

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



476

### 1. Name of Property

historic name The Filson Club

other names/site number JFCN-99

### 2. Location

street & number 118 West Breckinridge Street

city or town Louisville

state Kentucky code KY county Jefferson code 111 zip code 40203

NA	not for publication
NA	vicinity

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X 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 X local

*Lindy Casebier*

*May 17, 2013*

Signature of certifying official/Title Lindy Casebier, Acting 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]*

*6/25/13*

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Filson Club  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kentucky  
County and State

**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	0	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**

NA

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Social/Clubhouse  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Education/education-related  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals/Colonial Revival  
Late Victorian/Italianate  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Limestone/Concrete  
walls: Brick  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof: rubber  
other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Filson Club  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kentucky  
County and State

---

## Narrative Description

---

### Summary Paragraph

The Filson Club (JF-CN-99) in Louisville, Kentucky, had its original home in two Victorian-era brick residences that were combined to create a federalsque style building. The original houses were built between 1870 and 1890 and the two were combined into a unit in 1929 to serve as the Club's headquarters. While the design of the front facade is that of a textbook low budget federal style building, the many exterior details suggest a Victorian-era building. The property functioned as a historical society until 1986, when the club moved to its current location, 1310 South Third Street, Louisville.

After the Filson Club moved its headquarters to a new location on South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street the original site on Breckenridge became a car dealership, which included the addition of large concrete block buildings that surrounded the central building on three sides, leaving only the front facade exposed. These additions have since been removed and the club building returned to the footprint it had before becoming the car dealership.

### Character of Site

The Filson Club building is located in a mixed commercial and residential area to the south of Louisville's Central Business District. After 1986, the site had become a car dealership with large non-historic concrete block additions that stretched to the east and west and a little to the south of the current building. The building faces mainly northward. The property is near the corner of Breckinridge and South First Street, a block west of Interstate I-65.

Prior to the Filson Club moving to the area most of the buildings were constructed of brick, with stone foundations, and were a mix of sizes. Additionally, the area was only fully developed several years earlier, which more or less brought to an end what had been a rather sporadic development timeline for the area. While there were owner occupied homes in the neighborhood there were also a number of rental homes.

Most of the homes in the area were of a rather modest size and given the slow and piecemeal development of the neighborhood, likely could have been purchased at reasonable costs. This likely helped attract the Filson Club to the area. The buildings were of a material that would suffice for collection storage, being of brick and stone, and the location was relatively close to downtown, which would have provided for a close proximity to a large portion of the club's membership.

The building's additions have been removed and new dormitory housing has been constructed for Spalding University, located nearby, and for Family Scholar House, which sends students to a number of different local colleges. These new buildings are located on the sides of the block and run along First and Second Streets, leaving the Filson Club facing Breckenridge in the center of the block. Historically the buildings on this site have not had access to the streets to the east and west. The setback from Breckenridge Street is unchanged from the original construction of the building.

### Exterior

The building shows a three-story seven-bay federalsque style facade that refaced and joined two existing Victorian-era buildings. The protruding side bays belie the federal styling of the facade, clearly indicating a Victorian origin of the buildings.

Filson Club  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kentucky  
County and State

The front facade has an outset central entrance, covered by a shallow portico with Tuscan columns and classical cornice and a wrought iron railing around its roof. Just above this portico is a Palladian window, with classical entablature matching the Federal Revival styling of the portico. The central bay, with its entrance, protrudes from the center of the building by about three feet, giving it added prominence.

The building's facade is symmetrical, with three bays on either side of the entryway. These bays consist of evenly-spaced windows with smooth limestone sills, flat brick arches, and a flush limestone keystone. The windows are graduated in height, with the ground floor ones being the longest, diminishing in the second floor, with those in the attic being the shortest. The first and second floor windows have nine-over-nine sash, are of wood construction, and are double hung. The third floor windows are similar, but much shorter and only six-over-six. The windows of the east and west facades are primarily two-over-two. The side windows correspond in height to the front windows.

A relatively simple Greek revival cornice, matching the portico, wraps only the front facade of the building.

The foundation of the building depends on the portion of the building being observed. The west side of the building sits primarily on a smooth cut limestone foundation, while the east side of the building sits on a mix of concrete, brick, and limestone block foundation. These foundations indicate the original residences, before their conversion into a single building.

The exterior walls are brick, primarily Flemish bond, on the sides, with a common bond on the front facade. The rear of the building, which is primarily additions from the 1950s, is of no particular pattern or of a mixed pattern, depending on the exact date of the addition.

The roof is a shallow shed roof, gently sloping to the rear of the building. Additions in later years have slightly altered this configuration, but these changes are not visible from the street. The roof is covered by a rubber membrane that is non-historic.

## **Interior**

The interior of the building is typical of smaller institutional construction of the 1920s. The walls are plaster with relatively simple wood base molding, stained and then later painted. The door surrounds are similar, being of stained wood in general. In an effort to create a fireproof building, the club had the houses' original wood floors and joists removed, and in their place, installed steel beams and concrete floors. It is likely that this is when any remaining crown molding was removed, and with the budget being supported by a single primary benefactor, its replacement was probably foregone in favor of a lower finished cost.

The first floor has a central hallway extending from the main entryway to the rear staircase. The rooms to the east and west were originally large gathering and reading rooms, where members could meet, research, and present papers. These rooms have been altered to varying degrees, to create more usable spaces. In addition to the central hallway, a perpendicular hallway from a west side entrance intersected the hallway just prior to the rear staircase. This hallway accessed the west room as well as storage and bathroom facilities to the south. Just next to the staircase is the original elevator shaft, important to moving heavy loads of books and other documents.

Filson Club  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kentucky  
County and State

A later addition created an additional space, to the east and south of the rear staircase, that still remains. This space was never ornamented as the other interior spaces were, probably because it was constructed to operate as storage for the rapidly expanding collection.

The second and third floors replicate the first floor's arrangement of spaces, with the exception of the south rooms off the rear corridor, which do not exist.

### **Changes since the Period of Significance**

Since 1963 there have been a number of changes to the Filson Club building. The most important changes were made after the Filson Club moved from the building in 1986. After this move the building was acquired by an automobile dealership, which constructed a concrete block building that covered the surrounding site and attached to the original Filson Club building on three sides, leaving only the front façade exposed. The exterior windows were mostly covered with brick and the rear façade of the building, which was an interior wall was painted.

In 2010 the site was purchased and two multi-family buildings were constructed on the site. One is a dorm for Spalding University and the other is a residential facility for Family Scholar House, a local social services organization. The original Filson Club building was restored between these two buildings. The concrete block structure was removed entirely and the exterior features of the building, including the windows were restored or replaced, using matching materials and designs.

Filson Club  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kentucky  
County and State

**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.)

Social History  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1929-1963  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1929, 1955  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

NA  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Hutchings, E.T. - Architect  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jennings, J.D. - General Contractor  
\_\_\_\_\_

**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.

**Period of Significance:** The Period of Significance are the years that the property functioned in the significant way, as the Filson Club, beginning in 1929, and continuing until the conventional close of the historic period, 1963. The Club continued to meet in the building until 1986, and was a significant local historical society at this location until relocating to a new site in 1986.

**Criteria Considerations:** NA

Filson Club  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kentucky  
County and State

## Statement of Significance

### Summary Paragraph

The original Filson Club building (JF-CN-99) meets National Register Criterion A, as it is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. The Filson building is emblematic of the rise of private historical societies that emerged outside of the bounds of traditional institutional repositories of historical materials, such as libraries, colleges and universities, and government records departments. The building's significance is evaluated within the context "Private Historical Societies and Libraries in Louisville, Kentucky, 1865-1965." Part of its significance is realized in its design. The club could have chosen modern-era design aesthetics for the new façade placed on the front to unite the 2 historic buildings. The Club members' choice to use historic revival styles, rather than modern design, surely relates to the related interest of the Club to celebrate local history.

### Historic Context: Private Historical Societies and Libraries in Louisville, Kentucky, 1865-1965

#### Development of Private Repositories and Societies Nationally

The development of private historical societies is as diverse as the areas they seek to preserve. Some began nearly as soon as the United States was founded and still continue to this day; others continue to be founded in the present. Some found their mission usurped by more powerful local institutions, and had their collections and mission acquired, to be pursued on a new level. Other organizations simply disappeared into history, for lack of funds, lack of interest, or a disastrous event.

#### When did they begin

The earliest historical societies began in the original thirteen states, just after independence from England. These earliest societies saw preservation of historical documents, which could describe the founding of our country in first person terms, as important resources that could be easily lost to deterioration and the carelessness of those that did not understand what it was that they possessed.

An example of this was in Charleston, South Carolina, where in 1855 it was discovered that the letters of the Revolutionary Committee of Safety had been found among trash used to fill a mud-hole on Calhoun Street.<sup>i</sup> A less alarming anecdote is the notice the Indiana Historical Society made of historical records passing into oblivion in the west because of no direction provided on preserving the documents.<sup>ii</sup>

These organizations also saw education as a mission, and often reprinted manuscripts that could be more widely disseminated to the general public. This thought is perhaps best summed up by the New York Historical Society, which stated, "the surest way to preserve a record is to multiply the copies."<sup>iii</sup>

The first instance of this is from arguably the first historical society in the United States, the Massachusetts Historical Society, known at the time simply as the Historical Society, which published its first volume in 1792, and included a number of letters describing early settlement of the area, a local bill of

<sup>i</sup> Dunlap, Leslie W., *American Historical Societies: 1790-1860* (Madison: Cantwell Printing Co., 1944). 10.

<sup>ii</sup> *Id.*

<sup>iii</sup> Dunlap 95.

Filson Club  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kentucky  
County and State

mortality, topographical descriptions of surrounding areas along the northeast coast.<sup>iv</sup> This society would publish more than thirty extensive collections of material before 1861, joining the chorus of societies that together published more than 500 volumes of historic document reprints before the Civil War.<sup>v</sup>

The importance of such publishing in many instances cannot be overstated. Under entirely coincidental circumstances the manuscript written by Governor William Bradford describing the founding of the Plymouth colony in 1647 was found in England in 1855. The Massachusetts Historical Society quickly obtained it and reprinted it. This was the first time the *History of Plymouth Plantation* was made available to American scholars. Without it, a fundamental primary source describing the genesis of the United States would have remained unavailable.<sup>vi</sup>

These early organizations played an important role in engaging the early American public in the political ideas and theories that were the basis for independence from England and helped to shape the debate about the form, function, and reach of government as the United States expanded westward. In each new territory and state, historical societies began to form that documented the expansion and development of the interior and the western portions of this country.

While historical societies along the eastern seaboard are the oldest and in some cases the largest, such societies exist in every state and in most major cities.

### **Why did they start**

In the time after the Revolutionary War, there were few public repositories for important documents. Governments were, of course, looking after their records, but only to the extent they needed to and with a mission that was not focused on preservation. Documents were not retained for posterity in each town and in each state. To government, many of these documents were the product of bureaucracy, not the beacons of our history.

With government often unable or unwilling to retain outdated documents, which historians needed to recognize the trends and the development of our country, the work of document preservation fell to private organizations. In the modern era, this job is often left to universities, which are spread through every state and major city. However, when the U.S. had few universities, those institutions were not prepared to spend their resources acting as document repositories. Additionally, these universities were often privately funded and administered, and were not open to the general public. To place a document within their walls would often mean severely restricting public access to it.

Today we might like to think that a public library would be a good place to store important documents, but libraries at the time were either those of private individuals, often maintained in their residences, or were built and maintained by colleges and universities, which were unlikely to be measurably more open to the

---

<sup>iv</sup> Cape Cod History and Genealogy Page. <http://capecodhistory.us/19th/MHS1792-part1.htm>. Accessed 3/2/2013.

<sup>v</sup> Dunlap 95.

<sup>vi</sup> Dunlap 97.



Filson Club  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kentucky  
County and State

public. As discussed below, in Louisville, the library system was simply too undeveloped to adequately operate as a public archive.

To remedy these problems, many organizations were founded with the general mission of preserving important documents for future generations and providing them in a place that could be accessible to many. For those places that could not always be accessible to a large segment of the public, societies often reproduced their manuscripts, allowing the public to observe the document's content and the ideas, if not the original physical record itself.

### **Who started them**

Most historical societies were initially started by wealthy and elite individuals. They understood that documents were being lost and they were also in a position to do something about it. And if not driven by the value of those documents to the public at large, those with power and prestige often saw a self interest in protecting documents which reinforced their own social position.

Obtaining and securing the historical documents of any period can be costly. The elite that often started these organizations had the funds to purchase and secure the most important documents. Because these documents were unlikely to ever produce any return, and were not being held as an investment, it took considerable resources to build a meaningful collection. In addition, it would take considerably more funds to provide a dedicated and permanent home for these documents, wherever they were to be kept. The result of this is that most societies were started only by those who could afford to donate significant sums of time and money to amass worthwhile collections.

In time, people with less money showed they could contribute by offering expertise and time, which allowed collections and societies to grow. The rise of professional archivists and historians allowed benefactors to take a position on the organization's board, simply overseeing the development of a collection, instead of actively participating in it.

Like the development of historical societies in other cities, The Filson Club was founded by a small group of elite citizens with a keen interest in the history of Louisville and of the development of the Ohio River Valley. Though started later than some societies on the east coast, the Filson Club followed a very similar development pattern to them.

### **Contribution to the pattern**

When the Filson Club began in Louisville, there were no significant educational institutions that would suffice to hold many of the collections available or that could actively pursue the development of such collections. This point is illustrated by the fact that the original collection of Reuben Durrett, the first president of the club, was sold to the University of Chicago and not the University of Louisville or the University of Kentucky.

Though these institutions could potentially have competed for the local private collections that were leaving the state and the region, they lacked the significant financial support that would enable them to pursue such a mission. The Filson, following a well-established pattern of development in other areas of the county, was privately funded by membership dues, and the significant shortfall in funds was made up each year by

Filson Club  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kentucky  
County and State

wealthy board members. These members not only paid for acquisitions, but also for publications and publicity efforts to draw attention to the work of the club.

### Private Historical Societies in Louisville

At the time the Filson Club was founded in 1884, other lesser organizations existed in their infancy, but none of those had the vision or resources of the Filson Club's board, and none lasted more than a few years or grew to any significant scale. Most dissolved quickly, leaving no particular record of their existence and no meaningful impact on the development of lasting historical societies in the area. The only real significant competitors or peers to the Filson Club, both at its founding and during its growth through the twentieth century, were the predecessor organizations of the Louisville Free Public Library.

The first of these organizations was the Louisville Library Company, which opened a subscription-based service in 1816. This first library held 500 volumes and was located on the second floor of the courthouse on Jefferson Street.<sup>vii</sup> Sadly, when this attempt failed most of the collection was lost, but what remained was turned over to the next attempt, which was the Kentucky Historical Society, founded in 1838. This attempt also fell far short of intended goals and dissolved only a few years after its founding.<sup>viii</sup> The Louisville Franklin Lyceum, which was founded in 1840, became the next to attempt a circulating library model, and assumed the remaining collection of the previous entities. This effort also failed and the Louisville Franklin Lyceum was discontinued.<sup>ix</sup> In 1842 the Mercantile Library was formed with a large number of investors, acquiring more than 3,000 volumes, which gave it a collection rivaling libraries in any other part of the country.<sup>x</sup> The Mercantile Library continued to grow, and eventually offered a lecture series and was able to circulate many of its books. In an attempt to provide some stability for the effort, the board of directors attempted to get the city of Louisville to take over the endeavor. This however failed, and soon the library weakened and collapsed as a result of funding shortages.<sup>xi</sup>

The next, and by far most successful attempt at a real library and document repository, was begun in 1871. The Louisville Library Association began with over 200 investors, who donated books or money, to establish a collection that could circulate.<sup>xii</sup> At the same time, the Public Library of Kentucky was instituted in Louisville and was able to obtain many books from the local YMCA, which had been a beneficiary of earlier collection dissolutions. Both of these attempts succeeded reasonably well and were able to carry on until the current Louisville Free Public Library (LFPL) was established in 1902.

In 1902 the current LFPL library on York Street was begun with money from Andrew Carnegie's library foundation. The building was finished and opened in 1908. With a large and permanent home, the other libraries were folded into this more enduring institution, which rapidly expanded, with branches around the city and funding secured by city ownership.

<sup>vii</sup> Kleber, John, *The Encyclopedia of Louisville* (The University Press of Kentucky: 2000). 511.

<sup>viii</sup> *Id.*

<sup>ix</sup> *Id.*

<sup>x</sup> *Id.*

<sup>xi</sup> *Id.*

<sup>xii</sup> *Id.*

Filson Club  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kentucky  
County and State

The Filson Club was not immune to the same problems that plagued earlier attempts to create a sustainable historical collection, or even a general collection of books available to the public: a lack of funding and a permanent and dedicated home. Funding was secured only through the goodwill and efforts of a wealthy board, which approached the task as an almost professional hobby. And while the efforts were significant, the Filson Club lost its initial collection because it lacked a permanent and safe home. It would likely have suffered the same fate as other early organizations had it not been for its board obtaining a permanent and fireproof building to contain the collection.

In 1929, when the Filson Club moved into its new home on Breckenridge Street, the only other significant research institutions were the Public Library, city archives, and the University of Louisville, which was developing into a major research institution. Other groups certainly maintained libraries, which circulated and served broad portions of the local population, but these libraries did not have the dedicated mission to preserving historic documents and history that the Filson Club had, and their collections were nowhere near the scale that the Filson would develop in its new home, with a greatly expanded storage capacity.

### History of the Filson Club<sup>xiii</sup>

The Filson Club was founded on May 15th, 1884, with a mission of studying the history of the region around Louisville and preserving the region's important historic documents. The founding members elected to name the club after John Filson, Kentucky's first historian, who had published a history of Kentucky, *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke*, 100 years before, in 1784. The founding membership was comprised of ten prominent Louisville men: John Mason Brown, Thomas Bullitt, James Pirtle, Thomas Speed, Alex Humphrey, Richard Collins, William Chenault, George Davie, Reuben Durrett, and Basil Duke.

The first meetings were held at founding member Reuben Durrett's home and the original collection was also maintained in his private library. Durrett's personal collection had already aimed at preserving Kentucky's history through books, maps, portraits, and other many other printed documents. In many ways this focus is still the basis for the Filson Society's mission.

In addition to the collection of significant historic materials pertaining to the region, the Filson Club also held monthly meetings at which papers on the history of the region would be read. The first of these papers was presented by Colonel Durrett and was on the life and work of John Filson. Membership was open to all those interested in Kentucky history and presenting a paper was never a requirement for membership.

Durrett made a condition of his will that his personal collection would transfer to the club at his passing, so long as a suitable building could be found to hold it. The prime concern here was that the building be fireproof, as many materials had been lost to fires. This condition was challenging, as the club did not yet possess the resources to purchase or build a proper building.

---

<sup>xiii</sup> This section was written almost entirely from the Filson Club's own publications of its history. Filson Club, *The Filson club, its future* (Louisville: 1926) And Finley, John, *The Filson Club, 1884-1984: Shining the Lamp on Kentucky's Future* (Jack M. Doyle Advertising, Inc: 1984).

Filson Club  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kentucky  
County and State

The lack of a permanent and dedicated home for the collection eventually resulted in the loss of nearly the entire Filson collection. In his later years Durrett suffered a number of strokes. Concerned about the future of his personal collection, Durrett arranged for the entire lot to be given to the University of Chicago.

In 1912, shortly before his death, Durrett's entire personal collection was boxed and shipped to Chicago. Unfortunately, because little cataloguing of his materials had been done, the Filson Club's holdings, which were but a portion of Durrett's personal collection, were also boxed and shipped to Chicago, as well. At various times the University of Chicago sent back items that clearly belonged to the Filson Club, but a few of the Club's items remain there. The Filson Club virtually had to start over again, from scratch.

After the passing of Durrett, the collection was begun again. Roger Clark Ballard Thruston picked up the remnants of the collection, carefully marked each item to distinguish it as Filson Club property, and then stored the collection in his own personal office in the Columbia Building, Louisville's second skyscraper (see *Encyclopedia of Louisville*: 212). Thruston, as the president of the club, continued the work of the organization in seeking a new and dedicated home for the collection. The Columbia Building was fireproof, but it was not a particularly suitable place for meetings, which were then being held at the new Louisville Free Public Library, and was not always accessible to the membership, as a dedicated building could be. To continue the more intimate nature of the club, Thruston still held the first meeting of each year, in January, at his personal residence.

Thruston offered his own collection to the club, as well as \$50,000 as a match, to help purchase a new permanent home for the collection. It was not until 1926 that a fund drive was launched to match Thruston's offer. The drive brought in so little cash that Thruston found himself covering 75% of the cost of the new building.

The new Filson Club home began life as two buildings on East Breckenridge Street, between First and Second Streets. Though the group were unable to simply buy a lot and build from scratch to their exact specifications, they were able to combine the two residences they had purchased into an adequate facility.

The two buildings first had their front facades removed and a new unified facade, with a central entryway, constructed. The gap that had originally separated the two buildings was covered to create a central hallway on all three floors. In addition to combining the two buildings' exteriors, the wooden flooring and joists were all removed and new steel joists were installed underneath each floor with a concrete slab on top.

Removing the wood within the building went a long way toward creating the fireproof space that the Filson Club would need to continue to grow. The club's space included large reading rooms, archives, assembly space, office space, and an elevator to move materials between the levels. With this new house, the Filson Club was in a much stronger position to expand its collection and promote research.

Since its rehabilitation in the 1920s, the building has been added onto a number of times. The most significant alteration came in 1955, with an addition to the south side of what was originally the east building. This addition allowed the Filson Club to expand further and hold more documents than before.

Filson Club  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kentucky  
County and State

In 1986, the Filson Club vacated the building, moving to its current location on South Third Street. The original club building was developed into a car dealership and was surrounded by concrete block additions to the east, west, and south.

Beginning in 2010, these additions began to be removed, and the rest of the building underwent a significant rehabilitation. This rehabilitation turned most of the building into office and classroom space, restoring the building's original footprint, aside from a west side elevator tower addition that was installed for the new use of the building.

### **Evaluation of the significance of the Filson Club within the context of Private Historical Societies**

The Filson Club has considerable significance within the context of private historical societies, both locally and as a part of the broad pattern of their development across the country. It was Louisville's most important example of such an institution. The Club's founding shows that Louisvillians realized the need to preserve the primary documents and cultural artifacts that would allow future generations to understand the development of the Bluegrass and Ohio River Valley regions.

These concerns were among the prime motivations of the founders of the club. These founders ran into the two main problems that earlier local library organizations had encountered and that historical societies around the country continually encountered, and still do—a lack of regular funding and the lack of a dedicated and permanent home for a collection.

The Filson Club repeatedly fought through funding droughts, once losing its entire collection to the University of Chicago. The club was only finally secured as an institution when it obtained a permanent and fireproof home in 1929, which was the result of significant financial gifts. The establishment of a permanent home gave a sense of continuity to the Club, which gave it the ability to expand its collection and to raise significantly more money. Without its own building on Breckenridge Street it is likely that the Filson Club would have suffered the same fate as previous local library organizations and other historical societies around the country, which was a slow decline followed by the dissolution of the collection to other institutions outside of the region or to personal collections, closed to the public.

### **Evaluation of the integrity between the Filson Club's historic significance and its current physical condition.**

A building significant within this context, said to meet Criterion A, would need to retain sufficient material to support those important associations which can make it eligible. If such a place retains integrity of location, materials, and sufficient design integrity, it will be said to have integrity of association.

The Filson Club retains integrity of **location**. It has not moved, and its location is important. It is a site within the urban and commercial fabric of Louisville. The fate of the Filson Club was precarious until 1929, as long as the Club's holdings were in personal collections, in the hands of the Club's leaders, at their homes. The choice to move the organization to a permanent location, away from a residential setting and into a more public situation, signaled that the group had reached a new level of professionalism.

Filson Club  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kentucky  
County and State

The integrity of **materials** and **design** of the building have been restored much to their appearance during the Period of Significance. It's interesting that the organization, which began as nearly a hobby in a member's house, took up permanent residence in 2 houses which were made over into a new building. The conversion of the two residences into an institution became a metaphor for the change within the Club's organizational nature. After the Filson Club moved in the 1980s, the building became the center of a car dealership, a new use which required a change to its physical plant. A car repair center was built onto the original building on three sides, and which rose to nearly two stories in height. In the last two years, the exterior and the interior of the building have been restored to their almost original configuration. The main change to the design of the building is a small addition to the rear of the building, made in the 1950s, and a new elevator on the west façade toward the rear of the building. These additions have a minor visual impact from the street, and do little to alter the interior spaces as they relate to each other. The interior materials are nearly all the same as when the houses were originally put together, with plaster walls, wood molding, and concrete floors all completely intact. A few additional walls have been added to accommodate modern building codes for fire safety, but a tour of the building will still provide the same impression one that would have had in 1929. The building as a whole possesses significant levels of integrity in all areas and its recent rehabilitation has only strengthened this integrity, restoring previously bricked in windows and removing unsympathetic additions.

Because the building has integrity of location, materials, and design, it can be said to have integrity of **association**, and thus be eligible for listing.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Cape Cod History and Genealogy Page. <http://capecodhistory.us/19th/MHS1792-part1.htm>. Accessed 3/2/2013.

Filson Club, *The Filson club, its future* (Louisville: 1926).

Finley, John, *The Filson Club, 1884-1984: Shining the Lamp on Kentucky's Future* (Jack M. Doyle Advertising, Inc.:1984).

Kleber, John, *The Encyclopedia of Louisville* (The University Press of Kentucky: 2000).

Leslie W. Dunlap, *American Historical Societies: 1790-1860* (Madison: Cantwell Printing Co., 1944).

"Permit to Remodel Filson Club Issued," Louisville Herald-Post, October 21, 1928.

Sanborn Map Company. Insurance Maps of Louisville, Kentucky, Volume Two, Sheet 97. Sanborn Map Company: New York.

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_ JF-CN-99 \_\_\_\_\_

Filson Club  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kentucky  
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .22 acres

Louisville West Quad

UTM References Expressed according to NAD 1927: Zone 16; Easting 608 969; Northing 4233 109

UTM References Expressed according to NAD 1983

1	<u>16</u>	<u>608 966</u>	<u>4233 315</u>	3	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	4	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is Tract 1-b consisting of a portion of land starting 130' east of the corner of Breckenridge and First Streets, along Breckinridge Street in Louisville, Kentucky. The parcel being nominated is a rectangle, 93.15' wide along Breckinridge Street, and extending perpendicularly in a southward direction 104.55' deep from Breckinridge Street. The boundaries were reported on the Minor Subdivision Plat that was approved by Louisville Metro Planning Commission on February 19, 2010 and recorded in Deed Book 9524 Page 916.

Boundary Justification

The area proposed for listing contains the significant resource, a building, and a small area of land surrounding it, all of which contains a high degree of intact historic associations.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Joseph C. Pierson  
organization Pinion Advisors date             
street & number 1501 Morton Avenue telephone 517-862-7333  
city or town Louisville state Kentucky zip code 40204  
e-mail Jpierson@pinionadvisors.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Filson Club  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kentucky  
County and State

**Photographs:**

**Same information for all photographs:**

Name of Property: The Filson Club  
City or Vicinity: Louisville  
County: Jefferson  
State: Kentucky  
Photographer: Joseph C. Pierson  
Date Photographed: 3/3/2013

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:** Building from the northwest facing southeast.

- 1 of 4: Building from the northwest facing southeast.
- 2 of 4: Building from the northeast facing southwest.
- 3 of 4: Building from the southwest facing northeast.
- 4 of 4: Building from the southeast facing northwest.

**Property Owner:**

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

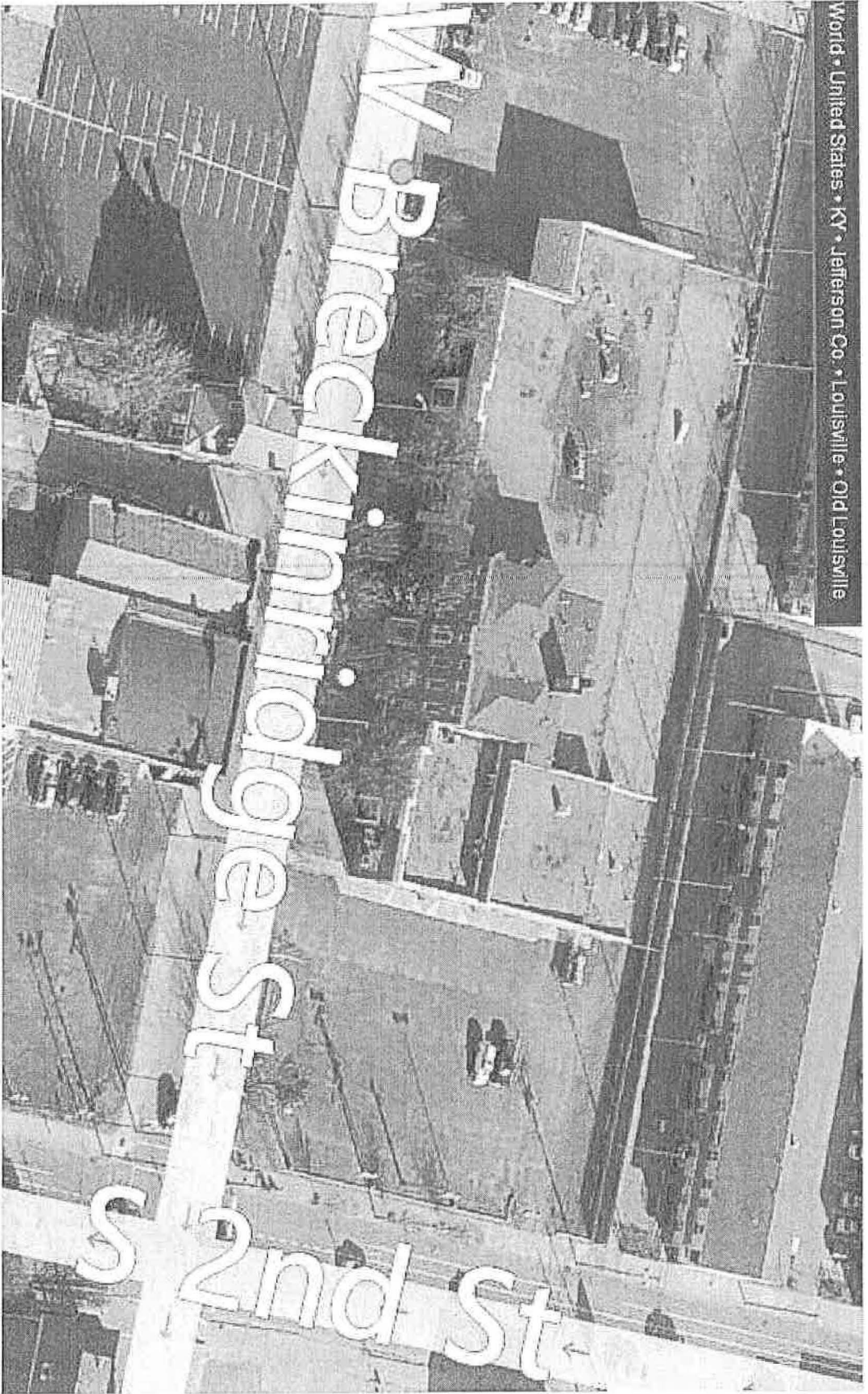
name Downtown Scholar House, LLLP  
street & number 1122 Rogers Street telephone (502) 297-8130  
city or town Louisville state KY zip code 40204



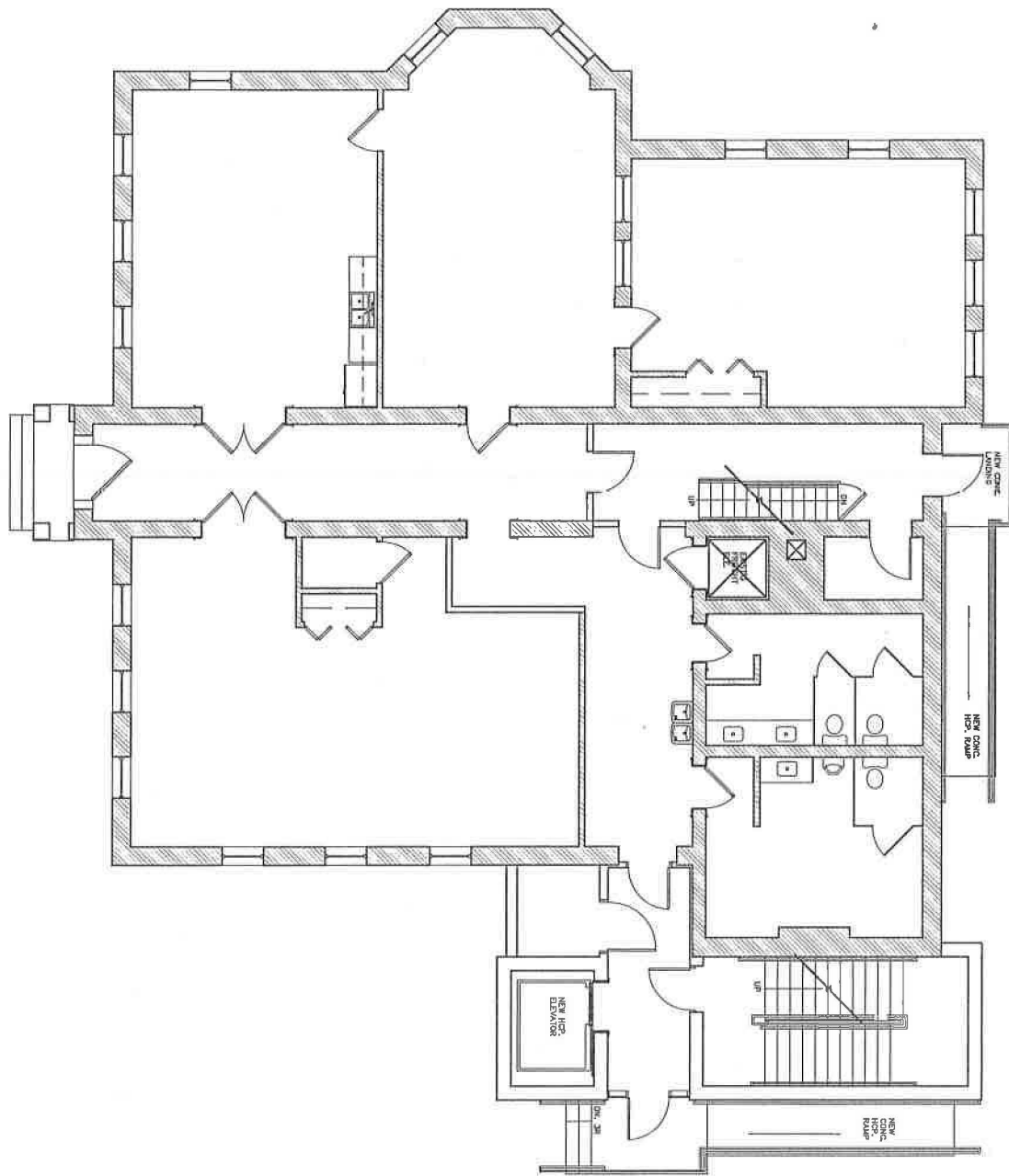


Filson Club, Jefferson County, KY  
Appearance of building prior to 2013 rehab

World • United States • KY • Jefferson Co. • Louisville • Old Louisville



Filson Club, Jefferson County, KY  
prior to rehab



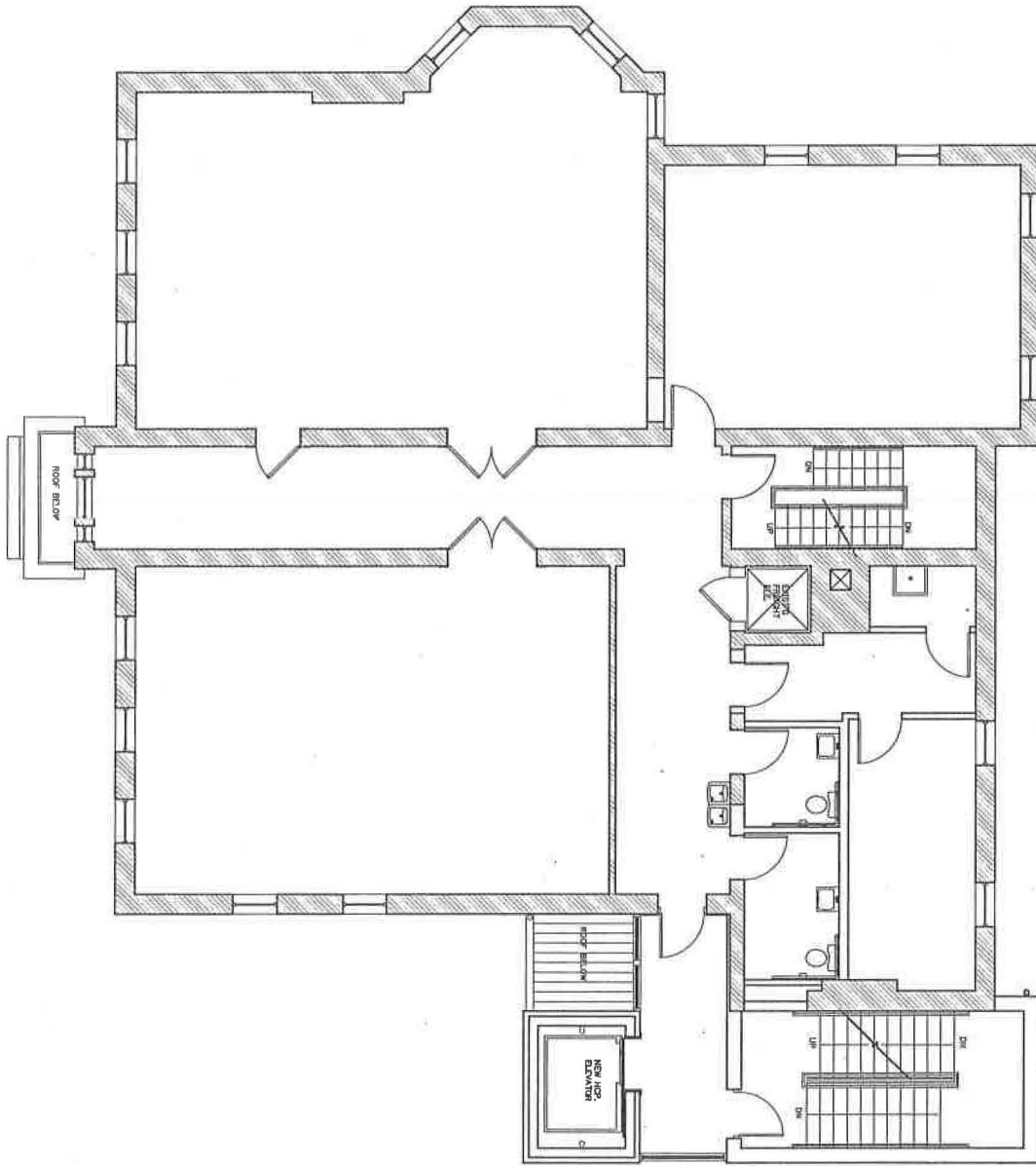
6 JANUARY 2012  
© 2012

Proposed  
First Floor

The Filson Club  
118 West Breckenridge St., Louisville, Kentucky  
*Filson Co., Ky*



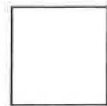
1531 MORICH AVE. LOUISVILLE, KY 40204  
Phone: 517.852-7333



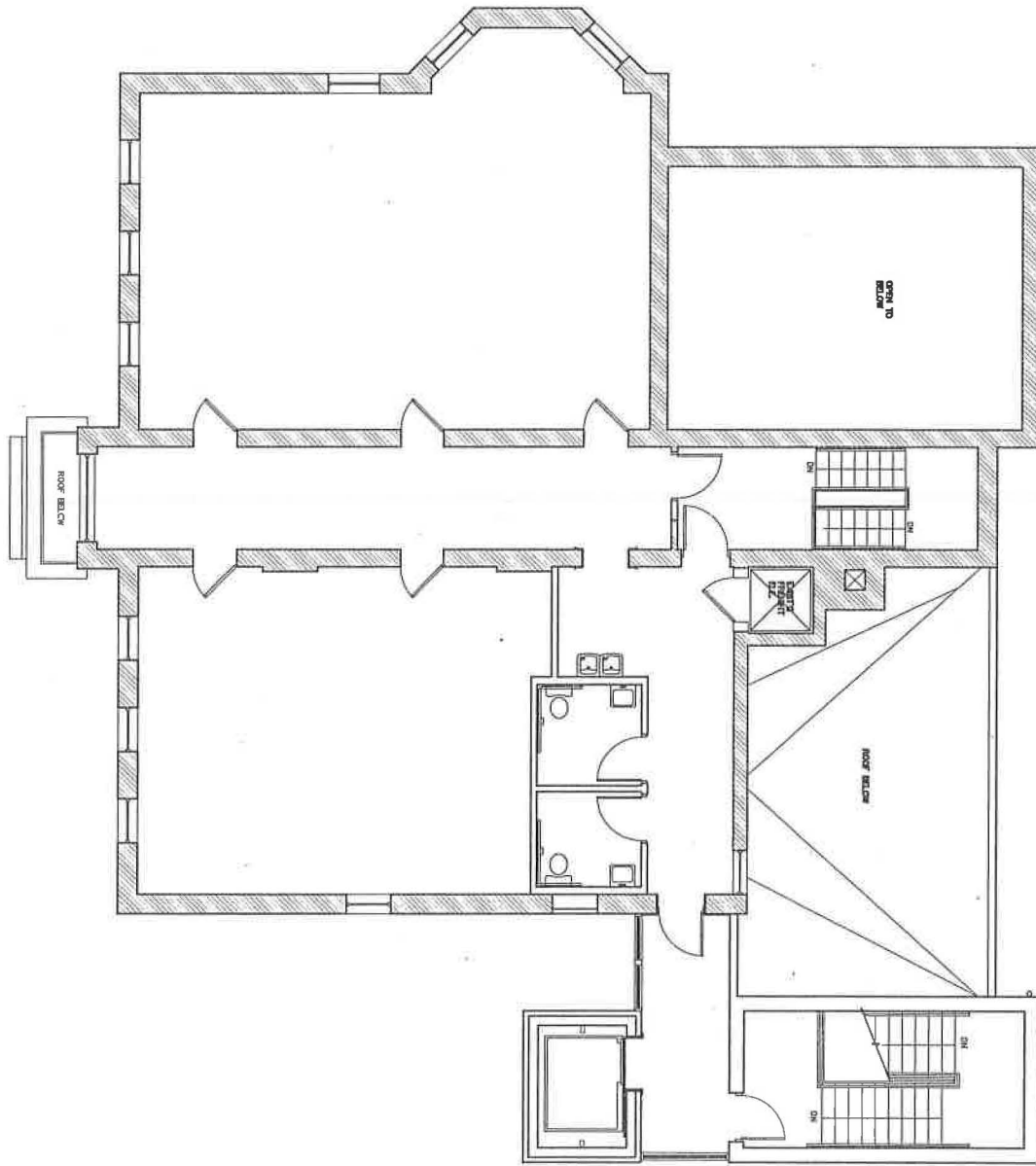
8 JANUARY 2012  
© 2012

Proposed  
Second Floor

The Filson Club  
118 West Breckenridge St., Louisville, Kentucky  
*Filson Club*



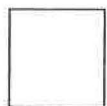
**PINON**  
1501 MORTGAGE AVE. LOUISVILLE, KY 40204  
Phone: 517.842-7333



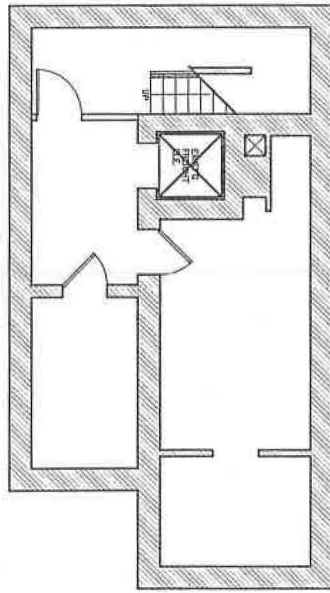
6 JANUARY 2012  
© 2011

Proposed  
Third Floor

The Filson Club  
118 West Breckenridge St., Louisville, Kentucky  
*Jefferson Co, KY*



**PINEN**  
1501 MORTON AVE. LOUISVILLE, KY 40204  
Phone: 517.862-7333



© JANUARY 2012  
© 2012

Proposed  
Basement

The Filson Club

118 West Breckinridge St., Louisville, Kentucky

*J. C. Johnson Co., Inc.*

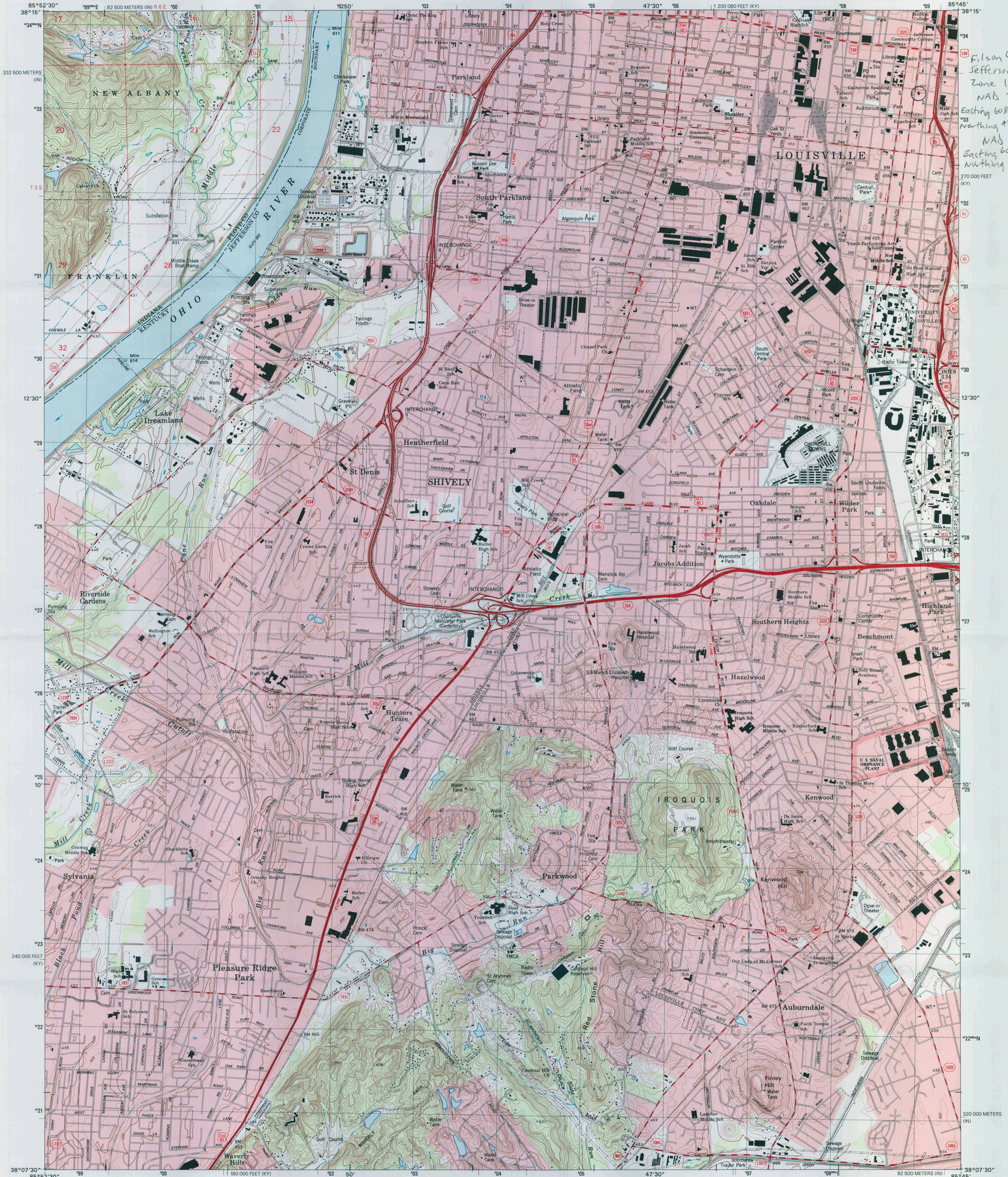


1501 MCINTOSH AVE., LOUISVILLE, KY 40204  
Phone: 517.862-7333



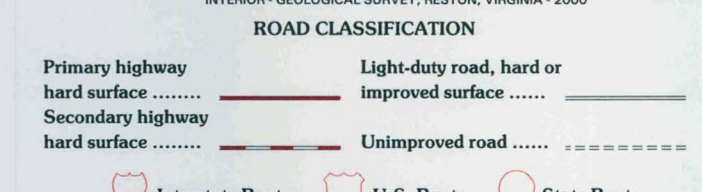
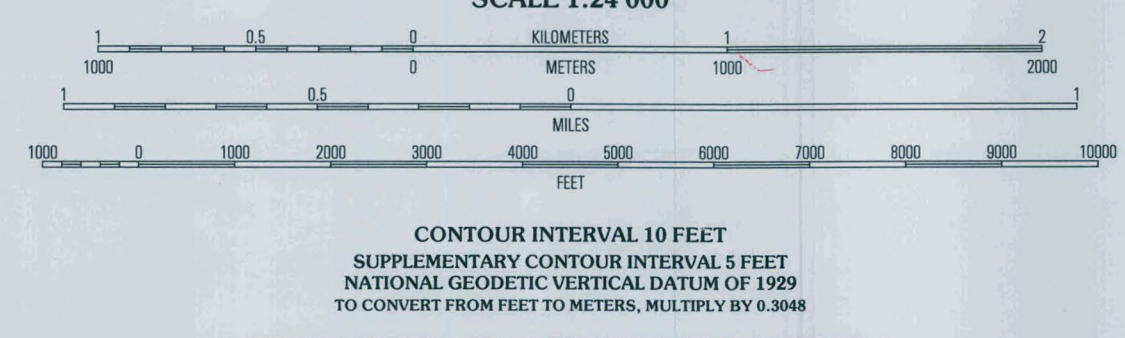
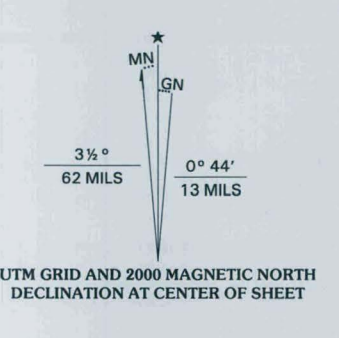
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

LOUISVILLE WEST QUADRANGLE  
KENTUCKY-INDIANA  
7.5-MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



Filson Club  
Jefferson Co, KY  
Zone 16  
NAD 27  
Easting 608 969  
Northing 4233 109  
NAD 83  
Easting 608 966  
Northing 4233 316

Produced by the United States Geological Survey  
Topography compiled 1978. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1988 and other sources. Survey control current as of 1979  
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83). Projection and 1 000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 16  
10 000-foot ticks: Kentucky Coordinate System of 1983 (north zone). 2 500-meter ticks: Indiana Coordinate System of 1983 (east zone)  
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 83 and NAD 27 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software  
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map  
Landmark buildings verified 1979



1	2	3	1 Georgetown
			2 New Albany
			3 Jeffersonville
4	5	6	4 Laneville
			5 Louisville East
			6 Keokuchville
6	7	8	7 Valley Station
			8 Brooks

LOUISVILLE WEST, KY-IN  
1998

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225  
KENTUCKY GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY 40506  
KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY 40601  
AND INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46204  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST













UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Filson Club, The

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: KENTUCKY, Jefferson

DATE RECEIVED: 5/24/13      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 6/18/13  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 7/03/13      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/10/13  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 13000476

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: Y    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    6-20-13 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

GREG FISCHER  
MAYOR

May 7, 2013

Mr. Lindy Casebier  
Acting Executive Director  
Kentucky Heritage Council  
300 Washington Street  
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601



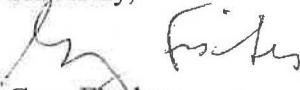
Dear Mr. Casebier:

I am pleased to have this opportunity to support the following nominations: Kurfee Paint Company Building; the Abbot House; Hogan's Fountain Pavilion, The Filson Club, and Schneider Hall (U of L Library) to the National Register of Historic Places. Our continuing partnership to recognize and preserve Louisville Metro's historic places is important and greatly appreciated.

The Louisville Metro Historic Landmarks and Preservation Districts Commission recommended approval of the nominations for the Abbot House; Kurfee Paint Company Building; and Hogan's Fountain Pavilion on March 21, 2013. The Landmarks Commission also recommended approval of The Filson Club and Schneider Hall on April 18, 2013. Please find enclosed a *Certified Local Government Review of National Register Nomination Report* indicating that recommendation as well as my recommendation that these nominations be approved.

The resources represented in these nominations will add to immeasurably to our community's heritage and I am pleased to support their nomination to the National Register.

Sincerely,

  
Greg Fischer  
Mayor

**CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPORT FORM  
REVIEW of NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION by LOCAL AUTHORITY**

*(Instructions in parentheses and italics. Print or type your responses. Fuller instructions on additional sheet.)*

Name of Certified Local Government     Louisville Metro    

Name of Property being considered     The Filson Club    

**INITIATION** *(enter one date only on a line below, describing the action on the nomination)*

         nomination submitted by CLG to State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). SHPO is asked by CLG to review nomination as soon as possible.  
  X   SHPO submits nomination to CLG for review. CLG has 60 days to review nomination and return this report form to SHPO.

**REVIEW BASIS** *(checkmark at least one line of Resource Type/Criterion; write the name of corresponding Commission member on one of the following three lines)*


<b>Resource Type</b>	<b>Criterion Selected on nomination form</b>
<u>  X  </u> Historical	National Register Criterion A or B
<u>        </u> Architectural	National Register Criterion C
<u>        </u> Archeological	National Register Criterion D

**Name of Commission Member Representing Significance Area**

    Joanne Weeter     Historian (when property meets Criterion A or B)  
                             Architectural Historian/Architect (for Criterion C)  
                             Archeologist (when property meets Criterion D)

**RECOMMENDATION** *(Check mark one of the four blanks below, sign, and enter date)*

  X   Commission Recommends Approval  
         Commission Recommends Disapproval  
         Commission Recommends Approval, Report Attached  
         Commission Recommends Disapproval, Report Attached

4/18/13   
Date Commissioner's Signature

*(Check Mark one of the two blanks below, sign, and enter date)*

         Chief Elected Official Recommends Approval  
         Chief Elected Official Recommends Disapproval

5/8/13   
Date Official's Signature/Title



STEVEN L. BESHEAR  
GOVERNOR

**TOURISM, ARTS AND HERITAGE CABINET  
KENTUCKY HERITAGE COUNCIL**

MARCHETA SPARROW  
SECRETARY

THE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
300 WASHINGTON STREET  
FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY 40601  
PHONE (502) 564-7005  
FAX (502) 564-5820  
www.heritage.ky.gov

LINDY CASEBIER  
ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND  
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

June 5, 2012

Ms. Carol Shull, Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service 2280  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 "I" (Eye) Street, NW 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington DC 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed are 3 nominations approved at the May 16, 2013 Review Board meeting. We are submitting them for listing in the National Register:

**Wolfe County High School**, Wolfe County, Kentucky

**Knight-Taylor-Hockensmith Farmhouse**, Franklin County, Kentucky

**Filson Club**, Jefferson County, Kentucky

We are asking for expedited review on all 3 of these properties. They are all 3 endangered, and accelerated listing provides the owners a State tax credit which will assist with their rehabilitation and overall preservation. Listing by June 20 is required for the owners to receive their tax credit. We have written to Jim Gabbert of your staff, who reviews Kentucky properties, and he has guided us to submit our request in these terms. Thank you for your special attention to these properties.

Sincerely,

Lindy Casebier, Acting SHPO and  
Executive Director  
Kentucky Heritage Council



STEVEN L. BESHEAR  
GOVERNOR

**TOURISM, ARTS AND HERITAGE CABINET  
KENTUCKY HERITAGE COUNCIL**

MARCHETA SPARROW  
SECRETARY

THE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
300 WASHINGTON STREET  
FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY 40601  
PHONE (502) 564-7005  
FAX (502) 564-5820  
www.heritage.ky.gov

June 5, 2012



Ms. Carol Shull, Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service 2280  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 "I" (Eye) Street, NW 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington DC 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed are 3 nominations approved at the May 16, 2013 Review Board meeting. We are submitting them for listing in the National Register:

- Wolfe County High School**, Wolfe County, Kentucky
- Knight-Taylor-Hockensmith Farmhouse**, Franklin County, Kentucky
- Filson Club**, Jefferson County, Kentucky

We are asking for expedited review on all 3 of these properties. They are all 3 endangered, and accelerated listing provides the owners a State tax credit which will assist with their rehabilitation and overall preservation. Listing by June 20 is required for the owners to receive their tax credit. We have written to Jim Gabbert of your staff, who reviews Kentucky properties, and he has guided us to submit our request in these terms. Thank you for your special attention to these properties.

Sincerely,

Lindy Casebier, Acting SHPO and  
Executive Director  
Kentucky Heritage Council