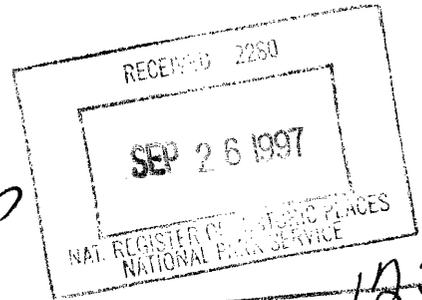


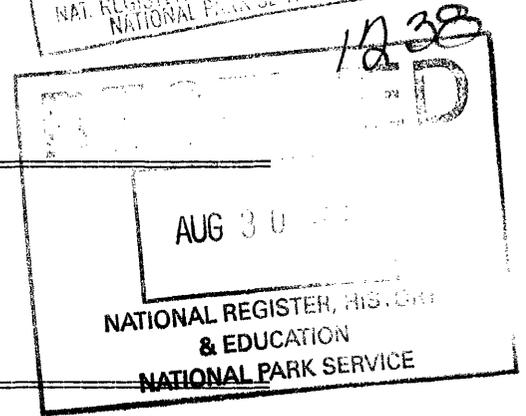
NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 10-90)  
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

OMB No. 1024-0018

*Resub*



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



1. Name of Property

historic name: Knott House  
other names/site number: The Little Green House

2. Location

street & number: 302 Nichols Street not for publication: N/A  
city or town: Princeton vicinity: N/A  
state: Kentucky code: KY  
county: Caldwell County code: 033  
zip code: 42445

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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  nationally \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_ locally. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*David L. Morgan* David L. Morgan, SHPO and Executive Director 9-17-97  
Signature of certifying official Date

Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency and bureau. In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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4. National Park Service Certification

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

Entered in the National Register Patrick Andrus  
See continuation sheet.  
 Determined eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_  
See continuation sheet.  
 Determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_  
 Removed from the National Register \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_  
Patrick Andrus 10/13/99  
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

private  public-local  public-State  public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

building(s)  district  site  structure  object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

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6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic

Sub: Single Dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic

Sub: Single Dwelling

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Post World War II Suburban Cottage

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Concrete roof: Wood walls: Shingle other: Aluminum, Glass

8. Statement of Significance

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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.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

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

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

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

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions): Social History

Period of Significance: 1952-1971

Significant Dates: 1971

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above): Knott, Sarah Gertrude

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Builder: Wade, Clyde

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

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

1. Sarah Gertrude Knott Collection, Folklife Archives, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green.
2. Dodge, Yvonne. Interview by Michele Pezzuti. Princeton, KY, 26 October 1996.

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Folklife Archives, Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University

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### 10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property: Less than one acre.

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>16</u>	<u>422 020</u>	<u>4106 320</u>	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

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

The property is a rectangular lot measuring 150 feet long by 50 feet wide. Please see the included Property Valuation Ariel Photo taken in 1991 (P11-2-2) which serves to illustrate property boundaries and position.

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

The boundary includes the Knott house and surrounding yard. This boundary has been stable since 1952, when the home was built.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Michele Pezzuti  
organization: Western Kentucky University: Graduate Programs in Folk Studies  
date: August 1, 1997  
street & number: 260 St. George Street, Apt. 8  
telephone: 904-824-8798  
city or town: St. Augustine  
state: FL  
zip code: 32084

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Property Owner

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

name: \_\_\_\_\_

street & number: \_\_\_\_\_

telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

city or town: \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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The Knott House

Caldwell County, Kentucky

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

The Knott House in Princeton, seat of Caldwell County, Kentucky, is a post-World War II suburban cottage designed by Gladys Knott and her sister, Lannie Ransdell. Built in 1952 by local resident and contractor, Clyde Wade, the home is located in a residential area of Princeton on Nichols Street, where most of the homes appear to be of similar age and type. The one story home, although of modest design, is significant for its association with Sarah Gertrude Knott, founder and director of the National Folk Festival Association from 1934 until 1971.

The front of the Knott home overlooks Nichols Street. The unheated, lattice-enclosed front entrance to the house is accessed through a storm-glass door. This entrance area is positioned exactly at midpoint on the semicircular, gravel driveway which arches around a small, grassed area and meets flush with Nichols Street. Southside Baptist Church, where Sarah Knott's sisters, Lannie Ransdell and Gladys Knott, were charter members flanks the lot diagonally across the street from the former Knott residence. Sarah Knott became a member of this church in 1971 after her retirement and permanent move to Princeton.

The lot on which the house sits is fifty feet wide and one hundred and fifty feet long. There is no basement, but ample storage is provided by attic space located above the residential area. The wooden shingles, used as siding on each of the four outer walls, as well as the poured concrete foundation, are all original. Access to the carport is available off the "vertical" gravel driveway, actually an extended part of the semicircular drive.

The floor plan consists of four main rooms, a central passage, and one full bathroom accessed by the den and from the center passage. The house contains two bedrooms or one bedroom and a den as it is currently being used, a living room/dining room area, and an eat-in kitchen. Wall paper and wall-to-wall carpeting accent the home's interior. In 1985, lattice work added to the area behind the carport provided privacy in a space which could function something like a back porch. In 1987, the single-bay carport located off the kitchen, original to the home's structure, was fitted with a garage door. And in 1988, a patio was installed to provide a transition from the sheltered porch area to the grassy back yard.

While living in Princeton, Sarah Knott nicknamed the home she shared with her sister, Gladys, and family friend, Yvonne Dodge, "The Little Green House." In fact, while working

from the home, Sarah Knott used that name as a part of the return address on her business stationery. Although the home is now painted blue, Ms. Dodge, who currently owns home, remarked in several conversations that she intends to restore "the little green house" to its namesake color.

One special aspect of Sarah Knott's home in Princeton is that it contains many artifacts whose presence strengthen the association between the house and the accomplishments of her life. Family furniture, her typewriter, her collections of costumes and folk musical instruments, as well as copies of manuscripts, all remain in the home. The high degree of material and design integrity on the house's exterior, along with an interior which retains many of Sarah Knott's furnishings and spatial arrangements, helps preserve the property's integrity of feeling and association.

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Knott House  
Caldwell County, KY

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### Narrative Statement of Significance

The Knott House, located in Princeton, seat of Caldwell County, Kentucky, meets National Register Criterion B and criterion consideration G for its strong association with Sarah Gertrude Knott, significant as the founder of the National Folk Festival. Miss Knott (1895-1984), whose contributions lie in the area of social history, served as the founder and national director of the National Folk Festival from 1934 until 1971, when she retired to Princeton, in her native Kentucky, to continue her legacy of cultural advocacy and research until her death in 1984. Sarah Gertrude Knott's National Folk Festival was a gift that encouraged Americans to value the spectrum of folk tradition found throughout the nation. In an age that values cultural diversity, the inclusion of Miss Knott's home in Princeton on the National Register would honor her pioneer spirit from which cultural institutions and festival audiences throughout the United States continue to draw inspiration.

The National Folk Festival has had a profound effect on the way in which America presents its cultural traditions. While various ethnic pageants and Appalachian folk festivals existed prior to 1934, Knott's National Folk Festival was the first American folklife festival to be both national in scope and multi-cultural in composition. Among its many contributions, the festival was innovative in its recognition of the cultural traditions of relatively recent immigrants, as well as of various occupational groups. Knott incorporated school

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programming into the schedule and worked closely with academic folklorists, decades before this became standard in folklife festivals. She was also a tireless lobbyist for government support of the traditional arts. The National Folk Festival spawned not only a number of smaller state and regional folk festivals, but was also influential in the shaping of other later festivals which were national in scope, such as the Smithsonian Institution's Festival of American Folklife and the Newport Folk Festival. Although the Smithsonian Festival, held on the National Mall in Washington D.C. since 1967, represents a major break away from the theatrical stage-oriented style of presentation, its commitment to educational programming and multiculturalism and its ties to academic folklore were foreshadowed by the National Folk Festival. Folk singer Pete Seeger credits Knott's festival as a major influence in his shaping of the Newport Folk Festival during the 1960s (Seeger 1995). The legacy of Knott's lifetime of work is found in the whole field of public sponsorship and programming of traditional arts for both general audiences and school children.

The "Little Green House," as she nicknamed the home where she spent her retirement, was Sarah Gertrude Knott's only permanent place of residence during her adult life. Because the National Folk Festival moved from city to city annually, Miss Knott needed to relocate constantly in order to install each festival properly. However, although she did not have a permanent residence of her own, she maintained a strong, continual connection to Kentucky

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through regular visits to her sisters, Lannie Ransdell and Gladys Knott. It was Lannie who raised both Sarah and Gladys to adulthood. Younger sister Gladys looked after many of the practical aspects of Sarah's life and served as business manager and assistant director during the early years of the National Folk Festival. An additional factor contributing to the closeness of the sisters is that the fact that Sarah Knott remained unmarried throughout her life. Her sisters were therefore her most intimately connected family members.

In the 1940s, Lannie and Gladys relocated to Princeton when the Knott family home in Kevil was sold after the death of Mrs. Ransdell's husband. Princeton quickly became "home-base" to the sisters. For Sarah Gertrude Knott, Princeton became home in her heart and on paper in the mid-1960s when her name was placed on the deed of ownership for the house her sisters had owned since its construction in 1952. "The Little Green House" therefore became the one permanent place of residence to which Sarah Gertrude Knott was attached legally and emotionally during her adult years.

Following is a description of deeds demonstrating property ownership prior to and after the Knott sisters' residence. On December 15, 1945, Barkley and Geneva Towne of Princeton sold their property to W. T. and Cora Dee Hooks, also of Princeton. The Hooks sold the property to Lannie Ransdell and Gladys Knott on November 11, 1952. On September 11, 1963, Gladys Knott and Sarah Gertrude Knott signed a deed designating them

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as owners of the property. A fourth deed was signed by Gladys and Sarah Knott of May 3, 1978, and on May 16, 1988, Yvonne Dodge, who is currently in residence, signed a deed to become sole owner of the property. Sarah Gertrude Knott's actual ownership of the house spanned from 1963 until 1984.

Sarah Gertrude Knott was born in 1895 in the community of Kevil, in far western Kentucky. She was educated at various institutions, including McCracken County High School, Georgetown Preparatory School (Kentucky) and Washington University in St. Louis, as well as various schools of the dramatic arts. Her first love was the theater. During the 1920s she worked for the Bureau of Community Drama in North Carolina where she fell under the influence of the Carolina Playmakers. The "folk drama" of Frederich Koch, Paul Green and others would eventually shape Knott's vision.

In 1929, Miss Knott relocated to St. Louis, where she was hired as director of the Dramatic League. Her professional activities at that time provided her with the opportunity to work with diverse groups such as African Americans and recent European immigrants. In 1933, Sarah Gertrude Knott conceived of the plan of a folk festival, which would be national in scope. She enlisted the help of Pulitzer Prize winning playwright Paul Green, who, in turn, secured the blessing of President Franklin D. Roosevelt (Avery 1994:217-219, 228).

Roosevelt's words are still echoed by folklorists today:

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We in the United States are amazingly rich in the elements from which to weave a culture. We have the best of man's past on which to draw, brought to us by our native folk and folk from all parts of the world.

In binding these elements into a National fabric of beauty and strength, let us keep the original fibres so intact that the fineness of each will show in the completed handiwork (Avery 1994:228)

A number of folk festivals were born in America during the 1930s. The American Folk Song Festival was founded by Jean Thomas in Ashland, Kentucky, in 1930. In 1931, the first White Top Folk Festival was organized in Virginia by Annabel Morris Buchanan. Bascom Lamar Lundsford's Mountain Dance and Folk Festival, founded in North Carolina in the late 1920s, continued to grow in popularity throughout the 1930s. In contrast with these other folk festivals, which were based largely on regional or cultural uniformity, a distinguishing feature of the National Folk Festival was its concern with cultural diversity. Knott's festival was the first multi-ethnic folk festival in the United States. The first National Folk Festival, which has held at the new Keil Auditorium in St. Louis in May 1934, was a landmark event in its novelty and progressive approach to cultural representation. Featured were the traditions of African Americans, Native Americans, Anglo Americans and Hispanic Americans all in one setting. Since its conception, the National Folk Festival has served as a model for numerous other festivals and cultural events throughout the twentieth century.

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Early in its establishment, the National Executive Committee of the National Folk Festival Association (NFFA) developed a mission statement which outlined the association's goals and general orientation. Following is an excerpt from the Executive Committee's mission statement, entitled "General Plan."

The National Folk Festival has as its objective the bringing together of groups from various sections of the United States, with the characteristic folk expression of each, in the faith that national incentive gives encouragement to regional festivals, and that continued participation in such festivals keeps alive the fine traditional customs associated with the founding of this Nation. In addition to serving as a record of the social life of early American, and later America as well, the Festival furnishes a basic, cultural, leisure-time activity program, and presents material which may inspire future artistic creations (Knott Collection, Western Kentucky University).

The NFFA's general plan encompassed six areas of focus: folk music, folk dance, folk plays, folk arts and handicrafts, legends and superstitions, and designated conference time. Additionally included in the committee's plan is a listing of the organization's eighteen members and their positions, with Sarah Gertrude Knott noted as "Founder and National Director." Records also show that, to Knott's credit, some of the most prominent folklorists of the century have served as members of the NFFA's board or participated in the festival, including George Lyman Kittredge, Zora Neale Hurston, Ben Botkin, Richard Dorson, Stith Thompson, and Louise Pound. During the early years of the festival, the executive committee also made plans to create an academic folklore program (Thomas Jones Papers, Fisk

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University). If this plan had been realized, it not only would have been the first academic folklore program in the country, it also would have been almost half a century ahead of its time in offering courses of instruction on the public presentation of folk traditions (Williams 1998).

The National Folk Festival remains an active annual festival in the United States and many of the original ideas behind the event continue to be influential. As evidence of its influence, state and national organizations across the United States have worked to encourage and preserve a variety of folk traditions. The public presentation of these traditions have educated Americans on the range of cultural expressions within the country and have promoted self-esteem and self-awareness among cultural and ethnic groups across the nation.

Miss Knott's career as director of the NFFA took her in the years between 1934 and 1971 to more than sixteen cities, as she worked to install the National Folk Festival. As friends said, Sarah Gertrude Knott "lived and breathed the National Folk Festival" (Urner 1995). During these years she was also periodically invited to direct regional festivals such as the American Indian Exposition and the Arcadian Bicentennial Celebration. Under Knott's influence, a number of state and regional festivals, many still in existence, were established.

During her career Knott devoted her life to the National Folk Festival, living on a meager budget while trying to secure financial support for her Festival. Newspapers were

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frequent supporters of the Festival, with the *Washington Post* and the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* two long-time underwriters. During the years that the *Washington Post* sponsored the festival (1938-42), First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt served as honorary chair. Knott also was an early lobbyist for federal support of the traditional arts. In the mid-1960s, Senator Claiborne Pell was in the process of drafting legislation which would create the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities. Knott contacted Senator Pell's office to insist that the folk arts be included in the enabling legislation and subsequently testified before Pell's committee. According to Livingston Biddle, who had served as Pell's Legislative Aide during that period, "In [Knott] the folk arts had a passionate advocate . . . And it is beyond dispute that Sarah Gertrude Knott was responsible for the inclusion of the folk arts in the legislation." (Biddle 1988:30)

After retiring from the NFFA in 1971, Miss Knott lived in Princeton full time. Here she was invited by members of various cultural advocacy committees in the city to develop a "folk activity program" for Caldwell County. One of the goals of these cultural groups was to establish Princeton as an "All Kentucky City," and to establish it as the center for folk events in western Kentucky. During the 1970s Knott stayed in close touch with former colleagues and folklorists across the country, turned out a voluminous amount of correspondence, and worked hard to establish folk programming in her own home state. Characteristic of Sarah

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Gertrude Knott's residence at "The Little Green House," a title incorporated into the address of her formal stationary, was her use of the home as a place of business during her retirement. She, in fact, had three work areas in the tiny home, and also hired two secretaries to type and copy her papers during her "retirement."

In 1977, the Folklife Archives and Western Kentucky University's Kentucky Museum, acquired materials from the course of Miss Knott's career, including NFFA organizational files, personal correspondence, research and background materials, articles written by Miss Knott, report files on organizations or institutions allied with the NFFA, such as the Smithsonian Institution and the National Endowment for the Arts. These materials serve as a resource for information on the early formation of the folk festival movement which is now a staple among our country's cultural activities. An abbreviated deposit (mostly material duplicated in the Western Kentucky University collection) was made to the Archive of Folk Song at the Library of Congress. Additional historical materials are found in the offices of the National Council for the Traditional Arts (formerly the NFFA) in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Estate material also remains in Princeton, at the Knott home. Many of Sarah Gertrude Knott's belongings, now owned by Yvonne Dodge, overseer of the estates of Sarah Knott and Gladys Knott, are still displayed in the house. Ms Dodge maintains "The Little Green House"

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much as it was during the Knott sisters' tenure. Ms Dodge is currently self-employed, giving voice and piano lessons from the home's living room among the Knott family memorabilia.

Knott's legacy lives on not only in the continued existence of the National Folk Festival and the many other festivals it inspired, but in the total enterprise of the public presentation of the traditional arts. As Timothy Lloyd wrote in the *Journal of American Folklore* (1997:255), "all folklorists" owe a debt to Knott and her colleagues from the early years of the National Folk Festival whose "efforts so centrally prefigure part of our work and shape the public understanding of all of it. . ." Knott's legacy has often been overlooked, due in part, as Lloyd suggests, to public folklore's "lack of a critically-examined history." However this is beginning to change as public folklorists begin to assess their history. Currently a doctoral dissertation is being prepared on the history of the National Folk Festival and a book-length study of Knott's career is being written. In 1997, the Kentucky Folklife Program began awarding the annual "Sarah Gertrude Knott Award" at its statewide festival. New assessments demonstrate the exceptional importance of Sarah Gertrude Knott in shaping the public presentation of traditional arts in the United States.

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## Bibliography

### Archival Collections:

Sarah Gertrude Knott Collection, Folklife Archives, Western Kentucky University.

Archive of Folk Song, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

National Council for the Traditional Arts, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Thomas Jones Collection, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee.

Paul Green Collection, Southern Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

### Articles and Books:

Laurence G. Avery, editor. 1994. *A Southern Life: Letters of Paul Green, 1916-1981*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Livingston Biddle. 1988. *Our Government and the Arts: A Perspective From the Inside*. New York: ACA Books.

Timothy Lloyd. 1997. "Whole Work, Whole Play, Whole People: Folklore and Social Therapeutics in 1920s and 1930s America." *Journal of American Folklore* 437:239-259.

Robert Rennick. 1996. "Knott, Sarah Gertrude (1895-1984)." In *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia*. Edited by Jan Harold Brunvand. New York: Garland Publishing Inc.

Michael Ann Williams. 1997. "Sarah Gertrude Knott." In *Kentucky Women: Two Centuries of Indomitable Spirit and Vision*. Edited by Eugenia K. Potter. Louisville, KY: Big Tree Press.

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Michael Ann Williams. *Staging the Folk: The Careers of John Lair and Sarah Gertrude Knott*. In progress.

