

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Gentry, William H., House

other names/site number Oak Dale/Cloney Family Farm/Curry Farm

2. Location

street & number 22970 Cherry Tree Lane [n/a] not for publication

city or town Sedalia [X] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Pettis code 159 zip code 65301

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Claire F. Blackwell 9 October 1997
Signature of certifying official/Title Claire F. Blackwell/Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date

[] entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet [].

[] determined eligible for the
National Register
See continuation sheet [].

[] determined not eligible for the
National Register.

[] removed from the
National Register

[] other, explain
See continuation sheet [].

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

Antebellum Resources of Johnson,
Lafayette, Pettis and Saline Counties,
Missouri

Number of contributing resources
previously listed in the National
Register.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

GREEK REVIVAL

Materials

foundation Brick
walls Brick
root Slate
other Wood

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

Property is:

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Areas of Significance

AGRICULTURE

ARCHITECTURE

Periods of Significance

ca. 1855

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person(s)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

UNKNOWN

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other:

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	477515	4288170			

C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing
---------	---------	----------	---------	---------	----------

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Roger Maserang/Historic Preservation Coordinator

organization Pioneer Trails Regional Council date March 15, 1996

street & number 122 Hout Street telephone 816/747-2294

city or town Warrensburg state Missouri zip code 64093

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

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

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Mr. and Mrs. Charles T. Curry

street & number 908 West Broadway telephone _____

city or town Sedalia state Missouri zip code 65301

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1

Gentry, William H., House
Pettis County, MO

Antebellum Resources of Johnson, Lafayette, Pettis and Saline Counties, MPS

The William H. Gentry House, 22970 Cherry Tree Lane, near Sedalia in Pettis County, Missouri, is a brick, central passage, vernacular Greek Revival I-House with a pedimented, two-story portico (see MPS cover document, "Antebellum Resources of Johnson, Lafayette, Pettis and Saline Counties, Missouri: Associated Property Types: Greek Revival I-Houses, Central Passage Subtype"). Constructed of soft brick in circa 1855, the three-bay Gentry House, with its tetrastyle portico, exemplifies the full-height entry porch Greek Revival subtype as described by McAlester and McAlester.¹ In the 1930s, a second floor was added to the original one-story ell and there have been subsequent additions to the main block and ell. The Greek Revival interior is in pristine condition and the high style north parlor features an entablature supported by pilasters. Despite additions, the Gentry House substantially retains integrity of design, materials and workmanship so that one receives a valid impression of the building as it appeared during its early decades.

The Gentry House is approximately one mile north of Sedalia, the county seat and largest city in Pettis County. Georgetown, unincorporated today but the county seat when the Gentry House was constructed, is approximately one mile northeast of the property. Cherry Tree Lane, a county road with a macadam surface, runs north-south along the west property line. A curving private drive leads from Cherry Tree Lane to a parking area near the front of the house, a distance of approximately 0.2 mile, then circles around the south side of the building to a garage addition to the ell and to farm service roads.

The Gentry House is located within a parklike setting which is partially enclosed by a white-painted wood fence. Nearby are several agricultural outbuildings and other structures and objects from the 19th and 20th centuries, comprising the nucleus of the former plantation. Much of the surrounding land is under cultivation or used as pasture. Even in winter when little foliage is present, the view is pastoral in all directions.

The west-facing Gentry House rests on an ashlar limestone block foundation. Original soft bricks in the primary facade are laid in a Flemish bond, while those in the gable ends and original portion of the ell are laid in a common bond. Modern bricks in the various additions including the second floor of the ell are laid in a stretcher bond.

The main block of the Gentry House is 52 feet across the front by 20 1/2 feet deep. The ell is approximately 22 feet wide and 42 feet long. The portico extends 10 feet from the main block and is 20 feet wide. Exterior walls of the main block are at least 16 inches thick; interior brick walls are at least 14 inches thick. There have been major additions but the usual public views are largely unspoiled.

The three-bay main elevation is dominated by a full-height pedimented portico which projects 10 feet. With a width of 20 feet, the portico comprises more than a third of the facade. Each level has its own set of four evenly spaced square Roman Doric columns across the front, plus two engaged pilasters. Entrances are moderately recessed behind pilasters (smaller versions of the columns and engaged pilasters) which support plain entablatures with massive cornices. Bands of sidelights flank these entrances but in a departure from the typical Greek Revival I-House, transoms are absent. The front door consists of two vertical panels, as do all types of doors throughout the main block.

The main entablature is plain, broad, and well-defined. It wraps into the gable ends where cornice returns produce a *semipedimented* effect. Brick chimneys pierce the gable ends. In addition to flat arches with

¹McAlester, Virginia and Lee, A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985, p. 179.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 2

Gentry, William H., House
Pettis County, MO

Antebellum Resources of Johnson, Lafayette, Pettis and Saline Counties, MPS

radiating voussoirs, window openings in the symmetrical main block (6/6s) have wooden lugsills and there are shutters. Window treatment in the gable ends is similar. Two windows are in the north end and four, including two added windows, are in the south.

In its original form, the brick ell was of one story with a side porch under a gable roof. In the 1930s, the ell was enlarged to include a second floor with a gallery porch. Modern bricks were used instead of soft bricks and they were laid in a stretcher bond instead of the correct common bond, but the design at least continued the original plan and was appropriate for this style and form of house. The Gentry House also has been expanded with obvious additions to the east and north. In the north portion of the main block, the rear roofline extends over some of the additions. Much of this work was done in the 1930s and 1940s. The house has been renovated and is in fine, well-maintained condition.

The Gentry House was built on the central hall plan, one room deep plus an ell. The first floor of the main block contains two primary public rooms flanking a central hallway. A formal parlor is in the north end and a secondary parlor or living room is in the south end. Bedrooms are above these rooms. The original one-story ell contained the dining room and sunken kitchen. In today's expanded house, a short flight of stairs at the rear of the dining room leads to a mezzanine over the former kitchen, and beyond that is another short flight of stairs leading to the maid's apartment above the three-car garage. Another stairway leads from the mezzanine to bedrooms on the added upper level of the ell. A former entrance in the northeast corner of the dining room has become a cabinet. In the north upstairs bedroom, a new doorway was constructed for a bathroom addition. Other first floor additions provide space for a modern kitchen, butler's pantry, guest room, sunporch, restrooms, elevator, and closets. The original sunken kitchen in the lower portion of the ell, today used as a family room, is perhaps the oldest part of the building.

The interior of the main block and original portion of the ell are well-appointed and in immaculate condition. Shouldered architraves frame openings for doors and tall windows with paneled reveals. Cornice boards mark the juncture of walls and ceilings. The north parlor has a formal entablature supported by classical pilasters, and an ornate centerpiece. The mantel in the south parlor features a shouldered, "Greek ears" architrave design, and other rooms contain simpler pilaster mantels.

The central hallway contains a free-standing walnut staircase with a railing that curves around the landing. A slender newel post with a tapering midsection rises from a plain square base. Although employed in individual rooms, shouldered architraves are not used in the central hallway on either floor.

Millwork, doors with two vertical panels, and other interior wood trim are painted white. Flooring, consisting of five-inch pine boards in the north parlor and upstairs bedrooms and of narrow hardwood in the hallways, south parlor and living room, has a clear varnish finish.

Properties within the immediate environment of the Gentry House include a former log cabin/carriage house, barns, a granary, a food storage building, poultry houses, a water tower, cast iron hitching posts, and a carriage step. These properties, all existing within a highly picturesque setting, apparently date from the mid-19th through the early 20th centuries.

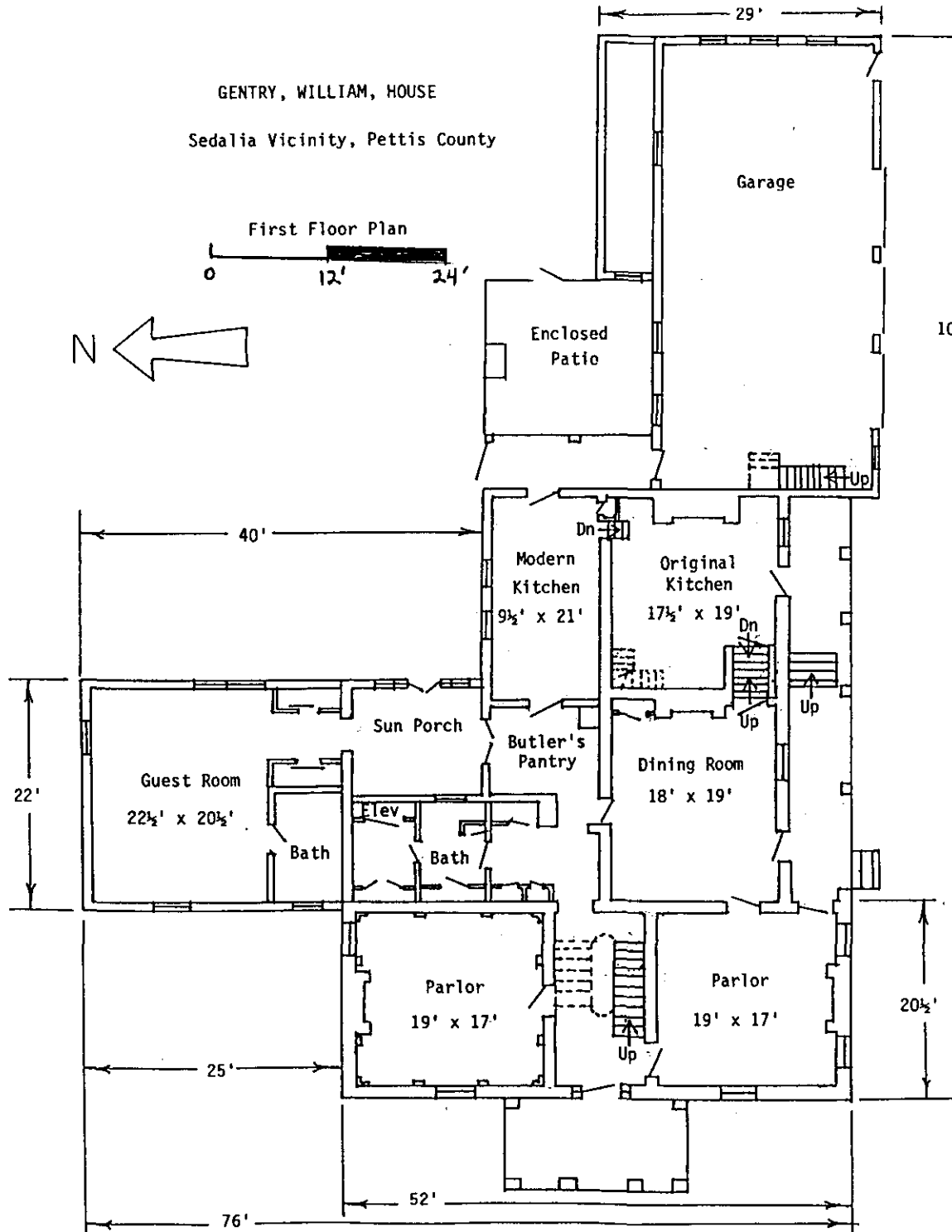
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 3

Gentry, William H., House
Pettis County, MO

Antebellum Resources of Johnson, Lafayette, Pettis and Saline Counties, MPS



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 4

Gentry, William H., House
Pettis County, MO

Antebellum Resources of Johnson, Lafayette, Pettis and Saline Counties, MPS

The William H. Gentry House, 22970 Cherry Tree Lane, Sedalia vicinity, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C in the areas of AGRICULTURE and ARCHITECTURE. The circa 1855 Gentry House was the centerpiece of Oak Dale, an antebellum plantation established by agriculturalists from the Upland South (see MPS cover document, "Antebellum Resources of Johnson, Lafayette, Pettis and Saline Counties, Missouri: The Development of Plantations, 1830s-1860s; Agriculture and the Hemp Culture, 1830s-1860s; and Associated Property Types: Greek Revival I-Houses, Central Passage Subtype"). The Gentry House is significant under Criterion A as the nucleus building of a documented plantation where a slave-based agricultural system flourished prior to the Civil War. Although Oak Dale's inland location made it unsuitable for hemp cultivation, its size and agricultural productivity were enormous by local antebellum standards. The Gentry House is significant under Criterion C as a fine and well-constructed example of a vernacular brick, central passage Greek Revival I-House with a full-height entry porch. Architecturally, the Gentry House is believed to represent the highest level of quality achieved by local antebellum builders. The sumptuous north parlor where pilasters with ornate capitals support a classical entablature is particularly impressive. Despite several additions, the preponderance of historic material and the overall context of the property mitigate some integrity problems, and sufficient integrity is retained. The possibility of additional significance under Criterion B, for William H. Gentry's individual contribution to the development of local agriculture, is also indicated.

By all accounts William H. Gentry was a prosperous and progressive agriculturalist, and from the time of its construction in circa 1855, the Gentry House was the nucleus building on the plantation known as Oak Dale. Within its brick walls, decisions were made about such things as crop plantings, when to buy and sell livestock, and matters involving the primary labor force which, in 1860, consisted of 16 slaves. Gentry raised a variety of animals--including cattle, sheep, horses and mules--and harvested immense quantities of grain, often exceeding in several categories the production on other local farms not only in Mt. Sterling Township, but throughout the Show-Me Region.² Most of the specialized buildings which were directly involved in the plantation's agricultural functions have been replaced, so that the Gentry House itself remains the best extant representative of antebellum agriculture on the farmsite.

By 1850 the Gentry plantation, at 762 acres, was already large by local standards. By 1860 it was enormous, consisting of 1,400 improved and 300 unimproved acres.³ Gentry grew no hemp, probably because his farm was too distant from Missouri River ports for a profitable operation. In 1860, a banner year for hemp in Missouri, only four tons of the crop were harvested in Gentry's Mt. Sterling Township.⁴ Nonetheless by 1860 Gentry's farm outproduced most of the other local plantations, including those of Thomas Shelby and James Hicklin, two of the wealthiest Southerners to locate along Lafayette County's Dover Road. Not counting implements and machinery, the census taker recorded farm values of \$85,000, \$60,000 and \$40,000, respectively, for the farms of Gentry, Shelby and Hicklin. In 1850 before construction of the Gentry House,

²Manuscript Census, Agriculture and Slave Schedules, Pettis County, Missouri, 1850 and 1860.

³Manuscript Census, Agriculture, Pettis County, Missouri, 1850 and 1860.

⁴Heath's Creek Township in the northeast part of Pettis County, and Blackwater Township in the northwest, were the only other Pettis County townships with hemp production in 1860, according to the Manuscript Census for Agriculture. As might be expected, these areas were closest to Missouri River shipping points--Arrow Rock for Heath's Creek Township (48 tons) and Waverly for Blackwater Township (11 tons).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 5

Gentry, William H., House
Pettis County, MO

Antebellum Resources of Johnson, Lafayette, Pettis and Saline Counties, MPS

Oak Dale was valued at \$2,600.⁵

The 1850 agricultural census credits Gentry with owning 53 asses and mules at a time when most of his neighbors had none. Such a large number probably indicates that he raised "Missouri" mules for export during this period. In 1850 Gentry also owned 10 cows, 75 beef cattle, 70 sheep and 160 swine as well as 10 horses and 8 oxen, valued at \$3,945. His farm produced 6,500 bushels of corn, 100 bushels of wheat, 10 bushels of rye, 400 bushels of oats, 8 bushels of potatoes, 5 bushels of sweet potatoes, 50 pounds of wool, 100 pounds of butter, 15 pounds of cheese, 20 pounds of flax and \$30 worth of homemade manufactures. Slaughtered animals were valued at \$40.

By the end of the decade, Gentry had significantly increased his farm's output although the number of mules was sharply reduced. As of June 1, 1860, Gentry owned 40 cows, 248 beef cattle, 500 sheep and 150 swine, as well as 20 horses, 13 asses and mules and 8 oxen, all valued at \$14,600. Slaughtered animals were valued at \$600. Produce during the year consisted of 15,625 bushels of corn, 1,000 bushels of oats, 300 bushels of wheat, 100 bushels of potatoes, 1,000 pounds of butter and 20 tons of hay. His sheep provided 1,700 pounds of wool. Orchard products were valued at \$200. In 1861, Gentry expanded his acreage by purchasing the large John S. Jones farm near Longwood.⁶

Slave ownership was a defining feature of the plantation lifestyle in the Deep South, and Gentry continued the tradition in Pettis County. Gentry's slave holdings were relatively low, however, considering the size of his farm and the amount of agricultural production. From six slaves in 1850, the Gentrys increased their slave ownership to 16, including children, by 1860.⁷

Beyond the personal example for productivity that he set for neighboring farmers, Gentry was instrumental in the local development of agriculture through his support of agricultural fairs. Although the exact location has not been determined, Pettis County's first agricultural fair is said to have been held on the Gentry farm in 1857. Later agricultural fairs also were on his property.⁸

The William H. Gentry House is representative of the highest level of vernacular Greek Revival architecture achieved by the frontier builders who established plantations in the Missouri River Valley. Through their architecture, the builders--mostly migrating Southerners and their descendants--projected their ideas of leisure and aristocratic gentility on the local landscape. Construction of the Gentry House, a particularly fine rendering of a central passage I-House with Greek Revival styling, is believed to have started in 1854. In that year Gentry reportedly had 100,000 bricks made and ordered stone to be quarried and hauled for the foundation.

⁵Manuscript Census, Agriculture, Pettis County, 1850 and 1860; Manuscript Census, Agriculture, Lafayette County, 1860.

⁶Manuscript Census, Agriculture, Pettis County, Missouri, 1860, and Missouri Historic Sites Catalogue (Columbia: The State Historical Society of Missouri, 1963), pp. 122-123.

⁷Manuscript Census, Slave Schedules, Pettis County, Missouri, 1850 and 1860.

⁸Missouri Historic Sites Catalogue (Columbia: The State Historical Society of Missouri, 1963), p. 124; Lang, Hazel, Life in Pettis County 1815-1973 (Sedalia: The Sedalia Democrat Co., 1975), p. 56.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 6

Gentry, William H., House
Pettis County, MO

Antebellum Resources of Johnson, Lafayette, Pettis and Saline Counties, MPS

Construction was probably completed during the next year, circa 1855.⁹

Family historian Richard Gentry noted that in 1846, William Gentry "bought and settled on a farm about three miles northwest of Sedalia, Missouri, which he called Oak Dale, where he lived continuously for 54 years, until the time of his death (May 22, 1890)."¹⁰ Specifically, the "beautiful old brick home" erected by William Gentry is said to have been built on part of 800 acres which Ann Redd Gentry inherited from her father, Lewis Redd Major. Major probably died in 1844, or at any rate before 1845.¹¹ Apparently, the Gentrys lived in a log house or an intermediate building of some type prior to construction of the Gentry House.

Among other things, the Gentry House is distinguished by its Flemish bond facade, a somewhat more complex bricklaying pattern than was usually employed by the frontier builders, and by its full-height pedimented portico. The uncommon Flemish brickwork which is found only in the primary facade is similar to brickwork in some other Georgetown area antebellum houses. These include the Gen. David Thomson House (circa 1840, listed in the National Register 10-04-82) and the Lewis Redd Major House (circa 1840s, potentially eligible for listing). Also, flat-arched window headers with radiating voussoirs, an uncommon form among local antebellum properties, are present in these and other Georgetown area properties. The Thomson House was constructed by brickmasons Charles R. and Ambrose Hieronymus, and a man named Smith. Considering the similar Flemish bond brickwork and window arches, it seems probable that these craftsmen built the Gentry and Major mansions as well. Carpentry on the Gentry House probably was the work of highly-regarded Absalom McVey and his team of "joiners." The McVey crew worked on the Thomson House and was involved in the construction of many other buildings in the Georgetown/Sedalia area. Later, McVey is said to have shifted his concentration from carpentry to farming.¹²

The full-height portico is a fine and well-articulated rendering of this traditional Greek Revival element. Each floor has its own set of square Doric columns and engaged pilasters. On the frontier, the Southern builders commonly substituted more easily constructed square columns for traditional round ones. In an interesting departure from typical Greek Revival entrance treatment, first and second floor units have plain entablatures in place of transoms. Possibly, the presence of sidelights but the lack of transoms suggests the lingering influence of Federal styling.

⁹This information is said to be contained in a letter dated February 1, 1854. The reference is from a photo caption in The Sedalia Democrat (undated, circa 1960). The location of the letter is unknown today. It is possible that the "letter" was actually part of the diary of David Thomson, a fellow Kentuckian and friend of the Gentrys, whose nearby home is already listed in the National Register (Thomson, Gen. David, House, 10-04-82). Thomson's actual diary, which had been partially transcribed, is in a private collection which has not been available to researchers, and the location of the transcribed portion is unknown. A perception that the Gentry House was built as early as 1846, the year that Gentry apparently acquired much of his land, is not supported by research.

¹⁰Gentry, Richard, op cit.

¹¹Gentry, Richard, op cit., p. 162; Carter, Genevieve L., "Pioneers of Pettis and Adjoining Missouri Counties," Sedalia, 1966 (typewritten manuscript).

¹²James M. Denny, "Thomson, General David, House," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1982; Hazel Lang, Life in Pettis County 1815-1973. Sedalia: The Sedalia Democrat Company, 1975, pp. 442-449. Denny's nomination includes a lengthy quote from David Thomson's diary, detailing the construction of his residence.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 7

Gentry, William H., House
Pettis County, MO

Antebellum Resources of Johnson, Lafayette, Pettis and Saline Counties, MPS

Portions of the sumptuous interior are particularly impressive, especially the north parlor with its classical pilasters and intricate centerpiece, tall paneled window openings and pilaster mantel. The main hallway contains a fine, free-standing walnut staircase. Overall the Gentry House makes a powerful and interesting Greek Revival statement.

The American Gentrys trace their roots to two brothers, presumably Nicholas Gentry and Samuel Gentry, who came from England as British soldiers and entered land in New Kent County, Virginia, in 1684. By the fifth generation or so, Gentrys had settled throughout the South as well as in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Missouri. William H. Gentry was of the sixth generation. Family historian Richard Gentry described the Gentrys as "very largely an agricultural people, interested in their lands and in their flocks and herds (who were) large slave-owners for 150 years, until the Civil War. They seemed to prefer their plantations to commercial pursuits or political office."¹³ Gentry noted that while few of his kin achieved national recognition, many were prominent at the state level as well as locally. At various times through 1909, Gentrys were elected to the legislatures of Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina and Missouri. Perhaps the most prominent member of the family was Meredith P. Gentry, a Whig with a reputation as an orator, who was elected to Congress prior to the Civil War.¹⁴

William H. Gentry's father, Reuben E. Gentry, a native of Albemarle County, Virginia, came to Missouri from Madison County, Kentucky, in 1809. William H. was born near Boone's Lick in Howard County on April 14, 1818. In 1824, the Gentry family moved to Pettis County and in 1840, William H. married Ann Redd Major, daughter of Lewis Redd Major who also came from Kentucky (in about 1844, after a land speculation visit a decade earlier).

Certainly inconvenienced by the Civil War and the end of slavery, the Gentry family recovered swiftly. After the war, Gentry continued acquiring land and expanding productivity. Eventually Gentry owned several farms with a combined area of approximately 6,000 acres. By the early 1880s, Oak Dale alone had been expanded to 2,200 acres.¹⁵

Significance is indicated, although not claimed, in the area of politics and government. Gentry was politically active, albeit somewhat reluctantly since he apparently did not enjoy being in the limelight. He was a Whig, then a Democrat. He was elected a Pettis County judge in 1858 and served until his resignation eight years later to administer the estate of a brother, Richard Gentry. Over the years, several Missouri governors appointed Gentry to various posts beginning with provisional Governor Hamilton Gamble who, in 1862, commissioned him a major in the 40th Regiment of Enrolled Missouri Militia. Gentry himself ran for governor in 1874, as the nominee of Missouri's Grange-backed People's Party, but the election was won by Charles H. Hardin, the Democratic candidate. In 1875, Governor Hardin appointed Gentry to help manage Missouri's exhibit at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. In the late 1870s, Governor John S. Phelps sent him to New York as a Missouri delegate to a convention to form a national agricultural society. In 1881, Governor Thomas Crittenden appointed Gentry presiding judge of Pettis County, a position which he held until his death

¹³Gentry, Richard, The Gentry Family in America 1676 to 1909 (New York: The Grafton Press, 1909), unpagged preface.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵History of Pettis County, Missouri (Kansas City, Mo.: Kansas City Historical Company, 1882), p. 359.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 8

Gentry, William H., House
Pettis County, MO

Antebellum Resources of Johnson, Lafayette, Pettis and Saline Counties, MPS

in 1890. In the mid-1880s, Governor John S. Marmaduke appointed Gentry to the State Board of Health on which he served as president.¹⁶

Like fellow Kentuckian George R. Smith, who also settled in the Georgetown area, Gentry was involved in the development of railroading in Pettis County. In the 1850s, Smith had been instrumental in persuading the Pacific Railroad (Missouri Pacific) builders to alter their route through Pettis County. In the postbellum years, Gentry was a director and then president of the Lexington & St. Louis Railway; he was a director of the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railroad (the Katy); and he was president of the Sedalia, Warsaw & Southern Railway. Gentry's many and varied achievements are particularly impressive considering that his formal education apparently was limited to the neighborhood subscription school established by his father.¹⁷

Gentry's wife Ann died in 1873, and the next year Gentry married her widowed sister, Evelyn Major Witcher. Gentry had eight children with his first wife. A daughter, Mary Elvira, married Thomas W. Cloney in 1875.

The following description of the Gentry plantation, circa 1882, testifies to Gentry's continued success and pursuit of excellence during the postbellum years:

Major Wm. Gentry is probably the most extensive stock raiser in Pettis county, and during the many years he has devoted exclusively to this branch of husbandry upon a large scale, he has achieved wonderful success. At present his landed estate comprises six thousand acres of choice land, well watered and timbered and in a remarkably high state of cultivation. His home farm "Oakdale," containing twenty-two hundred acres, is located two miles northwest of Sedalia, and in full view of the city. It is a magnificent prairie and timber tract, well watered by numerous flowing springs, by Brushy Creek and by several fine artificial lakes. The residence is handsome and commodious, and the approaches arranged in excellent taste and with a view to convenience and economy of space. The lawns and shrubbery surrounding the residence are arranged, well cultivated, and kept in excellent order, and the entire place presents the appearance of refinement, comfort and affluence, suggesting to the visitor the application of that beautiful and pathetic song, "Home, Sweet Home." Only about four hundred acres of this magnificent farm are devoted to the cultivation of grain, the balance being seeded down to blue grass pasture, and to clover and timothy meadow. Major Gentry's herd of breeding cattle consists of between thirty and forty thoroughbred Shorthorns of the most popular families, and two fine bulls of about 2,300 lbs. weight. He has also fifteen fine brood mares and a thoroughbred Norman stallion of excellent form and qualities, ninety horse and mule colts, sixty work horses, six hundred pure bred Merino, Cotswold and Downs sheep, and one hundred high grade cattle. His annual sales of live stock average thirty horses and mules, three hundred to four hundred steers, six hundred swine, and six hundred sheep. He also has on his farm "Locust Grove," "Denmark Chief" and "Denmark Jr.," the very highest grade of that class of saddle horses. They are both premium stallions, having taken premiums at St. Louis, Cincinnati and at various other large fairs in

¹⁶According to family biographer Richard Gentry, William H. Gentry was sort of a reluctant politico who "had no time or disposition for political preferment (but) was induced to run for Governor of Missouri." Gentry, Richard, The Gentry Family in America 1676 to 1909 (New York: The Grafton Press, 1909), pp. 159-161; Meyer, Duane, The Heritage of Missouri (St. Louis: State Publishing Co., Inc.), p. 427.

¹⁷Gentry, Richard, op cit.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8.9.10 Page 9

Gentry, William H., House
Pettis County, MO

Antebellum Resources of Johnson, Lafayette, Pettis and Saline Counties, MPS

1874. Denmark Jr. is a young stallion of great promise, and is one of the fastest racking horses in the state."¹⁸

In 1939, Thomas Warren "Todd" Cloney restored and expanded the house, adding, among other things, a second story to the ell.¹⁹

Bibliography

Gentry, Richard, The Gentry Family in America 1676 to 1909 (New York: The Grafton Press, 1909).

History of Pettis County (Kansas City, Mo.: Kansas City Historical Company, 1882).

Lang, Hazel, Life in Pettis County 1815-1973 (Sedalia, Mo.: The Sedalia Democrat Co., 1975).

Missouri Historic Inventory Survey Form No. 112, "Cloney Family Farm/Gentry House." Pettis County Survey, February 1988. Copy in Missouri Cultural Resource Inventory, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Jefferson City, MO.

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary of the nominated property is shown as the solid heavy line on the accompanying map entitled "Adapted from Ownership map 45-10-4, Pettis County, Missouri, prepared under the direction of the State Tax Commission of Missouri and Pettis County Tax Assessor."

Boundary Justification:

The boundary has been drawn to include only the William H. Gentry House and its immediate surroundings; it excludes a number of agricultural buildings and structures to the east of the house which do not relate to the areas of period of significance and the adjacent farmland, much of which was part of the original farmstead but which has been converted to modern practices of cultivation and processing and no longer retains integrity.

¹⁸History of Pettis County, *op cit.*, p. 359.

¹⁹Gentry, Richard, *op cit.*, and Lang, Hazel, *op cit.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section photographs Page 10

Gentry, William H., House
Pettis County, MO

Antebellum Resources of Johnson, Lafayette, Pettis and Saline Counties, MPS

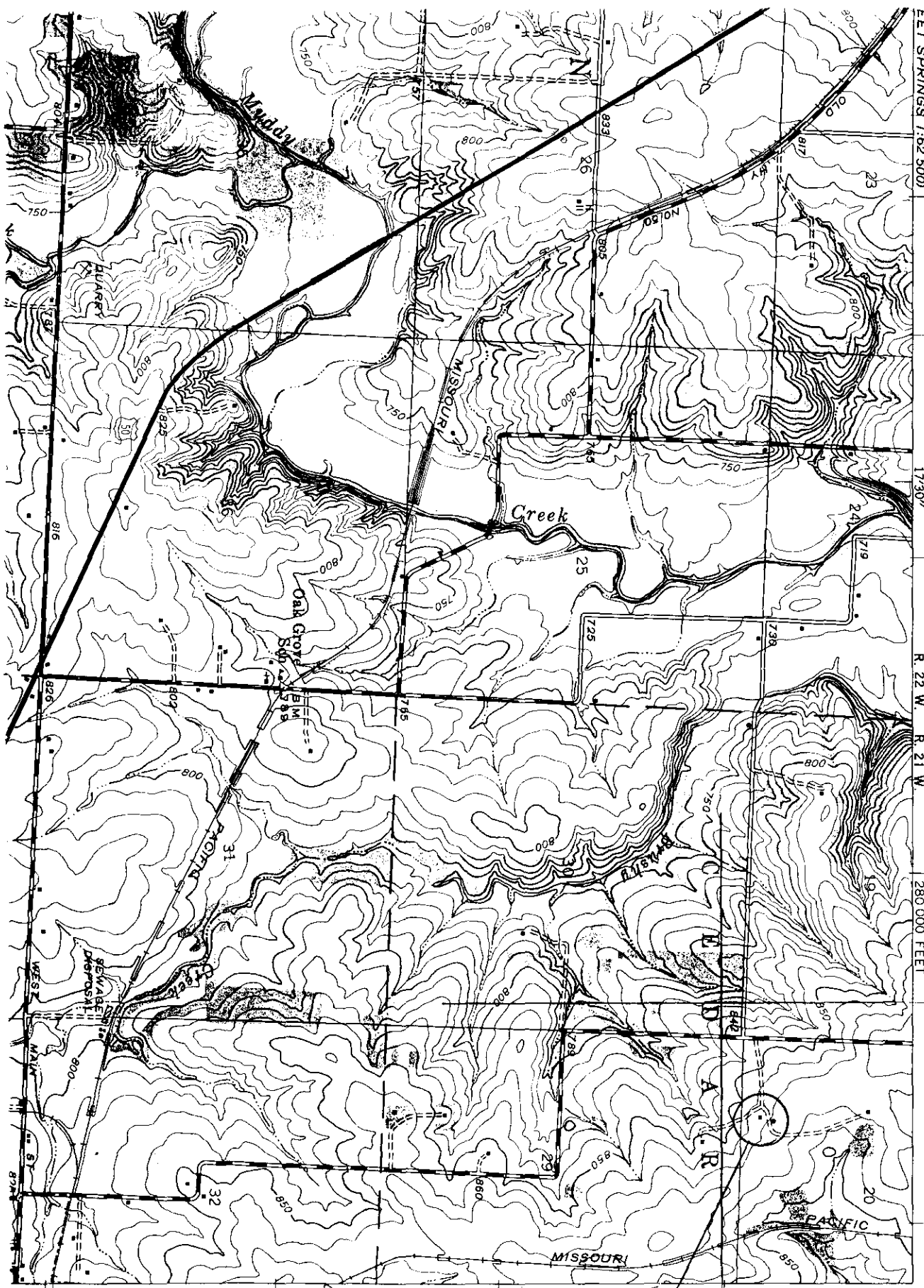
The following information is the same for all photographs except as noted:

Gentry, William H., Historic District
Sedalia vicinity, Pettis County, MO
Photographer: Roger Maserang
Negative Location: Missouri Cultural Resource Inventory
Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Historic Preservation Program
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City, MO 65102

- | | |
|---|--|
| #1: View of Gentry House from west
March 1996 | #12: Detail of entrance, facing east
March 1996 |
| #2: View of Gentry House from west
Circa 1930s
Photographer unknown | #13: Hallway stairway with balustrade, facing
northeast
March 1996 |
| #3: View of Gentry House from southwest
March 1996 | #14: View from stairway landing, facing west
March 1996 |
| #4: View of Gentry House from southwest
Circa 1905
Photographer unknown | #15: North parlor, facing north
March 1996 |
| #5: View of Gentry House from south
March 1996 | #16: South parlor, facing south
March 1996 |
| #6: View of Gentry House from south
Circa 1930s | #17: Dining room, facing east
March 1996 |
| #7: View of Gentry House from northwest
March 1996 | #18: North upstairs bedroom, facing north
March 1996 |
| #8: View of Gentry House from southeast
March 1996 | |
| #9: View of Gentry House from northeast
November 1992 | |
| #10: Detail of portico, view from northwest
March 1996 | |
| #11: South end of main block
March 1996 | |

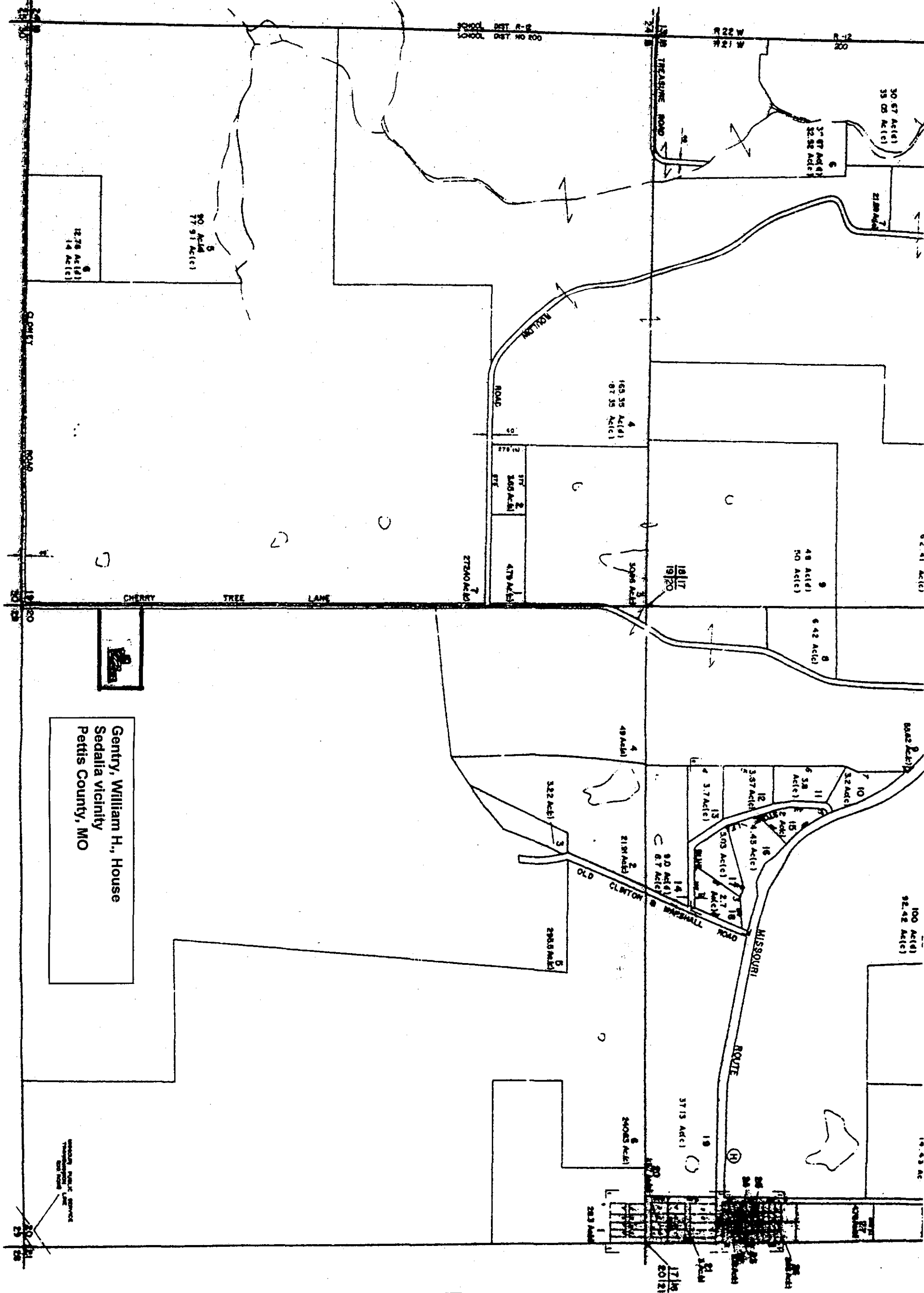
STATE OF MISSOURI
SURVEY AND WATER RESOURCES

MISSOURI
(PETTIS COUNTY)
SEDALIA WEST QUADRANGLE
7½-MINUTE SERIES



GENTRY, WILLIAM, HOUSE; PETTIS COUNTY, MO
15/477515/4288170





Gentry, William H., House
 Sedalia vicinity
 Pettis County, MO

Adapted from Ownership Map 45-10-4, Pettis County, Missouri, prepared under the direction of the State Tax Commission of Missouri and Pettis County Tax Assessor.

SEE MAP NO. 45-10-8



Buildings not drawn to scale



