

A HISTORIC INVENTORY
OF
GENTRY COUNTY, MISSOURI

Spring 1980

INTRODUCTION

The historic inventory of Gentry County was conducted during January and February of 1980. In attempting to locate the various sites, buildings and objects, local resource persons were contacted in each Township. The Tri-County Historical Society served as the local resource agent and nominated the majority of the architectural sites in King City. Mrs. Aletha Whittington of Stanberry, Missouri, was of valuable assistance in surveying the area and is the local contact person for the society. James Gibson provided assistance in the rest of the county and is well acquainted with the area.

Miss Nancy Sandehn worked as an assistant in surveying the area. She made the primary contacts with the resource persons in each township and the initial survey was carried out under her guidance. Another source of obtaining site and architectural locations in the county was by using the wind-shield technique. This was extremely useful in discovering agricultural architecture since a majority of these structures were missed in the first survey of the area.

The final forms were completed by Thomas W. Carneal, Associate Professor of History at Northwest Missouri State University. John Huffman of Architects and Planners Collaborative, Kansas City, Missouri, served as the architectural resource person and Robert Bray of the State Archaeological Survey office as the archaeological resource person.

Dr. Harmon Mothershead of Northwest Missouri State University served as historical research advisor on the project.

After completing the initial survey, one must conclude that some sites were missed and therefore the survey must remain open for further additions as more research is carried out. Some of the nominated sites stand on their architectural merit but need further research on their historical significance.

The survey indicated there is a wealth of Queen Anne and rural Gothic architectural styles in the area. There are several areas which possess the possibility of being developed as historical districts, especially Albany and Stanberry. In King City there would be the option of developing a multiple resource district in the downtown area along Vermont Street. In Albany this same plan could be used along I-Iundley Street. There is a voluminous amount of sites and materials which portray the agricultural nature' of the county.

In attempting to evaluate the significance of the inventory in each Township, the resource and advisory group looked at each nomination. The historical sites are separated from the archaeological sites and have separate code and numbering systems and can be checked against the map included with the survey.

The inventory definitely indicates several sites that are worthy of nomination to the National Register. In addition to the options mentioned above the primary project for the next year should be the nomination of:

1. The Gentry County Courthouse at Albany.
2. The Church at Gentryville.
3. The Harris Barn near King City.
4. The Stole House near Stanberry.

ADDENDUM

The Gentry County Courthouse was nominated by Thomas W. Carneal to the National Register of Historic Places in January, 1980. The nomination was approved by the State Council on April 25, 1980 and was forwarded to the Department of Interior as of May 1, 1980.

Gentry County: A Short History

Gentry County, organized in 1841, was named after Colonel Richard Gentry who died in Florida while on a military expedition. Early settlers came from Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Carolinas with a few from Illinois and Indiana, plus a scattering of German immigrants. Immediately after Missouri's statehood in 1821, adventureers and squatters tenated the area but the permanent settlers came in the late 1830's and early 1840's. Most of the settlers were farmers with an appropriate number of artisans, craftsmen, professional men and opportunists. Being Southerners, they were generally Democrat in their politics but opposed to war and secession. Gentry County returned to the Democrat fold after Reconstruction.

The religious preference of the early *settlers* reflected their southern background as surely as their politics. Various sects of the Methodists, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Christian Churches were predominant. That same southern mountain heritage appeared in the use and possession of "corn juice" as a barter trade item in local stores, as a social equalizer and again in the "local option" decisions in 1887. At a special election in the Fall of 1887, Gentry County voted against local option.

The trade areas of the county are centered around the three communities of Albany, King City, and Stanberry. Albany serves as county seat, while King City and Stanberry are local trading *areas*. The tracks of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy railroads originally tied much of the area together running

southwesterly from Albany to King City in Gentry County.

In the spring of 1980, the Burlington Northern, present owner of the system, is trying to abandon the line which will leave the area without rail service. A number of improved state roads and U.S. 169 and 136 provide an adequate highway system throughout the area.

There are a number of small communities in the area. Ford City, formerly Yolo and then Miller, was originally located on the farm of John G. Miller and still had a bank and a number of business enterprises in the 1920's. Siloam Springs attracted people because of the pure mineral water. The small hamlets of Alanthus Grove, Berlin, Carmack, Darlington, Empire Prairie, Evona, Gentry, Gentryville, Island City, McCurry, and McFall were never more than crossroad stores or railroad switching terminals.

Gentry County's major water system is the Grand River with several small tributaries. Along this broad stream, the soil is a black sand loam. There are bluff lands in the northeast and northwest parts of the county* The rest of the area is a gentle rolling prairie all lying within the glacial plains of Northwest Missouri. At one time, huge stands of timber dominated by white and black oak, walnut, elm, hickory, cottonwood and ash dominated the area. Little remains today as the more valuable of the woods were harvested for construction and the rest destroyed to clear the land for farming. Livestock is the principle product of the area with corn and soy beans being the important agricultural crops.

Wheat, oats, barley, and rye have been grown in the past in significant quantities. Hemp, flax, and tobacco were grown in the 19th century. Orchards of apple, pear, cherry, peach, and plum trees were common both as commercial enterprises and as family orchards but little of this activity exists in 1980.

As is true of most similar counties in Northwest Missouri based on agriculture and removed at a distance from fast growing urban areas, there has been a steady decline in population since 1910 with a fairly rapid acceleration following World War II. In the decade of 1940 to 1950, the county declined by 2,765 making a 21% drop from a *total* of 13,359. The period of 1920 to 1970 showed a decline from 15,634 to 8,060 or a 50% decline in a fifty year period.

The story of Gentry **County** is quite synonomus with the experience of other Northwest' Missouri agricultural communities. Although Gentry County is not unique, it remains a "special place" for those whose ancestry have roots there.

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PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Adams, Austin, County Collector
Grant City.

Barrett, Mrs. Richard, Albany

Bennett Family, King City

Bray, Katherine, Gentryville

Bulla, William III, King City

Burke, W.P., King City

Burl, John, King City

Clark, Carl G., King City

Clark, Clifford, King City

Combs, Mr&Mrs. Larry, King City

Combs, Mr&Mrs. Roger, King City

Culver Family, King City

Davidson, Dudley, King City

Dayle, Mrs. John, Albany

Ferguson, Miller, King City

Gibson, James, King City

Mash, Georgee & Mary, St. Joseph

Hayes, Iva, Postmistress, McFall

Henton, Helen, Librarian, Albany

Huntsman, Wilson, King City

Kibbe, Mr&Mrs. J. Harry, Grant City

Lane, Beverly, Stanberry

Lanning, Mildred, Stanberry

Limpp, Isabel B., King City

Limpp, Rufus H., King City

Lux, Roy, King City

Newman, Norma, Stanberry

Officers of Tri-County Museum, King City

Owens, Phyllis, King City

Rainey, Ben, Albany

Roberts Family, King City

Scott, Freeman, King City

Setzer, Glenn Mrs., St. Joseph

Simmons, Carroll B., King City

Slagle, Hazel, Stanberry

Smith, Albert, King City.

Smith, Mr&Mrs. Carl, Albany

Smith, Emma, King City.

Spiking, Gordon, King City

Stapleton, Edith, Albany

Turpin, Harry B., King City

Vogt, A.B. "Dutch", Stanberry

Wall, Lester, King City,

Weathed, Dixie, King City

White, Kenneth, King City .

Whittington, Aletha, Stanberry

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