Form No. 10-300 REV. (9/77)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME
HISTORIC
Ritchey, Mathew H., House

AND/OR COMMON
"Mansion House," Belle Starr House

2 LOCATION
STREET & NUMBER
Mill Street

CITY, TOWN
Newtonia

STATE
Missouri 64853

NOTE FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
#7 - Hon. Gene Taylor

CODE
29

COUNTY CODE
Newton 145

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY
DISTRICT
BUILDING(S)
STRUCTURE
SITE
OBJECT

OWNERSHIP
PUBLIC
PRIVATE
BOTH
PUBLIC ACQUISITION
IN PROCESS
BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS
X OCCUPIED
UNOCCUPIED
WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
YES: RESTRICTED
YES: UNRESTRICTED
NO

PRESENT USE
AGRICULTURE
COMMERCIAL
PARK
EDUCATIONAL
PRIVATE RESIDENCE
ENTERTAINMENT
RELIGIOUS
GOVERNMENT
INDUSTRIAL
TRANSPORTATION
MILITARY
OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Mr. & Mrs. Robert R. Darch

STREET & NUMBER
P.O. Box 44

CITY, TOWN
Newtonia

STATE
Missouri 64853

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE
Office of the Recorder of Deeds

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Newton County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Neosho

STATE
Missouri 64850

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
1. Missouri Historic Sites Catalogue

DATE
1963

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
State Historical Society of Missouri

CITY, TOWN
Columbia

STATE
Missouri 65201
DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

CHECK ONE

CHECK ONE

X_EXCELLENT

_DETERIORATED

_UNALTERED

X_ORIGINAL SITE

_GOOD

_RUINS

_Moved

_FAIR

_UNEXPOSED

_DATE______

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Mathew H. Ritchey House, Mill Street, Newtonia, Missouri, is an L-shaped, seven-room (including bath) residence in a classically derived style. A rear (south) wing, with an east extension, is attached along the west half of the south facade of the main (north) portion. Both sections are two stories in height. A one-story portico dominates the center bay of the primary (north) facade.

EXTERIOR

MAIN (NORTH) PORTION

The rectangular-plan main portion measures 50 feet by 20 feet. Approximately 2,000 square feet of living space is available.

Wall construction materials include red brick laid in common bond. Three layers thick; the outer bricks are kiln fired, while soft, sun-baked bricks comprise the inner layer. The foundation is of cut sandstone blocks. Asphalt shingles cover the roof.

Most of the six window openings of the first story are rectangular in shape and are filled by six-over-six light, double-hung sash; the only exception is the easternmost opening on the south facade which has a two-over-two light, double-hung sash. Identical two-over-two light, double-hung sash fill each of the six, second-story window openings. All windows are trimmed by stone lintels and lugsills.

Entrances are located in the center bays of the primary (north) facade and the rear (south) facade. The north entrance is filled by double-leaf, five-panel, pine doors framed by a five-light transom above and a wood and glass (a three-over-two light, double-hung sash) panel along each side. Plain wood panels cover the exterior face of each door. A stone lintel, reinforced with steel, caps the opening. Double-leaf screen doors complete the opening. Also opening into the first-floor center hall, the rear (south) entrance is filled by a single-leaf, pine door taken from the Newton County Jail. A four-light transom is directly above. The only second-story doorway is centered over the north entrance; it provides access to the balcony of the north entrance portico (described below) from the second-floor center hall. A single-leaf, pine door pierced by an oval light fills this opening. Across the upper edge is a stone lintel. A screen/storm door is flush with the wall surface.

A one-story portico spans the center bay of the primary (north) facade protecting the north entrance. Its floor is of cut sandstone blocks matching those of the foundation. Four, Tuscan columns and two, square pilasters of wood support the flat roof. A wrought iron railing with square, wood corner posts and pilasters surrounds the outer edge of the roof forming a balcony.

The medium-pitched gable roof has its center ridge parallel to the north and south facades.

A single-stack, brick chimney is centered on each end (east and west) facade. Flush with the exterior wall surface, both straddle the center ridge of the roof. Ornamentation is limited to the cap, consisting of three alternately projected and recessed courses.
The Mathew H. Ritchey House, Newtonia, is one of the oldest residential buildings still remaining in southwest Missouri. Built in 1840 as the home of M.H. Ritchey (farmer, miller, merchant, and politician), the residence was the scene of three Civil War skirmishes; it is one of the few structures to survive the conflict in Newtonia and the disastrous fire of 1868 which swept the town. The house is probably most well known as the setting for one of Belle Starr's youthful adventures.

A chronology of ownership includes:

1. Mathew Harvey Ritchey (builder) -- 1840-1889
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approx. 4 1/2 to 5 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Newtonia

utm references

ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING
A | 1 | 319.4 | 15.810
B | 4 | 401.8 | 17.410
C | 4 | 401.8 | 17.410
D | 4 | 401.8 | 17.410
E | 4 | 401.8 | 17.410
F | 4 | 401.8 | 17.410
G | 4 | 401.8 | 17.410
H | 4 | 401.8 | 17.410

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Block 42, Town of Newtonia, Mo. except the East 2541/2 feet and except Ritchey Burial Lot of Graveyard, Newton County, Missouri.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
1. Nancy B. Breme, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION
Office of Historic Preservation, Dept. of Nat. Resources

STREET & NUMBER
P.O. Box 176

CITY OR TOWN Jefferson City

STATE Missouri

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE ___ LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Director, Department of Natural Resources, and State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE May 17, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

ATTEST:

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE
RITCHEY, MATHEW H., HOUSE

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<td>2. Missouri State Historical Survey</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>2. Larry A. James (researcher)</td>
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<td>Newton County Bicentennial Commission</td>
<td>September 22, 1975</td>
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<tr>
<td>504 Joy</td>
<td>816/451-3517</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neosho, Missouri 64850</td>
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3. Mr. James M. Denny (state contact person) | May 9, 1978 |
| Office of Historic Preservation | 314/751-4096 |
| Department of Natural Resources | |
| P.O. Box 176 | |
| Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 | |
Decorative details include the stone lintels and lugsills, the wrought iron "1840's" attached to each gable end apex, and the wood eave trim. A partial cornice with evenly spaced rectangular blocks ornamenting the frieze spans the primary (north) facade; raking cornices trim each gable end.

REAR (SOUTH) WING

The dimensions of the rear wing are 20' x 20'. There is approximately 800 square feet of living space. An attached porch measures 10 feet by 20 feet.

Construction materials include cut sandstone blocks (foundations), red brick laid in common bond (first-story walls), dark wood shingles (second-story walls), and asphalt shingles (roof covering).

All windows are rectangular in shape. Each is filled by a two-over-two light, double-hung sash. The first-story window openings have stone lintel and lugsill trim.

The only entrance is on the east facade. Positioned at the north end of the wall, the doorway gives access to the first-floor kitchen. It is filled by a single-leaf, pine door.

The one-story porch is attached to the east facade. Square timbers provide support for the roof and second-story east extension above. Screening fills the spaces between the timbers.

A medium-pitched gable roof with its center ridge running in a north-south direction covers this section of the house.

The rear wing is serviced by one, single-stack, brick chimney. Centered on the south facade, it is flush with the wall surface and straddles the center ridge of the roof. Its design is similar to those of the main (north) portion.

Stone lintels and lugsills (first-story windows) and a raking cornice (wood painted white) on the south facade are the only ornamentation.

EAST EXTENSION

The rectangular, second-story east extension measures 10 feet wide and 20 feet long; it provides an additional 200 square feet of living space.

The walls are sheathed in dark wood shingles. The roof has an asphalt-shingle covering.
All windows are six-light casement sash. They occur in groups of three (south facade) and nine (east facade) sash.

There is no access from the exterior.

A shed roof, sloping in an easterly direction, covers this section of the house.

No chimneys service the east extension.

There are no decorative features.

### Interior

#### Main (North) Portion

The first floor is composed of two parlors separated by a center hall running in a north-south direction.

Brick walls sheathed with painted (white in color) plaster occur throughout. Exceptions include the west parlor where the plaster has been stripped from the wall surface above the red pine wainscot (original to the house); rose-colored, patterned wallpaper is used in the hall. Wide, tongue-and-groove, pine flooring is found in all rooms; the boards are laid parallel to the north and south walls. Ceilings are plaster-over-lathe. Centered along the east and west walls of the east and west parlors respectively are fireplaces. The east parlor fireplace has a metal mantel (not original) and a cut stone hearth; an original red pine mantel frames the west parlor fireplace opening. Classic-style woodwork is of red pine. Bookcases are to either side of the east parlor fireplace; only one is original.

An L-shaped stairway is in the southwest corner of the center hall and extends northward along the west wall. Of wood construction, it provides access to the second floor.

Two bedrooms and a center hall occupy the second floor. Their arrangement is identical to that of the first floor.

The brick walls are finished with plaster. Paint and flowered wallpaper cover the plaster in the east and west bedrooms respectively; the hall is also wallpapered in a paper identical to that of the first-floor hall. Pine, tongue-and-groove flooring, laid parallel to the east and west walls, occurs in all rooms; ceilings are of plaster-over-lathe. As on the first floor, fireplaces are centered on the east and west
walls of the east and west bedrooms respectively; while retaining its original mantel, the west bedroom fireplace has lost its fieldstone hearth. Woodwork is of a Classic-style design similar to that of the first floor. Closets flank both sides of each bedroom fireplace with the exception of that to the north of the west bedroom fireplace which has been removed.

All trim and flooring has been painted black in the east bedroom (nicknamed the "Black Room" from its use as a hospital during the Civil War and later painted or stained black or other dark color to cover the blood stains).

Access to the attic is by way of an opening (not original) in the second-floor center hall.

REAR (SOUTH) WING

The kitchen (once the formal dining room) occupies the first floor of the rear wing.

Finishing treatments of this room include brick walls faced with plaster, plaster-over-lathe ceilings, and narrow oak flooring covered by carpeting. The rear (south) wall is dominated by a fireplace (centered) and an enclosed stairway (southeast corner) to the second-floor bedroom above. The stair enclosure is of hand-split lathe and encases an L-shaped staircase.

The second-floor bedroom is a step lower than the bedrooms of the main (north) portion.

A wainscot of horizontal boards is below plaster walls painted (north wall) and/or wallpapered (all remaining walls). The ceiling is of plaster-over-lathe. A floor of pine boards is laid parallel to the east and west walls of the room. Unlike other upper-story rooms, there is no fireplace or closet.

EAST EXTENSION

The second-floor east extension is divided into a front (north) hall area and a rear (south) bathroom.

Walls are of vertical pine boards; the floor covering is linoleum.
ALTERATIONS

When constructed in 1840, the Ritchey House consisted of the main (north) portion and the first story of the rear (south) wing. The second story of the rear wing was added some time later (ca. 1880's). Dates for the addition of the east extension (originally a summer bedroom and later converted to the present hall and bathroom) and the porch below are not known. The north entrance portico was added in the 1950's.

Restoration of the house was begun in ca. 1950 and continues today. Much of the original integrity has been maintained despite various alterations. Changes and repairs include:

1. after 1865:
   a. house tied together by M.H. Ritchey

2. 1880's:
   a. enclosed stairway in the kitchen added to provide access to the new upper story of the rear wing.

3. 1920's:
   a. narrow oak floor laid in the kitchen

4. ca. 1940's:
   a. some interior woodwork removed and burned for heat

5. 1950's:
   a. west parlor:
      1. one closet at the side of the fireplace removed
      2. plaster stripped from the walls above the wainscot
   b. east parlor:
      1. flooring (damaged by termites) replaced with the present pine boards
      2. closet to the south of the fireplace removed and replaced by a bookcase

6. prior to 1961:
   a. some window sash replaced

7. after 1961:
   a. steel beam added to the north entrance lintel
   b. roof covering replaced with asphalt shingles
   c. new electrical system installed
   d. new plumbing system installed
   e. walls of some rooms replastered
   f. walls of the center halls (first and second floors) repapered with wallpaper similar to earlier papers used
   g. rear half of the first-floor center hall's flooring replaced
   h. west parlor:
      1. one closet at the side of the fireplace removed
      2. plaster stripped from the walls above the wainscot
   i. east parlor:
      1. flooring (damaged by termites) replaced with the present pine boards
      2. closet to the south of the fireplace removed and replaced by a bookcase
i. second closet at the side of the west parlor fireplace removed
j. opening in the second-floor center hall added to provide access to the attic
k. west bedroom:
   1. closet to the north of the fireplace removed
   2. walls repapered with wallpaper similar to earlier papers used

8. 1963:
   a. west facade of the main (north) portion stabilized
   b. first-story northern opening on the west wall of the rear (south) wing altered from a doorway to a window
   c. bannister of the stairway (first-floor center hall) replaced, including a walnut cap
   d. ceilings of the center halls (first and second floors) replaced
   e. original west parlor floor, burned by the fireplace, replaced with the present pine boards
   f. chair rail removed from the west bedroom
   g. summer bedroom of the east extension converted to a bath and hall area

9. unknown:
   a. rear (south) entrance door replaced with one taken from the Newton County Jail
   b. first-floor center hall:
      1. portions of the chair rail replaced
      2. replacement door inserted in the opening in the side wall of the staircase
   c. east parlor:
      1. metal mantel added to the fireplace opening
      2. doors of the original bookcase to the north of the fireplace removed
   d. formal dining room converted to the kitchen.

Property changes or repairs (maintenance) include the removal of the separate rock and wood summer kitchen (prior to 1957) and the restoration of the Ritchey family and slave cemeteries.

CONDITION

The Ritchey House is in excellent condition.
The Mathew H. Ritchey House, which faces north onto Mill Street, is located approximately one and a half blocks north of Highway 86 in Newtonia, a small rural community dominated by twentieth-century residential buildings. The house is partially isolated from neighboring homes, being set on a nearly five-acre tract of land. An open field overlooks the property from the north.

Property features include: outbuildings of wood construction (not contemporary with the home) to the south and southwest; a well next to the house, south of the rear wing; a U-shaped, gravel driveway west of the house; a brick walk extending from the main (north) entrance to Mill Street; a wrought iron fence across the front limit of the property; and a stone patio at the rear of the house, abutting the south facade of the main (north) portion and the east facade of the rear (south) wing. A natural spring marks the west boundary of the property. At the northwest corner of the tract is the Ritchey family cemetery; obelisk tombstones mark the graves of Polly, M.H., and Mary E. Ritchey. A wrought iron fence encloses the graveyard. Just beyond the west fence are other tombstones marking the graves of the slaves of the Ritchey family.

PRESENT STATUS

The continued existence of the house is assured through sympathetic ownership. Restoration begun by previous owners (Ralph and Louise Murphy) is being continued by Robert and Margaret Darch, the present owners.

In the future, the Darchs want to return the kitchen to its original use as a formal dining room; they hope to build a separate kitchen off the rear (south) wall of the rear wing.17

FOOTNOTES

5. Statement by Mrs. Robert R. Darch, personal correspondence, February 23, 1978; Neosho (Missouri) Daily Democrat, May 27, 1952, p. 5; and Joplin (Missouri) Globe, October 2, 1960, p. 88. (Each newspaper article is accompanied by a photograph of the house: the former is copied from a postcard having a Newtonia postmark with a December 24, 1914 date (no portico), while the latter photo is contemporary with the article's text (portico in place).)


7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.


12. Ibid.; statement by Mrs. Robert R. Darch, personal correspondence, February 23, 1978; Neosho (Missouri) Daily Democrat, May 27, 1952, p. 5; Springfield (Missouri) News & Leader, January 13, 1957, p. D3; and an unidentified newspaper article supplied to the Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Natural Resources, by Larry A. James, Newton County Bicentennial Commission. (The former newspaper article states "...that it (the house) might have been built to please a woman seems evident in the no less than two great storage closets that are a part of every room." Photographs accompanying the latter two articles show the closet in question (Item h) in place. Mrs. Darch, in her letter of February 23, 1978, confirms the after 1961 date; she and her husband removed the closet, replacing it with a bookcase.)


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15. Statement by Mrs. Robert R. Darch, personal interview, March 16, 1977; and Springfield (Missouri) News & Leader, January 13, 1957, p. D3. (The newspaper article does not give a date for the summer kitchen's removal, but merely mentions that such a structure was removed prior to this writing.)


17. Ibid.
Most prominent of the previous owners is Mathew H. Ritchey, born February 7, 1813 in Overton County, Tennessee. He was married on May 10, 1835 to Mary ("Polly") King, who died on November 10, 1855 at the age of 37. This union produced ten children: James Madison, Nancy J., Mary E., Martha Elizabeth, Christopher Columbus, Amanda M., Amelia (Amillia) A., Miranda Susan (M. Sue), Margaret E., and Sanford H.

A second marriage was to the widow Mary Eliza Clark (born January 3, 1819 and died January 18, 1895) in 1856, by whom Ritchey had three more children (John C., Julia A., and Charles G.). Mathew Ritchey died on August 18, 1889.

One of the very earliest settlers of Newton County, Ritchey located in 1832 on land where the present town of Ritchey, Missouri, now stands. He would by 1888 become one of the best known citizens of southwest Missouri. Even while politically active, Ritchey was continually engaged in agricultural, mercantile, and milling pursuits; he accumulated 1,000 acres of land and a large amount of town property in Ritchey and Newtonia.

Ritchey's many activities included:

1. constable, his jurisdiction extending over an area of 30 square miles (1836)
2. county judge, elected for several terms
3. State Representative, twice elected
4. State Senator, serving several terms
5. member of the state convention of 1860 (1861), called to determine the question of Missouri's secession from the Union; Ritchey voted for the Union amidst much opposition
6. U.S. Army Assistant Paymaster during the Civil War, appointed by Governor Gamble at the rank of major
7. captain in State Militia
8. member of the Missouri Constitutional Convention of 1865
9. laid out and built the town of Newtonia (1854); active in the establishment of Newton College
10. founder of the town of Ritchey (1870); laid out town (1871) and in the company of his son, Capt. J.M. Ritchey, constructed the mill and dam, the hotel and store, and other buildings
11. member of the masonic fraternity, charter member of Newton Lodge No. 175 at Newtonia; changed membership to assist as a charter member in organizing Ritchey Lodge No. 530.33
12. member of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, joined in 1840; held position of ruling elder for over twenty years.34

Battle(s) of Newtonia

Newtonia was the center of heavy fighting throughout the Civil War, M.H. Ritchey's stone mill (across the road from his home) being the base for food supplies and nearby Granby a source of lead for bullets.35 Federal forces had a fort at Newtonia with the commanding officer usually making his headquarters at the Ritchey House. As a result, the town passed back and forth between northern and southern control.36 Officers staying at the Ritchey home include Generals Sterling Price and Joseph O. Shelby of the Confederate army and Generals John M. Schofield and Samuel Curtis, Lt. Colonel Thomas T. Crittenden, and Major Edwin B. Eno of the Union forces.37

Colonel M.H. Ritchie (Ritchey), a prominent Union man of Newtonia, had a farm that joined the town limits on the southwest, south of the Neosho road. His dwelling-house, stone barn, and barn lots were adjoining the town. On the north side of his farm there was a stone fence that extended from his home to a quarter of a mile or upward along the Neosho road. His barn lot, of about two acres, was also enclosed with a stone fence. This lot was west of north of his house. The south-side stone fence of it and the farm fence made a lane of fifty to sixty feet wide, and some two hundred yards long.38

Behind these stone fences, Confederate troops awaited advancing Union soldiers in the early hours of September 30, 1862.39 Following a day's skirmishing, the southern forces were still in Newtonia.40 On October 4, 1862,41 Union soldiers again advanced on Newtonia, assuming the Confederate army would think its position a strong one on account of the shelter offered by the stone fences in and near town in the event of a federal assault.42 Early on, however, the rebel forces had resolved not to fight; they retreated with few shots being fired and abandoned Newtonia.43

When the Federal troops passed through Newtonia they saw on every hand the effects of the Federal artillery, on September 30th and on the morning of October 4th. There were dead horses all through town, torn by shells, and there were cannonball holes through Colonel Ritchie's (Ritchey's) house and barn, through the college buildings, and through other buildings in town.44
Southern troops on retreat from Kansas to Arkansas, and pursued at some distance by federal soldiers, camped south of Newtonia on October 28, 1864. Here the northern army caught up with the Confederate forces. A yellow flag soon waved over "a fine brick structure (the Ritchey House) used as a hospital" to protect it from the shells of the enemy (federal troops). Afterwards, the Confederate army continued its march south to Arkansas. Some historians have called this engagement the last battle of the Trans-Mississippi Department.

Belle Starr Legend

The story of Belle Starr (born Myra Belle Shirley) at the Ritchey House is one of the most hotly contested stories of her life. It first appeared in a Richard K. Fox publication, was later used by S.W. Harman (friend of Judge Issac C. Parker of the United States Criminal Court at Fort Smith, Arkansas) in his Hell on the Border; He Hanged Eighty-eight Men (1898), and more recently repeated by Missouri novelist Homer Croy in his biography of Cole Younger (Last of the Great Outlaws) in 1956.

Early versions of Belle's stay in Newtonia take this form. On her sixteenth birthday, February 3, 1862, as Belle, returning from a scout, was riding through the village of Newtonia, in the eastern part of Newton County, Missouri, thirty-five miles, as the crow flies, from her home town, Carthage, she was intercepted by a Major Enos (Eno) who, with a troop of cavalry was stationed in the village and who had his headquarters at the house of Judge M.H. Ritchery (Ritchey).

On the day of Belle Shirley's capture, as noted above, Major Enos had sent a detachment of cavalry to Carthage for the purpose of capturing her brother, Captain Shirley, who was known to be on a visit to his home. Belle, or Myra, as she was then called, had ridden into that section of the country for the purpose of obtaining information that might be of value to her people, and having discovered that men had been sent to capture her brother, was on the point of hastening to warn him, when she was arrested and detained. She had been in the habit of riding where she pleased, and as scarce any Union soldier would think of molesting a woman, especially when the woman chanced to be a
beautiful and buxom girl, her plans had not, hitherto, been disarranged. It happened that Major Enos, who had resided in Carthage, was acquainted with both her and her brother, as children, and this was why he had ordered her arrest; he rightly surmising that she was about to go to her brother's assistance. The girl was taken to the chamber of the Ritchey home and guarded by the major himself, who laughed at her annoyance. This served to anger her and she gave expression to her rage in loud and deep curses. Then she would sit at the piano and rattle off some wild selection in full keeping with her fury; the next instant she would spring to her feet, stamp the floor and berate the major and his acts with all the ability and profanity of an experienced trooper, while the tears of mortification rolled down her cheeks, her terrible passion only increased by the laughter and taunts of her captor. At last believing his men to have had plenty of time to reach Carthage ahead of her, Major Enos said: "Well, Myra, you can go now. My men will have your brother under arrest before you can reach him."

With eagerness trembling in every lineament, she sprang to the door, rushed down the stairway and out to a clump of cherry bushes where she cut several long sprouts for use as riding whips. The judge's daughter, now Mrs. Graves, accompanied her.

"I'll beat them yet," said the girl, as with tearful eyes she swallowed a great lump in her throat. Her horse stood just where her captors had left it; vaulting into the saddle, she sped away, plying the cherry sprouts with vigor. A short distance from the house she deserted the traveled road and, leaping fences and ditches without ceremony, struck a bee line in the direction of Carthage. She was a beautiful sight as she rode away through the fields; her lithe figure clad in a closely fitting jacket, erect as an arrow, her hair unconfined by her broad-brimmed, feather-decked sombrero, but falling freely and flung to the breeze, and her right hand plying the whip at almost every leap of her fiery steed. The Major seized a field glass and ascending to the chamber watched her course across the great stretch of level country.

"Well, I'll be d___," he ejaculated, admiringly, "she's a born guerilla. If she doesn't reach Carthage ahead of my troopers, I'm a fool."
The Major was right; when his detachment of cavalry galloped leisurely into Carthage that evening they were greeted by a slip of a girl mounted on a freshly groomed horse. She dropped a courtesy and asked: "Looking for Capt. Shirley? He isn't here -- left half an hour ago -- had business up Spring River. 'Spect he's in Lawrence county by this time."53

Homer Croy, writing about Belle's Newtonia adventure some twenty years ago, recounts the story as passed down through the Ritchey family. Mrs. Mildred Graves Sanders, M.H. Ritchey's granddaughter-in-law related the following story to Mrs. Louise Brock Murphy (with her husband a past owner of the house), who was interviewed by Croy. Local tradition seems to favor this version.

Mr. Richey (Ritchey) was a Union man and was in the habit of sheltering Union soldiers and sympathizers. One evening in February 1863 Richey and his family were surprised to see a girl of about fifteen ride up in front of the house and calmly dismount at the horse block. She tied her horse, and started for the door. By this time the house was agoggle. A young and unaccompanied girl!

"My name is Myra Belle Shirley and I live in Carthage," she said smoothly. "I've been visiting friends and got lost on my way back. Can I stay overnight?"

Of course she could stay overnight, said unsuspecting Mr. Richey.

She was taken up to what was called the "black bedroom," this because everything in it was painted that color. She had supper with the Richeys, talking pleasantly with them. The Ritchey family knew the Shirley family in Carthage, but did not like them. However, they liked Belle, who was making herself so agreeable. All eyes were on her as she chatted, girl-like, about nothing.

One of the guests staying in the house was Major Edwin B. Eno, of the 8th Missouri Militia, a cavalry regiment. This meant that he was a Union man.

After supper the people went into the parlor where there was a square rosewood piano. Belle obligingly sat down and played. Everybody thought this was delightful. After the music she again talked pleasantly, now and then asking a question. The sum and substance of these questions had to do with the Union troops and how many were there. She
learned also that the Richey house was being used as headquarters for Major Eno and his officers, that enlisted men were using the stone barn and the stone mill as barracks; in addition, some of the men were encamped in the town of Newtonia. Belle smiled brightly; it was interesting to know such things, she said. The next morning she came down to breakfast early and again was pleasant and agreeable and most appreciative of the hospitality that had been extended to her. After breakfast she said she would have to get home as fast as she could so that her parents would not worry about her. Her horse was saddled and brought.

"I want to get some switches for my horse," said Belle. With Mr. Richey's daughter she went to a clump of cherry bushes and cut off two or three. Then she walked slowly back to her horse, mounted the horse block, got into her side-saddle and rode briskly off in the direction of Carthage. She had gone only two or three miles when hell struck the Richey House. The cutting of the cherry switches had been a signal to Confederate lookouts who had been watching and who reported to their officers. A fusillade was launched against the house. It was such a spirited attack that Major Eno and his officers had to leave and could no longer use the house as officers' headquarters. It was quite a little victory for Belle.54

The survey of Missouri's historic sites is based on the selection of sites as they relate to theme studies in Missouri history as outlined in "Missouri's State Historic Preservation Plan." The Mathew H. Ritchey House is, therefore, being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as an example of the themes of "Architecture," "Military Affairs," and "Society."

FOOTNOTES


2. Ibid.


7. Reprint (of) McDonald and Newton County Sections of Goodspeed's Newton, Lawrence, Barry and McDonald Counties History (1888) (Cassville, Missouri: McDonald County Historical Society, April 1972), pp. 327-328.


10. Davis and Durrie, pp. 575-576; Reprint (of) McDonald and Newton County Sections of Goodspeed's Newton, Lawrence, Barry and McDonald Counties History (1888), p. 398; and James, p. 53.


12. Reprint (of) McDonald and Newton County Sections of Goodspeed's Newton, Lawrence, Barry and McDonald Counties History (1888), p. 398; and James, p. 53.

14. James, p. 53; and data derived from the inscription on the tombstone of Mary E. Ritchey in the Ritchey family cemetery, Newtonia, Missouri.


16. James, p. 53; and Reprint (of) McDonald and Newton County Section of Goodspeed's Newton, Lawrence, Barry and McDonald Counties History (1888), p. 398.

17. Data derived from the inscription on the tombstone of M.H. Ritchey in the Ritchey family cemetery, Newtonia, Missouri.

18. Reprint (of) McDonald and Newton County Sections of Goodspeed's Newton, Lawrence, Barry and McDonald Counties History (1888), p. 398.


20. Reprint (of) McDonald and Newton County Sections of Goodspeed's Newton, Lawrence, Barry and McDonald Counties History (1888), pp. 398-399.

21. Ibid., p. 398; McGrath, p. 161; and Davis and Durrie, pp. 575-576.

22. Reprint (of) McDonald and Newton County Sections of Goodspeed's Newton, Lawrence, Barry and McDonald Counties History (1888), p. 399.

23. Ibid., p. 398.

24. Ibid.


26. Ibid.


29. Reprint (of) McDonald and Newton County Sections of Goodspeed's Newton, Lawrence, Barry and McDonald Counties History (1888), p. 398.


31. Reprint (of) McDonald and Newton County Sections of Goodspeed's Newton, Lawrence, Barry and McDonald Counties History (1888), pp. 327, 398.


33. David and Durrie, pp. 575-576; and Reprint (of) McDonald and Newton County Sections of Goodspeed's Newton, Lawrence, Barry and McDonald Counties History (1888), p. 398.

34. Ibid.


36. Unidentified newspaper article supplied to the Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Natural Resources, by Larry A. James, Newton County Bicentennial Commission.


40. Britton, Vol. I, pp. 356-361; and Edwards, pp. 87-89. (Accounts of this confrontation do not completely agree. While there are differences in naming the participating officers, companies, divisions, etc., it is the bias of the authors that becomes quite evident. Britton has the Union forces finally driving the Confederate soldiers back into Newtonia; Edwards gives the "victory" to the Confederate army who retained control of Newtonia.)


43. Ibid.; and Edwards, pp. 89-90. (The conflict here centers around whether the federal forces pursued the retreating Confederate army. Britton claims the northern soldiers followed, keeping up a running fight nearly all day with no important result. Edwards, on the other hand, has most of the rebel forces retreating with no federal pursuit.)


47. Britton, Vol. II, p. 511; and Edwards, p. 459. (These sources again disagree with each other with regard to the condition of the Confederate army as it resumed its march southward. Britton has the Confederate troops retreating from the battlefield without victory, while Edwards describes the triumphant rebel army's return from the scene of its last glorious victory.)

48. Edwards, p. 457; and Joplin (Missouri) Globe, October 2, 1960, p. 8B.


50. S.W. Harman, Hell on the Border; He Hanged Eighty-eight Men (Fort Smith, Arkansas: The Phoenix Publishing Company, 1898), title page and dedication.

51. Croy, p. 50; and Harman, pp. 560-562.

52. Croy, pp. 51-53.


8. Data derived from the inscriptions on the tombstones of M.H. Ritchey, Polly Ritchey, and Mary E. Ritchey in the Ritchey family cemetery, Newtonia, Missouri.


14. Joplin (Missouri) Globe, October 2, 1960, p. 8B.


21. Unidentified newspaper article supplied to the Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Natural Resources, by Larry A. James, Newton County Bicentennial Commission.
RITCHEY, MATHEW H., HOUSE
First Floor Plan
(shading denotes chronology of construction)
Not to Scale
RITCHEY, MATHEW H., HOUSE
Second Floor Plan
(shading denotes chronology of construction)

Not to Scale
RITCHEY, MATHEW H., HOUSE #1
Newtonia, Missouri
photographer: Frederick J. Breme
March 16, 1977
Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101
North (primary) facade; view looking south-southwest.
RITCHEY, MATHEW H., HOUSE
Newtonia, Missouri
photographer: Frederick J. Breme
March 16, 1977
Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101
Northeast corner; view looking southwest with the north facade on the right and the east facade on the left.
RITCHIEY, MATHEW H., HOUSE
Newtonia, Missouri
photographer: Frederick J. Breme
March 16, 1977
Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

View looking north-northwest with the rear (south) facade of the main portion in the right background and the rear wing in the left foreground.
RITCHIEY, MATHEW H., HOUSE " #4
Newtonia, Missouri
photographer: Frederick J. Breme
March 16, 1977
Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101
South facade of the rear wing; view looking north-northwest. A portion of the wing's east facade is at the far right.
RITCHEY, MATHEW H., HOUSE
Newtonia, Missouri
photographer: Frederick J. Breme
March 16, 1977
Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101
Southwest corner; view looking northeast with the rear wing in the right foreground and the main (north) portion in the left background.
RITCHEY, MATHEW H., HOUSE #6
Newtonia, Missouri
photographer: Frederick J. Breme
March 16, 1977
Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101
Detail of the cornice above a second-story window of the north facade; view looking south-southwest.
RITCHEY, MATHEW H., HOUSE
Newtonia, Missouri
photographer: Frederick J. Breme
March 16, 1977
Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

Interior view of the first-floor center hall looking southwest towards the staircase to the second-floor bedrooms.
RITCHEY, MATHEW H., HOUSE #8
Newtonia, Missouri
photographer: Frederick J. Breme
March 15, 1977
Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

Interior view of the south (rear) wall of the first-floor kitchen (originally the formal dining room). A rear stairway to the second floor of the south wing is behind the door to the left of the fireplace.
RITCHEY, MATHEW H., HOUSE #9
Newtonia, Missouri
photographer: Frederick J. Breme
March 16, 1977
Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101
Second-floor interior view showing the west wall of the west bedroom. The fireplace mantel is original.
RITCHEY, MATHEW H., HOUSE  #10
Newtonia, Missouri
photographer: Frederick J. Breme
March 16, 1977
Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101
Ritchey family cemetery; view looking northwest. The three tombstones in the southeast corner (left foreground) mark the graves of Mary E., M.H., and Polly Ritchey (left to right).