

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

MAY 23 1983

date entered

9/16/83

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic John W. Bennett House

(NH00-15)

and/or common NA

2. Location

street & number NA NE 67

NA not for publication

city, town NA vicinity of Brownville

state Nebraska code 031 county Nemaha code 127

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>NA</u> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: storage

4. Owner of Property

name Mrs. Deanna Furnas

street & number 7920 Cherrywood Drive

city, town Lincoln vicinity of state Nebraska

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Nemaha County Courthouse

street & number 824 "N" Street

city, town Auburn state Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date On-going federal state county local

depository for survey records Nebraska State Historical Society

city, town Lincoln state Nebraska

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>NA</u>

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The John W. Bennett house is a two-story, brick-nogged, braced-frame, central-hall I-type house with internal, gable-end brick chimney flues, and a one-story framed kitchen-dining room wing on the rear. The house is a remnant feature of the Bennett farmstead (later part of the Furnas Nursery), standing alone in a little-altered state.

The John W. Bennett house is located one-half mile southwest of Brownville on the uplands overlooking the Missouri River bluffs just southeast of the intersection of Nebraska Highway 67 with U.S. Highway 136. Located in extreme southeastern Nebraska, Brownville is one of the State's oldest river towns. The house is a remnant feature of what was once a substantial farmstead operated by John W. Bennett and later served subsidiary functions as a part of the noted Furnas Nursery property. The site is being nominated as an individual feature since all significant site associations have been lost -- that is, outbuildings have been lost over the years through removal and demolition, the site was severed from the main headquarters of the Furnas Nursery just one-quarter mile to the west by the establishment of Nebraska Highway 67, and the site was impacted recently by the development of a contemporary residential unit within the historic farmstead area. Further future impact is anticipated through the relocation of U.S. Highway 136 just south of the site.

The house, built in 1868, is a particularly fine example of the I-type house which has been significantly associated with Anglo-American farmers in the states to the east and southeast of Nebraska. The main body of the house is a two-story rectangular mass measuring 5.25 by 10.75 meters (17.25 x 35.25 feet), built of a brick-nogged, braced-frame type of construction. This section is a symmetrically arranged composition of two identically-sized rooms divided by a wide central entrance hall. The central hall supports the stair to the second floor which is divided into two equal chambers reflecting the first floor arrangement.

Attached to the rear in an ell fashion is a single story, non-nogged, psuedo-braced-frame section measuring 7.5 x 4.3 meters (24.5 x 14 feet). This section houses both the kitchen and the dining room with doors from both opening east onto a porch. The porch roof has fallen-in, and has been completely removed -- its size and shed-roofed configuration is preserved in the porch floor which is still extant (showing column locations), and in the trace of the roof along the south wall of the main I section. This rear wing appears to have been built as a separate unit (perhaps as a separate, double-pen cottage) and attached to the main I section at the time of its construction. Not only is its structure different from the I section, but its style reflects the simplified Greek Revival, particularly in the return cornice of the south gable end, a treatment which is not used on the main body of the house. A single internal chimney flue rises from the interior partition wall of the ell.

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The main body of the house is distinctive in its formal composition, particularly in the five-bay treatment of its north, front facade. Symmetrically arranged, the central entrance is flanked by two windows on each side, a pattern which is reflected in the five window openings in the second story. Windows in the second story are of the six-over-six configuration typical of the period, while the ground floor windows are one-over-one, probably reflecting a turn-of-the-century remodeling. Emphasis is placed on the entrance with its paneled recess, divided sidelights and transom, and the simple one-story porch supported by square columns and pilasters. The door is of the standard double-arched light typical of the period.

Fenestration elsewhere is typical of the type -- the east gable is windowless; the west with a single window per floor, placed in the bay south of the chimney flue; and the south facade reflects a symmetrical three-bay fenestration pattern except where the rear ell is attached. The house features a simple gabled roof, punctured with internal brick chimney flues at each end. The house is covered with standard 10 cm. (4 inch) clapboards, terminated at the corners with narrow pilaster boards. A wide board cornice and a uniform eave overhang completes the exterior treatment.

The interior is very simply finished with wide board floors, and plastered walls and ceilings. Floors are finished variously with carpet or linoleum while most of the walls are wall-papered. Window and door trim is composed of simple boards, with a slight pediment given to the heads. Emphasis is again placed at the entrance where door trim is uniformly molded. The stair banister and newel is of walnut.

Few modifications have been made. The second floor bedrooms retain their original beaded-board closets while a more recent closet occupies the east, main floor parlour. The door connecting the west parlour to the dining room has been enlarged to a wide arch configuration. The most extensive modification involves a relatively sensitive insertion of a restroom in the space under the main stair, an insertion which closed the first floor hall space, necessitating the removal of the south door at that location (where it formerly led to the rear porch ell), where it was replaced with a high transom-like window.

No serious integrity problems exist with the house. The few interior modifications which have occurred are minor for a house that was still occupied until recent times. The most serious problems involve the loss of the rear porch, a feature which can be reconstructed with relative ease, and a wood-rot problem which is occurring along portions of the timber sill at the foundation. Plans are currently underway to deal with these, as well as the preservation and continued use of the dwelling.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1868 Builder/Architect ~~XXXXXXXX~~ Mr. Workman

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The John W. Bennett house is significant architecturally as a fine and prototypical example of the I-type house, a type which has been associated with prosperous Anglo-American farmers in the eastern United States; and is significant to agriculture (more specifically horticulture) for associations with Governor Robert W. Furnas' pioneer Brownville nursery during the years 1889 to 1903.

John W. Bennett was born in Hardin County, Kentucky in 1830. He moved with his parents to Holt County, Missouri in 1844 where he soon after engaged in the freighting business, crossing the plains twice before arriving in Brownville in 1855. In February of 1856 he purchased a claim adjoining the town (Andreas, 1149) which became the basis for a prosperous farm. In 1864 he expanded his farm land further by receiving a patent on the land on which the present house is located (Nemaha County Deed Book 3, 372).

Bennett's first house was built of logs, "with huge chimneys out of doors, after the style of his native State" (Andreas, 1149) -- probably a log double-pen or dogtrot house.¹ By 1867 he had built a good two-story house which was destroyed by fire in January of 1868 (Advertiser, February 27, 1868). His new house, the dwelling currently being nominated, was under construction by March of 1868 (Advertiser, March 19, 1868) and was completed by master builder Workman by June of that year (Advertiser, June 11, 1868).

The house John Bennett moved into in 1868 is the oldest, dated example of the I-house² in Nebraska, a fact reinforced by certain vestigial aspects of its design. Certain features of I-houses are common to all, making them an easily identifiable type: a full, two-story front entrance facade with the eave side facing the front, gable-ends facing the side, two or more rooms in length and only one room in depth (Kniffen, 555; Southern, 71). The type is clearly associated with Anglo-American settlement, originating in English folk culture (Glassie, 66, 124; Southern, 71). The house was built by English settlers in all parts of early America, from the New

¹Double-pen, dogtrot, and "central-passage" houses are all common in Bennett's native state of Kentucky. At least two of these typically would be built with more than one massive external chimney, see Montell and Morse, 17-22, 28-30, 89-90.

²Lacking any other known label, the I-house was named such by geographer Fred B. Kniffen in 1936. The label was suggested by the large numbers of this house type which were built in southwestern Louisiana by settlers from Illinois, Iowa and Indiana. The term has survived, largely because the letter I is strongly suggested in both the tall, narrow proportions of the gable-end of such houses, and by the shape the main body of the house exhibits in plan, both diagnostic features of the type (see Kniffen, 553).

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Peru, Nebr.--MO

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	5	2	7	2	9	7	5	4	4	7	4	4	7	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification Defined by the projection of the eave lines and the porch floors on the ground -- significant site associations with other outbuildings have been lost over the years due to demolition of outbuildings, the establishment of Nebraska Highway #67, and recent residential development. Further future impact is anticipated via relocation of U.S. Highway #136.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code county code

state NA code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title D. Murphy, Architect

organization Nebraska State Historical Society

date January, 1983

street & number 1500 R Street

telephone (402) 471-3850

city or town Lincoln

state Nebraska

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Marrin W. Kretz

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

date April 25, 1983

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Bill Groves
Keeper of the National Register

date 9/16/83

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

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England colonies through the Mid-Atlantic Region (Glassie, 49, 124-125; Kniffen, 553), and was built as the most common house type throughout the Tidewater and Upland South regions (Glassie, 66-67, 75, 99, 107-109; Kniffen, 553; Southern, 71). Throughout the eastern United States, the house has been associated with agricultural prosperity (Glassie, 99; Kniffen, 555).

The large two-story front facades of these houses present the most impressive facade possible for a house of its size. One aspect of this facade is clearly common, though not exclusive: that is the strict formal symmetry of its design. The result of the acceptance of Renaissance formalism throughout English folk culture, the concept of symmetry in the vernacular tradition was accepted slowly, first from Georgian and more-so later from Federal architecture in America. Symmetry probably didn't become codified until the mid-19th century with the advent of the Greek Revival style in the South (Southern, 74, 78).

Perhaps the most impressive I-house facades are those of the fully-developed, symmetrical, five-bay design derived from Georgian precedent and preserved through the Federal period. By the time that symmetry became codified, the most consistent design treatment exhibited the symmetrical three-bay division (Southern, 78).

The John Bennett house is important as an extension of a dominant Anglo-American house type onto the western margins of the midwestern prairies. Important too is its vestigial nature, being a survival of Federal period design influences, and its construction technique, being a survival of antique methods during a period when the balloon-frame was coming into almost exclusive use among American builders.

Stylistically the house is non-specific and somewhat hybrid. In its fully-developed five-bay facade, its most distinctive feature, the house represents a survival of Federal influences, especially in the lightness of form achieved by the high proportion of window to wall area (Southern, 75). In proportion the house resembles more the Greek Revival and subsequent 19th century styles (Southern, 78). And in the uniform overhang of the eaves on all sides, the house is more up-to-date, sharing this characteristic with I-houses built in the Gothic and Italianate Revival styles (Southern, 79-82).

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In this sense, the Bennett house seems typical of the stylistic development of territorial Nebraska, and of vernacular houses in general. Some few, very simple versions of the Greek Revival style were built in early Brownville. In fact, the ell wing to the Bennett house portrays the most sophisticated example of a Greek Revival element extant in the Brownville area -- that is, the return cornice of the south gable end. Like the Greek Revival, only a few early dwellings exhibit Gothic Revival styling and all of these consist of lancet arched windows adorning second-story gabled wall dormers which are symmetrically placed on two room and central hall, one-and-one-half story cottages. The first really sophisticated execution of domestic style in Brownville occurred with the Italianate. Houses of this style in the Brownville area were typically Georgian-derived central-hall, double-piles (or otherwise two-story square-types with hipped roofs), which were being built during the period 1868-1872. Thus the Bennett house was constructed during a period of stylistic hesitancy, one where the need to establish livelihood was more important than architectural refinement. In this regard the house is a testament to Bennett's agricultural achievement, being one of the earliest big houses in the Brownville community.

Typologically, however, the house is absolutely correct: in its one room depth, in its two room plus hall length, in its full two-story height, and even in the one story ell addition on the rear which is commonly associated with the type (Montell and Morse, 34). The brick, internal gable-end chimneys, themselves a sign of the use of cast-iron stoves in place of the earlier open hearth fireplaces, are also characteristic features of the type, especially in the South (Glassie, 184). In fact, in almost every major respect, the Bennett house exemplifies the design of I-houses in his native state of Kentucky (Montell and Morse, 32-33). As such, the house stands as an idealized example of traditional folk building practice and the movement of Anglo-American folk culture into the trans-Missouri west.

I-houses are relatively rare features of the Nebraska landscape. Only eight have been identified by the Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey in the two southeastern-most counties of the state, counties that were initially settled by numerous Anglo-Americans arriving from the Upland South area. None of these, nor any of the few others known to be extant in the state exhibit the two-story five-bay facade of the Bennett house.

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Primary significance in agriculture, more specifically horticulture, is derived from the inclusion of the Bennett farm in the Furnas Nursery property from 1889 until two years prior to Furnas' death in 1905. Robert W. Furnas (1824-1905) was a pioneer horticulturalist in Nebraska, establishing his business in Brownville in 1857. Described as the "father of Nebraska horticulture", Furnas was an early and life-long promoter of agricultural development in the state:

One of his chief delights has been to witness the results following his efforts to transform the so-called great American desert into a region covered with fruitful farms cultivated by an intelligent community of farmers . . . The governor is now actively engaged in farming and fruit-growing on the Furnas fruit farm on the outskirts of the picturesque little city in which he has lived twenty-six years (Andreas, 1150).

The nursery business continued to be his main vocation throughout his life.

In addition to his horticultural business, Furnas was actively involved in a variety of pursuits, making him one of Nebraska's most important pioneer citizens. Furnas established, edited and published the Nebraska Advertiser in Brownville beginning in 1856, and edited and published the first agricultural publication in the state, the Nebraska Farmer, a journal which is still in publication. In 1856 also he was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Nebraska Territory, serving four sessions where he authored both the first common school law for Nebraska and the law creating the Board of Agriculture. He served as president and secretary for the Board for many years and was instrumental in establishing the Nebraska State Fair, an event which today still promotes the State's agricultural interests. Furnas served a term as the State's second governor, organized the Second Nebraska Cavalry, and was agent to the Omaha Indians from 1864-1866. For his service to the State of Nebraska, he was inducted into the Nebraska Hall of Fame in 1980.

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