

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED NOV 18 1977
DATE ENTERED FEB 17 1978

**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 **BELL PLACE**

AND/OR COMMON
BELL HOUSE

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Sayre Avenue

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN
Lexington

___ VICINITY OF

06

STATE
Kentucky

CODE
021

COUNTY
Fayette

CODE
067

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government

STREET & NUMBER
136 Walnut Street

CITY, TOWN
Lexington

___ VICINITY OF

STATE
Kentucky

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. **Fayette County Courthouse**

STREET & NUMBER
Main Street

CITY, TOWN
Lexington

STATE
Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Historic Survey and Plan for Lexington and Fayette Co., Kentucky

DATE
1970 ___ FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS **Lexington-Fayette Urban County Planning Commission**

CITY, TOWN
Lexington

STATE
Kentucky

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

After the devastating fire at Bell Place around 1890, the house was rebuilt from plans drawn by Cincinnati architect, William Stewart. The Stewart family were architects and were listed in the Cincinnati Directory from 1880-1894 as W. H. Stewart's Sons.

There is no evidence of the original house built from plans by Lewinski. Perhaps the foundation was saved which dictated the Greek Revival floor plan.

The house is laid in Flemish bond. Window frames are wooden with a chiseled or pecked wood design (photo #1). This design feature is carried out in other exterior woodwork. Above the massive portico is a decorative parapet (Photo #1), Queen Anne in feeling with its curved scroll design on either side of the main section. Windows have Victorian hoodmolds yet they are Greek Revival in appearance. On the facade are triple windows of the Greek Revival style although the transoms are of stained glass. Above the doorway is an oriel window. Below the three sashes, the panels are Queen Anne in style with a symmetrical design very much Japanese in feeling.

On the west side the drive leads to a porte-cochere (Photo #2). This appendage has the sunburst design in the spandrels with ornate detailing very characteristic of the 80's and 90's before the Colonial Revival period. The columns on the porte-cochere are Romanesque in style decorated with a stylized leaf pattern. Along the drive are two marble blocks, one which has engraved "D.D. Bell," and the other, "Henry Bell."

The chimneys have corbeled stacks. The ones to the rear of the house have additions to the corbeled stacks to increase their height, thus their efficiency.

The cornice appears of the typical Greek Revival style, although on closer examination, it has been embellished with an addition, making it somewhat more massive than the usual.

Beside the front portico there is a 2-story veranda on the east side of the rear wing. The lower part has been closed, while the second story remains open (Photo #3). There is a small back porch off the kitchen area.

Entrance is through a recessed vestibule into a large stairhall. After a quick inspection, one begins to realize that the interior articulation represents the "aesthetic movement" in architecture. To put "labels" on styles, there would be Gothic, Queen Anne and Eastlake.

(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 type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1845 and ca. 1890

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Thomas Lewinski/William Stewart

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Bell House, located only several blocks from the downtown area of Lexington off Richmond Road was a building visible to most Lexingtonians. Since 1957, as part of the Lexington Park system, it has been visited by many due to the various functions it has served.

Bell House was originally built on a 56 acre tract from drawings by Major Thomas Lewinski for Mr. David Sayre. Lewinski came to Lexington in 1842. "After the architect, Gideon Shryock, and the builder, John McMurtry, the man next in line for having made the greatest contribution to Kentucky architecture is Major Thomas Lewinski."¹ Completed in 1846, Sayre did not keep this house long, for it was soon purchased by Henry Bell. The details of these transactions are sketchy but checking Fayette County Courthouse records, there are indications that Henry Bell and the Sayre family had many business dealings together and were closely connected in the banking world. "In May of 1848, Mary Todd Lincoln wrote to Abraham Lincoln, who was a Congressman in Washington, that she and her mother 'rode out to Mr. Bell's splendid place this afternoon to return a call. The house and grounds are magnificent'."²

"David Sayre was born in Madison, New Jersey in 1793; came to Lexington in 1811, founded the Sayre Bank in 1820 and the Sayre Female Institute in 1853."³ Sayre was one of the leading citizens of Lexington. Henry Bell, born in Delaware in 1808, came to Lexington as a young man and soon made his mark as a merchant and financier.⁴ He served on the board of David Sayre's bank. E.D. Sayre, nephew of David Sayre, came to Lexington in 1848 to learn the banking business from his uncle and went on to organize the Security Trust and Safety Vault Company of Lexington. Through the same courthouse records it

¹Lancaster, Clay, "Major Thomas Lewinski: Emigre Architect in Kentucky," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, XI, 4.

²"History of Bell Court," an unpublished manuscript. Author unknown.

³Biographical Cyclopedia of the Commonwealth of Kentucky (Chicago-Philadelphia, John M. Gresham Co., 1896).

⁴Ibid.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Bell Place." Unpublished Manuscript. Author unknown.

Lancaster, Clay. Ante Bellum Houses of the Bluegrass. Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 1961.

(continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 5.1

UTM REFERENCES

4213-000							
A	1,6	7 2,0 6,8 0	4,2 1,2 1,0 0	B	1,6	7 2,0 7,2 0	4,2 1,2 9,5 0
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C	1,6	7 2,0 6,2 0	4,2 1,2 8,5 0	D	1,6	7 2,0 5,7 0	4,2 1,2 9,1 0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The house and carriage house are on 5.1 acres which face Sayre Avenue and back up to Russell Avenue between Bell Court East and Bell Court West.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Richard S. DeCamp, Executive Director

ORGANIZATION

Lexington-Fayette County Historic Commission

DATE

August, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

253 Market Street

TELEPHONE

255-8312

CITY OR TOWN

Lexington

STATE

Kentucky

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

Richard S. DeCamp

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

11/15/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Robert B. Kettig

DATE

2/17/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

Charles A. ...

DATE

2-24-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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

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The double glass front door are beveled-edged with two vertical panels of acid-etched frosted glass (Photo #4). There are two horizontal bands of jeweled random-edge cut glass. One of these panels has been replaced. The transom of the front door is leaded glass representing garlands of flowers and leaves. In the front hall, as throughout much of the house, the plaster is finished in a swirl design. This design resembles waves that might be seen in a Japanese painting. The decoration between the stair treads and nailing resembles Japanese latticework and is Eastlake in style while the wall side of the stairs is paneled in a Queen Anne design (Photo #5). The stair railing is asymmetrical in sections to allow for the fingers to fit into the outer edge. There is a large stair landing which has an elaborate stained glass window with a carved window slat beneath.

At the far end of the lower hall is the library. The two doors have three vertical panels above and below one horizontal panel, the panels being constructed out of birdseye maple. The library mantel is unusual in that it is designed as if there is a mantel within a mantel, yet this strong expression is fitted for a comparatively small gas fire (Photo #6). The design above the mantel is very symmetrical, almost severe. Off the library is a lavatory which is oak paneled. The original bookshelves are intact.

Also at the rear of the house off the back hall is the butler's pantry and kitchen. Most of the original kitchen equipment has been replaced and an elevator installed (ca. 1930). The pantry still has the original cupboards which were built for the house.

Across from the pantry is the dining room. There is high wainscoting which near the top has a six inch horizontal composition band, heavily designed to resemble tooled leather. These door and window frames, which are similar throughout the first floor, are of elegant design. The door frames have rounded components as the outer moulding and facsimile of the sunburst design carved on the upper outer corner. The floor design, also carried out on the first floor, has marquetry blocks at the four corners with the dark and light colored wood motif connecting the four corner blocks (Photo #7). All the floors are intact except in the front hall where they have been taken up to put an inside entrance to the basement. The dining room mantel has tile facing and its above-shelf original mirror (Photo #8).

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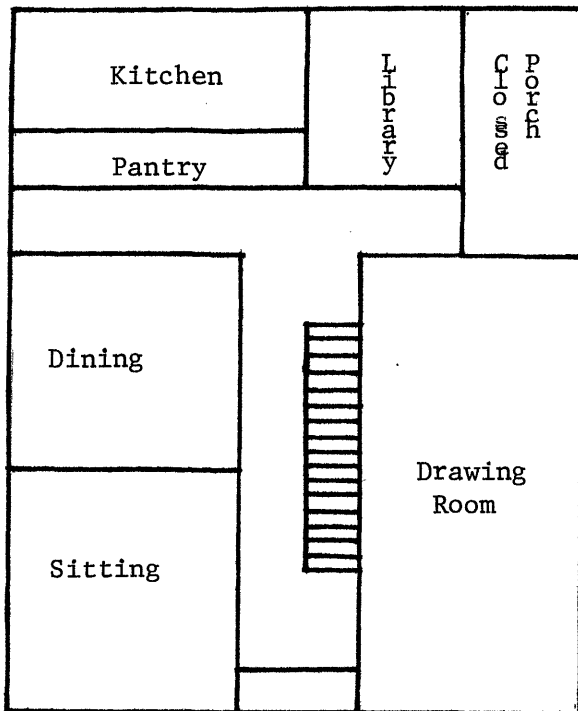
Bell Place

CONTINUATION SHEET

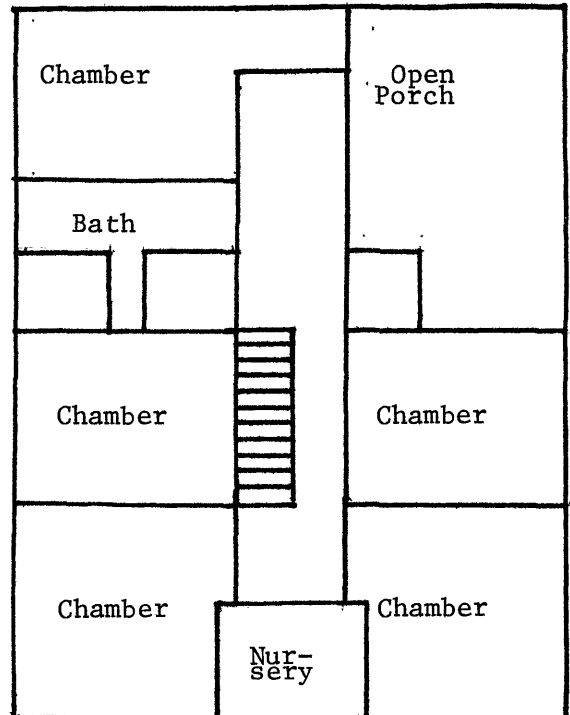
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The sitting room mantel's mirror has been removed in order to hang the portrait of D. D. Bell (Photo 9). The tiles in this fireplace have two large rectangular ones representing French or Dutchmen of the 17th century. The inner frame in the fireplace is iron, patterned to represent random laid block, rather Japanese in style. The triple window has finely painted stained glass within the transoms.

On the east side of the house is the double parlor with an indication of division by a segmental arch in the center of the room. The two fireplaces are identical (Photo 10). Unfortunately, one has been painted white while the other is the original finish of birdseye maple. The fronting of these fireplaces are of Mexican onyx. Both have the iron insets within the fireplaces, these being Arabist in design. The transom of the triple front window is more elaborate designed colored glass. The ceiling has a pair of Greek Revival style chandelier medallions and the outer edges have garland designs reminiscent of the Adams style. Except for modern fluorescent lights, the room is intact. The only major structural change is the closing in of the lower side porch on the first floor.



First floor (no scale)



Second floor (no scale)

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The second floor is composed of five major chambers, a nursery, a dressing room, large hall, two baths (one original and one later, both with space taken from the porch) and a large open gallery. The two chambers on the east side make up the master suite of rooms, including two large rooms and dressing room. The original bath has a later partition in it but originally was one large bath with fireplace. The other five fireplace mantels are Queen Anne in style (Photo #11) and the triple windows on the front facade have stained glass transoms, each having different designs. The nursery has a triple window in the oriel and these stained glass transoms depict cupids, one learning numbers, one learning music and the other of a biblical motif. The upstairs door and window frames are of the same style but less ornate than those on the first floor. The five major fireplace fronts are finished in different type ornate tiles; those in the rear chamber follow a Persian motif.

The attic, reached by the back stairway covers the full size of the house. It is finished and houses a servants bedroom. In addition, the original water storage tank and hot water heater (obsolete) which originally gravity fed water to the baths and kitchen is intact in a separate attic room. The full basement has had several rooms remodeled and partitioned in order to facilitate uses by the Parks Department.

The house has seen very few structural changes since it was rebuilt in the late 1880's. The Parks Department's program centers principally around senior citizens so the structure is not abused. Nevertheless, time continues to take its toll although the Urban-County government attempts to keep the building in operating condition.

The Carriage House, located at the rear of Bell Place, gives a Swiss chalet effect (Photo #12). The details are Queen Anne style, having heavy brackets and several bracketed gables. The posts of the brackets are chamfered. The oak leaf patterned detail on the vertical posts supporting the main gables and above the windows are raised-edged brick segmental arches and a belt course of two rows of protruding bricks. The roof has accentuated overhang and this, along with the heavy brackets and gables, gives the building a tremendously three-dimensional feeling.

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The Carriage House on the exterior is unchanged from the time it was built in the 1890s. The interior has been remodeled into a small theater which has been used for many years by a local group known as the Studio Players. The Studio Players have leased this facility since 1958.

The main house and carriage outbuilding sites on a rectangular lot of approximately five acres, opposite older houses, largely two-story, of early 20th century vintage.

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is shown that E.D. Sayre and D.D. Bell, Henry Bell's son, were connected in several business transactions. D.D. Bell married E.D. Sayre's daughter, Sydney Sayre.

The Bells and the Sayres were successful in the business and financial life of Lexington and the house, built by one but always connected with the other, reflected this prosperity. A fire sometime around 1885 destroyed the original Bell House. "However, because the Bells loved the old place, they rebuilt the high mansion again with very few changes from the original."⁵

When Henry Bell died in 1883, Bell House became the residence of his son, D.D. Bell. Three years previous to this D.D. Bell had married Sydney Sayre and Bell and his bride purchased and moved to Hollyrood, a large Italianate house located on a farm on the Harrodsburg Road. Hollyrood later became the home of famous Kentucky author, James Lane Allen.⁶ D.D. Bell and his wife had one daughter, Clara Bell.

Upon D.D. Bell's death in 1892, Bell House was left in trust to his daughter. In Bell's last years it had been his wish to subdivide his farm because of its proximity to town but to keep the house and grounds intact for his daughter. This was not done until the Bell Court Land Company came into being in 1906 and streets were developed and lots sold. By this time Clara Bell was married to Mr. Julius Walsh of St. Louis and her mother, remarried to a Mr. Cary, resided at Bell House. In 1907 the Lexington Herald-Leader reported the following: "Mrs. Clara Bell Walsh presents to her mother the homestead on East Main. A beautiful old Southern home, valued at \$25,000, was a Christmas gift of Mrs. Clara Bell Walsh of Saint Louis, to her mother, Mrs. Sydney Sayre Cary, of this city. Mrs. Walsh, formerly Miss Clara Bell of this city, has given her mother the old Bell Homestead on East Main Street in consideration for the love and affection which the daughter bears for the mother." In 1940 Mrs. Cary and her daughter,

⁵"History of Bell Court", an unpublished manuscript. Author unknown.

⁶Simpson, Elizabeth, Bluegrass Houses and Their Traditions, (Lexington, Kentucky, Transylvania Press, 1932), p. 397.

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Clara Bell, announced the Bell Place and the grounds were being given⁷ to the City of Lexington, but that Mrs. Cary would remain in residence. Upon the death of Mrs. Walsh in 1958 the house was taken over by the City of Lexington.

In the 19 years in which the City of Lexington has fully operated this building it has had several uses. It housed the United Fund office, the Travelers' Aid office but the principal function has been with the Parks and Recreation Department. It soon became the headquarters for the Senior Citizen program and remains so today. The second story is used for the office and meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The Bell House is architecturally significant in being a successfully eclectic structure whose exterior combines Greek Revival, Queen Anne, and Romanesque elements. The Corinthian columns, Doric pilasters, chiseled woodwork well-executed brick parapet, corbeled chimneys, and the rather elaborately treated porte-cochere unite to render the house a pleasing sense of plasticity. The interior is equally rich in detail. Here are found a wide variety of materials including stained and etched glass, tiles of various designs, molded plaster, onyx and assorted woods. The total effect, both inside and out, is one of opulence. Upon both its completion in 1846 and its rebuilding in the early 1890s, the Bell House was hailed as being among Lexington's grandest residences.

⁷Lexington Herald-Leader, May 5, 1940.

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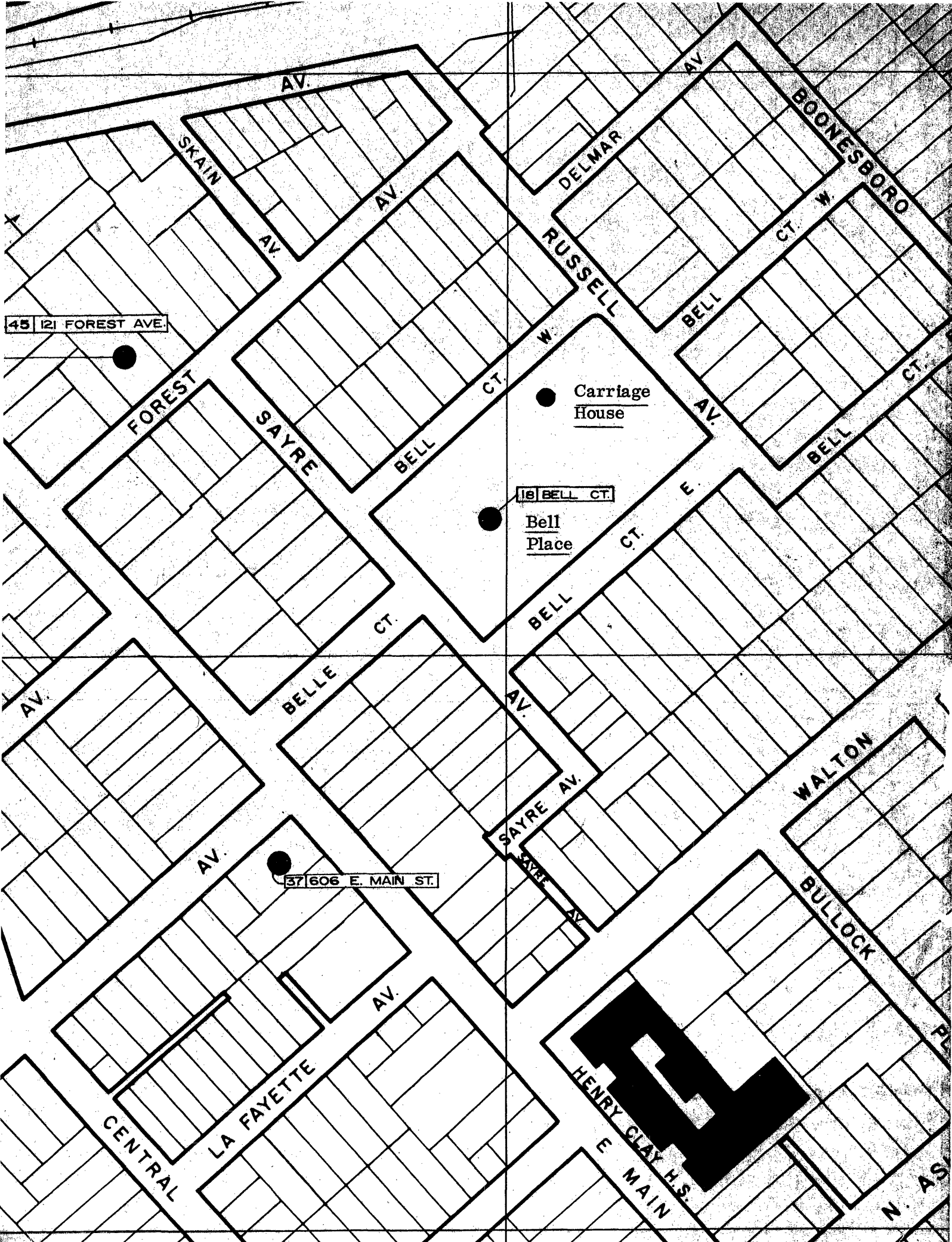
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Lancaster, Clay. Ante Bellum Houses of the Bluegrass. Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 1961.

Lexington Herald. May 1, 1940, p. 1.

Simpson, Elizabeth. Bluegrass Houses and Their Tradition. Lexington, Transylvania Press, 1932.



45 121 FOREST AVE.

Carriage House

18 BELL CT.

Bell Place

37 606 E. MAIN ST.

HENRY CLAY H.S.
E MAIN

SKAIN AV.
AV.

FOREST

SAYRE

BELL CT.

RUSSELL

BELL

BOONESBORO

BELL CT.

AV.

BELLE CT.

AV.

BELL

CT.

AV.

SAYRE AV.

WALTON

BULLOCK

CENTRAL

LA FAYETTE

AV.

N. 40