A HISTORIC INVENTORY

OF

HOLT COUNTY MISSOURI

INDEX

Introduction	p. 1- 6	Hickory 65- 76
	p. 7- 12	Lewis 12, 25-55
	p.13- 14	Liberty 189
Benton	77-147	Lincoln 181-188
Bigelow	156-162	Minton 148-155
Clay	190-212	Nodaway 56- 64
Forbes	1- 11	Union 163-180
Forest		
roics -	15 1	
		,
	INVENTORY FORM	MS NUMBER
Aesdale, Frances	141	Brunk, Jerald 64
Ahrens, J.D	187	Bullock, Dr. Frank E 13
Alkire, H. T	43	Bunt, John 167
Allen, F.K. Building	172	Burge Recreation Parlor 93
Allen, F.K. House	173	Burnsides, James & Elizabeth - 134
Anderson, George	30	Burrier Building 36
Asher, Mrs. d	46	Cain, Frank 66
Baird, James	28	Carroll, Jesse Stagecoach Inn- 62
Baker, Mrs. E a	10	Carter Stone Opera House 90
Ball, Mrs. Alpha	150	Catron, G.W 151
Band Stand	122	Catron, William 151
Bank of Corning	185	Chautauqua Park 138
Bank of Mound City	89	Christian, John 202
Banks House	2 .	Christen, Peter 186
Banks, William	12	Christen, Wesley 185
Barbour, Daniel	50	Christensen, E.C 64
Benne Law Office	97	Chuning House 162
Bennett House		Cleaning Shop 100
Bigelow Consolidated School		City Hall/Mound City 121
Big Lake State Park	158	Cobb, Robert 29
Bohart & Fields Building	209	Coin, Earlena 168
Bonner, Bill	190	Coin Salvage 110
Bonners Grocery	208	Coop Fert-Elevator 112
Botkin, J.L	65	Costello Farm 62
Botkin, Oliver		Cotten, George 22
Boyd, Bill		Cotton, C.F. Jr 56
Brandon, William	157	Cotton, C.W. Jr 47
Broadview Hereford Farm		Cowan, Arthur 197
Browns Apartments		Cowan, John 72
Brown, Curtis		Cox, Dr. John 152
Brown's Tourist Court		Craig Presbyterian Church 175
Brundage, Katherine		Crawford, W.H 140

Crider House		Graves & Collison bldg 200
Crider, John	74	Grahm, V.L 68
Crouse, H.E. & Leona	131	Gray Bldg 96
Crouse Motors	116	Griffith Apt. Office complex 101
Dahlman, Reuben	45	Griffith Bldg 88
Dankers, H.A	183	Griffith Flowers, Gifts 88
David, Charles	167	Griffith T.V 84
David, Coleman	167	Groves Bldg 80
Davidson, Sam	49	Guilliams, C.M 176
Davis, Eldon & Wilma	125	Guilliams Mill 166
Davis, J.M. Dr	169	Guthrie, Jim 113
Debord, Daisy	73	Guyer, Lester 11
Derr, Elwood	23	Haer, Emmett 181
Derr, Linn	- 59-60	Haer, Melvin 181
Dicks Rexall Drugs	81	Hahn, Catherine 51
Dobyns, D.P	h8	Hall, John B 146
Dodson, Mrs. Mae	151	Hall Lumber Co 205
Doebbling, Ed	180	Hall, Margaret 46
Dry, Robert	180	Harmon Drug 84
Dry, Robert	102	Harman, Jacob 52
Duncan, Ruth	142	
Dungan, H.M	40	Hayzlett, Carl 14
Dunn, Carl	200	Headley Barn 6
Dwyre, Catherine	211	Headley, E.W 45
Egger, G.A	51	Heck Fertilizer Co 114
Egger, Lloyd	57	Hiatt House Hotel 107
Elder, Doyle	44	Hinde, William 41
Elliott, C.T	194	Hinkle, John D 32
Elton, Dellie E. Jr		Hinkle, W.J 156
Exchange Bank Building	98	Historic Tree 20
Farmers Mutual Fire & Lts. Co		Hoblitzell Lumber Co 205
Farmers Oil Co		Dr. Hogans Office 86
Fawks, Nina	22	Holt County Bank 97
Fayman House		Holt County Courthouse 35
Ferguson, Merrill	51	Holt County Historical Soceity 154
Feuerbacher, John	- 59&61	Holt County Historical Soceity 155
Fields Dept. Store	85	Holt County Historical Museum 154
First Christian Church	117	Holt County Jail 42
First School/Mound City	120	Holt County Poor Farm 25
Fitzmaurice, Patrick		Hopkins, J.B 174
Fleener, Kelson	120	Hornecker Farm Farmyard 63
Flint Cabinet Shop	171	Hornecker, John 58
Flint, Harry	171	Hornecker, Osmer 58
Forest City Brewery		Houston House 132
Forest City, City Hall		Hovy, Vine 16
Fortescue Consolidated School		Hughes, Darelyn 16
Franscher, Boone		Huiatt, Dan 123
France, Charles	18	Huiatt, James
Frye, Robert	45	Dr. Humphrey's Office Bldg 83
Gillis Farm	77	Hunzinger, Henry 7
Gladstone Hotel Bldg		Huts Orchard 144
Glenn House	126	Idekec, A.C.F 179
Golden, Bill	186	Iden, John 157
Gomel, Bertha	177-178	Idlewild School 149
domes, berond	-11 -10	- ZWICHILL DOLLOVI

Jackson Point	- 113	Meyer, Alvin 4	
Johns Apartment	- 106	Meyer, Andrew 14	6
Johns, Dewey Bld	- 92	Meyer, George 9&7	5
Johnson, David	- 192	Meyer, John 6	,4
Johnson Funeral Home	204	Meyerdale, Farm	9
Jones, Guy	- 159	Miller Drug Store 8	11
June Market	- 34		8
Kollmor, Albert	- 19	Minderman, Robert 18	37
Kearney, Dr. E.L	- 47	Minton House 14	8
Kelly House	- 191	Minton, Dr. Lafe 15	52
Kelso, Joshua	- 168	Minton, William 15	
Kent Mill	- 166		1
Kinglewood Farms		·	16
Kneale, C.R.			33
Knepper, Mrs. Paul			9
Kreek, T.I	- 26	Morgan, F.S	
Kreek, Richard	- 26	Morris Barn 7	5
Kunkel, Alf	- 71	Morris, Oakley 4	7
Kunkle, Daniel	- 53	Mound City Bottling Works 11	4
Kurtz, Gary	- 61	Mound City Davis Creek State	
Kurtz, James	- 58	Street Bridge 10	8
Kurtz, Verne	- 60	Mound City Depot Museum 11	
Kurtz, Wayne	- 63	Mound City Dev. Inc 12	
Larkam Farm	- 212	Mound City Flour Mill 11	
Lehmer, Solomon		Mound City Methodist Episopal	
Lentz, General Store	- 69	Church 13	30
Lentz, George	- 68	Mound City Power & Light 11	
Lentz, Richard	67&68	Mound City Presbyterian Church - 12	
Lewis/Clark Tree		Nauman, Joseph 16	
Locust Grove Stock & Grain Farm -		Nell's Tavern 9	-
Loess Mounds		New Liberty Baptist Church 18	19
Louden, Mr. & Mrs. Everett		New Point Consolidated School 7	
Luckhardt, George	- 29	New Point Mutual Tele. Co 6	7
Main Street Bridge	- 108	New Point School 6	
Maitland Cafe	- 209	Noble House	4
Maitland Depot Museum		Noland, H.G 5	il
Maitland Nutrient Site	- 209	Noland, Twilla 16	
Maitland Phone Bldg	- 207	Old City Hall 10	-
Maitland Presbyterian Church		Old Fortescue High School 15	
Maitland School Board		Old Punshon Bldg 10	
Marion, John		Oren, J.A 6	
Martin, Daniel	- 32	Owens, Kenneth 15	9
McCormack Bldg	- 99	Oyerly, Mrs. Rosa 11	
McCormack, Carson	- 145	Parsons, Jerry 3	
McCormack, S.C	- 128		37
McCoy, Thomas	- 140	Passenger Freight Depot, CB&Q 11	-
McIntyre, Mrs. Gene	- 157	_	55
McIntire Lumber Co	- 102	Patterson, Robert 5&5	-
McRae Hospital	- 126	Payne, James W 3	-
McRoberts House	- 134	Penny, Elias 14	
Meade, J.F	- 2	Peoples Bank 18	35
Messengale House	- 1.98	Perry, Dr. D.C 9	

Pessly Dry Goods		Shape's Grove Baptist Church	188
Pettijohn & Crawford Bldg	87	Sharps Grove United Methodist	
Pettijohn & Crawford Funeral		Church	188
Storage		Sharp, W.A. Sr	174
Pettijohn, Irsi	140	Shellenberger House	129
Petree King & Proud Bldg	34	Shellenberger Bldg	
Philbrick, John	38	Shipman, Edythe & Helen	127
Pilkington, Verne	43	Shunkwiler Outhouse	
Pinkston House	206	Shunkwiler, Mrs. Ruby	103
Pinkston Lumber Co		Sipes, Marcel	49
Pioneer Farm	163	Skinner, Roberta	
Planalp, Sam		Smith Farm	
Pleasant Hill Nursing Home		Smith, Mrs. H.W	
Porter, William T	78	Smith, Jim	
Post Office, Fortesque		Smith, Mrs. Sam	
Power Plant & Ice Plant		Solon, Harry	
Presbyterian Church & Academy		Speer, John Smokehouse	
Price, Ashby		Sportsman's Lodge	
Public Library		Squaw Creek Inn	
Pullen, Edgar	48	Squaw Creek Wildlife Refuge	
Racket Store	79	State Hwy. Patrol	-
Radley, Junior	54	State Theatre	
Ramsey, Fred	38	Stephenson, John	•
Ramsay, J.W. Barn	6	St. Joe Light & Power Office	
Ranklin, Wm	75	St. John's Luthern Church	
Ratliff Farm Barn	75	Stine, John	
Rauch House		Stokes, John W. Office,	
Reed, Wilma		Stone, Georgia	
Richards, William		Stone, William Banks	12
Richardson, Bernice	183	Stoner, Jeanne	
Richardson, Mrs. Herbert	129	Strickler, Edith Lower	
Robbins, D.K.	118	Strobel House	137
Roberts, Gordon		Stuckey, Sam	
Robinson's Repair Shop	94	Summers, Max	
Rockwell, George	109	Swearingen Smokehouse	
Roecker, Albert	28	Swope House	148
Rogers Pharmacy	85	T & D Bldg	
Roselius, Henry	182	Teare, Howard	
Rostock, Phillip	54	Twyman, Roy	
Russel, R.H	70	Thomas House	
Salfrank, Carl	163	Tiffany Nursing Home	
Schaffer, Sam		Dr. Tracy Horse Barn	
Schooler, Wilbur	.170	Trading Post	- 80
Shultz, Byron	187	Treasure Chest	86
Scout Hut	100	Treasure Chest	66
	11	Tritt, George True, Hiram	165
Scroggins, Kenneth Sears Bldg		Turney, John	
Shady Lady Hotel	90	Turney, John	
Sharp Ford Parking Lot	90	Upperman, Gusta	37

United Methodist Church Mound City	130	Webber, Ed	152
U.S. Post Office Fortesques	152	Wehrli Grocery	92
U.S. Post Office Mound City,	107	Weiss, Barry	201
Van Burkirk, King & Proud Bldg	34	Whetsell, Don	172
Vance Investment Broker Bldg	101	Whitnah, Harry	10
Vonderschmidt, Lester	132	Whobrey, Jesse	132
Wakely House		Wickiser Theatre	171
Walker, Frank	161	Williams, Edward	. 41
Walker, Dr. J.G	11	Wilson, John R	135
Ward, T.A. Jr	179	Wood Abandoned House	24
Ward, T.B	179	Wood, Allen C	
Watson, Gail	53	Zona House	3
Watson, James	• 52	Zook, C.D	39
Watson, Velma	132	Zook, William	18
Wear's Sundries	185	Zook & Roecker State Bank	333

INTRODUCTION

The historic inventory of Holt County was conducted during the summer and fall of 1979, and January of 1980. In attempting to locate the various sites, buildings and objects, local resources persons were contacted in each Township. The Mound City Museum Society served as the local resource agent and nominated the majority of the architectural sites in Mound City. Mrs. Ellouise Robinson of Mound City, Missouri was of valuable assistance in surveying the area and is the local contact person for the society. Eileen Derr provided the same type of assistance in the rest of the county and is well acquainted with the area.

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

The final forms were completed by Thomas W. Carneal, Assistant Professor of History at Northwest Missouri State University. John Huffman of Architects and Planners Collaborative, Kansas City, Missouri, served as the architectural resource person and Robert Bray of the State Archaeological Survey office as the archaeological resource person. Dr. William Fleming of Northwest Missouri State University served as historical research advisor on the project.

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

The survey indicated there is a wealth of Queen Anne and Gothic architectural styles in the area. There are several areas which possess the possibility of being developed as historical districts, especially Forest City, Corning and Craig. In Mound City there would be the option of developing a multiple resource district in both the State Street area from Seventh to Fifth and the South State Street area. There is a voluminous amount of sites and materials which portray the agricultural nature of the county.

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

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

- 1. The Alpha Ball House near Fortesque.
 - 2. The Lewis and Clark Historic Tree near Forest City.
 - 3. The Roselius House south of Corning.
 - 4. The Old School at Fortesque.

Holt County

Situated in the northwestern corner of the State of Missouri, Holt County is part of an area known as the Platt Purchase of 1836. As such, therefore, it was not part of the original state when Missouri came into the Union in 1820. Named for Dr. David Rice Holt, a member of the Missouri legislature from Platte County who died in 1840, a year before the organization of the county, the county contains some 462 square miles with 295,680 acres of which some 225,000 acres are in cultivation. This large percentage of land cultivated attests to the richness of the soils, of the area. Three types of land prevail, alluvial river bottom, glacial till, and loss silt, especially on the bluffs along the Missouri River. Although the land was originally about sixtyfive percent covered with timber, intensive farming has reduced the forested area to less than ten percent. For the most part, farming has been the mainstay of the economy of the county although around 1900 flour mills were found in Forest City, Craig, Maitland, and Mound City, the latter also having a cigar factory. Despite the growth of sufficient wheat to make the milling of flour an important industry, corn began to be the most important crop after 1900, joined by soy beans by the 1960's. Hay, fruits, and small quantities of other grains have contributed to the wealth of the county, insuring the continued agricultural basis of the economy.

Although one thinks of Folt County as having an agrarian economy, there has been some small degree of urban development

as a result of the need for goods and services by the farm community. Oragon, the county seat, along with Mound City, Corning, Craig, Bigelow, Forest City, Fortescue, and Maitland are the principle towns. Although Oregon was chosen as the county seat, Mound City has been the largest town since 1890, and at present is the only town in the county with a population of over one thousand [1,002 in 1970]. The greatest growth of Mound City was in the period around 1900 when the population reached some 1,681. There has been a decline generally since that peak year. It has witnessed the tendency of most of the small towns in rural America of slowly declining population as rapid transportation has eliminated the need for multiple centers to supply goods and services.

Founded in 1845 as a stop on the St. Joseph to Council Bluffs stage coach line, Mound City soon had a United States post office and a mercantile business. First known as Jackson Point, the name was changed to North Point, but was changed to Mound City in 1857 when the town was incorporated. Growth of the settlement began after that year, and by 1880 some 678 persons were enumerated in the United States Census. By 1890 the population had reached 1,193.

As the town grew both in population and wealth, the cultural and social life of the town also began to become similar to rural life elsewhere in America. Such social institutions as the Masons and Independent Order of Odd Fellows organizations provided a meeting place for the exchange of ideas for the male citizenry. The coming of the railroad in 1880, saw further developments including the opening of an opera house which featured INICLE TOM'S CABIN

as its first presentation. The next year saw a town-wide event with the organization of the first Harvest Home Fall Festival.

While the town was becoming socially organized, it was also keeping pace in an economic sense with the opening of many stores and businesses of other kindsimulating a flour mill, a newspaper, and a bank. A waterworks brought fresh water into residences by 1891, and electricity coursed through wires to light the town in 1895.

With progress seemingly not to be stopped, tragedy struck in 1896 when Davis Creek flooded the town, washing away sidewalks and doing much damage to many of the businesses and residences. A fire in the same year which destroyed the Mount City mill caused further economic distress. Despite these setbacks the town continued to prosper, and by 1900 the population had reached 1,681. Telephone service made the conducting of business and social life easier during this decade as did the beginning of rural free delivery. By the second decade a modern sewer system and the paving of streets with brick further enhanced the esthetic look of the town. Despite this progress, however, the population began to decline, and the census of 1910 showed the loss of some one hundred residents since the earlier enumeration.

Other towns in Holt County witnessed expansion similar to Mound City although less extensive. Oregon, not only was the county seat but by 1900 also had a canning factory which canned tomatoes, apples, and pumpkins; a cigar factory, flour mill, sorghum mill, and a broom factory. The town also had electric lights, a waterworks, a town park, and featured an annual chrysanthemum show.

The citizenry also had the advantage of a newspaper, the <u>Sentinel</u>. By 1900, the population of Oregon had reached slightly over 1000 according to the census of that year, but, like other towns, began to show a decline in subsequent enumerations, and by 1970 contained only 789 persons. Meanwhile with the coming of the railroad through Holt County, other villages were organized including Maitland, Craig, and Forest City, each of which attained a population of five hundred or more by 1900. They too have suffered the decline so common in rural America, with each having less than half of its 1900 population by 1970.

Holt County with its excellent soils, however, has continued to enjoy an agricultural prosperity along with other agricultural areas. Although the number of farms has been decreased from the 2,256 listed in 1900, the total production from fewer and larger farms has greatly increased. The average farm at the beginning of the twentieth century contained about 175 acres valued at \$30.00 to \$125.00 an acre. The same land now brings from \$1000.00 to \$3000.00 an acre. The population which in 1920 was 14,084 by 1970 had decreased to some 6,654.

Despite the waning population during the decades of the twentieth century, Holt County perhaps will relive the expansion brought about by the coming of the railroad in the nineteenth century since it occupies a vantage point along the newly opened four-lane highway from Kansas City, Missouri, to Omaha, Nebraska (Poute 29). In summary, the history of Holt County is tied to two major factors, transportation and its rich farmlands. The farmlands are still productive, and the "iron horse" has been replaced by the "gas buggy."

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN HOLT COUNTY, MISSOURI (site locations for official use only)

The following Inventory is of all the archaeological sites recorded with the Archaeological Survey of Missouri for the county of Holt as of July 17, 1978.

The great majority of these site locations were submitted by amateur archaeologists, mostly members of the Missouri Archaeological Society. Dates of submissions range from 1948-1977.

Most are dated prior to 1960. Thus, it is probable that some sites have suffered further damage from cultivation, erosion, and random digging. A few sites were located in the rights-of-way of road projects and are now destroyed. Others are known to be presently covered by houses. It is estimated that 5% of sites on the inventory are now destroyed or inaccessible, and that 30-40% have been, at least somewhat, damaged since their reporting.

The site reports studied are, with few exceptions, quite general in nature. Often, no information at all was given for the kinds of evidences found.

In many instances, site reports include superficial descriptions of the objects found, but nothing from which cultural identifications can be derived. That is, all material discussed is non-diagnostic and could be related to any one of the various prehistoric periods recognized as present in the Northwest Prairie Region of Missouri. The fact is closely related to the manner of collecting and to the collector's objectives. Normally, an amateur archaeologist will not return repeatedly to a site if it fails to reward him with artifacts which are either very numerous

Missouri files contain many reports which are based on one visit to the site. If such a site happened to be grass-covered at the time of the visit, then relatively little would have been found and a reliable judgment of size, kind, and complexity could not have been made. In no case was the site information recorded in sufficient detail to allow a determination of National Register significance. This was true regardless of the apparent notoriety, to collectors, of a few sites. These observations point up the general inadequacy of site records pertaining to the county underconsideration. The great majority have been prepared by untrained persons who have worked without professional direction.

Practically all site records, to be of maximum value, should be revised on the basis of updated surveys designed to reveal size and function of the site; cultural affiliation; degree of integrity (preservation); and other attributes relevant to a determination of National Register significance. This sort of effort would also result in a set of minimal requirements for planning areal and Regional research designs for archaeology.

There are no historic Indian tribal sites, and no historical American sites listed for subject county. The former are known to be present in the general area of the study, but no specific locations are recorded with the Survey. Historical American sites are, of course, wery numerous, as they are in most places, but it has been only very recently that the Archaeological Survey of Missouri been accepting such sites into its files. Very few submissions have been received from anywhere in the state, either in the past of the present.

It is well-known by those familiar with the situation that even the prehistoric sites listed in the Survey files represent only a fraction of those sites actually present in the various counties. Some counties have been more completely surveyed than others; but all counties are far from complete in their sites inventories. This could be remedied only by long, painstaking survey work designed specifically to discover all the known kinds of sites, not just those which may exhibit some objects which are readily recognized by collectors.

An Archaeological Resources Preservation Plan, developed in the 1960's by Chapman and others, included projections of "probable totals /of sites7 by counties" (Chapman nd: 2-3). Totals listed for Holt county considered here are compared with the totals actually on record to date:

	On Record (7-18-78)	Projected
Ho1t	4	300

It should be pointed out that a few sites are officially known that are not yet entered in the Survey records. Some are known by collectors and by few others because their locations are not publicized. Both categories are included in the projected totals. Thus, it can be readily seen that survey work has only just begun in this county.



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