The columns were square post, with a railing that ran the width of the porch with square spindles. Between the first and second floors are the wood joist remnants of the gallery porches. This style of porch can be found in Missouri-German stone houses, and like some of those, the lower level of the Byrd house had a steep set of stairs that went to the second level.<sup>27</sup> It is believed porches were destroyed in 1927 by a tornado.

Abraham Byrd and his family are considered one of early pioneer and influential families in the Cape Girardeau County, once known as the Cape Girardeau District. Originally the Byrd family came from Virginia moving westward into Tennessee before settling in the Cape Girardeau County in 1799. Abraham and his wife Elizabeth moved to the area with his father, Amos, and his brothers, Stephen, John, and Amos Jr., and his sisters Polly and Sally.<sup>28</sup> Abraham, along with father and brothers, obtained land from the Spanish government and settled near a creek, now known as Byrd Creek, in the Byrd Township of Cape Girardeau County.<sup>29</sup>

Byrd became active in the Missouri government serving as a member of the State

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Vanishing Culture, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1977, p. 181-183.

<sup>27</sup> Ravenswaay, 185.

<sup>28</sup> Goodspeeds., 276-277.

<sup>29</sup> Biography of Historic Cape Girardeau County.

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Legislature in 1830 and then in 1836 was a presidential elector. At the local level, Byrd served as a commissioner on the seat of justice when in 1815 the circuit courts were established. As a commissioner he helped to establish the town of Jackson, Cape Girardeau County, Missouri.<sup>30</sup>

Byrd owned and operated a sizeable farming operation on the property until his death in 1857. The 1850 census reports that Byrd owned 268 acres of enhanced land and 1,000 acres of undeveloped land. The livestock he owned was valued at \$1,250 and was comprised of 15 milk cows, 26 horses, 6 oxen, 12 other cattle, 70 hogs and 50 sheep. Byrd produced 2,500 bushels of corn, 300 bushels of oats, 250 bushels of wheat, 3 tons of hay, 20 bushels of clover seed, 51 bushels of Irish potatoes, 150 bushels of sweet potatoes, 125 pounds of wool, \$30 of orchard produce, 250 pounds of butter, 50 pounds of cheese, 100 pounds of maple sugar, 20 gallons of molasses, 25 pounds of beeswax, \$150 worth of home manufactured products and \$300 of animals sold for slaughter. In addition, he owned several slaves. According to the 1828 census he owned 12 slaves. In 1830, he had 18 slaves, 20 by the 1840, then in the 1850 census he owned 26.<sup>31</sup>

In 1857, Byrd died and left his wife, Elizabeth, and their son Stephen the plantation and 540 acres of land. His grandson, Benjamin Alton, received 160 acres of land. Byrd divided up his slaves, and other land holdings among his other children. Elizabeth died in or about 1869. The land remained within the Byrd family until about 1886 when it was sold to William H. Dow.<sup>32</sup> Today it remains in the William H. Dow family.

### Conclusion:

The Abraham Byrd House is a local example of popular trend that swept across mid-west from the late eighteenth century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The I-house, a rural vernacular farmhouse, allowed a flexibility and simplicity in style that helped to serve the needs of the rural farmers and their families. Historically, the house was designed to work with the surrounding landscape to benefit those who resided within and operated a farm. While the I-house was a popular type, stone constructed I-houses, such as the Abraham Byrd House, is relatively rare in Southeast Missouri.

The two-story limestone home retains a significant amount of original materials. Although the home has weathered over time, the original two feet thick limestone blocks walls, the wood panel doors, and the two-over-two double hung wood stash windows

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<sup>30</sup> Goodspeeds, 320 and 326.

<sup>31</sup> Edison Shrum. The Slaves & Slave Owners of Cape Girardeau County. 1986.

<sup>32</sup> Abstract. James Hickam.

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are original and overall, the house retains a high degree of integrity.

The interior of the home also retains a significant amount of the original materials including wooden floors, fireplace mantels, chair railing, wood trim, and decorative painted ceiling. Plumbing was never installed in the home, with water being carried up from the springhouse to do daily chores.

The Abraham Byrd House is a rare example of vernacular limestone I-house construction in Southeast Missouri. The Abraham Byrd House had a significant role in the local history as what was once known as a "plantation house", that served the Byrd family and those slaves that resided on the farm. While the I-house was considered the "farmers mansion," the Byrd house being constructed entirely of limestone, set it apart from the other I-houses in the area. It still retains the integrity of workmanship, design, materials, feeling, association, original locations and represents well the period of significance of 1827, and meets the requirements for placement on the National Register of Historic Places.

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### Boundary Description:

A square parcel roughly 95 feet by 95 feet located in Township 32 N. in Section 15, and Range 12 E, on the south side of the County Road 442, .07 miles from County Road 439, of Survey No. 223.

### Boundary Justification:

The selected boundary includes the land historically associated with the Abraham Byrd House. The boundary includes the footprint of the building, the foundation of the kitchen, the yard that surrounds the house. The boundary is drawn to exclude the neighboring two mobile homes that are not historically associated with the house and to exclude the acreage of farmland, though historically associated with the Abraham Byrd House, it is not associated with architectural significance of the property.

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### Photographs:

The following information is the same for all photographs:

Abraham Byrd House

Jackson, Cape Girardeau County, Missouri

Photographer: Terri L. Foley

January 2006 and September 2006

Location of negatives: Digital File

Photo No. 1: view toward south, showing the north façade.

Photo No. 2: view toward southeast, showing the north and west façade

Photo No. 3: view of stone shelf on north façade

Photo No. 4: Cross and Bible door

Photo No. 5: view toward west, showing south elevation

Photo No. 6: view toward west, showing east elevation

Photo No. 7: view toward east, showing west facade

Photo No. 8: view toward the southeast, showing the setting of the Abraham Byrd House with the north and west elevations

Photo No. 9: view toward the east, showing the rural setting of the house

Photo No. 10: view toward the east, showing the non-contributing barn

Photo No. 11: view toward south, showing the property behind the house

Photo No. 12 & 13: interior ceiling of east room

Photo No. 14: engraved date over main entrance

Byrd, Abraham House  
Jackson, Cape Girardeau County, MO  
UTM REF: 16J261215E / 4148181N











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