

PH 0329130

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
 JUL 8 1975
 RECEIVED
 DATE ENTERED AUG 22 1975

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
 Haphazard (Mason-Triplett-Bell House)
 AND/OR COMMON
 Haphazard

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
 Pleasant Valley Road
 CITY, TOWN
 Owensboro
 STATE
 Kentucky
 VICINITY OF
 COUNTY
 Daviess
 CODE
 021
 CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
 02
 COUNTY CODE
 059

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
 Garland W. Howard
 STREET & NUMBER
 Pleasant Valley Road
 CITY, TOWN
 Owensboro
 STATE
 Kentucky

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
 REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
 Daviess County Courthouse
 STREET & NUMBER
 Frederica Street
 CITY, TOWN
 Owensboro
 STATE
 Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
 Survey by Johnson, Depp & Quisenberry
 DATE
 1953 (latest)
 DEPOSITORY FOR
 SURVEY RECORDS
 Daviess County, Kentucky; Court Clerk's Office
 CITY, TOWN
 Owensboro
 STATE
 Kentucky

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" 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 DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Haphazard is situated on a long ridge that forms the backbone of Owensboro and extends east and west along the Ohio River. Although the land around the house has recently been subdivided, it originally looked out northward to the river and south over fertile farmland and rolling hills. The house is located on the brow of the hill, with the formal one-and-a-half-story portion resting on the lower service floor set into the hillside facing south.

The original, pre-1822 portion of the house forms the upper central block. Made of logs covered with yellow poplar boarding, its extra thickness still shows on the outer walls. The hallway, actually 14 feet rather than the "12 foot passageway" described in the 1822 deed, may originally have been an open dogtrot.

Slaves are said to have furnished the labor for the building, which has hand-crafted fittings on doors, windows, and shutters. These and even the logs themselves are put together with pegs.

It was probably Triplett who superintended the addition of the exquisite Federal interior and perhaps the gable on the north side, as well as the wings on either end that lengthen the house to 90 feet. The north central hall with random-width flooring is crossed by an arch; the stair may still reflect the location of the original closed staircase in the open dogtrot. However, there is refined Federal chair-railing consisting of a band of delicately reeded stylized triglyphs and metopes (rosettes) (see photo 4). The room to the right has an early mantel with a reeded lozenge and half-lozenges. It is flanked by parallel cupboards with reeded implied pilasters--both vertical and horizontal (see photo 5).

In the living room on the opposite side of the hall, are three elliptical arches on engaged colonnettes that frame the mantelpiece and flanking niches. The fluted columns have "correct" bases and smooth concave capitals, but odd proportions: those on the outside are elongated, those above and below the mantel are truncated. The latter are linked by pairs of slender but swelling diminutive colonnettes that frame the unusual pointed-end carved motifs that repeat the shape of the stylized sunburst in the central panel. The overall effect is most impressive, if provincial in execution (see photo 6).

The ceilings in the original part of the first story are 12 feet high; elsewhere they are 10 feet high.

It may have been William Bell after he bought the property in 1844 who added the handsome one-story portico, perhaps replacing more modest supports for the central gable. In any case, the square piers have a definite Grecian flavor. They are spaced regularly on the three-bay porch, which rests directly on the ground on top of the ridge, but under the gable the wider central opening couples the piers on either side. A long, less formal gallery also extends across the back of the house, over the stone service area--once containing slave quarters. Wings on the end make an approximate U-shape layout.

(continued)

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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Before 1822; ca. 1822 & later.

unknown; Robert Triplett; unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Haphazard was reportedly named for the eddies in the Ohio River which it faces. It is the last remaining early house on a ridge that extends east of Owensboro along the river, once the site of many prominent mansions. An interesting amalgam of several architectural periods, the house reflects its series of owners, all significant figures in the development of Western Kentucky. The central portion of the house dates from before its purchase in 1822 by Robert Triplett, an early Owensboro land speculator and an industrial and coal developer. From 1844 to 1941 the house was owned by the family of William Bell. Bell was a president of the Owensboro branch of the Southern Bank of Kentucky.

The property on which Haphazard was situated formed part of one of the most important early land grants in the area. It was originally included in a land warrant to George Mason which was surveyed in 1787. Mason, a Virginia patriot, took part in the writing of the Virginia Constitution, the Virginia Bill of Rights, and Constitution of the United States. In 1786, he was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention along with George Washington. Mason's grandson, Richard Mason, inherited the property. In 1822, Mason sold the land to Robert Triplett. Described in the deed transfer is a "log dwelling house of two rooms, 20 by 20 feet with a 12 foot passageway between," which forms the original portion of the present house. Richard, for whom the log house had presumably been built, was a colonel in the United States army, and served as civil and military governor of California when gold was discovered there in 1848.

A brief sketch of Triplett, a native of Virginia, is given in Potter's History of Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky (1974):

Robert Triplett, pioneer Daviess county entrepreneur, was a man with unlimited ambition, foresight, energy, determination, and talent. Arriving in primitive "Owensborough" soon after the town was established, for the purpose of settling the Kentucky estate of David Ross, wealthy Virginia revolutionary patriot for whom an effort was made to have this community named, Triplett immediately began a career that over the next thirty-three years saw him make and lose one fortune and build another. He also established a record of "firsts" in so many fields he could easily qualify for recognition as Daviess County's all-time "first citizen."

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Some alterations are said to have been made by members of the Bell family after the Civil War. These may include the paired segmental-arched full-length windows onto the north portico, although the entrance retains a square Greek Revival character.

After a period of deterioration, during which the basement of the house was used for sheltering livestock, the house has been restored and the utilities modernized, with adaptation of some of the subsidiary rooms, including the basement slave quarters, for domestic use. Nevertheless, respect has been shown for the surviving early features, such as the original woodwork and hand-painted mural in the dining room.

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Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky
1971 State
Kentucky Heritage Commission
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

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As sales agent for the heirs to the Ross estate, Triplett was Owensboro's first major real estate dealer. In this capacity he conducted private sales, auctions of town lots and had to eject squatters from land on which they had lived and built homes only to learn, as so many other pioneers in Kentucky did, that they either had no title or an invalid one.

As the purchaser of a part of this land, on which the 300-acre "David pond" was located, he became Daviess county's first soil conservationist. In this role he drained the large lake and turned it into some of the finest farm land in the new county.

As the owner of this rich land which produced much low-priced corn per acre, Triplett figured he could make more money by turning the grain into whiskey. In carrying out this plan, he became successively the first operator of a steam-powered saw mill which he needed to cut giant trees into lumber with which to build two distilleries. Although he was not Daviess county's first distiller, he was the first to set up his plant in the vicinity of the Ohio River which became the area in which most later Daviess county whiskey manufacturing plants would be built.

As a distiller whose operations proved unprofitable, Triplett became suspicious of his distiller, engaged in a law suit with him and, in court, crossed tempers with the small, lame, fiery, wealthy lawyer-soldier, Philip Thompson. The result was one of the best remembered, if not the first, duels fought by prominent Owensboro area men which, happily, proved to be beneficial instead of fatal to the loser.

Next, Triplett turned his attention to the Bon Harbor Hills, west of Owensboro, where he became the first coal magnate of Western Kentucky whose salesmanship helped to convert early steamboats from wood-burners to coal-burners.

As a coal operator, Triplett became the builder of what he believed, and Kentucky historian Lewis Collins agreed, was the first railroad in Kentucky if not the West. This was a gravity-powered line used to deliver coal from a mine opening in the side of one of the Bon Harbor Hills, overlooking the Ohio River, to boats moored in the harbor below. Whether the empty coal cars were pushed back to the mine by slave-power or hauled by mules is still a matter of speculation.

As a very successful (for a period of time) coal producer, Triplett needed more barges than his steam powered saw mill could provide so he contracted with other mill operators as far away as Salt River to build them and, as a result, became

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Daviess county's (if not Kentucky's) first barge line operator.

Through his observations of the advantages offered by the attractive good harbor in which his coal barges were loaded, Triplett's fertile mind churned up the idea of converting Bon Harbor into an industrial community. This he did, even though it was ultimately a complete failure and no trace remains of his dream city. His efforts to promote a "Lowell, Massachusetts" of the West at Bon Harbor made him the first and only planned industrial city promoter in Daviess county history.

Not satisfied with his efforts and accomplishments, nor overcome by failures in other fields of endeavor, Triplett became Daviess county's first author. He wrote his biography as his life was nearing its end, from a cancer of the face. This book which was published in 1853--the year of his death in Philadelphia--substituted the name of "Roland Trevor" for his own but it told the story of the life of Robert Triplett and left for future generations much information about early Owensboro, some of its people, and its way of life that otherwise would have been lost. Thus he was also Owensboro's first historian (p. 30).

In his "novel," Roland Trevor or Pilot of Human Life, Triplett not only recounts his adventurous life in vivid language, but also gives candid details of his innumerable transactions and projects. Of Haphazard he says, "The house we had built was a very large one, with plenty of room for both our families, as B's [a friend and business companion whose family shared the house with the Triplett family] wife was a sweet, well-bred, amiable woman" (Roland Trevor, quoted in Potter p. 33).

The Haphazard property was sold in 1843 to A. B. Barret of Henderson, Kentucky, a wealthy tobacconist and merchant, perhaps in the course of an elaborate transaction to capitalize Triplett's overextended projects. In 1844, the house with 1,000 acres was sold to William Bell for \$13,000. Bell came to Daviess County in the early 1840s. He served as one of the first directors of the Owensboro branch of the Southern Bank of Kentucky in 1850 and was elected president of the bank in 1853. His son J. Hunter Bell lived at Haphazard, until his death in 1927. He is listed as the owner of the property on the 1876 Atlas of Daviess County, Kentucky.

The house remained the property of the Bell family until 1941, when it was sold to Samuel Coots. Coots restored the house, for it had been vacant for three years. The first-floor rooms had been used for stripping tobacco and the basement for quartering livestock.

The present owner, Garland W. Howard, purchased the house and ten acres in 1969.

