

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Johnson, Captain Benjamin, River House

other names/site number BE-1676

Related Multiple Property Historic Resources of Boone County, Kentucky (NRIS: 64500225)

### 2. Location

street & number 9260 River Road

NA	not for publication Vicinity
NA	

city or town Hebron

state Kentucky code KY county Boone code 015 zip code 41048

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:  
 A  B  C  D

Signature of certifying official/Title Craig Potts/SHPO Date \_\_\_\_\_  
**Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office**  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register  
 other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

Captain Benjamin Johnson River House  
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5. Classification

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	0	<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

Historic and Architectural Resources of the County of Boone, Kentucky MPS (64500225)

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

EARLY REPUBLIC/Federal

foundation: Field Stone, concrete  
walls: Brick  
roof: Tin  
other:

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**Narrative Description****Summary Paragraph**

The Captain Benjamin River House (BE-1676) is a Federal style, 1½-story, central passage, double pile dwelling, constructed in 1818. It is located on the Ohio River, 1/3 of a mile north of River Road (KY20) in the North Bend Bottoms section of Boone County. It lies about 2½ miles northwest of the community of Francisville and about ten miles north of the county seat, Burlington. The parcel on which it stands is ninety acres. The property is being interpreted for the house's Federal style design. The property proposed for listing is less than one acre and includes one contributing building.



**Captain Benjamin Johnson River House aerial view; latitude: 39.137817/longitude: -84.761080**

**Character of Site and History of Property Size Changes**

The Captain Benjamin Johnson River House is located in the Bullittsville Precinct in northern Boone County, in the North Bend Bottoms valley along the Ohio River. The farm is an unspoiled rural landscape, all of which is in a pasture. No modern structures have been added.

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**View of site from River Road looking northwest**

The house is located on land with a bank on the Ohio River, some 400 yards north of Kentucky Route 8. It cannot be seen from Route 8. House is located on level pasture land, used for cattle grazing and/or crop growing.

The house, built in 1818, is the only structure on the present 90-acre parcel. Originally in 1818, the house sat on a 220-acre parcel. These 220 acres were sold by Captain Benjamin Johnson's widow to George Balsly in 1832. He expanded his land holdings, and 180 acres of these (on which the house lay) were divided among his eight children when he died in 1848. Between 1848 and 1924 the parcels of land changed hands between the children. In 1924, Gustave Reinhardt purchased the entire 180 acres and the land remained in the Reinhardt family until 2017, when Dr. Richard C. Crisler, Jr. purchased 90 acres thereof on which the house is located.

The Captain Benjamin Johnson River House is indicated in the most northern portion of the Bullittsburg Precinct map of Lake's 1883 Atlas of Boone, Kenton and Campbell Counties. It is labeled "Res J. Balsly." The history of the Captain Benjamin Johnson River House ownership is as follows:

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1818 - Constructed by Captain Benjamin Johnson on a 200-acre plot reserved for his father Colonel Cave Johnson by the Campbell County Court in 1797 for the establishment of the town of Bullittsburg (never built).  
 1826 – 200-acre plot sold to son, Benjamin Johnson, by Colonel Cave Johnson  
 1828 – 200-acre plot sold to George Balsly by Captain Benjamin Johnson  
 1849 – 52-acre plot on which house stands distributed to Julius Balsly by Boone County Commissioners after the death of his father, George Balsly  
 1924 - Original 200-acre plot sold to Gustave Reinhart by William O. Balsly, son of George Balsly  
 1967 – 200-acre plot willed to his son, Harold Reinhart, by Gustave Reinhart  
 2004 – 200-acre plot willed to his sister, Helen Anderson, by Harold Reinhart  
 2005 – 200-acre plot willed to his son, Paul Anderson, by Helen Anderson  
 2017 - 90 acres of 200-acre plot (on which house stands) sold to Dr. Richard Crisler, Jr. (descendant of Colonel Cave Johnson) by Paul Anderson

### Exterior Description of House

The Captain Benjamin House has been vacant since the end of the nineteenth century. It stands with its ridgeline/primary axis running southwest to northeast. The house looks west toward the Ohio River, whose bank is approximately 50 feet from the house's foundation.



Southwest side and southeast (back) side, to North



Northwest (front) side.

The front doorway (north) of the Captain Benjamin Johnson River House is larger and thicker than the house's rear door (south) and that to the outside kitchen addition in the rear. Two doors puncture the back brick wall—one door which enters the house's interior, and a smaller opening, which gives access to a staircase leading to the house's cellar.

The house's original portion has a coursed fieldstone foundation and Flemish bond brick walls. An outside door on the south side foundation gives ground-level access to the cellar. The foundation, despite the ravages of many floods, remains intact, and the cellar, when not inundated by flood waters, remains dry. The house has a

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simple ridged roof, recently covered with green sheet metal. The outside walls of the Captain Benjamin River House are twelve inches thick.



**Northeast side with cellar entrance**

This original part of the house retains its jack arches over the window openings. These show little wear, given their two hundred years of existence, including being subjected to twenty-two floods of the Ohio River (see below).

The 1½-story house is two rooms deep. The main façade is four bays wide, with four bays in each pile. Both gable end walls on the first story contain one bay. Windows vary in size, with each pile having a larger-than-usual bay. Those of the second story also reflect the irregular placement of the first story. No window sashes remain. The doors of the Captain Benjamin Johnson River House appear to have been added since its construction; they do not appear to post-date the nineteenth century. The gables on the northeast and southwest end of the house each contain working brick chimneys.

### **Interior Description of House**

The inside walls of the house measure 8½ inches. The house contains two spacious rooms (eighteen feet, four inches by nineteen feet, three inches) on the first floor. An 8' 5" central passage with a circular staircase on the

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western side divides these rooms. A large front door (7' x 3½') in the central passage faces the Ohio River on the north side. Doors that measure 6' 5" x 3' doors at the upper north corners of each of the two rooms provide access from the central passage. A door of similar dimensions at the southeast end of the western room leads to the outside rear of the house, and a door, also of similar dimensions, at the south end of the central passage leads to the kitchen addition. A smaller door to the west of the kitchen door leads under the circular staircase to an inside staircase to the cellar. The ceilings are 11' 6" high.



The two second-story rooms mirror identically the dimensions and plan of those on the first story, excepting that no fireplace openings are present. The 6' 6" ceiling elevation of these rooms is five feet less than the ceiling height of the first story, perhaps to conserve the heat generated from the fireplaces below.

All rooms exhibit flat woodwork. The walls are plastered; ceilings are covered with pine boards, and floors are of pine. Partially the interior woodwork seems to be original. Elegantly fluted moldings frame the first-floor doors. Centered on the east and west walls of the first-story rooms are stout, plaster covered brick chimneys, without mantelpieces.

#### **Changes to the Building Since the Period of Significance**

An outside kitchen, like many during the period, stood near the house, off of its the rear. Later owners, probably George Balsly in the 1830s, built a more permanent kitchen that was integrated within the house's walls. This is suggested by a large fieldstone foundation and sixteen rafter openings in the house's rear wall.

Captain Benjamin Johnson River House

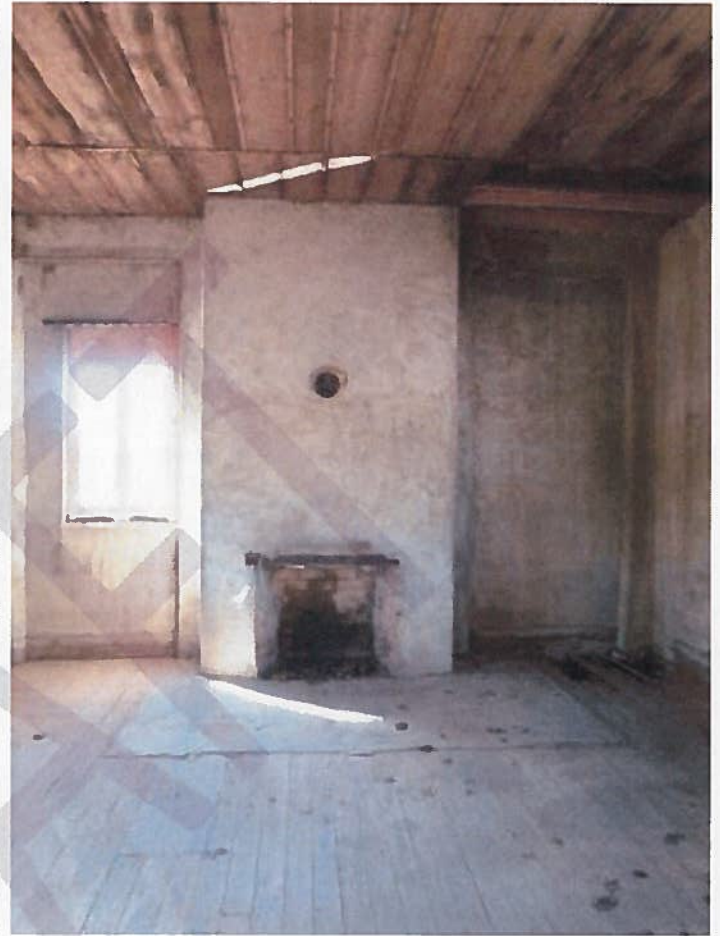
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Floods of the Ohio River have subjected the house to much interior water. A flood of over sixty feet will cover the floor on the first story. The National Weather Service has been recording Ohio River floods since 1883. Since that date, twenty-two floods have exceeded sixty feet. The largest was the record flood of 1937. It crested at eighty feet and left only the house's chimneys visible. Broken loose by the waters, a barge crashed into the house's east side. The damage was substantial. The house's tenant during that flood sought refuge in the Rev. Robert E. Kirtley House (Be-103) across River Road to the southeast. In spite of these inundations, the foundation and walls of the Captain Benjamin River House remain intact. The floors, particularly on the first story, however, have suffered.

The owner in 1960, Gustave Reinhart, rehabilitated the building for continued occupancy. He rebuilt the destroyed eastern chimney and its surroundings completely with original brick. He rebuilt the remaining destroyed sides on the east, southeast, and north east sides with cinder block. Reinhart even attempted to rebuild the rear kitchen addition, which the 1937 flood had swept away. In time, however, the reconstructed kitchen's roof and its wooden eaves that he had added fell apart. That concrete block kitchen addition has recently been removed.



Captain Benjamin Johnson River House

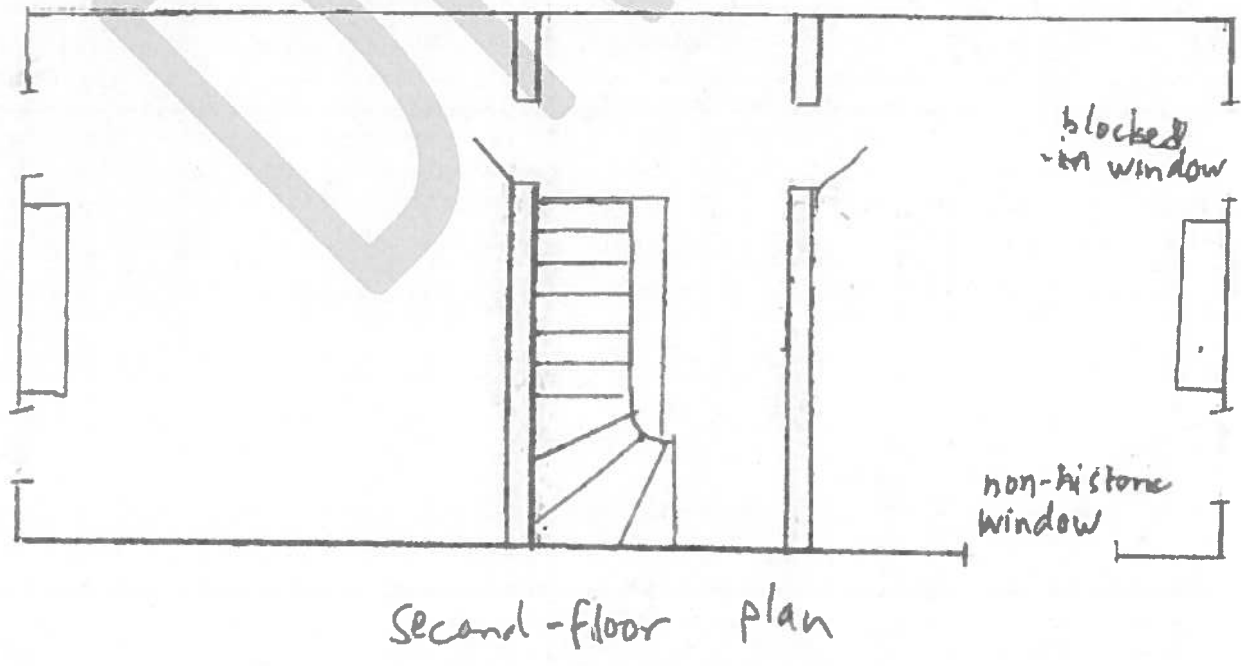
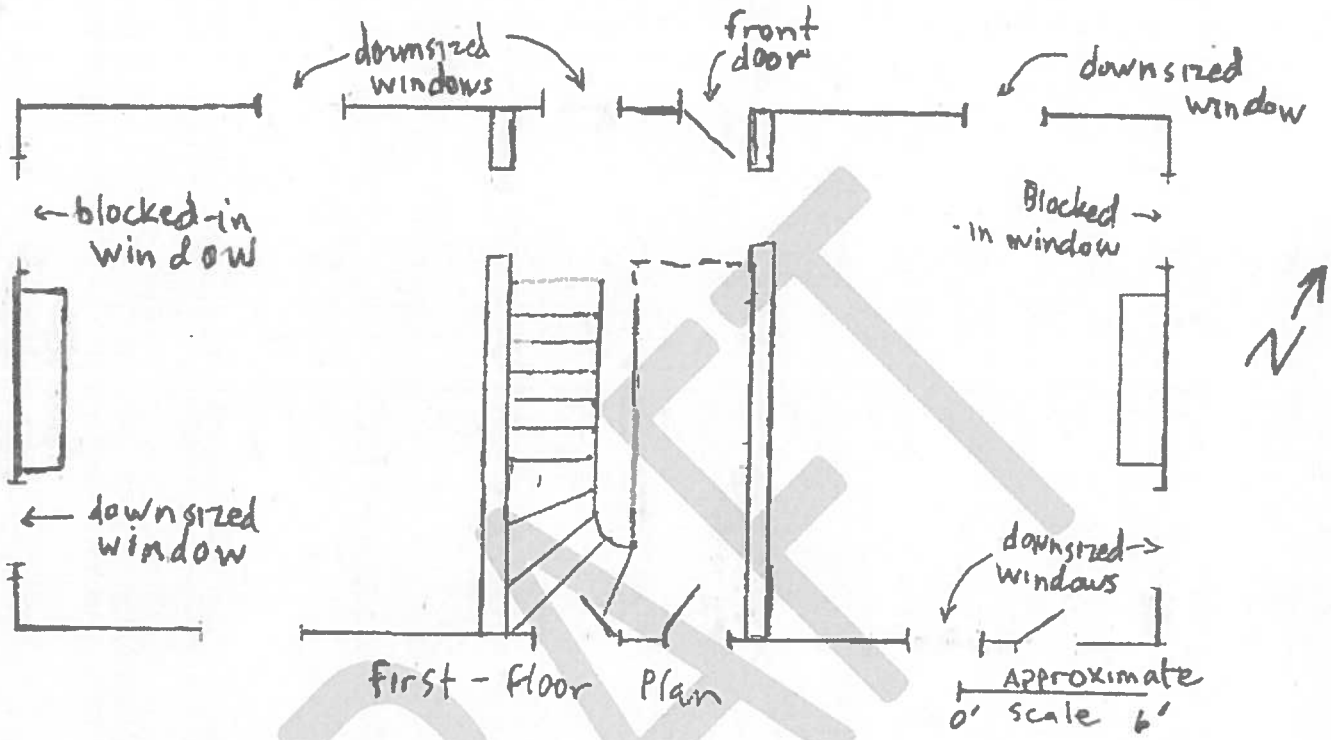
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**8. Statement of Significance**

**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.)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1818  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1818  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**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.

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

NA  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Architect: Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_

Builder: Johnson, Captain Benjamin  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

The Period of Significance is the single year of construction, 1818; which is a convention of the National Register program.

**Criteria Considerations: NA**

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## Statement of Significance

### Summary Paragraph

The Captain Benjamin Johnson River House (BE-1676) meets National Register Criterion C, and is an architecturally significant example in Boone County of an I-House type of house built during the Federal era, i.e., during the period 1794-1830. The property qualifies for the National Register according to eligibility specifications defined in two large studies of historic properties in Boone County. The Captain Benjamin Johnson River House meets Registration Requirements for Property Type 1D, "I House," as outlined in the Multiple Property form, "Historic and Architectural Resources of the County of Boone, Kentucky" (2000, NRIS 64500225). That multiple property listing is based on and extends an earlier project, titled "Historic Resources of Boone County, Kentucky," (NRIS 64000206) which gained listing in 1989. The present form will refer to these two multiple property nominations by their colloquial names: the 1989 project will be called the "Boone County MRA"; the 2000 project will be called the "Boone County MPS". These terms and format are explained in the following paragraphs.

### Background on the MRA/MPS approach to National Register listing

The National Register devised the Multiple Resource Area (MRA) format in the 1970s to enable State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) to follow up a systematic survey of architectural resources in an area—a city, a county, even a state—with an efficient way of nominating numerous resources to the National Register, those found most significant in that survey.

At the conclusion of such an architectural survey project, the historians undertaking the fieldwork and archival research were ready to complete an MRA cover form. That cover form consisted of an overview of the survey area's relevant historic themes, usually themes drawn from the National Register's Areas of Significance: Architecture, Education, Commerce, etc. The authors of the MRA cover form would also evaluate which of the area's surveyed properties contained the most significant illustration of the themes discussed. The authors of an MRA nomination form would select for nomination those properties deemed to qualify. The nomination consisted of the survey forms of those properties deemed to qualify, and the MRA cover form. If the SHPO and the state's Review Board approved those forms for nomination, that nomination package was submitted to the National Register for listing.

The Kentucky SHPO took advantage of the MRA format more than 50 times by 1990, leading to the listing of thousands of the Commonwealth's properties. Included among the many Kentucky MRA submissions was the Boone County MRA. Former Kentucky Heritage Commission (the original name of the Kentucky Heritage Council) employee Ken Gibbs surveyed 353 Boone County properties between 1976-1977, submitting 63 properties for listing (Taylor, Section H, page 2).

By the mid-1980s, the MRA format had begun to seem inadequate. To remedy this situation, the National Register called for a higher level of documentation to list batches of properties at the conclusion of area-wide survey projects. The Register created a new format, the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), which superseded the MRA cover form. The new form required more than an overview; it required historic context narratives and Property Type definitions. Also, properties would no longer be listed merely by attaching

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survey forms to the MPDF cover form. Instead, the Register required the completion of an individual registration form for each nominated property. This approach still retained efficiencies that were part of the former MRA process, such as not requiring the individual nomination form to repeat the contextual and property type information entered on the MPDF cover form.

Boone County also took advantage of the MPDF after the second round of county-wide survey. Between 1993-1996, consultant Margo Warminski documented an additional 869 properties. Another consultant, David Taylor, completed the "Historic & Architectural Resources of the County of Boone, Kentucky," an MPDF based on both Gibb's and Warminski's survey work. Taylor concluded that 27 additional Boone County properties were eligible individually, along with 5 districts (Taylor, Section H, page 3). Taylor's work gained listing in 2000. The Captain Benjamin Johnson River House, the current nomination, was not among Gibb's, Warminski's, or Taylor's work. Thus, this nomination form proposes listing for the Captain Benjamin Johnson River House according to the terms of the Boone County MPS from 2000. The following text explains how this newly-surveyed property fits within the body of information already gathered from the county's architectural past.

#### **Summary of the Boone County MPS's classification system**

The Boone County MRA defines 10 different types of properties which can be eligible for National Register listing. The Captain Benjamin Johnson River House fits within Property Type 1, which is broadly named "Domestic Architecture." Due to the variety within that type, and the extensive record of houses surveyed, Taylor broke Property Type 1 into 12 different subgroups, using letters A through L. These subgroups mostly are defined by house form or plan. Architectural style, which is overlaid on top of the plan or form, is not given subgroup status. This means, for instance, we would find early versions of single pile central passage plan houses (Property Type 1D), with Federal style—such as the nominated property—and later versions of Property Type 1D houses in Greek Revival style, but no separate property sub-type within Domestic Architecture named "Federal Style House" or "Greek Revival House." Captain Benjamin Johnson River House's Federal style marks it as an early instance of Property Type 1D.

#### **Historic Context: Domestic Architecture in Boone County, Kentucky, 1789-1854.**

National Register eligibility results when a property has three qualities: sufficient age (at least 50 years), significance, and integrity. The first term of National Register Criterion C allows a property to be evaluated as significant if that property can be categorized by its **type** of construction. The Captain Benjamin Johnson River House, then, has significance, by virtue of its I-House plan. The Boone County MRA adopted this understanding of design significance for residential construction within the county, as the document names Property Type 1, Domestic Architecture, defined within 12 subgroups, differentiated by floor plan. The relevant subgroup for this nomination is I-House, property type 1D.

In the Boone County MRA, Taylor observes the I-House plan house as an extremely popular vernacular house type in Boone County. He cites the following as characteristics of the I-House type:

...a two-story laterally-gabled, single-pile dwelling containing two rooms on each floor. Facades of this property type contain three, four or five bays [window or door openings] which may be arranged symmetrically or, as in some of the earliest examples, in a more casual fashion. Many, but not all, include a

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center hall that historically offered an enclosed, unheated space to greet guests before inviting them into family quarters. I-Houses were built in large numbers in town and country alike. Like the hall-and-parlor house, the I-House proved a durable feature of the landscape and enjoyed a long period of popularity in Boone County, with examples identified from ca. 1800-1910 (Section F, page 9).

Taylor demonstrates the great popularity and pervasiveness of the house type by listing 108 Boone County I-Houses on pages 9-11 of the MPS's Section F. Given this wealth of study properties, we will interpret the architectural value of the Captain Benjamin Johnson River House by investigating how it compares with its contemporaries. This author obtained a list of early I-Houses in Boone County from the Kentucky Heritage Council's survey database. This is what the SHPO's files contain:

Early I-Houses in Boone County, Kentucky from SHPO Survey Database					
Site #	Name	Status	Build date as per Survey form	Date of Major Alterations	Current Condition
BE-62	Wingate-Gaines House	National Register	Ca. 1820	1830s, ca. 1850s, 1922	Intact
BE-72	Graves House	Not listed	Ca. 1820		Demolished
BE-83	George Gaines House	Not listed	Ca. 1810		Visual inspection from road suggests Demolition
BE-104	Cave Johnson House	National Register	1800-1825	1825-50; 1925-50	House distant from SR 8
BE-127	Collins-Revil House	National Register (in a district)	1825-1835	1910-15 (porch)	Appears demolished for High School
BE-264	Hutton House	Not listed	1815-1825		Aerial photo suggests house intact
BE-274	Morris Lassing House/Elm Tree Place	National Register	1820	North and south wings added after 1950.	Intact
BE-314	Harris House	Not listed	1820s		demolished
BE-346	Thomas Sutton Farm	Not listed	1820	Upper story removed, roof rebuilt, rear porch enclosed	Not visible from road
BE-357	Dr. Piatt House	Not listed	1795-1800	1850-60: room built on back, bay window added, front-back L-shaped porch	Not greatly altered since survey
BE-1070	Marsh-Eggleston House	Not listed	Ca. 1800	1890: rear el; 1970s: vinyl siding	House appears to be present at site.

While many I-Houses were built from Boone County's earliest days, few have survived. Of course, the earliest ones were built before technologies such as indoor plumbing, electricity, central heat, air conditioning, and

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others became available. As each new amenity presented itself, the owner of a house without that comfort had to make a choice—continue using the structure without the innovation or obtain the luxury which came to be seen as a necessity. For a number of owners, that choice meant leaving the older house behind.

Some of the I-Houses may have not been built to stand the test of time in the first place. People of modest means could not afford the highest level of material quality or craftsmanship, which left the house prone to quicker deterioration. Also, as economic forces buffeted the house's original or a subsequent owner, maintenance might have been deferred, leading to the house's neglect and further decline.

Conversely, as economic fortunes in an area generally rose, an early I-House, which might have seemed perfectly acceptable through the 1870s, could begin to remind people of an era they had not yet developed a fondness for—the pioneering days. An owner in the last quarter of the nineteenth century might not invest in keeping the house's design original or even invest in its continued existence at all. Other owners retained their early structure, but expanded them through room additions and wings, to conform to modern desires for space and use. For instance, the Dr. Piatt House (BE-357) was purchased by its namesake doctor around 1850, leading to the adding of an exam room and the updating with fashionably stylistic features at mid-nineteenth century. The survey form for the house says that owners added to it again in 1922. This and many of Boone County's I-Houses tell stories about local housing desires and economic rises and falls through the historic period. It is a rare house which retains great purity from the settlement period. The following three properties are the Boone County I-Houses that have achieved National Register listing:



**Wingate-Gaines House (BE-62), front/east side**



**Wingate-Gaines House, west side**

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Morris Lassing House (BE-274), east/front facade



Lassing House, west side



Cave Johnson House (BE-124)



Another way of evaluating the significance of the Captain Benjamin Johnson's House is on the basis of style. In all, Boone County contains twelve houses with Federal styling which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These are:

Name	Year listed	NRIS #	Style	Period of Significance
Jonathan Carlton House	1982	82001551	Federal	Ca. 1825
Dinsmore House	1979	79000962	Federal, Greek Revival	1842
Early House	1989	88003297	Federal	1820-1830
Col. Abner Gaines House	1980	80001483	Federal	1790, 1830
D.W. Huey House	1989	88003294	Federal, Greek Revival	Ca. 1840
Hughes House	1989	88003282	Federal, Greek Revival	1825-1849
Cave Johnson House	1989	88003273	Federal	1800-1824
Morris Lassing House	1990	88003285	Federal, Greek Revival	1820s
Abe Souther House	1987	87000143	Federal	1818
John Tanner House	1987	87000207	Federal	1790s
Ephraim Uitz House	1990	88003276	Federal, Greek Revival	1842-1844
Watts House	1987	87000208	Federal	1790s

As can be observed from the table above, Boone County has several houses with Federal styling in part combined with the Greek Revival style. Because the Captain Benjamin River House was built in 1818, it is of pure Federal style. What makes it distinctive is that the house was expanded during the time when owners and



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builders in Boone County, and elsewhere in Kentucky, were becoming aware of the Greek Revival style, yet the owners chose not to make over the house with Greek Revival styling on its exterior.

### **Evaluation of the Architectural Significance of the Johnson River House within its Historic Context**

By the time of the construction of the Captain Benjamin Johnson River House (1818), it displayed what had become the prominent style for people of wealth and affluence in Boone County. Its Federal styling had been established locally some 20 years before its construction. Susan Cabot characterized the Cave Johnson House (built ca. 1797, BE-104, NRIS: 88003273) as the earliest of its kind in Kentucky, if not west of the Allegheny Mountains.

Cabot describes the Cave Johnson house as a rare local example of the two-story, center passage, double pile plan in Boone County. That would put it on a par with Liberty Hall, the house in Frankfort owned by Senator John Y. Brown, built ca. 1796-1800 (made a National Historic Landmark in 1971, NRIS: 71000344). Its Federal style is evident in Flemish bond brick work, jack arch openings, and 9/6 and 6/6 sashes." Cabot goes on to say in the Survey form, "In the first quarter of the 19th century, Boone County's architecture is stylistically conservative and restrained; while many buildings feature elements of national styles, high-style examples are relatively rare." The Cave Johnson House is one of these high style examples.

Such a house fit Colonel Cave Johnson's stature. He was elected as the first Clerk of the Boone County Court and served in that position for fourteen years. That was a key county position because as county clerk he would help establish the validity of land ownership claims through deeds in his office. Kentucky Governor Shelby chose Johnson to head the Boone County Militia as Colonel. In 1817, Boone County elected him to represent them in the State Legislature in Frankfort. The Legislature chose him in 1818 to be President of the newly formed Bank of Burlington, Boone County's only financial institution. In 1820, Governor Shelby chose him to be a Judge of the Peace on the Boone County Court and, when his term was over, finally to be Sheriff of Boone County.

In the Multiple Property form, Taylor saw a relationship between people of impressive accomplishment and houses of significant style. He acknowledged that "In a limited number of cases, Criterion B eligibility may be derived from the association of a residence with an individual whose contribution to broader historical and cultural development patterns is of demonstrable consequence" (Section F, page 28). Some people of wealth, status and prestige in Boone County chose an architectural style to announce to the community that they were people of importance. In this way, design served not only an aesthetic purpose but also took on a social function—indicating that the owner is a member of the county's elite.

As was noted, Captain Benjamin Johnson, builder of the Johnson River House, was the son of this illustrious father and grew up in the house. Thus, he was well acquainted with its style and architecture.

And, in almost every respect, the Captain Benjamin Johnson River House embodies the characteristics of the Cave Johnson House's Federal styling. The Benjamin Johnson House features an even more elegant feature in its circular staircase, something that surpasses the straight stairway in his father's house. This circular staircase is said by Matt Becker, chairman of the Boone County Historical Preservation Board, as easily the first of its kind

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in Boone County. The differing sizes of its windows, though, make practicality rather than design the high priority, as these are sized and located on the façade to fit the differing functions of the rooms. Perhaps another nod to practicality is that the house lacks fireplaces in its second story rooms.

By any measure, the Captain Benjamin Johnson River House ranks as a luxurious home for a member of a prominent Boone County family in the early nineteenth century. In the October 1849 setting apart of Clara Balsly's dower from her deceased husband's estate, the Boone County Commissioners described the Captain Benjamin Johnson River House as the "mansion house of George Balsly." Rather than choosing to continue to live in her home place, Clara Balsly opted to occupy "a large unfinished house erected by the late Capt. Benjamin Johnson, decd." This house stands nearby, southeast across the then-North Bend Road. It has Kentucky Historic Resources Inventory number Be-103 and is listed on the National Register as the Rev. Robert E. Kirtley House (NRIS 88003272).

### **Integrity Considerations/How the property meets the Registration Requirements**

In Section F, pages 29-30, Taylor offers these Registration Requirements for all Type 1 (Residential Architecture) properties in the Boone County MPS:

If Property Type I [properties] are nominated under Criterion C, integrity of *design, materials, workmanship, and feeling* should be present, at a minimum. Integrity of *design* will be maintained if the overall plan and detailing of a resource is essentially unimpaired. Original floor plans should be modified only to a minimum and distinguished architectural features (woodwork, exterior trim, etc.) should be intact.

Property Type I resources retain integrity of *materials* if the essential historic elements of the property's exterior finishes are unaltered. As with integrity of design, above, interior examples of materials include woodwork, moldings, doors, wall surfaces, etc. Exterior surface treatments, including brick, stone, and wood, should be intact. Within the context of Boone County residential architecture, the introduction of non-historic siding may not necessarily render a property ineligible for registration as long as the original fabric remains beneath the non-historic material, as long as other significant defining features have not been removed in the process of installing the new material. For example, a log house with little or no architectural embellishment and which was first covered in clapboard which was later clad in non-historic siding, may retain integrity, while a Queen Anne or Italianate home, originally graced by brackets, corbeled ornament, elaborate window surrounds—all of which were removed in the course of siding—would fail to meet the test of integrity of materials.

Integrity of *workmanship* for Property Type I resources is reflected in unaltered brickwork and the dressing of stone for foundations or for trim, and interior and exterior wood features such as siding and decorative elements, the fashioning of hewn logs, molded woodwork, wainscot, etc. Such workmanship is apparent throughout Boone County and is indicative of the quality of craftsmanship which was available in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the area.

The integrity of *feeling* which must be retained by eligible Property Type I resources is expressed by the minimally-altered character of the exterior of nominated properties, exhibiting a significant proportion of

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intact character-defining features. These elements include exterior finishes, fenestration patterns, roof form and appearance, porches, architectural ornament, etc., and may also be related to the integrity of location, discussed above. Integrity of feeling with respect to interiors is achieved by the general maintenance of the floor plan, original volumes, wall surfaces, trim, etc. An adaptive use for a Property Type I resource will not generally impair its integrity.

The claim for the integrity, between the architectural significance of the Captain Benjamin Johnson River House and its current physical condition, rests on five components of integrity: location, setting, design, feeling, and association.

The Captain Benjamin Johnson River House possesses integrity of **location**, because it remains on the site where it was built. Until its sale to Gustave Reinhart in 1924, the house survived as the primary residence on a large farmstead. With this building in its original location, the relationship between the building and the land has tangible form.

The Captain Benjamin Johnson River House possesses integrity of **setting** because it remains in a rural locale, surrounded by pasture. The farm remains intact and undisturbed. No new structures have been built on the property. The current owner has taken steps to ensure that the property will remain in a rural environ through the imposition of conservation easements on the land.

The Captain Benjamin River House possesses integrity of **design** at the local level through the possession of its essential elements of Federal style form and façade. These elements identify it unmistakably as a Federal style house. The house's central passage single-pile form with gable chimneys is unaltered. The house retains its original fieldstone foundation and brick walls, except where these have been repaired with cinder block after the 1937 flood. The main modern addition is a new sheet metal roof which the owner had installed in the fall of 2017. The lack of interior updating in this house is remarkable, giving us a rare glimpse of living conditions for upper class people in Boone County as early as the second decade of the nineteenth century. The house lacks the types of modernizing items that we must overlook in almost all other extant historic houses: electricity, indoor plumbing, bathrooms, etc.

The Captain Benjamin Johnson River House possesses integrity of **feeling**, in that it still retains the basic dimensions and proportions that houses of this Federal type possessed historically. Furthermore, the house possesses integrity of feeling because it remains on its original site and in its original setting. The land around the house has not been compromised. The lack of modernization of the house also enable it to convey the sense of residential life in the early nineteenth century.

Finally, the Captain Benjamin Johnson River House possesses integrity of **association**. The house is associated with an important theme in Boone County history: the construction of Federal style houses. As noted before, the county has a limited, but important, inventory of Federal style structures, most of which, like the Captain Benjamin Johnson River House, were built in the first half of the 19th-century. The property retains its rural character, surrounded by pasture, which provides a suitable setting for this 19th-century rural dwelling.

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With these considerations, we conclude that the Captain Benjamin Johnson River House is eligible for National Register listing under Property Type 1, as defined by the Multiple Properties Submission "Historic and Architectural Resources of Boone County, Kentucky, 1789-1950" (listed 2000, NRIS 64500225).

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Boone County, Kentucky  
 Property Deeds, Boone County Administration Building, Burlington.

Boone County Recorder  
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Boone County Planning Commission  
 Historic Resources of Boone County, Kentucky. Boone County Planning Commission, Burlington, 2002

Cabot, Susan, "Historic Structures of Boone County, Ky" 2002

Gibbs, Kenneth  
 1989 Historic Resources of Boone County, Kentucky. Multiple Property National Register submission. On file at the Kentucky Heritage Council, Frankfort, Kentucky.

Kentucky Heritage Council  
 Historic Resources Inventory forms for Boone County, Kentucky. Available at Kentucky Heritage Council, Frankfort.

Lake, D.J., "Atlas of Boone, Kenton and Campbell Counties, Kentucky," 2002.

Lancaster, Clay, "Antebellum Architecture of Kentucky," 1919 and 2015

Newcomb, Rexford, "Old Kentucky architecture: Colonial, federal, Greek revival, Gothic, and other types erected prior to the War Between the States," 1960

Taylor, David  
 2000 Historic and Architectural Resources of the County of Boone, Kentucky. National Register multiple resource documentation form. Paper copy available from Kentucky Heritage Council, Frankfort, Kentucky. Electronic version available from <https://npgallery.nps.gov/pdfhost/docs/nrhp/text/64500225.pdf>.

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

latitude: 39.137817/longitude: -84.761080

UTM References

1 Zone Easting Northing

3 Zone Easting Northing

3 Zone Easting Northing

4 Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Captain Benjamin Johnson River House is located on the Ohio River in the North Bend Bottoms, an unincorporated area of Boone County, Kentucky. It is near the community of Francisville. It is part of an 89.647-acre farmstead on the north side of River Road (KY Route 8), approximately one-half mile north of said road. A boundary extending fifteen yards outward from the house on all directions has been drawn to enclose the residence. The southern line of said boundary includes the field stone foundation of a now non-existent kitchen and a concrete cistern approximately fifteen feet south of the house.

The larger property is defined within Boone County records. That location corresponds with the property recorded by the Boone County Kentucky Property Valuation Administrator under account number 023.00-00-001.01. The Boone County Clerk records the full property acreage in deed book 1034 page 739.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated boundary contains sufficient land to enclose the house with its kitchen foundation and its cistern. The remainder of the acreage currently associated with the building has been excluded from the nomination because it does not contribute to the context under which the property is being nominated. That additional acreage provides the rural setting, but is not critically important to the understanding of the house's architectural significance. The property's 90 acres are protected by a conservation easement, which will protect the property from future owners' interest in developing the land for more than agricultural use.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. Richard C. Crisler, Jr./owner and L. Martin Perry/consultant  
organization Neboshon Farms date 2018  
street & number 8368 River Road telephone 859-689-7228  
city or town Hebron state Kentucky zip code 41048  
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**Photographs:**

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**Name of Property:** Captain Benjamin Johnson River House  
**City or Vicinity:** Hebron, Kentucky 41048  
**County:** Boone  
**State:** Kentucky  
**Photographer:** Dr. Richard C. Crisler, Jr  
**Date Photographed:** August 2017 - February 2018

**Description of Images of the Captain Benjamin Johnson River House on the Image disc and number**

- 1 of 10: Pasture view of House. Camera direction: north
- 2 of 10: Unrestored view of House. Camera direction: north west
- 3 of 10: West elevation. Camera direction: east
- 4 of 10: East elevation. Camera direction: west
- 5 of 10: Front elevation. Camera direction: south east
- 6 of 10: Rear elevation. Partial restoration of House. Camera direction: north
  - a. Removal of outside cinder block kitchen ruins and vines
  - b. Addition of new tin roof
- 7 of 10: View of circular stairway in central passage. Camera direction;: south
- 8 of 10: Detailed View of circular stairway. Camera direction: west
- 9 of 10: View of fluted doorway frame molding. Camera direction: north
- 10 of 10: View of chimney in west 1st story room. Camera direction:

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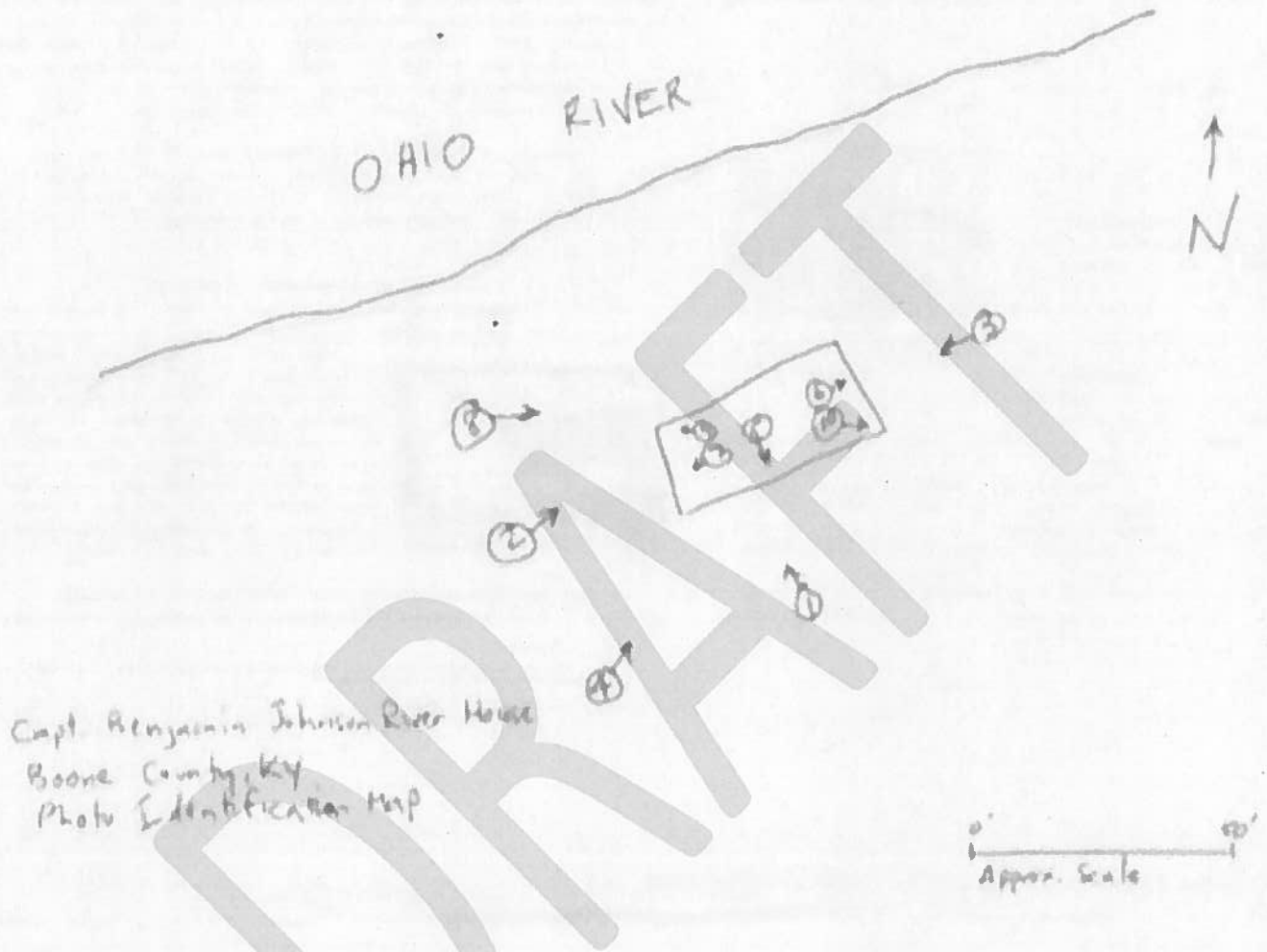
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**Property Owner:**

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street & number 8368 River Road

telephone 859-689-7228

city or town Hebron

state Kentucky zip code 41048