

**Butler County, Missouri**  
**Historical and Architectural Survey**



**Prepared by**  
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**for**  
**Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission**

BUTLER COUNTY, MISSOURI  
ARCHITECTURAL/HISTORICAL SURVEY  
AUGUST 1992-AUGUST 1993

SURVEY REPORT

prepared for  
Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission  
by  
Dr. Bonnie Stepenoff  
History and Archives Consulting  
August 1993

Cover photograph: Stillcamp School (Dan River School), ca. 1930. This one-room rural school building is located at the junction of Route HH and BC329, ten miles southeast of Poplar Bluff, and is an excellent example of a twentieth-century craftsman-style school building. There are several good examples of these rural school buildings in Butler County.

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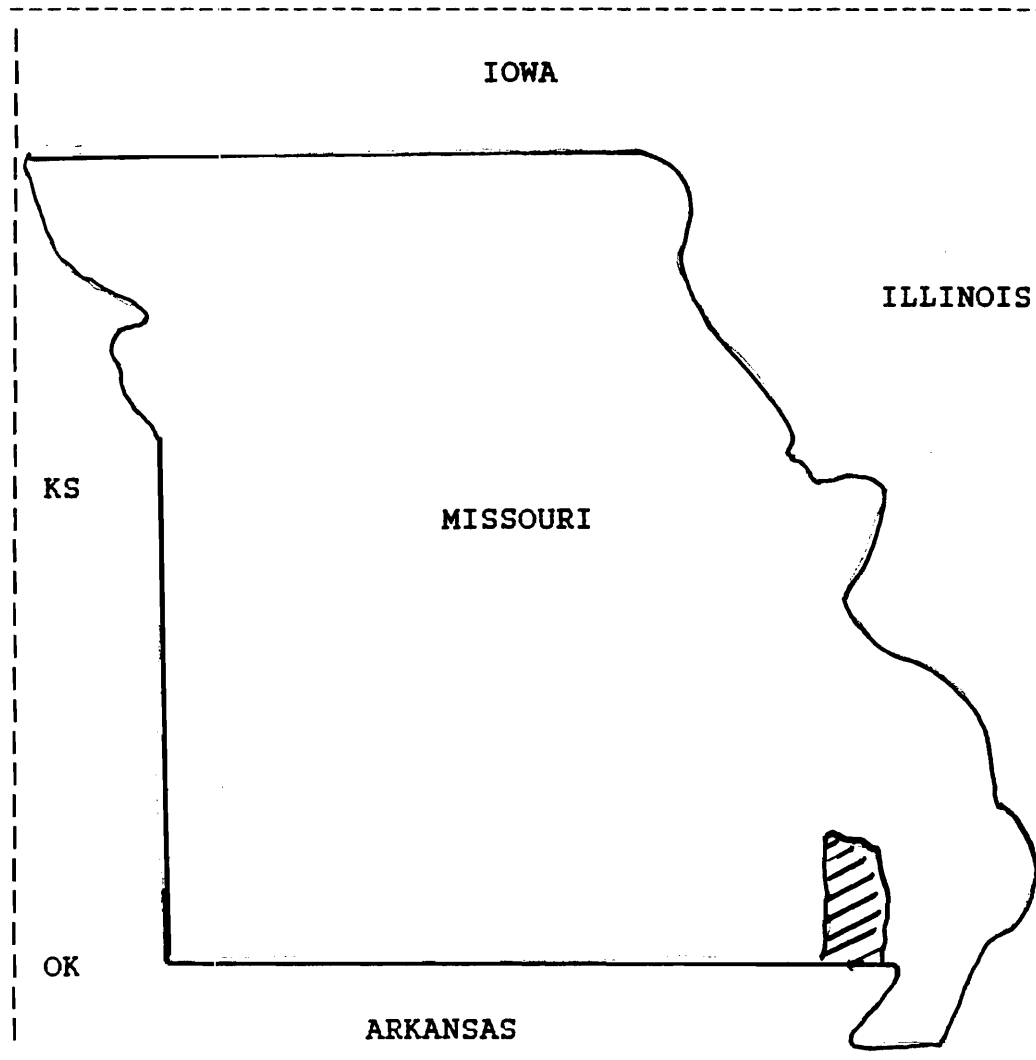
Completion of this survey would have been impossible without the assistance of many people. The consultant owes special thanks to Joan Stricker of the Butler County Historical Society for spending a day in October discussing and visiting sites. Cynthia Price of the Mark Twain National Forest offered valuable information and advice. John and Bertha Marley shared their great knowledge of Butler County History. Earl Greason and other members of the Neelyville Historical Society invited the consultant to attend a meeting and ask questions. Jim Moss also shared his knowledge of Neelyville history -- and history in general. Dr. Don Bell and Sandra E. Ward of the Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission initiated the project, kept it on track, and contributed their thoughts to the final report. Many other people, including Debbie Eakins, owner of the Blue Moon, expressed their deep concern for Butler County's heritage. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks, Historic Preservation Program supported the project with a grant from the Historic Preservation Fund.

### **Introduction: Butler County**

Butler County is a highland county situated on the southeastern slopes of the Salem Plateau of the Missouri Ozarks at the western edge of the Mississippi River lowlands. The western and central portions of the county are marked by rough wooded hills, fertile valleys, and Ozark streams. The southeastern section of the county resembles the Missouri Bootheel with its flat wetlands containing the remnants of a cotton growing and ginning economy. Butler County is bounded on the north by Wayne County, on the east by Stoddard County, on the south by the state of Arkansas, and on the west by Carter and Ripley counties. (See Map One.)

Because of its dense woods, Butler County served as a hunting ground for native Americans as well as European-Americans in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The first well-documented settler was Solomon Kittrel, who came from Kentucky, reaching Cane Creek in the fall of 1819. Early settlers like Kittrel coexisted with Indians in the area. Included among the pioneers were Daniel Epps, Thomas Scott, Martin Sandlin, Samuel Hillis, William and Frank Whittington, Samuel Polk, James Brannam,





MAP ONE  
LOCATION OF BUTLER COUNTY

the Applebys and Vandovers,' and Malachi Hedspeth. An early log home associated with the Hedspeth family still stands on a private lane, one-half mile from Route JJ, twelve miles north of Poplar Bluff.<sup>2</sup>

Most of Butler County's nineteenth century settlers came from Kentucky or Tennessee, bringing with them the traditions of the Upland South. The earliest settlers generally crossed the Mississippi River at Cape Girardeau, avoided the big swamp to the south, crossed the St. Francis River and went west to the Black River. Some settled down on the Big Black River, but many continued north and west to Cane Creek, Ten Mile Creek, and the Little Black River. From there, they fanned out to the south, occupying the valleys of those streams and the gentle rolling table lands in central Butler County. Other pioneers settled in the low sandy hills (called Ash Hills) in northeastern Butler County just west of the St. Francis River.<sup>3</sup>

Because they lived so far to the south of

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<sup>1</sup> Goodspeed's History of Southeast Missouri, 309.

<sup>2</sup> Dorothy Caldwell, Missouri Historic Sites Catalogue (Columbia: State Historical Society of Missouri, 1963), 16.

<sup>3</sup> Loughead's History of Butler County, typescript on file at the State Historical Society.

Greenville, the Wayne County seat, these settlers demanded the formation of a new county in the mid-nineteenth century. On February 27, 1849, the Missouri General Assembly created Butler County from a portion of Wayne County. The new county took its name from William Orlando Butler of Kentucky, a famous general at the peak of his popularity after the Mexican War.<sup>4</sup>

Butler County remained sparsely settled until after the Civil War, but experienced a postwar boom. In the 1870s and 1880s, railroads penetrated the hills, enabling businessmen to exploit the mineral and timber resources of the county. The St. Louis and Iron Mountain railroad reached Poplar Bluff, the county seat, in the 1870s. Other railroads, constructed in the 1880s and 1890s, connected the county by rail to markets in St. Louis, Cape Girardeau, Little Rock, and Memphis.

Lumber companies enjoyed a brief bonanza. But by the second decade of the twentieth century, they had virtually denuded the county of its timber resources.<sup>5</sup> Lumbermen and timberworkers, who had migrated to the

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 2-5.

<sup>5</sup> Thomason and Associates and Cynthia Price, An Overview of the Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission, June 1991, p. 20.

county in the early twentieth century either moved on to other timbered areas or remained to try to make a living in agriculture.

Cleared of trees, the lowlands of Butler County attracted cotton growers. The county participated in the immense and costly engineering projects that drained the wetlands of southeast Missouri. By 1920, the Little Black River Drainage District had constructed the system of ditches that drained the runoff from thirty thousand acres in Ripley and Butler counties. Commercial cotton cultivation flourished in the area in the drained wetlands from the late nineteenth century through the 1920s, but suffered a miserable downturn in the 1930s. In the later half of the twentieth century, rice cultivation has replaced cotton growing in the lowlands of Butler County."

Tourism became a mainstay of the county's economy after the decline of the lumber and cotton industries. Poplar Bluff became a central hub of automobile traffic, as Missouri developed its highway system in the 1920s. Butler County resorts such as Keener Spring began luring travelers off the highways to enjoy the scenic qualities of the area. The federal government

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" Ibid., pp. 50-52.

began a project to restore Ozark timber in what became Mark Twain National Forest. After World War II, the dam and reservoir at Wappapello attracted large numbers of tourists to Butler and Wayne counties.<sup>7</sup>

The architectural/historical survey conducted in Butler County between August 1992 and May 1993 represents an attempt to catalog the historic and architectural resources of Butler County and relate these resources to important historical trends and events. These historic and architectural resources provide important information about events that have shaped the county. They also have value as physical reminders of the past. Many of them have aesthetic qualities worth preserving. These resources express the character of Butler County and add richness to the experience of residents and visitors.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

### **Survey Methodology**

In 1991, Thomason and Associates and Cynthia Price completed a survey plan for the counties served by the Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission. This survey plan identified major themes in the region's history and common building types found in the region. In carrying out the 1992-1993 survey of Butler County, the consultant followed the lead of Thomason and Price, attempting to further develop the themes they found to be significant. These themes included: agriculture, community development, transportation, commerce, industry, education, and recreation/conservation. An additional theme which should be explored in Butler County is the theme of exploration/settlement.

The 1992-1993 survey of Butler County identified approximately 385 properties possessing historical and/or architectural significance in small towns and rural areas, excluding the city of Poplar Bluff (which was previously surveyed). Most of these properties are at least fifty years old, although a few are not. For each property identified, the consultant prepared a standard inventory form (required by the Missouri Historic Preservation Program) and provided two five-by-seven black and white photographs. The properties

are located on a large-scale map of the county and on several additional maps of towns, farmsteads, and districts.

Work on the survey consisted of three basic components: research, site inspections, and photography. A brief description of each component follows:

#### Research

The consultant visited various libraries and historical agencies, including the Missouri Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Program, the State Historical Society of Missouri, the Missouri State Archives, and the Poplar Bluff Public Library in order to locate and study printed materials and documents relating to the history of Butler County. The consultant also interviewed knowledgeable people, including property owners and members of local historical organizations, in order to obtain information not found in documents.

#### Site Inspections

In order to locate properties more than fifty years old, the consultant systematically drove county roads, locating properties on county highway maps and stopping to observe and take notes on the

characteristics of specific buildings and structures. The consultant's observations, plus additional information gleaned from documentary or oral sources, are recorded on individual inventory forms included with this survey report. Each inventory sheet includes an opinion as to whether or not the property is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. This opinion is based on the consultant's observations, knowledge, and judgement, and is subject to review by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Program. Final determination of eligibility depends upon approval by the Missouri Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Keeper of the National Register.

#### Photography

The consultant took photographs of each building, structure, or site deemed to possess historical or architectural significance. Two black and white prints were provided of each resource identified. These photographs are now on file at the Missouri Department of Natural Resources and the Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission.

A note on the numbering system: Properties included in



the inventory have been assigned numbers beginning with the letters "BU" for Butler, followed by a two-letter code for the town in which (or in the vicinity of which) the property is located, followed by a numerical designation. Thus, the first property inventoried in Fisk received the number BU-FI-1, and so on. These numbers appear on inventory forms, photographs, and maps relating to the specified properties.

**Contexts for Evaluating Historical Properties  
in Butler County**

**Exploration/Settlement**

As previously discussed (see Introduction: Butler County), settlement of Butler County by European Americans began about 1820. Early settlers traded with indigenous Indians, who hunted along Cane Creek and the Little Black River. Solomon Kittrel opened a frontier store on Cane Creek, transporting goods from Cape Girardeau with ox teams. Malachi Hedspeth also settled along Cane Creek.

In recognition of the importance of the Cane Creek as an area of early settlement, the Butler County Historical Society has placed markers at many sites in the area. The Society has also provided directions to motorists who wish to take a driving tour of this historic part of Butler County. A copy of the directions are included in this report as "Appendix I".

One important survival of the early settlement period in Butler County is the Hedspeth Log Home. In about 1850, Henry Hedspeth built a log home near the mill at Keener Spring. Twenty-four years later, the home was dismantled and moved to a new location, where it still stands, west of Route JJ, and twelve miles

north of Poplar Bluff. The home is included in this survey as site # BU-PO-35. See "Recommendations".

### Agriculture

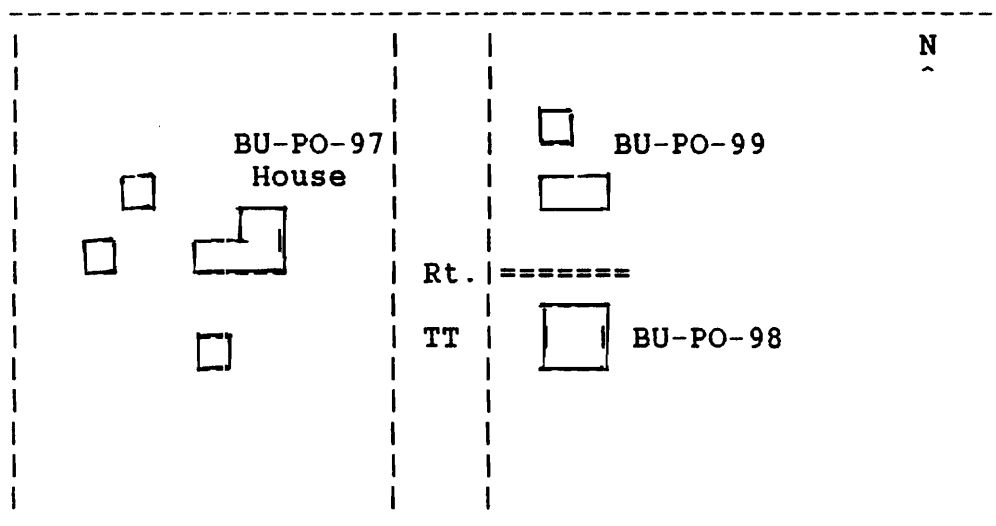
Until the 1880s, Butler County was heavily timbered. Pre-Civil War settlers established farms in the fertile valleys along rivers and streams, but the uplands remained rocky and tree-covered. The alluvial plains of eastern Butler County were swampy and covered with heavy growths of oak, cottonwood, poplar, maple, locust, gum, paw-paw, and cypress. Much of this timber cover remained until the 1890s.<sup>a</sup> Deforestation of both the uplands and the plains and drainage of wetlands opened Butler County to the development of farms.

Results of this survey indicate that agriculture flourished in the early twentieth century, with many farmsteads dating from the 1900s through the 1920s, especially in northwestern and southeastern Butler County. A significant late-nineteenth/early twentieth century agricultural complex is the Bertha Cash

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<sup>a</sup> Goodspeed's History of Southeast Missouri (Chicago: Goodspeed, 1888), reprinted in 1990 by the Southern Historical Press, Inc., pp. 197-198.

Farmstead (BU-PO-97-98-99)\*, located west of Poplar Bluff on Route TT. The Cash residence is an I-house featuring gingerbread ornamentation. The farm has numerous outbuildings on both sides of the county road. (See Map Two, below).



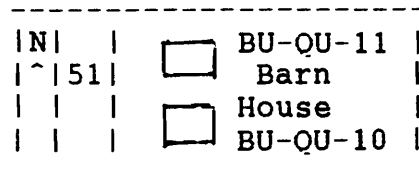
Map Two: Bertha Cash Farmstead

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\* "BU" stands for Butler County. The next two letters (e.g. "PO") indicate towns, such as Poplar Bluff. Numbers refer inventory sheets.

east side of Highway 51, is a typical lowland farm complex. The farmhouse is of the bungalow type with a central dormer and a full one-story front porch. Just north of the house is a dog trot style barn with a hay hood.

Map Four: Vancil Farmstead



The Cash Farmstead, the Head Farmstead, and the Vancil Farmstead are well-preserved historic farmsteads that are representative examples of farms in Butler County. House types on these farmsteads are typical of three different eras and house types, i.e. the late nineteenth-century I-house, the early twentieth century double-pen house, and the early to mid-twentieth century bungalow. The barns on these farmsteads are also typical of Butler County barns, discussed below.

#### Barns of Butler County

Included in this survey are many fine examples of twentieth-century wood frame barns. The typical Butler County barn is rectangular in shape, one-and-one-half

stories tall, with a front-opening gable roof and hay hoods over the loft, either in the front only, or in both the front and rear. Many of these barns have lean-to additions flanking the main rectangular block. Most have vertical wooden siding, and many have metal roofs. Some Butler County barns (e.g. the Vancil Barn, previously noted) are of the dog-trot variety, with an open breezeway through the center of the gable-front structure. A notable collection of barns is located along Route O between Poplar Bluff and Hendrickson.

#### Community Development

With the exception of Poplar Bluff, the towns of Butler County are small communities that serve as localized market centers for surrounding rural areas. The earliest towns, such as Keener in the vicinity of Keener Spring, developed as milling and market villages for pioneer settlements. In the 1880s, towns sprang up along railroad lines. Cotton cultivation in the 1880s-1920s gave economic life to towns such as Qulin and Neelyville, which became cotton ginning centers. But these towns faded after the 1930s. The development of highways in the twentieth century boosted Poplar Bluff as a hub of automobile travel, but caused the decline

of many old railroad towns, such as Hilliard and Harviell.

Significant communities in Butler County include the following:

#### Ash Hill

Ash Hill, located ten miles east of Poplar Bluff, began its life as a lumber milling town in an area of early settlement just west of the St. Francis River in northeastern Butler County. The town was established as a railroad stop ca. 1872. Originally called Nye, the community enjoyed an era of prosperity around the turn of the century as a stop on the Cairo Branch of the Missouri Pacific Railroad from Cairo, Illinois, to Poplar Bluff. During the lumber boom, the town had two sawmills, and a population of about 300. When the lumber industry faded and highways replaced railroads, Ash Hill declined from a thriving market center to a small village with only a few houses.

One significant property near Ash Hill is the Ash Hill General Baptist Church (BU-AS-1). Churches were very significant centers of community life in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In 1902, elders of the Ash Hill Church helped to organize a General Baptist Church at Fisk. At that time, Ash Hill

was a larger community than Fisk. But the development of highways favored Fisk over Ash Hill.<sup>10</sup>

### **Batesville**

The town of Batesville developed on farmland owned by Horace Bates, three miles south of Ash Hill. (See the large-scale map of Butler County.) For a short period around the turn of the century, the Butler County Railroad ran through it. Subsequently the railroad moved west, the line was discontinued, and Batesville became a lost town.

### **Broselev**

First known as Bailey's End, Broselev originated as a stop on the Bailey Railroad in the early twentieth century. William N. Barron, a wealthy local landowner with an interest in the Butler County Railroad, insisted that the town's name be changed to Broselev, after a town in his native England, in 1913. By 1930, the town had two cotton gins, a grist mill, a shoe shop, a sawmill, and a blacksmith's shop. It seems reasonable to assume that the Great Depression, overproduction of cotton, and a general decline in the population of Butler County after 1930 contributed to

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<sup>10</sup> Butler County Genealogical Society, Butler County, Volume 2, p. 61.



the decline of the town. One highly significant site in Broseley is the Boeving Brothers Cotton Company's Broseley Gin (BU-BR-2), which was built south of town in the mid-1920's. This old cotton gin remains almost totally intact with machinery still extant in the interior.



Figure One: Broseley Gin

### **Carola**

Carola was a German settlement on a site formerly known as Gillis Bluff, approximately eight miles southwest of Qulin. Charles Hendrix, a citizen of Poplar Bluff, sponsored the settlement and induced about one hundred immigrants to come there from Saxony in the 1870s; the settlers travelled on a steamboat named the Carola. The town of Carola must have been located just south of the present town of Oglesville.

### **Coon Island**

Coon Island is not a town, but an area of farms and wilderness occupying the relatively high ground east of Neelyville and west of Oglesville.

### **Fagus**

The town of Fagus, located at the junction of Highway 51 and Route N in extreme southern Butler County, was formerly a lumber milling camp on the Butler County Railroad.

### Fisk

Fisk is a small, but still thriving town, in eastern Butler County near the St. Francis River. The town originated as a stop on the "CAT," the Cairo, Arkansas and Texas Railroad.<sup>11</sup> Samuel J. Fisk operated saw mills on both sides of the river in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Fisk is located on the Stoddard County line, seven miles northeast of Poplar Bluff, just south of Highway 60. (See Map Five.) According to Sanborn Insurance Maps, most structures in Fisk date from after 1924. The Pool Hall (BU-FI-1) is a boomtown commercial building, ca. 1925, that suggests an earlier historical period.

### Harviell

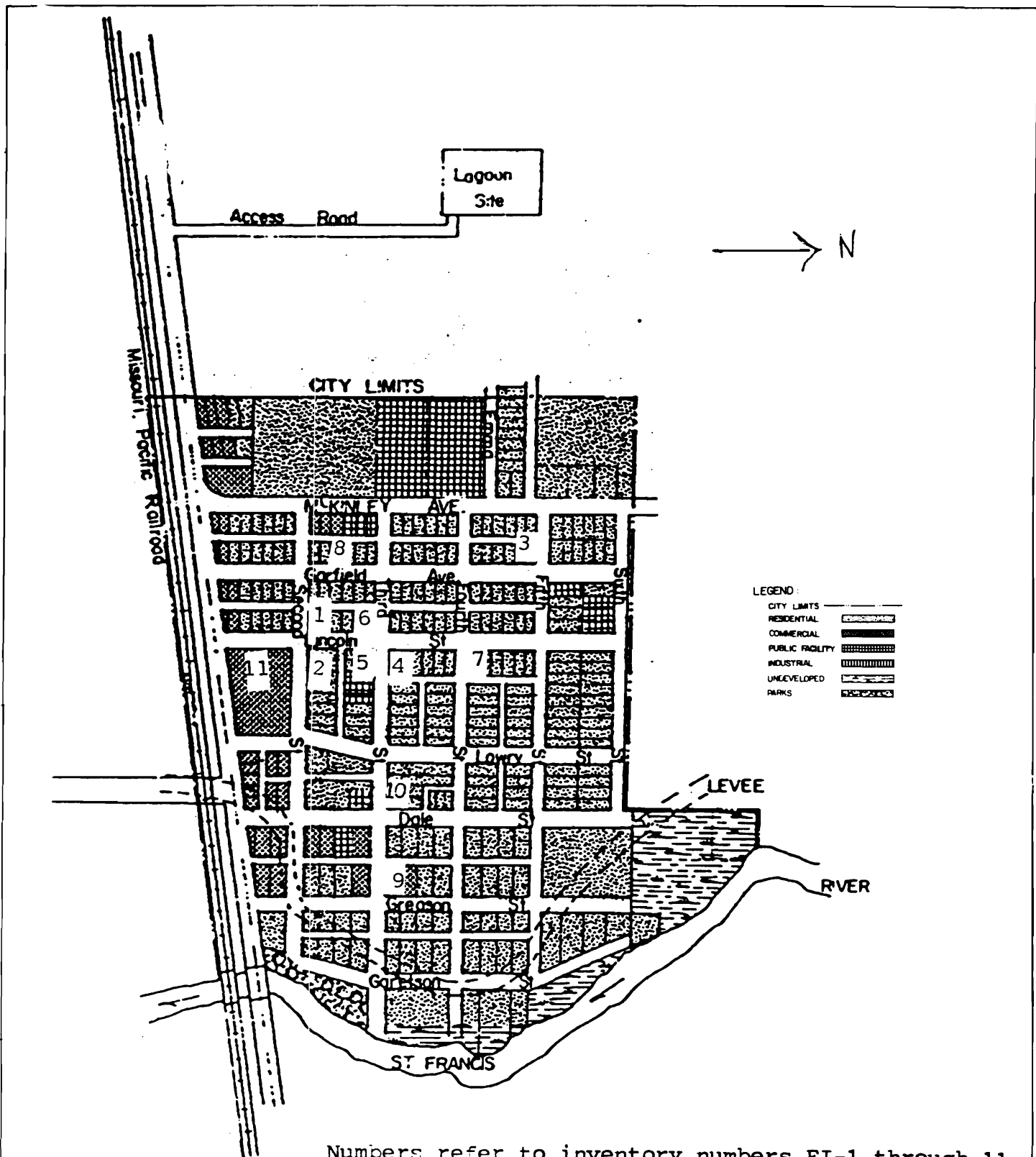
Harviell began its existence in 1872 as a stop on the Iron Mountain, St. Louis, and Southern Railroad. The town was named for Simmons R. Harviell, a prominent landowner in Butler County.<sup>12</sup> By 1900, Harviell was a

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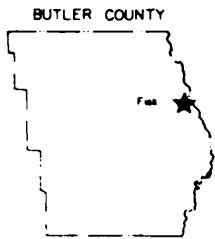
<sup>11</sup> James E. Price, Final Report of an Archaeological Survey Conducted in the Direct Impact Zone of the Proposed Fisk, Missouri, Sewer System, February 27, 1976, on file at the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

<sup>12</sup> George Loughhead, Early History of Butler County (Wappapello, Mo., 1971), 106.

thriving lumber town. However, lumber milling structures appear not to have survived. One important historic property in the community is the Foreman's House (BU-HA-2), erected in the town's heyday. This imposing house has a full two-story front porch supported by turned wooden posts, with a wooden railing on the second story. (See Map Six.)



Numbers refer to inventory numbers FI-1 through 11.



CITY BASE MAP OF  
*FISK, MISSOURI*

THIS MAP WAS PREPARED BY  
THE OZARK FOOTHILLS  
REGIONAL PLANNING  
COMMISSION MARCH 1973

### Hendrickson

Hendrickson, which was named for Nathan W. Hendrickson, a prominent landowner, is an old railroad town north of Poplar Bluff. The town was laid out along the tracks of the Iron Mountain Railroad (later the Missouri Pacific) in 1873. In the early 1900s, this community was an important shipping point for timber and iron ore. A significant old hotel (BU-HE-20) remains extant in the town, west of Route O and east of the railroad tracks. Constructed in the early twentieth century, this two-story frame commercial building has a single central entry, hipped roof, and one-story porch with wooden posts. Only a few additional buildings remain in the town. These include a double-pen house (BU-HE-19) and an open gable house (BU-HE-21). In the vicinity of Hendrickson, along Route O, there are many notable wooden barns.

### Hilliard

Like Hendrickson, Hilliard is an old railroad, timber, and iron-mining center in northern Butler County. In 1869, George W. Hill purchased a large tract of timber land in the area. The Iron Mountain Railroad came through town in 1872 and built a spur to

a local iron mine. Mr. Hill's lumber yard on the railroad became known as "Hill's Yard," which was later changed to "Hilliard". Mr. Hill sold wood for use in locomotives, until the railroads began using coal for fuel. The end of the lumber boom and the fading of the railroads brought on the town's decline. There are now only a few houses and one store left in Hilliard. The gabled ell type house (BU-HI-2) adjacent to the store is probably the oldest surviving building in Hilliard.

#### Neelyville

Neelyville began as a stop on the Doniphan Branch of the Iron Mountain Railroad. Its streets were laid out in 1870.<sup>13</sup> The town was named after the Neely family, which owned the land on which it was platted. There was a post office in Neelyville by 1875, by which time the town had acquired a store, a cotton gin, and a sawmill.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Larry Grantham, An Intensive Survey of Archaeological, Historical, and Historic Architectural Resources Neelyville Community Park, City of Neelyville, Butler County, Mo., August 1980, p. 7, on file at the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

<sup>14</sup> Suzanne Harris, Missouri Township Project, Southeast Missouri, 1981: Inventory of Archaeological and Historical Sites, Phase III, September 1981, p. 82, on file at the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

In 1882, the Boyden and Wyman Lumber Company began operating in the town. A fire nearly destroyed Neelyville in 1900. During that year, the Boyden and Wyman company reorganized as the Star Ranch & Land Company and purchased approximately twenty thousand acres in the vicinity of Neelyville. After logging off the land, the company drained it and sold it to settlers.<sup>15</sup>

In the early twentieth century, the town enjoyed prosperity as a marketing and cotton ginning center. A local physician, investor, and booster named Dr. Robert L. Turner was responsible for the construction of several commercial buildings and houses in the town during the 1920s. (See Map Seven.)

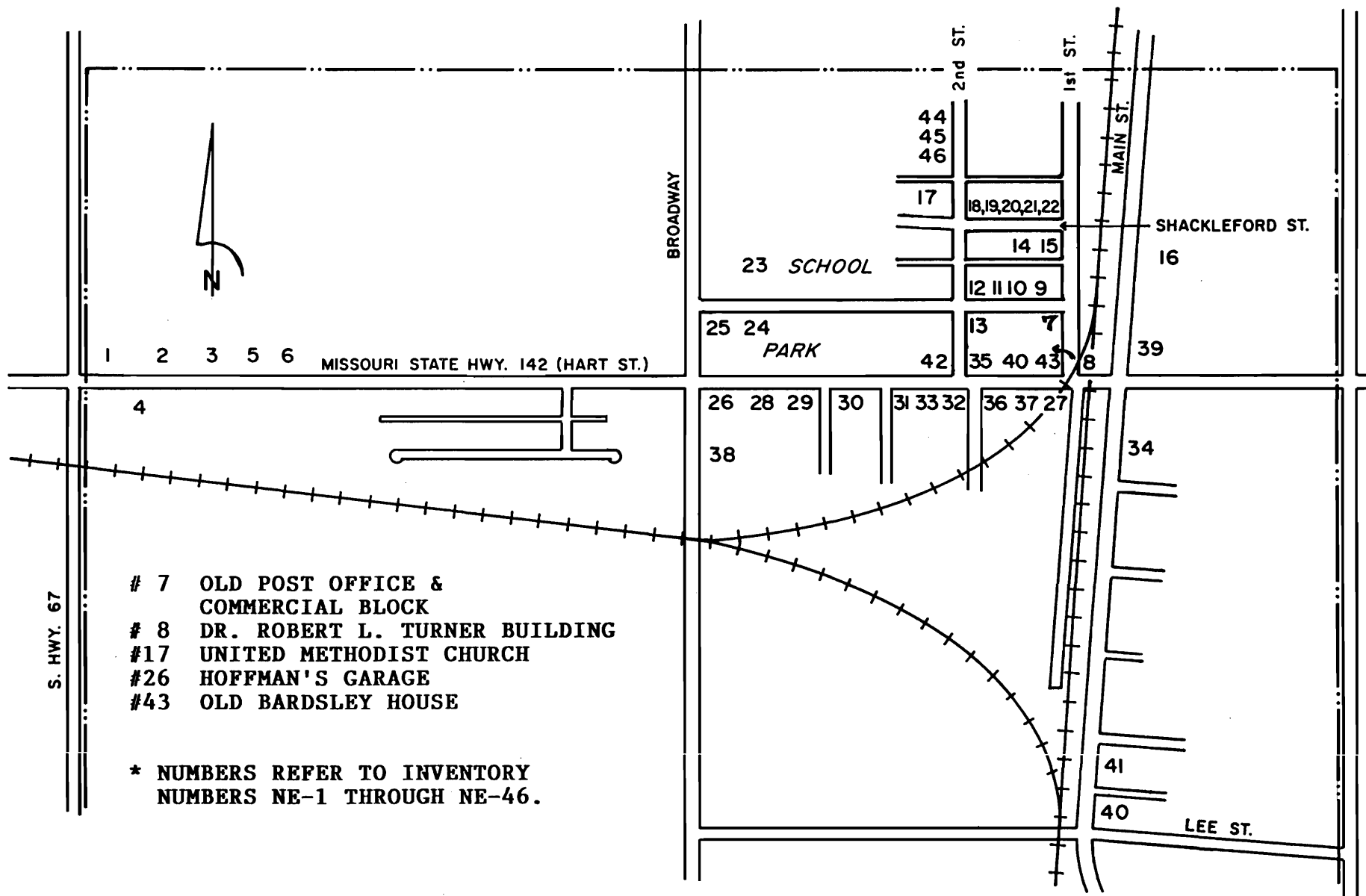
This survey includes more than forty properties in and around Neelyville. Several of these properties would seem to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Eligible properties include the following: Mt. Moriah C.M.E. Church (BU-NE-5), Old Washington School (BU-NE-6), Old Post Office and Commercial Block (BU-NE-7), DR. Robert L. Turner Building (BU-NE-8), Dr. Robert L. Turner House (BU-NE-9), shotgun house (BU-NE-14), United Methodist Church

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 82-83.



(BU-NE-17), Neelyville High School (BU-PO-23), Hoffman's Garage (BU-NE-26), double-pen cabin (BU-NE-39), and the Old Bardsley House (BU-NE-43). Two properties, i.e. Mt. Moriah C.M.E. Church and Old Washington School, have significance in the area of Ethnic Heritage--Black. The Old Washington School and Neelyville High School have significance in the area of Education and should be included in a thematic study of rural schools in Butler County (see "Recommendations"). The Dr. Robert L. Turner House and the Dr. Robert L. Turner Building have significant associations with a local physician and community booster.



NEELYVILLE, MISSOURI

### Poplar Bluff

Poplar Bluff, the county seat, took its name from an imposing stand of tulip poplar trees along the Black River. The site for the county seat was selected in 1849, and lots were sold in 1850. In the late nineteenth century, the city grew as a railroad and agricultural marketing center. Highway development, beginning in the 1920s, insured the city's continuing prosperity as a hub of commerce. The many historic resources of Poplar Bluff have been surveyed by Thomason Associates. Survey documents are on file at the Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission in Poplar Bluff and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Program in Jefferson City.

### Qulin

A post office existed in what is now Qulin as early as 1883. At that time, the community was situated in the middle of a dense forest. In the early twentieth century, the extension of the Iron Mountain Railroad made it possible to harvest and ship timber from the area. By 1904 the town consisted of several houses, a cemetery, a saloon, and a store. Within a few years, residents built a school, a church, and

several more businesses. Deforestation of the area made possible the cultivation of cotton. By the 1920s, Qulin had a cotton gin. (See Map Eight.)

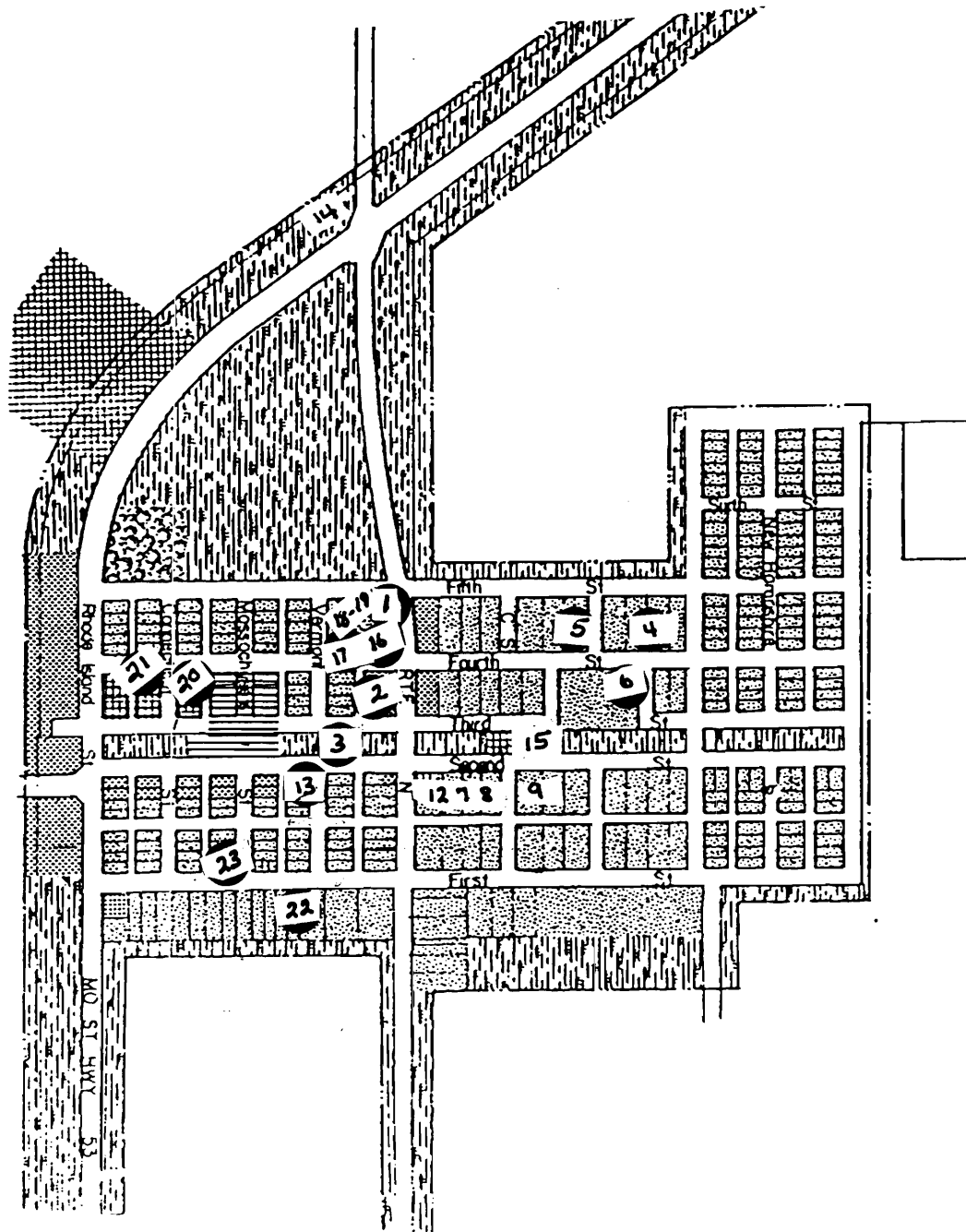
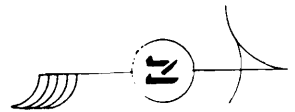
The Melville-Qulin Historical Society has reconstructed the Oller-Reynolds House, located near the town's water tower. This house, which has been moved about two blocks from its original location, is a two-story cypress cabin. Originally constructed around the turn of the century, it is one of the oldest houses in Qulin. With donations and support from the Twin Rivers FFA and Twin Rivers Elementary School, the Historical Society replaced some windows and put a new cedar shingle roof on the house.<sup>16</sup>

This survey includes twenty-four properties in and near Qulin. Several of the properties would seem to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Eligible properties include the following: Qulin United Methodist Church (BU-QU-1), Qulin Post Office (BU-QU-2), Ortho Seed Co. (BU-QU-3), four-square house (BU-QU-4), open gable cottage (BU-QU-8), double-pen house (BU-QU-9), C.M. Vancil Farmstead (BU-QU-10-11), gabled ell (BU-QU-16), Gentzen Country

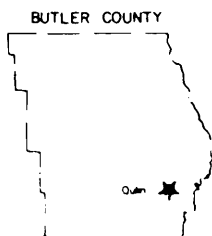
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<sup>16</sup> Poplar Bluff Daily American Republic, April 19, 1990.

School (BU-QU-17), Qulin School (BU-QU-20), Qulin School Building (BU-QU-21). Three of these properties have significance in the area of Education and should be included in a thematic nomination of rural schools in Butler County. Qulin United Methodist Church was originally erected as a school. The Qulin school buildings (BU-QU-20-21) were architect-designed buildings constructed during the Great Depression by WPA workers.



Numbers refer to inventory numbers QU-1 through QU-23.



CITY BASE MAP OF  
*QULIN, MISSOURI*

THIS MAP WAS PREPARED BY  
THE OZARK FOOTHILLS  
REGIONAL PLANNING  
COMMISSION MARCH 1973

## Rombauer

Like Qulin, Rombauer began as a lumbering and railroad town around the turn of the century. In its early days, it was a boomtown with wooden sidewalks and many small businesses. With the decline of both the lumber industry and the railroads, Rombauer suffered many losses. The wooden sidewalks are gone, and streets are unpaved. An important historic property in Rombauer is the Rombauer School (BU-RO-8), constructed in 1941 by relief workers of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). This is an imposing building reflecting the ideals of modern architecture as expressed in New Deal public works projects. Other significant surviving buildings include the craftsman-style Old Rombaurer Post Office (BU-RO-1), a double-pen bungalow-type house (BU-RO-2), and an old store (BU-RO-7).

## Transportation

One of the earliest roads through Butler County was the Military Road, which was used in the 1830s to transport Indians from Florida, Illinois, and Indiana to Indian territory under military guard. The Military Road originated in Keener, passed through the Cane

Creek and Little Black River areas, and ran south through the county, to Fort Smith Arkansas. Before the Civil War, the road was used by stage coaches.<sup>17</sup> One site that remains along the old road is the Military-Houts Cemetery (BU-ST-2), located on Butler County unimproved road BC451, west of Poplar Bluff.

Railroads transformed the county in the late nineteenth century. The railroads made it possible to strip the county of timber and ship lumber to various urban markets. As previously mentioned, many towns sprang up along railroad lines. The railroad foreman's house at Harviell (BU-HA-2) is an important survival of the railroad era.

Automobile transportation and highway construction opened up the tourist industry in Butler County. Resorts like Keener Spring (BU-PO-36-51) catered to travelers on the state's new highway system in the 1920s and 1930s. New types of buildings, such as gasoline stations, popped up along county roads. Some significant early service stations have survived. One of the best of these is Hoffman's Garage in Neelyville

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<sup>17</sup> Joseph Nixon, et al., Report Phase I Level Cultural Resource Survey of Proposed Harviell Access Area Along Cane Creek in Butler County, Southeast Missouri, March 1986, p. 23, on file at the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.



(BU-NE-26).

Butler County has several historically significant bridges. The Hargrove Pivot Bridge (Old Hargrove Bridge, Old Hargrove Swing Bridge), located two thousand feet east of Route HH and three-tenths mile east of Highway 53 on the Black River, has been previously listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Other significant bridges include Miller Bridge (BU-PO-9), an iron through-truss bridge with a wooden deck that spans Cane Creek on unimproved road BC448. The Black River Bridge (BU-HE-17) is double camelback truss bridge, ca. 1920, located near the town of Hendrickson, where Old Highway 67 crosses the river.

### Commerce

Commercial enterprises in Butler County communities other than Poplar Bluff are generally small family-type businesses, including general stores, pool halls, taverns, and cafes serving a local clientele. Typical Butler County commercial buildings include Craft's Grocery (BU-OG-9), formerly known as the Muffittville Store, in Oglesville, the Pool Hall in Fisk (BU-FI-1), Killian's Market (BU-PO-62), just south of Poplar Bluff, and the Blue Moon (BU-PO-64), a tavern

on the west side of Highway 67, south of Poplar Bluff. Neelyville contains some fine old commercial buildings, including the Old Post Office and Commercial Block (BU-NE-7) and the Dr. Robert L. Turner Building (BU-NE-8).

The Blue Moon (BU-PO-64) is a significant commercial building, constructed in the early 1930s, just before Prohibition ended. After the repeal of the anti-liquor laws, the Blue Moon changed from a store to a tavern. Local citizens recall many dances being held there. The owner, Debbie Eakins, has reported that the Blue Moon had the first juke box in the county in the early 1950s.

Commercial buildings are important reflections of the changing economic and social life of the community.

### Industry

Industry in Butler County has generally been limited to iron mining and the processing of wood and agricultural products. The lumber industry, which boomed and declined between the 1870s and the early 1900s, has left few traces in Butler County. In the northern part of the county, there are a few abandoned iron mines.

### Cotton Gins

The most notable industrial structures in the county are the large mechanized cotton ginning plants, such as the one in Broseley (BU-BR-2) and the one in Qulin (BU-QU-3). Cotton ginning in the county flourished briefly in the early twentieth century, but declined after 1930. In the 1920s, Neelyville had three cotton gins. According to oral testimony collected by Earl Greason, the Clay County Cotton Company, the Radcliffe company, and the Harrison and Snodgrass Company all had gins operating in Neelyville at one time. Harrison and Snodgrass had two gins for a brief period [in the 1920s], one in the north end of town, and one on the road that is now Missouri Highway 142 just west of the railroad.<sup>18</sup> Parts of this latter gin remain standing. The Boeving Brothers Cotton Company operated gins in Broseley, Qulin, and other locations in Butler County. The Broseley Gin is extant and possesses a high degree of integrity.

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<sup>18</sup> Dr. Fred Joseph "Buddy" Briggs Oral History, October 29, 1991, transcribed from a recording made by Earl Greason, on file at the State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

### Education

Butler County continued the tradition of the one-room rural school well into the twentieth century. Some of the most significant buildings in the county are wood frame schoolhouses in craftsman styles, such as the old Dan River School (BU-PO-12) shown in the cover photograph. The county also has a substantial number of brick and stone school buildings constructed by relief workers during the Great Depression. The old Qulin High School building (BU-QU-21) is an outstanding architect-designed building, built by WPA workers, in a Moderne style. Neelyville has two very significant school buildings. One of them, the Old Washington School (BU-NE-6), was constructed ca. 1942 as a segregated school for black students. The other, the Neelyville High School (BU-NE-23), was built in 1934-36 by the WPA.

### Entertainment/Recreation

Like other Ozark counties, Butler County attracted tourists in the early twentieth century, as the state developed its highway system. Keener Spring Resort, northeast of Poplar Bluff, is a very significant example of a tourist resort, which began operating in the

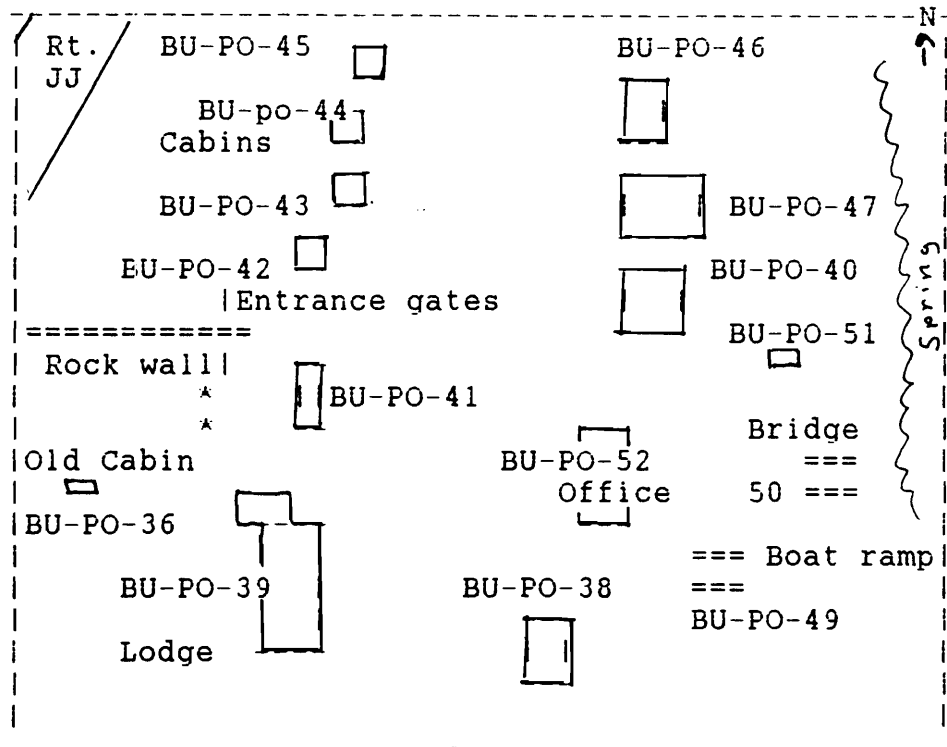
1880s.

#### Keener Spring Resort

This is a beautiful tourist development at the edge of a clear Ozark spring. (See Map Nine, next page.) In the mid-nineteenth century, there was a mill at Keener Spring. By the 1880s, however, tourists had discovered the charm of the area, and a developer had erected small vacation cabins. Only one of the original log tourist cabins remains (BU-PO-36). The original horizontal log cabins were replaced in the 1920s with picturesque cabins and lodges in a popular Tudor revival style. These lodges, cabins, and other structures (BU-PO-37-52), with some modifications, remain in use today.

#### Federal Projects

During the Great Depression, the federal government took an interest in restoring the forests of the Ozark region. Thousands of relief workers in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Works Progress Administration (WPA) programs helped to plant trees and develop conservation and recreation structures in Butler County's deforested lands. Much of this land became part of Mark Twain National Forest. One significant reminder of this era of reforestation is



Map Nine: Keener Spring Resort

the Lone Hill Lookout Tower (BU-LO-10), located on Missouri Department of Conservation property, southwest of Poplar Bluff.

After World War II, the federal government developed Wappapello dam and reservoir which gave rise to dense recreational developments in northern Butler County at the Wayne County line. A typical 1940s-type tourist facility at Wappapello is Wedgewood Lodge (BU-WA-6), which consists of an office and four sleeping cabins in a craftsman style.

### Common Property Types

The historical building types most representative of the life and culture of Butler County are the pioneer log cabin, the open gable house, the twentieth century barn, the craftsman bungalow, the boomtown commercial building (with false front), the small rural schoolhouse, the WPA school, and the simple gable-end church. A discussion of each of these building types follows.

#### Pioneer Log Cabins

For nineteenth century settlers, Butler County provided an abundance of timber for the construction of simple horizontal log dwellings. By the time pioneers arrived in the county, the tradition of log construction was well established, especially in the Upland South, where most Butler County pioneers originated. At one time, log houses must have been quite common. However, only a small number have survived.

The best-preserved example of a log home in Butler County is the Hedspeth Log Home (BU-PO-35), located on the Vern Hedspeth property, on the south side of Route JJ, east of Keener Spring. Henry Hedspeth built this



home in 1850 in the vicinity of the spring. In 1874, he dismantled the home and moved it to its present site.

### Open Gable Houses

The open gable house type was popular in the United States from the mid-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century. Open gable (or gable-front) houses are one, one-and-one-half, or two-story houses with gable roofs that face front. Large numbers of these houses adorn the Butler County landscape. Most are of frame construction, and many are covered with shingle siding. (See Figure 2.)

### Barns

The rolling hills and alluvial plains of Butler County are dotted with early- to mid-twentieth century barns. Most of these are of frame construction with gable or gambrel roofs and hay hoods. Most have vertical wood siding. Most of them have a central block flanked by lean-to additions. (See Figure 3.)

### Bungalows

Craftsman bungalows are a common early to mid-

twentieth century house type. Butler County has many bungalows, both in towns and on farmsteads. Bungalows are one-story or one-and-one-half-story houses with low silhouettes, steeply pitched roofs, and square floorplans. Most of them have large front porches, and many have dormers. A typical example of a farmhouse constructed in the bungalow style is the C.M. Vancil house (BU-QU-10), south of Qulin.

#### Boomtown Commercial Buildings

Boomtown commercial buildings are gable-front buildings with false facades, typical of Midwestern and Western boomtowns. Generally, they are of frame construction. Many have front porches with shed-style roofs. A good example of a false front commercial building in Butler County is the Pool Hall in Fisk (BU-FI-1). (See Figure 4.)

#### Rural Schoolhouses

As previously stated, Butler County has a substantial number of small rural schoolhouses constructed of wood in a craftsman mode in the early twentieth century. A good example is the Carter School, constructed ca. 1925. (See Figure 5.)

### WPA Schoolhouses

During the Great Depression, relief workers built numerous schools in Butler County. Typically, these schools were substantial buildings, constructed of brick or stone, in a Moderne or Art Deco style. WPA school buildings can be found in Neelyville, Qulin, and Rombauer.

### Gable-end Churches

Other than the open gable house, the simple gable-end church may be the most common pre-1950 building type in Butler County. These churches have gable roofs that face front, and they may or may not have steeples. Many of them are sheathed in shingle siding. Windows are generally of the double-hung variety with clear glass. Ornamentation is minimal. Many of these churches have central entranceways with double doors. Vestibules have often been added. A typical example is the Ash Hill General Baptist Church (BU-AS-1). (See Figure 6.)

Representative examples of these types should be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C (Architecture) as

examples of various types, styles, and periods of construction. Considerations for determining eligibility include age (generally more than fifty years old), specific features and details, and integrity. A building or structure possesses historical integrity when it substantially retains its original structure and appearance without significant alteration.



Figure 2. Open gable house. BU-QU-6 Qulin.

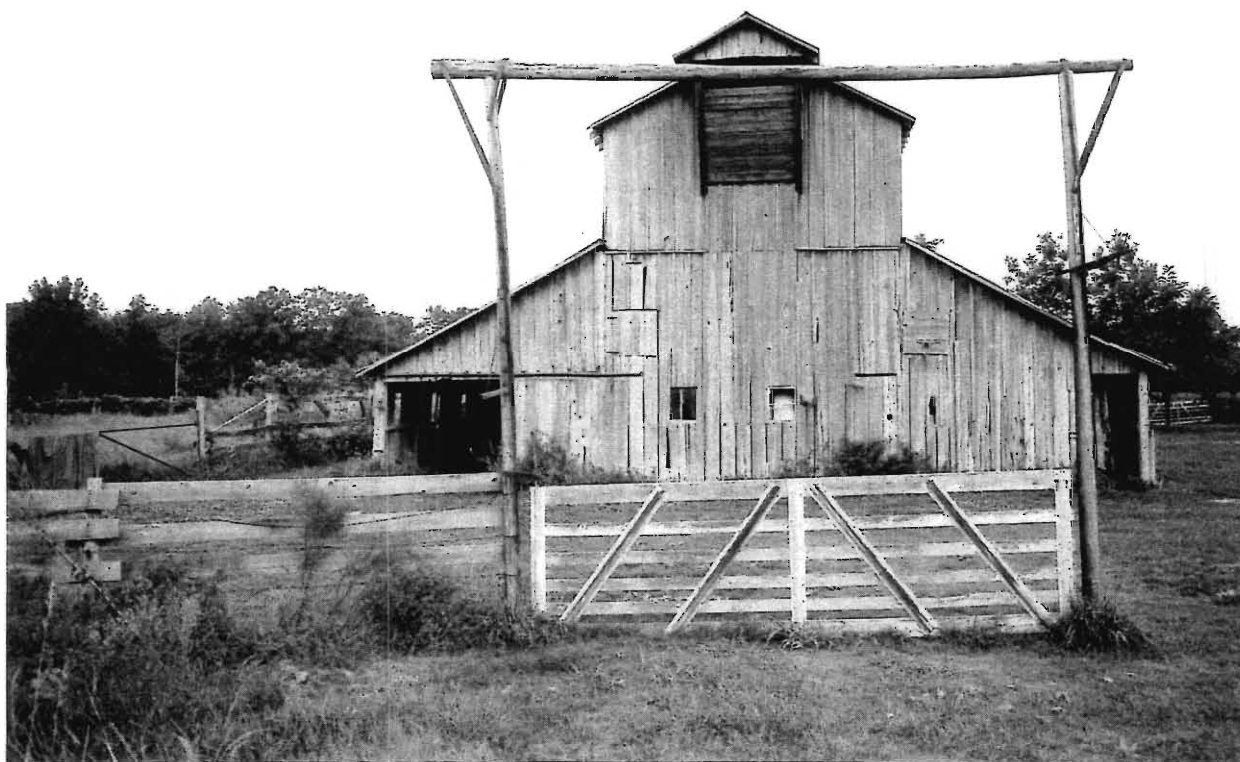


Figure 3. Barn. BU-PO-24 Poplar Bluff vicinity.



Figure 4. False front commercial building. BU-FI-1 Fisk.



Figure 5. Rural school. BU-PO-11 Poplar Bluff vicinity.

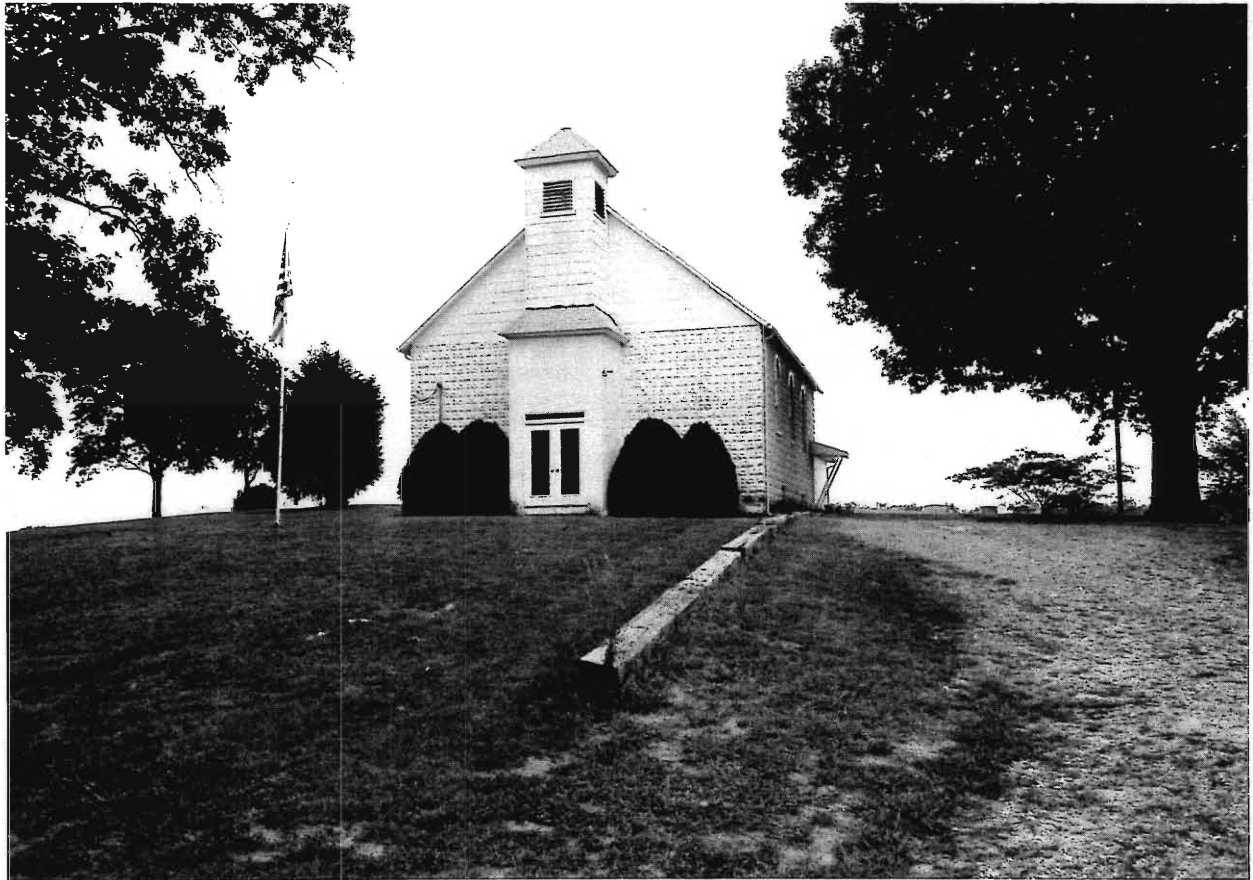


Figure 6. Gable-end church with center steeple. BU-AS-1  
Ash Hill General Baptist Church

## Recommendations

Historical and architectural surveys identify buildings that may be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The process of nominating properties for Register listing is time-consuming and costly and involves the completion of a National Register nomination form with text, maps, photographs, and substantial documentation. Therefore, it is necessary to set priorities for nominating those properties that seem to be the most significant (or sometimes the most endangered). Buildings and structures closely associated both geographically and historically may be listed as historic districts. Buildings and structures that are related by period and historical context may be grouped together in thematic nominations.

Properties may be eligible for National Register listing under the following criteria:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of



a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

D. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.

These criteria are explained more fully in National Register Bulletin 16A, available from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Program, Jefferson City.

As a result of this Butler County survey, the consultant recommends the preparation of one district nomination. A district nomination should be prepared for the Keener Spring Resort Historic District (Map Nine). Buildings and structures in this district would seem to be eligible for National Register listing under Criteria A and C in the areas of Entertainment/Recreation and Architecture.

The consultant also recommends preparation of a thematic nomination of Rural Schools in Butler County. This thematic nomination should include the following eleven properties:

BU-NE-6 Old Washington School, Neelyville

BU-NE-23 Neelyville High School  
BU-PO-11 Carter School  
BU-PO-12 Old Dan River School  
BU-PO-18 Twin Springs School  
BU-PO-23 Old Baskey No. 1 School  
BU-QU-1 Qulin United Methodist Church (Qulin  
School)  
BU-QU-17 Gentzen Country School  
BU-QU-20 Qulin School (Middle School)  
BU-QU-21 Old Qulin High School  
BU-RO-8 Rombauer School

These properties would seem to be eligible for National Register listing under Criteria A and C in the areas of Education and Architecture.

The consultant further recommends that a single-property nomination be prepared for the Hedspeth Log Home (BU-PO-35), because it is a rare surviving example of a pioneer log home in Butler County. This property would seem to be eligible for National Register listing under Criterion A in the area of Exploration/Settlement.

The Boeving Brothers Cotton Company Broselev Gin (BU-BR-2) is certainly eligible for National Register listing, because it retains such a high degree of

integrity. The building could be nominated as the best surviving example of a cotton gin in Butler County.

In the opinion of the consultant, it would be eligible for National Register listing under Criterion A in the areas of Agriculture and Industry.

It would be highly desirable to develop a context for nominating cotton gins in southeastern Missouri by locating and documenting other similar properties that have survived from the era of the 1880s to the 1920s, when hundreds of gins operated in the region.

Therefore, the consultant recommends a thematic survey of cotton gins in Butler County and the Bootheel. This would be a substantial undertaking, requiring a study of cotton growing and ginning in Missouri and a thematic survey covering approximately six counties in the extreme southeastern section of the state. Such a survey would be desirable, but probably not necessary, for the successful listing of the Broseley Gin.

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# Windows On The Past

If you would like to take a trip back in time and spend a few hours learning about Poplar Bluff and Butler County history, the Butler County Historical Society and the Poplar Bluff Ranger District of the Mark Twain National Forest suggest two outings.

One includes eight sites located in and around the city and the second is a trek through the historic Cane Creek area.

## Cane Creek Tour

Take a trip back in time, to a day when traveling Butler County meant traveling by foot or horseback or by wagon.

Imagine what it was like when Butler County's first settlers entered Cane Creek valley and saw tall cane breaks, ivory-billed woodpeckers, flocks of Carolina parakeets, and herds of elk and bison.

Drive along the old roads used by the earliest settlers of Butler County and discover the past along the historic Natchitoches Trail/Old Military Road.

The Butler County Historical Society in cooperation with the Poplar Bluff Ranger District of the Mark Twain National Forest have produced a brochure and a cassette tape for those interested in taking the historic Cane Creek Driving Tour.

Before you go, you should know the entire round trip for the driving takes about three hours. Most of the tour will require driving on gravel roads that are generally in good shape. Many types of traffic can be found on the roads, so drive carefully. Also, please respect the rights of private landowners along the tour route.

## Directions:

From the Poplar Bluff Ranger Station proceed west on Maud Street and turn right onto Westwood Blvd. (Highway 67) then left onto PP Highway and drive for 2.8 miles.

At the intersection of Township Road in Green Forest, PP Highway turns to the northwest, at this point drive straight onto Butler County (BC) Road 448 (Miller Road) to get to Marker No. 1. The sign will be on your right.

Less than ¼ mile from here make a right on BC449. You will pass marker No. 4 on your left, but continue on to markers 2 and 3 farther up the road then turn around and go back to marker 4 and then back to BC448 and make a right.

Soon after you go over historic Miller Bridge you'll encounter marker 5; and farther down the road, marker 6, markers 7 and 8 are located at the intersection of Highway M and BC451.

Make a right on BC451 to see marker 9. Continue on this road to Highway TT and then make a right and proceed to where it intersects with Highway PP. Make a right on Highway PP and proceed 1.2 miles to marker 10. Then turn around and go back to the same intersection and this time make a right on BC423 to visit

markers 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15.

After crossing another historic iron bridge, you'll encounter marker 16. At this point turn right onto BC421 to visit markers 17 and 18. Continue on this road for a little less than a mile then turn left onto BC420 to see Marker 19.

Continue on BC420 for 1.4 miles the turn left on Highway 60. Marker 20 will be on your right 2/10 of mile after turning onto Highway 60. If you'd like to stop and read the sign pull into the driveway.

Please BE CAREFUL driving Highway 60 after driving the back roads, the main highway will present quite a contrast in speeds.

Marker 21 is 2/10 mile on your right along Highway 60 West. If you'd like to stop, please pull off of the highway onto the gravel lane.

Continue west on Highway 60 for 6/10 mile then turn right on BC410 to see markers 22 and 22a. You may choose to stop at the latter to stretch your legs. You are welcome to hike the trails or enjoy the scenery.

To complete the tour turn right on BC410 then turn left onto BC411 where another historic iron bridge that spans Cane Creek. Continue on BC411 then make a left turn onto Highway 60. About one mile on your right is the last marker on the tour No. 23 marking the Kitrell Cemetery.

Because of the high speed of traffic on this road and narrow shoulder of the highway, we suggest that you not stop or slow down near this marker. The cemetery is some distance from the road and cannot be seen from the road. Continue on Highway 60 East and 67 South if you wish to return to Poplar Bluff. We hope you enjoyed this tour.

The following is information about the various sites.

✓ 1. Dr. James C. McCowan House Site ca. 1878. The McCowan house is no longer standing. According to one source, he had one of the best farms on the creek. He also had a racetrack on the bottoms and raised racehorses.

2. George Powers Home 1893 (Marley Home 1953). According to one of six children raised in the house at the turn of the century, "We may have been poor — but we didn't know it. We had a beautiful, sheltered, happily life of comfort and peace. We worked a lot, but we played a lot, too."

3. Patty House Site c. 1860. The Patty house site is inaccessible. The house and barn are no longer standing.

4. William Combs Home ca. 1860 (Miller Home ca. 1901). Combs helped organize Cane Creek Baptist Church and was its first minister. He also helped to organize the First Baptist Church in Poplar Bluff and also served as its first minister.

5. Judge Ezekia Miller Home ca. 1870 (original barn). It was Judge Ezekia Miller for whom the bridge and the road are named.

6. Bay Spring School est. 1870 (new school a. 1923). The original school was a log building that was located at the foot of the hill near a

spring.

7. **Military Road (Natchitoches Trace 1834-1880).** Also called the old Vincennes—Natchitoches Trail, the Military Road entered Missouri from Illinois and Kentucky and went through Southern Missouri and on through Arkansas into Louisiana. Originally, it may have been an Indian trail that the French adopted for their use in the early 1700's.

Tradition has it that it was along this trail that the Kittrells came in a covered wagon. Years later it was along this trail that President Andrew Jackson constructed the "Military Road" over which part of the Indian Removal occurred in 1839. As such, it is a small section of the infamous Trail of Tears.

Years after this episode, the Military Road was used by a Confederate army under the command of Major General Sterling on their excursion into Missouri during the Civil War.

8. **Old Military Cemetery, Powers Cemetery, Grist Mill.** The military cemetery and the Powers Mill are on private land and are inaccessible to the public. The Powers Mill was a grist mill built before the Civil War and at one time was considered to be the best in the county. Operations at

the mill ceased in the early 1900s. Powers Cemetery in the vicinity of the mill, was started during the Civil War.

9. **Military-Houts Cemetery ca. 1860.** This cemetery dates as far back as the Civil War.

10. **Post Office ca. 1860.** In this vicinity was a U.S. Post office and a country store at the site prior to the Civil War.

11. **Sparkman Cemetery.** This cemetery is a very old burial place predating the Civil War. Legend has it that the first person buried here was a Black child who was part of a wagon train going west. W.W. Sparkman allowed the child to be buried on his land in what is now this cemetery. The oldest original part of the cemetery was not plotted and was closed in 1906, for fear of digging into older unmarked graves. A cemetery board was then incorporated to divide the remaining space into plots and oversee their sale and to oversee the upkeep of the cemetery.

12. **Methodist Church ca. 1890.** First organized in 1890 on Ten Mile Creek, it was then known as the Rushville Methodist Church. When this building was erected, the church met here, became known as the Good

Hope Church and in 1896 became associated with the Sunday School that had been organized in 1861.

13. **W.W. Sparkman Home ca. 1860.** The original Sparkman in Butler County. W.W. Sparkman, lived here prior to the Civil War. The Sparkmans were one of the earliest pioneer families in the county.

14. **Cane Creek Church ca. 1842.** This church located up the hill was organized in 1842. Among the list of the early pastors of this church were William Combs (see No. 4) and Dan Shipman, the first person born in what is now Poplar Bluff.

15. **Sparkman Cave.** The path to the cave leaves the road at the west end of the bridge over Cane Creek. Way back when the creek was crossed by what is known as "fording" there was a swinging bridge at the site of this bridge. It was for pedestrians only, and for school children primarily. The bridge that now crosses the creek was built around the turn of the century.

16. **Cane Creek School.** The first Cane Creek School was reportedly built in 1868 about ¾ miles northwest of the present location. It was a

See WINDOWS  
On Page 5

# Windows

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From Page 4

log schoolhouse established with the aid of William Sparkman, Solomon Kittrell, and T.J. Caldwell. The second schoolhouse was a large two-room frame building which burned down in 1944. The third and last school building built in 1945 of cinder blocks and brick now stands in ruins.

17. J. H. Sparkman Home ca. 1870.

18. Joel Jasper Kearbey Home ca. 1838. Joel Jasper Kearbey was the son of Thomas Lee and Nancy Scot Kearbey who settled in Cane Creek in 1838 and were among the first settlers in the area. The Kearbey family put in a claim for a large tract of land here and paid the government 25 cents an acre for it.

19. Spurlock Cabin. The "Aunt Jane Spurlock" place is the original site of the cabin which now stand in Hendrickson Park in Poplar Bluff.

20. Thomas Scott Home. Near here was the location of the house site where the first meeting of the Butler County Court was held on June 16, 1849.

21. Samuel Kittrell House Site ca. 1819. The Kittrell House site is located somewhere along this lane. No visible evidence of the house place remains. Solomon Kittrell came here with this family and elderly father Samuel Kittrell from Kentucky in 1819. They soon set up a trading post and general store. His trade goods were hauled by ox wagons from Cape Girardeau. His patrons included Indians and pioneer hunters and trappers. Later he put in a distillery and tan yard and also reportedly had a blacksmith shop.

22. O.L. Smith ca. 1850. Martha Jane Kittrell, daughter of Solomon

Kittrell and granddaughter of Samuel Kittrell, married John C. Smith and this was their homestead and farm. Their son, Odie L. Smith Sr. and grandson Odie S. Smith Jr. grew up here. Built as a log cabin, the log house has undergone a number of episodes of remodeling over the years and now is concealed by exterior coverings and additions. The barn, built in two parts, the first about 1852 and the second half sometime later, was built using square, wrought iron nails, pegged joints, and massive timbers of red oak that were put up when it was green wood. When John C. Smith was living this was a lively place with a general store, a grist mill, a saw mill, and a blacksmith shop. It was also the end of the line for the once-a-week mail delivery.

22a Victory School. The forerunner of the Victory School was a log schoolhouse built by Solomon Kittrell west of Goose Creek that predated the Civil War. Later there was a school operating about one mile west of Goose Creek on a small intermittent tributary of Cane Creek. Legend has around the turn of the century when the location of this school was moved again, this time from the hollow to the ridge be near the new county road, arguments arose as to what to name the new school. A name for the school was decided upon after someone said in exasperated tone "It will be a VICTORY if we ever finally decide on a name for this school!"

23. Kittrell Cemetery. The resting place of Butler County's first settler family has a hand chiseled stone at the grave of Samuel Kittrell who was born in 1777 and who died in 1838.