



James Kiser House  
Name of Property

Bourbon County, Kentucky  
County and State

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
1		<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

NA

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic: single dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Work in Progress  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

No style  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Stone  
walls: Metal (Aluminum Siding)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof: Metal  
other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## **Narrative Description**

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### **Summary Paragraph**

The James Kiser House, (BB-P-495) is located at 41 E. Main Street, in Paris, seat of Bourbon County, Kentucky. The house can be traced back to at least 1814, through courthouse records of deed transfer, when its existence is first attested to. James Kiser (or Keizer), purchased the property, presumably just an empty lot, for \$30 in October, 1814, and sold it a year later for \$1,500 to Jacob Kiser and then both Kisers sold the property in 1817 for \$1,300. By today's standards, the house is almost too small for most residential users, but when built, it was occupied by a family, workers, and an industrial business—a blacksmith. Its location along a historic road, and its relation to the town's early commercial and governmental center, are key pieces of its information which this nomination interprets.

### **Physical Character of Site**

The site drops as it recedes from the road, the old Limestone Trace (now, East Main Street and US 68), down to Stoner Creek. The adjoining lots on both sides have been filled in to make them more or less level with the road. The lot of the subject property is protected from the high waters of the creek with a berm across the back.

### **Exterior Description**

This one-story building with a loft has timber-frame construction, a side passage plan, and double pile depth. Its front face runs parallel with the road, set back only a few feet, the width of the sidewalk. The house's front faces roughly south-southeast. For convenience, the front will be designated the south façade.

The James Kiser House is a timber-frame structure covered in 8-inch poplar weatherboard, over which modern aluminum siding has been installed. The house began as a two-bay structure that was occupied by a blacksmith, James Kiser, as early as 1814. Presumably Kiser plied his trade in what we would call a walkout basement of his residence (see photos 3 and 6, and photo 5, which shows the fireplace in the cellar). The house's gable roof ridge runs parallel to the road. Green sheet metal covers the roof. The roof ridge terminates at the east end where it meets a small brick chimney that rises from the fireplace in the basement.

The house has few windows. A recently-installed 6-over-6 double-hung vinyl window opens on the attic's west gable end. Similar 6-over-6-light double-hung wood window, installed ca. 1930, light the south and the north sides on the main level. A small shed-roofed addition was added to the west side of the house during the 20<sup>th</sup> century; it has a modern concrete block foundation. This addition spans about half of the width of the west façade, and has a 1-over-1 double sash vinyl window on the addition's west side. A 7-step stairway rises on the original west wall of the structure; that stair and landing is not visible from the front of the house, obscured by the shed-roofed addition.

Two openings puncture the ground-floor level of the rear (north) side—a door made of 5 vertical wood planks and a small opening, perhaps for wood or coal, that now has security bars on it.

### **Interior Description**

At approximately 800 sq. ft., the house is small by 21<sup>st</sup>-century standards, yet was probably typical of an early 19<sup>th</sup>-century yeoman cottage in Paris. Kiser's blacksmith trade could explain the large open fireplace in the cellar of the house (see photo # 1). There had once been a very large fireplace in what is now the parlor, judging by the size of the base to this fireplace (photo #7 ) that would have served for cooking.

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There is a tiny dog-leg stairway to the loft, located in a corner, to the left, of the front foyer. Centered on the north wall of the living room is a brick chimney, recently re-extended above the roofline by the current owner. This was apparently installed to replace an earlier, much larger one, based on the size of the fireplace base in the cellar (see picture). There is a Federal period mantelpiece. Flanking the fireplace are twin cupboards that extend nearly to the ceiling.

If one never climbed the narrow stairway to the loft, or visited the cellar (see pictures), it would be hard to imagine this cottage is two-hundred years old. But that is the case, evident in those service spaces, as well as revealed by evidence found in courthouse.

**How the property has changed since the Period of Significance**

The James Kiser House apparently underwent few changes until ca. 1970, when it was converted to low-income rental housing, conforming to standards required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. This required adding aluminum siding to the exterior, changing front and back doors to modern, insulated replacements, changing the rear window to a modern vinyl one, adding gas central heat, adding a small bathroom to the south facade, updating the kitchen and installing wall-to-wall carpet throughout.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- 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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Planning and Development

**Period of Significance**

1814-1817

**Significant Dates**

1814

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

NA

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The Period of Significance for the Kiser House is the 3-year span of time in which the house is known to have been used for an important early function in the Planning and Development of Paris Kentucky. It reveals information about an early tradesman, as well as the housing occupied by the working class people during the earliest days of this community. If more information is discovered, or the context is expanded, the Period of Significance might expand, as well.

**Criteria Considerations: NA**

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## Statement of Significance

### Summary Paragraph

The James Kiser House, (BB-P-495) meets National Register Criterion A, significant for its association with the town's earliest development. Its significance is evaluated within the historic context Early Settlement of Paris, Kentucky, 1780-1820. Two Inner Bluegrass Kentucky counties, Bourbon and Fayette, outpaced all other counties in agricultural outputs and land values in the years leading up to the Civil War. Paris, the seat of Bourbon County, exhibits this wealth in the surviving elite housing erected during the settlement period, 1780-1820. Walter E. Langsam and William Gus Johnson surveyed Bourbon County in 1985, and could not help attending to this astounding population of surviving high style structures in *Historic Architecture of Bourbon County*. However, Langsam and Johnson reported no significant remnants of early Paris on the north side of Stoner Creek. The Sanborn Map of 1912, however, reveals numerous early structures which were standing in 1985, which were omitted from *Historic Architecture's* discussion, on both sides of the Paris-Maysville Road leading north out of Paris. The lone survivor of these, the James Kiser House, gives strong evidence of the non-elite population which helped to build the community. Neilson gives a nod to "those hard-working folk 'on the other side of Stoner,' beckoning with their livelihoods toward a growing town and reminding us the American dream was forged not only by those in history we know about, but also by those whose stories have been lost" ("The Other Side of Stoner," *The Bourbon County Citizen*, February 20, 2013). The Kiser House provides us one of Bourbon County's only insights into housing typical for working people, to balance the vast portrait of the county's wealthy early residents.

### Historic Context: Early Settlement of Paris, Kentucky, 1780-1820

Langsam and Johnson's county-wide survey and follow-up study, *Historic Architecture of Bourbon County*, reveals some patterns in the local landscape, as well as its authors' interests. The compelling collection of high style architecture definitely captivated the authors. The great majority of early houses were found on farms instead of in Paris or Millersburg, the county's two urban areas. In the earliest period, 1780-1799, Langsam and Johnson found only 3 buildings in Paris, yet found 74 farm houses to record. In the next period, 1800-1824, they surveyed 16 buildings in Paris, and 169 country seats. This landscape of the landed gentry overshadowed the houses used by common folk, the low style and altered buildings such as the Kiser House, which the survey largely ignored. Consequently, we know little about the lives and living conditions of this sector of people who helped build Paris.

To better appreciate the role played by the James Kiser House in the early-19th century, it would be helpful to place it in its original context of "roadside residential and commercial architecture" that a traveler at that time would have discovered upon entering Paris on North Main Street. That experience is not unlike what one encounters today, as one enters Paris from South Main Street—a mishmash of commercial uses: fast food restaurants, filling stations, used car lots, banks and other businesses of the commercial strip. The main difference between then and now is that in the early-19th century, with plenty of space and very little in the way of zoning restrictions, it was possible to create a new business inside Paris and build whatever accommodations were needed for it. This urbanization pattern would prevail into the middle of the 20th century, when land use provisions were adopted to segregate where people lived from where they might work.

In the nineteenth century's first decade, the town building pattern in Paris still exhibited the traditional habit of assembling dissimilar land uses and structures—business, industry, and residence—together in ways that people in that era accepted and which we have come to regard as occasionally awkward. The landscape exhibited features of a newly-emerging mercantile class in town. These people depended upon advantageous transport links, locating their homes and production facilities close to each other. These spatial relations between home,

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work, and transportation fostered the growth in local and regional commodity manufacturing, a proliferation of artisans' workshops—tailors, cobblers, bakers, and blacksmiths, among many others—and specialized retail activity.

For example, the businesses on the east side of Third to Second Streets included a saddlery, a drugstore, two dry goods stores, and Hughes Tavern; the Indian Queen Tavern stood at the corner of Second and Main. Across the street stood two malodorous tanneries, a mere half block from the courthouse, nuisance industries that were usually banished to the periphery in larger settlements. Beyond Second Street (which includes the Kiser House), a saloon, bakery, cabinet shop, residence, blacksmith shop, and hat shop fronted the street on the left (Raitz and O'Malley: 191).

The late settlement period in Central Kentucky (1810-1820), when the James Kiser House was built, was a time when Paris was undergoing a rapid development. The population had more than doubled—from 337 in 1800 to 838 in 1810—and this growth could especially be seen on Paris' north end. This was the first area of the town that pioneer explorers had settled, near what came to be called Hopewell Spring, and later, Sandy Bottom, as it lay along the important Paris-Maysville Road.

Approximately 100 yards to the south of the Kiser House, the first bridge over Stoner Creek was built in 1795. This first structure was replaced in 1808, greatly facilitating commerce with Maysville and Washington to the north. Washington was more important economically at this time than Lexington, mostly because of its geographical location, being close to Maysville and the Ohio River, a transportation corridor of national importance. The nascent town's compactness was evident: just two blocks south of the bridge, the county's first courthouse was built, a timber-frame structure measuring 32' x 20', not completely unlike the Kiser House.

Surrounding the courthouse were a number of low one- or two-story commercial buildings, some brick, others timber-frame. A good illustration would be BB-P-89, "a quaint pair of one-story frame buildings, divided by a brick parapet," which served over the years as a doctor's office, private residence, plumber's shop and various other uses, including that as an upholstery shop [*Historic Architecture*, pp. 252-253]. It was about this time that Abraham McJoy built the first mill on Stoner Creek (demolished), across the road from the Kiser House.

Just north of the Kiser House, the 30' x 18' Bourbon Academy was created in 1799-1800. Around 1800, the Platt Bayless House and hat shop, Dr. Keller House and offices, and the house of Aaron Smedley, a shoe maker (extant, BB-P-154), were built just south of the Stoner Creek bridge. In 1816, a hemp factory was erected in this same area of the Paris-Maysville Road. Though not recording the buildings on survey forms, Langsam and Johnson acknowledged the timeworn state of this earliest portion of town: "Situated at the northern end of Paris near Stoner Creek, the row of townhouses includes two of the oldest brick dwellings in Paris and represents the only remains of the earliest settlement in the bottomlands beside the Paris-Maysville Road" [*Historic Architecture*, p. 218].

After the early 1980s, almost all of these early remnants of historic Paris fell victim to urban renewal. However, these townhouses were not the only remains of the earliest settlement along that road. Continuing over the bridge to the other side of Stoner Creek, one used to find this same type of early habitat. The 1912 Sanborn map of Paris shows six more townhouses, just west of the Paris Gas Company (BB-P-40, now a veterinary office), in addition to five other "dwellings" of similar vintage on that same north side of the Paris-Maysville Road, before arriving at the first warehouse, formerly attached to the distillery in operation there before Prohibition. There

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were also three townhouses on the south side of the street, past the mill entrance, on what is now the Stoner Creek Country Club, and a building identified as a “colored school” on the 1886 Sanborn map.

Of these fifteen or so dwellings identified on the 1912 Sanborn map, only one, identified as 41 East Main Street, retains most of its physical identity to be recognized as a product of the city’s early era. Twelve of the other structures have been torn down and three, adjacent to and north of #41, have been encapsulated in concrete block so that they give a modern appearance. Even the Kiser House underwent a facelift in the 1970s as part of a rehabilitation of low-income housing. The outside was covered in aluminum siding, the chimney tops were removed, a small bathroom was added and the tiny kitchen updated.

### **History of the James Kiser House**

James Kiser’s double use of his house as both a residence and a place of business was not uncommon at that time, and in fact continued throughout the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century. This was a common practice whose origins can be traced back to medieval European times. We know that Kiser was a blacksmith because he is on record for having sold his blacksmith tools to his successor, Jacob Kiser. The latter advertised in the local paper for the return of his apprentice to the blacksmith trade.

### **Evaluation of the historic significance of the James Kiser House within the historic context Early Settlement of Paris, Kentucky, 1780-1820**

This early dwelling, which incorporated an artisan activity, preserves a sense of the diminutive scale of the older settlements in Central Kentucky at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Two-hundred years later, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the James Kiser House is functionally obsolete for its original combined residential-industrial purpose. It once provided shelter for a family, plus apprentice(s), and the work function, all under one roof. The James Kiser House provides us with a good example of an integral part of the hub of business activity which was situated on this north end of Paris, because it stood closer to the distant source of business, Maysville/Ohio River.

Today’s automobile and highly engineered roads have allowed profound changes to our cities and the functions of modern life. Much of Paris’ work, transportation, and shopping centers lie outside of town, in Lexington, to the southwest. Even those areas of Lexington have shifted in the post-WWII period, from downtown, to the city’s first mall (Turfland, 1964), to the Hamburg Pavilion, further from Lexington’s center, on its southeast side, near Interstate 75. What remains within Paris of commercial and residential development has shifted from its near north to its south side. The James Kiser House stands as the lone witness to this earliest day of commerce, trade, and travel into Paris. It deserves to be preserved for what it adds to our understanding of past ways of life.

This view of significance leads to the judgment that the property meets Criterion A, for its association with important events, those of the early development of the town, in which transportation, labor, and residential life, came together.

### **Evaluation of the Integrity between the Kiser House’s significance and its current physical condition**

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This form asks the reader to consider the significance of the Kiser House as resting on its ability to give us insights into the early development of Paris, particularly by showing the life and work of one of its craftsmen. The house signifies something about a population of workers whose residential presence was significant but has been lost to demolition and overshadowed by the surviving houses of citizens in more elite strata. The evaluation of integrity asks what of that significance can be gleaned from the property's physical presentation today? If the property is judged to be eligible for National Register listing, that judgment comes from the conclusion that the property retains sufficient material aspects to convey that significance in its physical form. Of the seven components of integrity, the most critical to conveying the significance of the Kiser House are location, setting, design, and workmanship. If the house retains sufficient elements of these aspects of integrity, it will be said to retain integrity of association, and thus be eligible. It is the view of this author that the Kiser House exhibits integrity between its physical form and its significance, and thus is eligible. The following are the considerations which led to that conclusion.

In the most basic way, the property retains integrity of **location**, as it has not been moved. Much more important than its unchanged location is the way this property's location testifies to the presence of many of the early community's working folks who lived in proximity to the Kiser House. These early workers chose this place to build their home and workplace because of their connection to resources that were vital for their livelihood: the very early road from Paris to Maysville, the Stoner Creek, the bridge which linked these houses to the emerging retail and governmental center of Paris on the other side of Stoner Creek. The Kiser House is the only remnant of this important locus of craftsmen activity in early Paris.

It is not known whether James Kiser built his own house or entrusted the work to a local house wright. We know only that he acquired the land on which cottage was to be erected and then, in less than two years, sold it to his successor, Jacob Kiser, who also operated a blacksmith shop there. It is also unknown why James Kiser kept the property for such a short period of time. Today, such rapid purchase and sale transactions often occur to take advantage of rapid appreciation of real estate, i.e., property speculation. Perhaps an early-19<sup>th</sup>-century version of this was happening in this part of Paris, as well. Kiser may have constructed a house for himself to live and work in, or to sell if sufficient profit could be gained—either way, using the property for economic gain.

The property retains **integrity** of setting, through retention of its roadside location, the retention of its surrounding site, and its continued relationship to Stoner Creek at its rear. Together, the integrity factors of location and setting give us the appearance of the property as it was in 1814. The choice of the area proposed for listing has been informed by these two integrity factors.

The Kiser house maintains integrity between its significance and its physical **setting**. Located strategically at the edge of the Limestone turnpike, the house would have provided a convenient stopping point for travelers. The 2-level construction gave the house immediate access to the important road in front of the house, and the lower back of the property provided a good place to set up a shop. The back yard of the house slants down to Stoner Creek, providing easy access to water for the animals, and perhaps people in those days, as well as a source of water for use by the blacksmith. One of the deeds refers to a smaller building there—no longer extant—which might have been where most of the work was done, conveniently placed between the house and the creek. The lower level kitchen, with its massive limestone fireplace, may have provided a source for the smith's fire as well as a place for travelers to rest while they waited for their animals or to have a meal.

In the 1800s, the house had a large open expanse of land to its left, where wagons and horses may have been

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parked. From there, it was only a step down to the creek or next door to the blacksmith. Just across the road, a tavern was available for a cool drink. Today the open space is occupied by other buildings, but at one time this house would have been the last stop before crossing the creek, and the first stop for those coming the other way, whose animals or wagons might have suffered damage in the crossing.

The James Kiser house has a reduced integrity of **materials** because the exterior has for the most part been covered over with modern siding, replacement exterior doors and windows. This was done in the 1970s, as part of the revitalization efforts to conform to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) standards for decent housing. Consequently, the house has less to offer on its exterior alone to inform us about its early-19<sup>th</sup> century identity and use. The primary exterior information that remains in view is the limestone foundation, which becomes more prominent toward the property's rear, due to the land sloping downward from the house's front-to-back. The house's interior also retains visible historic materials, such as heavy post and beams, and its raised limestone cellar where Kiser apparently conducted his blacksmith business, as indicated by the large walk-in fireplace located there.

In order to appreciate these, it is necessary to climb the narrow dogleg stairway off the front entrance hall, to the loft, which was finished as acceptable living space by standards of the time, including wide-plank flooring and plank covered kneewall and ceiling. There remains a thimble-covered smoke vent hole in the chimney coming up from the fireplace below, which would have provided minimal comfort for those who occupied this space, presumably children and apprentice(s). It is interesting to note that some of the original beaded clapboards were used as wall covering for a small area of the kneewall, above the stairway. Another area where the material integrity is evident is in the walkout cellar where Kiser apparently operated his blacksmith business. There, one can see, in addition to the large walk-in fireplace, the original framing members, the ceiling joists which provided floor support for the rooms above.

In contrast to the integrity of materials, the house retains a greater integrity of **design**, where design refers to its exterior form and interior room arrangement. The house does not appear to have had any high style design application; rather, its formal arrangement would be appropriate for vernacular analysis. Its original status as a side-passage two-bay cottage, while covered over with modern siding and a metal roof, is clearly legible. The key elements of room size and spatial relations provide many opportunities for scholars of early Kentucky trades to know one urban instance of the domestic situation for a blacksmith and his family. Amos noted that cottage industries were very common in the entire Bluegrass region of Kentucky during the settlement period, 1775-1820 (Amos: 42). This narrow side-passage plan with a large room was a popular residential form in urban areas of the Bluegrass before the central passage plan began to supplant it after 1820. Houses such as the Kiser House could accommodate combined domestic and commercial functions. Because of this, the Kiser House's floor plan becomes a vital part of its integrity of design, and provides an important element of the house's instructive value.

By retaining sufficient integrity factors of location, setting, and design, the property can demonstrate the important historic associations that qualify it for Criterion A. The house, therefore, can be said to have integrity of **association**, and thus, is eligible. Although no longer used for its original commercial purpose, the cottage continues to provide the observer with the physical evidence needed to recapture the spirit in which it was created.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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The area proposed for listing is a parcel identified in the Bourbon County Property Valuation Administrator's office under the map code 036-10-12-019.00. The parcel is not a perfect rectangle, but a rectangle with sides of 49' x 210' would be very close to the parcel size. A scaled map is included which shows this area.

**Boundary Justification**

The area proposed for listing includes the land that has historically been associated with the property. The area has integrity of location and setting, and those consideration led to the boundary choice.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Howard Gregory/owner  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 3/17/2014  
street & number 249 Houston Avenue telephone 859-351-4925  
city or town Paris state KY zip code 40361  
e-mail [howard\\_gregory@bellsouth.net](mailto:howard_gregory@bellsouth.net)

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**Photographs:**

**Name of Property:** James Kiser House  
**City or Vicinity:** Paris  
**County:** Bourbon  
**State:** Kentucky  
**Photographer:** Howard Gregory  
**Date Photographed:** 2013

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**

1. Hearth, basement, camera shooting east
2. Attic, camera shooting to the east
3. North and west façades, camera shooting to the east
4. South and west façades, camera shooting to the north
5. Hearth, basement, camera shooting east
6. North façade, camera shooting to the south
7. Main floor, primary fireplace, camera shooting to east

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**Property Owner:**

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

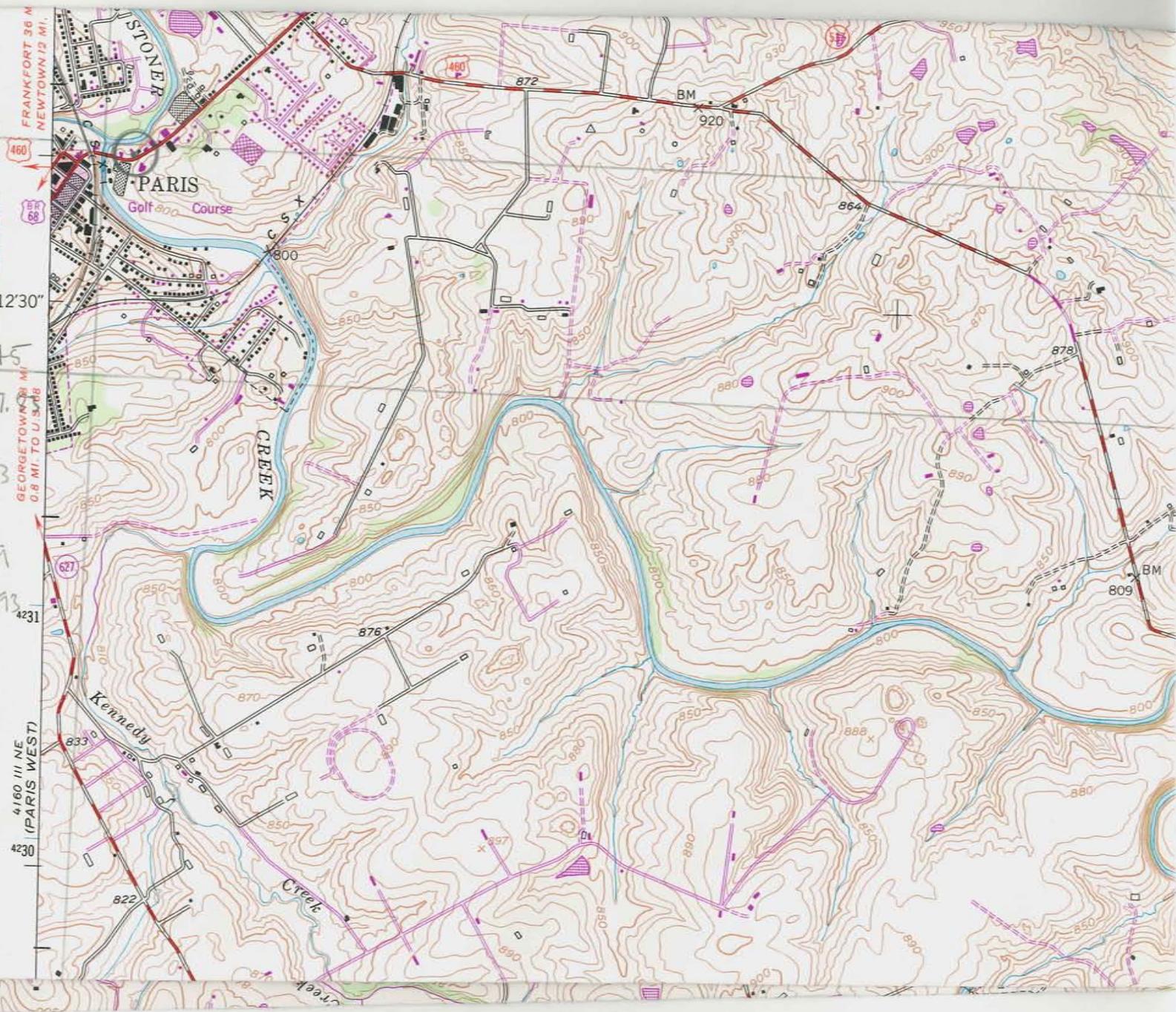
name Howard Gregory  
street & number 249 Houston Avenue telephone 859-351-4925  
city or town Paris state KY zip code 40361

James Kiser  
House

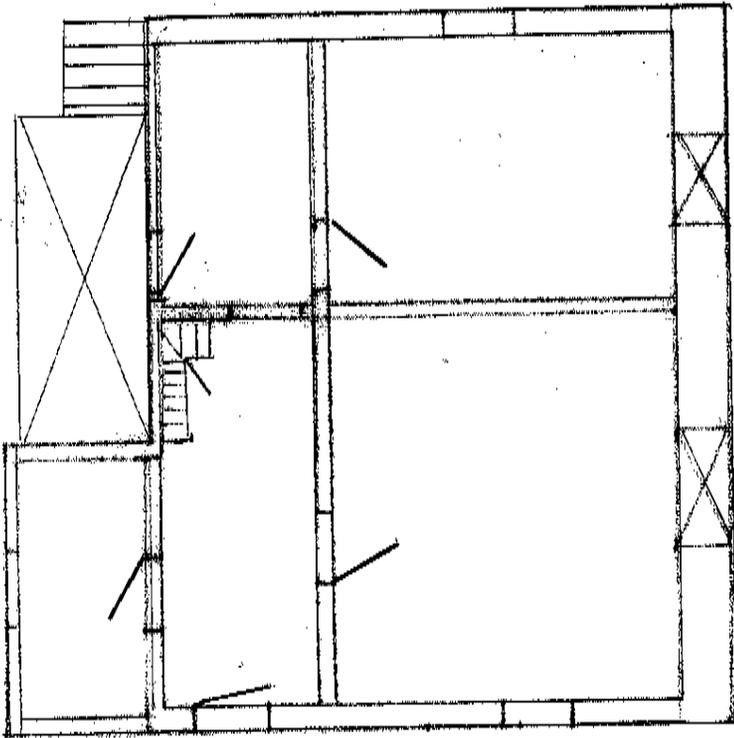
Bourbon Co, KY  
Paris East quad

Coordinate = NAD27  
Zone 16  
Easting 741,137.45  
Northing 4232,957.0

Coordinate = NAD83  
Zone 16  
Easting 741,131.39  
Northing 4233,163.93



120'



31 1/2'

41E MAIN

SCALE 1/8" = 1'



HIST



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