

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received DEC 29 1988

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Historic Resources of Mercer County, Kentucky

and/or common

2. Location

street & number See individual inventory and historic na not for publication

city, town district forms vicinity of

state Kentucky code KY county Mercer code 167

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name See individual inventory and historic district forms

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Mercer County Courthouse

street & number Main Street

city, town Harrodsburg state KY 40330

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Sites in Kentucky has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1969, 1973, 1981 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Kentucky Heritage Council

city, town 12th Floor Capitol Plaza Towers Frankfort state KY 40601

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## 7. Description

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**Condition**

☒ excellent  
☒ good  
☒ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

**Check one**

☒ unaltered  
☒ altered

**Check one**

☒ original site  
☐ moved      date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

### Overview

The Historic Resources of Mercer County, Kentucky contains thirty-four individual nominations with fifty-eight contributing buildings, two contributing structures, and three non-contributing buildings. The nomination also contains one residential district in Harrodsburg containing fourteen contributing and two non-contributing buildings. The buildings and structures date from 1800 to 1931, a period covering the county's development from early settlement to the early twentieth century. The locations of the eighteen nominations in the county are shown in Figure 1. The locations of the sixteen individual nominations and the residential district in Harrodsburg are shown in Figure 2.

Mercer County is located in the central section of Kentucky. In general, the landscape of the county is rolling or hilly with elevations ranging between 500 and 925 feet above mean sea level. The portion of the county located between the Kentucky and the Dix Rivers and the Salt River is generally classified as belonging to the Inner Bluegrass. The landforms of the Inner Bluegrass are gently rolling and underlain with gray limestone. The limestone is resistant to erosion and forms a fairly deep, fertile soil. West of the Salt River, along Mercer County's borders with Anderson and Washington Counties, the geology is characterized by calcic shales and thin limestones. The terrain is steeper in the western part of the county and more susceptible to erosion. It is also less desirable for farming, and contains more forested area than the eastern portion of the county. Traditionally, the subsistence farms of relatively small size have been found along the hills and valleys of the Salt and Chaplin Rivers while the prosperous and large agricultural holdings were established in the eastern section of the county.

Since Mercer County is located in the second tier of counties outside the metropolitan area of Lexington and Fayette County, it has only recently experienced any major population growth. For sixty years, from 1900 to 1960, the population of Mercer County increased only 1.2%, from 14,426 in 1900 to 14,596 in 1960. After 1960, the population grew 9.3% to reach 15,960 in 1970. In 1980, the population of Mercer County was 19,011. The two major towns of Mercer County are Harrodsburg, the county seat, and Burgin. In 1980, Harrodsburg had a population of 7,265 and Burgin had a population of 1,008. Land use in Mercer County is characterized in the following manner, according to a recent study: 30% cropland, 20% pasture, 40% forest, 3% urban, 6% federal land, and 1% water.

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## Survey Methodology

Documentation and preservation of Mercer County's historic resources began soon after the establishment of the Kentucky Heritage Commission in 1966. Frances Keightley, a member of the Harrodsburg Historical Society, became the Mercer County contact person and began the survey work. In 1969, the historic sites survey was well enough established in Mercer County to sponsor one of the first Landmarks Certificate Programs in the state. To date, a total of 361 sites have been surveyed. There have been eighteen individual National Register nominations as well as the following multiple listings of buildings within districts: Harrodsburg Commercial District (58 buildings, 1979); College Street Historic District (28 buildings, 1979); Shakertown at Pleasant Hill which is also a National Historic Landmark (27 buildings, 1972); and Morgan Row (4 buildings, 1973). A multi-county thematic nomination titled "Early Stone Buildings of the Inner Bluegrass" was listed on the National Register in 1983 and included five Mercer County buildings.

Members of the Harrodsburg Historical Society who have worked on the surveys and National Register nominations include Rebecca Conover, Frances Keightley, Mary Ingram, Clay Lancaster, William Noland, and James C. Thomas. Daniel Kidd, Mary Cronen Oppel, and Charlotte Worsham of the Kentucky Heritage Council have also been involved in the documentation of the county's historic resources. The Harrodsburg-Mercer County Landmark Association was established in 1984 to protect and develop the historic resources of the county. With funding from the Kentucky Heritage Council, the group produced a preservation plan for Mercer County in 1985. The plan dealt with downtown development, education, certified local government, tax incentives, and tourism as they related to the preservation of historic resources.

From a review of the historic resources catalogued in the files of the Kentucky Heritage Council, Frances Keightley and Helen Powell identified buildings not yet listed on the National Register which seemed to meet National Register criteria. On-site inspections and additional research reduced the list to the properties identified here.

The boundaries for the properties nominated includes the residence and associated domestic outbuildings that contribute to the complex

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as a whole. Included acreage does not extend to potential historic fields or other historic natural resources because a context for evaluating that type of resource was not developed during this study. Where the domestic buildings were separated from the fields by fences, roadways, or natural elements such as a tree rows, these features were used as the basis for the boundaries. When such features did not exist, an arbitrary boundary was chosen to provide a setting for the house, to preserve the setback from the road, and to include all the domestic outbuildings which contribute to the significance of the property.

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**ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT**

The buildings nominated within the Mercer county MRA illustrate the local variations of national styles from 1800 until the 1930's as well as the ways in which houses were remodeled and updated during the 130 year period.

Settlement and Community Structuring (1780 - 1830)

During the period of settlement in the late eighteenth century, the people in Mercer County erected temporary log and brush structures in which to live as they made improvements on their land. The temporary structures were close to stations or fortified cabins to which they could retreat in the event of Indian attack. The organized Indian attacks ended with the Battle of Blue Licks in 1782. With the resolution of the Indian problems, the pioneers' attention was turned from defense to the development of the land that they had claimed.

The period of settlement passed into an era marked by prosperity and expressions of permanence in buildings made of log, stone, and brick. Many builders of the early houses in Mercer County employed hewn logs joined at the corners by saddle notches, V-notches, and half dovetail notches. In Mercer County, the most common floor plan for hewn log houses are single-pen, double-pen, saddlebag, and dogtrot. The tradition of log construction was not limited exclusively to the early settlement period, but continued to be used until after the Civil War.

Single log pens, or rooms, were built as squares, measuring approximately sixteen feet on each side, or as rectangles, measuring approximately sixteen feet by twenty-four feet. The square pen plan contained one room with the gable-end chimney placed away from the door. The rectangular log house often had two rooms of unequal size created by a board partition to form the hall-parlor plan. The larger room or hall was probably used as a multi-purpose living and eating space while the parlor functioned as a company room or sleeping chamber.

The builder of a log house could increase interior space by combinations of pens. The additional pens might be constructed of log or of another material as in the case of the James Armstrong McAfee House (Me-151B) which has a square hewn-log pen placed

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adjacent to a hewn-timber and mud pen. In the hewn timber and mud pen the heavy timbers are joined with wood pegs and anchored to a wood sill. The timbers are arranged to create a wall frame with rectangular and triangular voids. Spilt saplings were worked into the voids to create a lath-like construction, onto which a mixture of clay, twigs, and straw were thrown to create textured mud panels between the timbers. The total number of buildings constructed in this manner in Mercer County is unknown because the timber and mud construction is usually sheathed in weatherboarding. The most visible example of this construction technique in Mercer County is the Old Mud Meeting House (Me-132) placed on the National Register in 1973.

Another method of expanding a log house is the dogtrot plan in which two log rooms are combined under one roof with a central open space between the two pens. The passage or dogtrot provides circulation between the two log rooms. While some dogtrot houses resulted from expansions of single-pen houses, others were originally built in the dogtrot form. The Adams House (Me-146) began as a rectangular pen to which another log room was added across an open passageway. The interior of the dogtrot at the Adams House has beaded ceiling beams and an enclosed straight flight of steps to the loft. The wooden vertical sheathing on the interior of one room has hand-painted watermelon pattern on two walls and a rendition of a building, possibly the first state capitol building, on a third wall.

Stone was another material used in Mercer County in the late eighteenth century. There are three stone houses in Mercer County with the hall-parlor plan which were placed on the National Register as part of the thematic nomination of "Early Stone Houses of the Central Bluegrass" in 1983.

The hall-parlor plan persisted as a traditional form of space arrangement, but was later constructed with more attention to stylistic detail. Many of the brick houses have Flemish bond brickwork on the prominent facades with elaborately carved woodwork on the doorways, windows, and mantels. Many brick hall-parlor houses in Mercer County have been placed on the National Register and include the following: Benjamin Daniel House (Me-66), 1983; Moses Jones House (Me-9), 1979; and Millwood (Me-168), 1976.

As new conceptions of spatial organization and types of ornamentation became accepted, people began to update their homes.

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As the central passage plan became more common in Mercer County, some owners of existing homes, such as Colonel John Bowman (Me-83) made their existing hall-parlor houses the rear ell and placed the newer, more stylish central passage house along the road frontage. Other home owners added to existing plans to make the central passage configuration. The George Passmore House (Me-H-71) was built as a one-room-over-one-room, two-story brick building in 1821. It was converted to a central passage house with the addition of another two-story block of rooms containing a passage and single room on each floor to create a symmetrical five-bay facade.

In Mercer County in the early nineteenth century, the houses using the central passage plan are either one room or two rooms deep, with three or five bay main facades executed in Flemish bond brickwork, jack arches over the windows, and nine over six window glazing. Three of the houses within the nomination have central passage plans for the central pavilion of the house which are or were flanked with one-room symmetrical wings which are slightly recessed behind the plane of the main facade. Burford Hill (Me-H-1) has a central passage plan which is one room deep and three-bay facade with Palladian windows in both the main pavilion and the one remaining wing. The Boise House or Fountain Blue (Me-129) has a central passage plan which is two rooms deep. Both the Peter Dunn House (Me-150) and the Boise House (Me-129) are five bays with Flemish bond brickwork on both the main pavilion and the wings.

The woodwork of Burford Hill (Me-H-1), Col. John Bowman House (Me-83), and the Boyle House (Me-129) has been attributed to Matthew Lowry, a local craftsman practicing in Mercer County from 1806 to 1840 who was noted for his carving of mantel sunbursts, door and window reeding, and beaded chair rails.

Antebellum Period (1830 - 1860)

In the period between 1830 and 1860, the central passage plan became more popular than the hall-parlor plan for dwelling construction. It became the dominant floor plan in Mercer County by the mid-nineteenth century because of its symmetrical arrangement of rooms and improved circulation pattern. Ornamental elements from the Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, and Italianate styles were used on central passage houses. Additions were made to

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the rear as ells instead of the lateral wings of the earlier period to preserve the symmetry of the front facade.

As the economy expanded in the county due to the improvement of transportation routes and the expanding market for Mercer County products, families built new houses on the early settlement sites near the original dwelling to take advantage of its proximity to water and its relationship to the county's road patterns. Such was the case with the McGee House, or Oak View, built circa 1850 as a single pile central passage plan near the family's earlier rectangular hewn log house. The pattern of reusing sites continued after the Civil War in the McAfee Houses (Me-151A and B).

The rebuilding of settlement period dwellings built as hall-parlor plans to conform to the central passage plan or to become the ell to a newer house continued during these years and became more frequent as the period progressed. Such a change occurred at the Matheny-Taylor House (Me-H-57). In 1840, Major William Taylor who was instrumental in attracting Bacon College to Harrodsburg, bought Felix Matheny's House which stood on the corner of College and Poplar Streets. The original portion of the Matheny House has a hall-parlor plan ornamented with Federal elements such as the fanlight over the entrance, Flemish bond brickwork, and jack arches. Instead of tearing the Matheny House down, Taylor built an addition perpendicular to it and facing College Street. This second portion of the house has a central passage plan and recessed central entrance framed by Ionic columns and an entablature, ornamentation associated with the Greek Revival style.

The introduction of new styles did not mean that earlier forms of ornamentation and building techniques were readily abandoned. Some builders in the early 1830's used elements from both the Federal and Greek Revival styles in the same house. The Tobin House (Me-40) has a one-room deep, central passage plan. On the interior there are wide baseboards, heavy mantels, and drip moldings around the doors, ornamental features associated with the Greek Revival style. On the exterior, the front facade has Flemish bond brickwork, a narrow boxed cornice, a five bay window pattern on the first floor and a four bay window pattern on the second floor, features of the early nineteenth century.

In the Mercer County Jailer's Residence (Me-42), built in 1827, the builder also chose ornamental elements from both the Federal style, in the Flemish bond brickwork, and from the Greek Revival style, in



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the flat lintels over the windows. The central passage plan was used, but modified for the combination of uses which the house accommodated. The central passage is flanked on each side by rooms of unequal size, the smaller rooms containing the jailer's office and stairway leading to the cells upstairs and the larger rooms, the jailer's living quarters.

The stylistic elements of the Greek Revival were applied with great variety in Mercer County. Its expression ranges from simple gable returns on modest frame houses to massive pedimented porches on large brick houses. The Greek Revival style is characterized by a low pitched gable or hip roof, three or five bay facades, and an emphasis on the front entrance through the arrangement of sidelights, transom, and entablature. The cornice is wider than those found on earlier houses and is often ornamented with classical elements such as dentils or triglyphs. On brick houses, pilasters are sometimes used to divide the facades into bays. Wood or stone lintels are used over the windows instead of brick jack arches. A porch or portico is usually present as well. Some earlier Federal houses were remodeled to exhibit the new style such as Clay Hill (Me-H-25), built circa 1800 on a central passage plan with Federal detailing. In 1830, a full-height, Greek Revival portico was added. Clay Hill was placed on the National Register in 1976.

When the central passage plan is single pile, or one room on each side of the central passage, as in the case of the Elms (Me-H-18), the configuration of the house is rectangular. Additional space was gained by adding rooms to the rear of the house by means of an ell composed of single rooms along a passageway which is usually a continuation of the central passage of the main block of the house. Examples of this plan include the Sutfield House (Me-H-6) built in 1843 and the James Jackson McAfee House (Me-151A). The McAfee House was built after the Civil War and has a different placement of the chimneys and window shapes but demonstrates the persistence of the central-passage form.

The double-pile version of the central passage plan, in which the central passage is flanked on either side by two rooms, produces a square form. Aspen Hall (Me-H-30) in Harrodsburg has a double pile, central passage plan and a full-height, pedimented porch which covers both the central entrance and the windows to either side. The Ionic columns, wide cornice with dentils, and central doorway framed by pilasters show an awareness of the detailing

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associated with the Greek Revival as a national style. Similar floor plans and stylistic elements can be found on Walnut Hall (Me-39), Lynnwood (Me-85), and Glenworth (Me-86) which were nominated to the National Register in 1978.

In Harrodsburg, the central passage plan was modified for use in narrow in-town lots. The Benjamin Passmore (Me-H-51), built in 1852, has a side-passage plan which is flanked on each level by a single room. The passage led to a frame ell at the rear of the house.

A small number of houses built before the Civil War in Mercer County display Gothic Revival ornamentation. The vertically-pointed Gothic revival style was popularized by Andrew Jackson Downing in his books and essays on the appropriate house-types for rural residences. The books, first written in the 1840's, went through multiple reprintings in the late nineteenth century. Downing preferred the asymmetrical picturesque styles, such as the Gothic Revival to the symmetrical, horizontal Greek Revival. In Mercer County, builders generally employed the ornamentation advocated by Downing, such as wall gables, high-pitched roofs with decorative bargeboards, and lancet windows, but used it on the familiar central passage plan. The Daniel Curry House (Me-H-145) is an example of this phenomenon.

Other builders combined ornamental elements of the Gothic Revival and the Greek Revival house on single pile, central passage houses with ells to the rear. The Baldin House (Me-19) and the Cunningham House (Me-155) built in 1850 and 1848 respectively are examples of this local interpretation of a national style. Both houses have three-bay, two-story brick facades, steeply pitched gable roofs with remnants of scalloped bargeboards along the eaves, double central chimneys, and paired elongated windows. In both houses the original two-tiered porch which covered the central bay has been removed. Doorways leading to the central passages of both the first and second floors of the houses have simple entablatures, sidelights, and a transom. The interiors of both the Baldin and Cunningham houses have Greek Revival elements on the interior in the wide baseboards, heavy mantels, and drip moldings around the doors and windows.

Post-War (1860 - 1900)

In the few buildings constructed immediately after the Civil War in

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Mercer County, the central passage plan persisted and was ornamented with combinations of elements from several different styles as the builders chose details from pattern books. The Floyd Gritton House (Me-163) built in 1865 on the west bank of the Salt River near Bondville uses ornamentation from the Greek Revival and Gothic Revival styles on a single-pile, central passage plan. The two-story, three-bay main facade has a central wall gable, steeply pitched roof, and icicle-shaped bargeboards, all elements of the Gothic Revival style. The exterior central doorways to the first and second floors are recessed and framed by square columns, pilasters, sidelights, and transom. The doorway treatment and the interior woodwork with its wide baseboards, heavy mantels, and drip moldings are ornamental details from the Greek Revival style.

The Burris House (Me-156), built in 1870, uses elements of both the Greek Revival and the Italianate styles on a single-pile, central passage plan with an ell to the rear. The central entrance contains double-leaf doors and is framed by sidelights and a transom, elements of the Greek Revival style. A two-story porch supported by square posts covers the central bay. Both the porch and the main block of the house have low hipped roofs with wide eaves supported by brackets, details characteristic of the Italianate style.

In the late nineteenth century, another plan called the T-plan came into use in Mercer County. In the T-plan, one of the rooms flanking the central passage is moved forward, thus breaking the plane of the front facade. The Abraham Bonta House (Me-90), built in 1881 on the Danville Road, is an example of a T-plan with ornamentation from the Italianate style. It is a two-story brick house with a low-pitched hipped roof and brackets beneath the wide eaves. The exterior has multiple entrances, each covered by one-story porches with arched friezes. The elongated windows are capped by segmentally arched hood moldings.

The Italianate style became increasingly popular in Mercer County after the Civil War as part of a national trend. The greatest concentration of Italianate detailing is found in downtown Harrodsburg due to the rebuilding which occurred after the fires of 1864, 1883, and 1890. The downtown commercial district of Harrodsburg was placed on the National Register in 1979. Wildwood (Me-H-184) and the Dr. A.D. Price House (Me-H-35), which were both built of brick in 1870, are double-pile, central passage residences with Italianate ornamentation. The symmetry of the plan is disguised from the outside by the use of advancing planes and

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polygonal bays. The arched elongated windows are capped with brick hood moldings. The Price House has separate entry porches for its multiple exterior doors while Wildwood's doors are connected by a one-story wrap-around porch. Wildwood is classified as an example of the Italian Villa style because of its three-story entry tower.

The latter decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the construction of buildings in styles which favored the asymmetrical massing and multi-textured facades. The Romanesque Revival style is not often used in central Kentucky outside of the urban areas of Lexington and Louisville, but there are two examples in Mercer County. The Daniel Moore House (Me-H-21), located on the Lexington Road exhibits a facade which combines brick and limestone on a double-pile central passage house. The house also has a corner tower with a conical roof and a one-story wrap-around porch. On the porch, the cushion capitals of the stone columns have been carved in elaborate floral motifs. The other building in the Romanesque Revival style is a commercial building in the Harrodsburg Commercial District which was nominated to the National Register as part of the Harrodsburg Commercial District in 1979.

Mercer County's concentration of Queen Anne houses is located on the east side of Beaumont Avenue in Harrodsburg. The houses date from 1883 to 1902. They display towers, wrap-around porches, irregularly massed roof lines, and polygonal bay windows on double pile central-passage plans. Harrodsburg's rail connection enabled carpenters to order details for porch friezes and gables from catalogues and many houses along Beaumont Avenue bear this stock millwork. The Queen Anne houses in the Beaumont Avenue include the Tabler House (Me-H-28), the Poteet House (Me-H-28), the Dedman House (Me-H-29), and the G.L. Curry House (Me-H-146).

Twentieth Century 1900-1935

Harrodsburg and Mercer County participated in a national reawakening of interest in early American history that began in the early twentieth century. Public architecture was influenced by the national renewal of interest in American history. When the Harrodsburg Post Office (Me-H-84) was built in 1930, its detailing was inspired by colonial Georgian architecture being restored in Virginia and Maryland. The Harrodsburg Post Office has a symmetrical facade with fanlights over the doorway and keystones over the multi-paned windows.

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At this time, there was also a revival of interest in Classical detailing for both domestic and religious architecture. New structures executed in this style were characterized by full-height porticos which were supported by Ionic or Doric columns. St. Peter's AME Church (Me-H-95), built in 1918 by a black congregation, demonstrates their awareness of this national style in the symmetrical facade and portico.

As in previous eras, the builders of Mercer County exhibited an awareness of national styles, but combined features from different styles in their local interpretation. The central-passage house, first used in the early nineteenth century, continued to be popular in the twentieth. Greystone (Me-148) was built in 1931 as a double pile central-passage house with a full-height portico from the Classical Revival style and fanlight and arched openings around the windows from the Colonial Revival style.

There was also remodeling of houses to reflecting a romanticism for the Classical detailing and a desire to emphasize the symmetry of the central passage plan which had been disguised under the detailing of the Queen Anne, Italianate, and Romanesque Revival of the late nineteenth century. Part of the Roach-Ison House (Me-59) was built in the early nineteenth century. Two of the rooms on the first floor of the north side have Flemish bond brickwork on the exterior and reeded woodwork around the doors and windows on the interior, ornamental details of the Federal style. In the early twentieth century, the house was remodelled during the tenure of the Roach family. A second story room was added over the existing rooms, a two story central passage way and additional rooms, including an ell were added. A two-story, pedimented portico with dentils along the eaves supported by two pairs of Ionic columns covering the three central bays of the house was added at the same time. Another house, the Smith-Williams House (Me-123), built in the early nineteenth century and remodeled in the mid-nineteenth century, added a massive two-story pedimented portico with an arch cut into the cornice of the porch in the early twentieth century.

Another popular house form was the American Four Square or Prairie Box, which has a hipped roof, square plan, and a symmetrical arrangement of doors and windows. The Alfred G. Curry House, included in the Beaumont Avenue District, was built in 1905 and displays the low hipped roof, square plan, and wide eaves of the Prairie style, but the builder chose details from the Classical Revival style to ornament the house with Ionic porch columns and garlands across the porch frieze.

## 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–1931	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
				commemorative structures

**Specific dates** 1800–1931      **Builder/Architect** See individual forms

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### SIGNIFICANCE

The Multiple Resources Area nomination for Mercer County, Kentucky contains buildings and structures significant for the period from 1800 to 1931. These buildings and sites meet the National Register Criteria in association with the themes of architecture, transportation, engineering, and commemorative structures.

Under the theme of architecture, the nomination illustrates the local interpretations of national styles and methods of construction from 1800 to 1931. From the early nineteenth century there are examples of the kinds of floor plans of log and brick buildings used in Mercer County. It also illustrates how settlers and their descendants chose and reused sites for their homes in relation to the stations or fortified cabins. The buildings in the nomination also illustrate how houses were remodeled as the conceptions of space changed through the period of significance.

The persistence and the popularity of the central-passage plan is demonstrated as well as how the builders chose details from the Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Romanesque Revival, Classical Revival, and Colonial Revival to ornament it.

The theme of transportation is important to demonstrate how people oriented their houses in relationship to the roads. The position of Harrodsburg on the Maysville to Harrodsburg Turnpike stimulated the construction of hotels and brought people to the springs. The dependence on the waterways proved unprofitable after the Civil War when Mercer County lost its southern markets. The completion of the railroad in the 1880's sparked a late nineteenth century building boom reflected in the Beaumont Avenue District.

The theme of engineering relates to the construction of the Dix River Dam and hydroelectric plant pushed by the national move towards electrification in the 1920's.

The veneration of their pioneer ancestors moved the Pioneer Memorial Society to build the replica of Fort Harrod in 1927. The replica of the fort is significant as a twentieth century commemoration and interpretation of the lives of the late eighteenth century founders of Harrodsburg.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheets.

## 10. Geographical Data

See individual properties and district forms.

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References

A 

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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See individual properties and district forms.

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

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Helen Powell

organization H. Powell and Co., Inc.

date December 1988

street & number Suite 201 2230 Idle Hour Center telephone (606) 266-5351

city or town Lexington

state Kentucky 40502

## 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

title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

date December 22, 1988

For NPS use only

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

*Patrick Andrus*

date 2/8/89

for Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1

Historic Resources of Mercer County, Kentucky

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**HISTORIC CONTEXTS**

**Period: 1780-1830**

**Theme: Settlement**

As early as 1767, Samuel and James Harrod explored the headwaters of the Salt River in what is now Mercer County. In 1774, they enlisted a group of thirty men from the Virginia and Pennsylvania border to return with them to Kentucky and establish a town. The group descended the Monongahela River to Fort Pitt and then down the Ohio River to the mouth of the Kentucky River. At Harrod's Landing, they left the Kentucky River and proceeded inland to the Big Spring where they laid out Harrod's Town, or Harrodsburg, on July 16, 1774. Very soon thereafter, Harrod and his men were recalled to Virginia to aid the settlers in Lord Dunmore's War. Harrod's group returned to Mercer County in 1775. The rough structures built near the Big Spring had been flooded during their absence, so they began construction of a fortification on a hill west of the spring. The years until the resolution of the Indian threat were a time of constant vigilance. The settlers were plagued with a lack of sufficient food and unsanitary conditions within the fort. The spring in the northwest corner of the fort was often polluted. In 1779, the settlers were on the offensive. Missions conducted by George Rogers Clark and Colonel John Bowman (Me-83) resulted in the capture of the Indian strongholds of Chillicothe and Vincennes, north of the Ohio River.

In 1780, three counties were created from the Kentucky District of Virginia: Lincoln, Fayette, and Jefferson. After the Battle of Blue Licks in 1782, the citizens of Harrodsburg became more confident about leaving the protection of Fort Harrod and the other stations or fortified cabins in the county on a permanent basis to farm the land which they had claimed or had received from the government for military service during the American Revolution. Very little visible evidence from the late eighteenth century period of settlement remains above ground. Fort Harrod itself fell into disuse after the threat of Indian attack subsided. By 1790, settlers began to build away from the forts and stations. Many individual dwellings were placed within close proximity of these earlier fortifications in order to take advantage of their protection if the need arose and to re-use the advantageous building sites. The Williams House (Me-58), for example, was built



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Historic Resources of Mercer County, Kentucky

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in 1806 for David Williams's daughter Polly upon her marriage. The new house was within sight of the station or fortified cabin, which the family had used as a refuge during the early years of settlement.

Theme: Transportation

The corn crops were plentiful and the local economy began to grow as grist mills were established on the creeks. The first roads in Mercer County were rough trails built to link the grist mills. Livestock was herded south and east, but waterways were the best means for transporting other agricultural products to an urban market. In the case of Mercer County, the creeks emptied into the Salt, Dix, or Kentucky River which flowed to the Ohio and on to the Mississippi and New Orleans. Since the Kentucky River was the largest of the waterways, two new towns, called Warwick and New Market were established with warehouses to store the tobacco, corn, and bacon until shipment down river.

The construction of the warehouses influenced the county road pattern. New roads such as the Warwick Road was built to aid movement of farm products from the interior of the county to the warehouses. The Williams House (Me-58) was remodeled in 1835 and changed its principal orientation from the earlier family station to the new road. The warehouses created wealth for their owners, such as Joseph Morgan (1772-1860) who used his profits to build his house Round Hill (Me-172) and to become one of Mercer County's first developers with the construction of row houses on Chiles Street in Harrodsburg which contained an inn and a tavern as well as residential units. The four buildings comprising Morgan Row were placed on the National Register in 1973.

Theme: Commerce

The expansion of Mercer County's economy after the War of 1812 and the increased circulation of money made it possible for some farmers and businessmen to embellish the homes they built. The promising market attracted Matthew Lowry, a talented wood carver, to Mercer County where he worked during the early decades of the nineteenth century. Houses such as Burford Hill (Me-H-1), Colonel John Bowman House (Me-83), and the Boise House (Me-129) have carved mantels, chair rails, and door and window frames attributed to Matthew Lowry.

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Historic Resources of Mercer County, Kentucky

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**PERIOD (1830-1860)**

**Theme: Community Structuring**

North of Harrodsburg, near the mouth of Shawnee Run on the Kentucky River, the village of Pleasant Hill was developed by the Shakers or the United Believers in the Second Coming of Christ. The Shakers came to Kentucky around 1806, attracted by the Great Revival meetings. The Shakers reached the height of their prosperity in Mercer County in the years from 1820 to 1840. They ran a brickyard, grist mill, tannery, paper mill, and hemp breaker and were also instrumental in the introduction of new kinds of sheep and cattle to Kentucky. The 27 buildings associated with the Shakers were placed on the National Register as Shakertown at Pleasant Hill District in 1972 and became a National Historic Landmark as well. The West Lot Family House (Me-49) and the West Lot Bath House (Me-50) were nominated in the thematic nomination "Early Stone Houses of the Inner Bluegrass" in 1983.

**Theme: Transportation**

The expansion of the southern cotton states after the War of 1812 enhanced the lucrative markets for Mercer County farm products. The steamboat replaced the flatboat as the principal means of water transportation, enabling goods to come upstream to Kentucky as well as downstream to New Orleans. The Kentucky Legislature supported river transportation during the mid-nineteenth century, but left the development of roads to the private sector. Private corporations built and maintained roads by charging tolls to the travelling public. In 1835, the Nicholasville, Harrodsburg, and Perryville Turnpike Company was formed to build the Mercer County portion of the road from Maysville on the Ohio River to Nashville on the Cumberland River.

Mail coaches replaced post riders and Harrodsburg became an important stop for passengers on the routes from Louisville to points south and from Maysville to Nashville. Establishments such as Tandy's Tavern and the Mercer House or the Passmore Hotel (Me-H-91) were built to accommodate the increased number of travelers.

The gradually improving transportation systems also brought visitors to Harrodsburg from Vicksburg, Natchez, New Orleans, and

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Historic Resources of Mercer County, Kentucky

Nashville to enjoy the mineral or epsom waters of the Greenville and Harrodsburg Springs. Harrodsburg gained a national reputation as the "Saratoga of the West" during the 1840's and 1850's. From June through September, people fled the yellow fever and cholera epidemics in the south for the dancing, music, ice cream, billiards, horse racing, and other amusements to be enjoyed with the interesting company at the springs in Harrodsburg. The buildings associated with the springs burned in the mid-nineteenth century and Daughters' College was built on the site in 1856. Daughters' College was placed on the National Register in 1980.

Theme: Education

The presence of the spas and springs and their potential for fostering what some people considered immoral behavior lost Harrodsburg the opportunity to be the home of the state's first Baptist college in 1829. The Baptist school subsequently located in Georgetown, Kentucky. In the 1830's the administrators and the professors of Georgetown College became embroiled in the Campbellite controversy. A professor named Thornton A. Johnson dismissed from Georgetown College because of his Campbellite sympathies, decided to start another school. He found an underwriter for his proposed school in the person of James Taylor of Harrodsburg (Me-H-57). The school was briefly known as Taylor Academy until the proper documents were passed by the state legislature. Taylor Academy was renamed Bacon College in honor of Sir Francis Bacon because of the number of engineering students enrolled.

The school officially opened in Harrodsburg in 1839 with sixty students. Later that same year, Dr. James Shannon (Me-H-30) came to Harrodsburg to be president of the college and pastor of the First Christian Church. By 1843, the college began to experience financial difficulties because it was unable to collect all the pledges made to it by the local citizens. During this period, John Bryan Bowman, a descendant of Colonel John Bowman (Me-83) returned to Harrodsburg to try to save the college. He was quite successful in raising money from the surrounding counties, but was ultimately defeated when fire destroyed the main college building in 1864. Aware of unused grants for a college in Lexington, Bowman moved the assets of Bacon College there. Bowman engineered the acquisition of Henry Clay's estate as a site for the Agricultural and Mechanical College which later became the University of Kentucky.

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Historic Resources of Mercer County, Kentucky

Theme: Politics

Ever since the formation of Mercer County, its two major towns, Harrodsburg and Danville had been competitive in both commercial and political matters. Harrodsburg was the county seat of Mercer County, but Danville was chosen as the site of the constitutional conventions from 1784 to 1892, the district court for the resolution of settlement land titles, and the location of Centre College in 1819. The Danville-Harrodsburg separatist movement was greatly encouraged by an incident involving Benjamin Hardin in 1841. Feeling that he had been underestimated and mistreated by the people of Harrodsburg when he had served as an out-of-town prosecutor for a murder trial in Harrodsburg, Hardin used his influence in the Kentucky legislature to create Boyle County from Mercer County territory. Both Perryville and Danville, which was made the county seat of the newly formed county, were included in the territory which was taken from Mercer to form Boyle County. The division thus reduced both the size and the prestige of Mercer County.

PERIOD: 1860-1900

Theme: Politics

The Civil War governor of Kentucky, Beriah Magoffin, was born in Harrodsburg, but the nearest battle to Harrodsburg during the war itself was in the vicinity of Perryville. On October 7, 1862, 61,000 Union soldiers under the command of General Don Carlos Buell encountered 16,000 Confederate soldiers commanded by General Braxton Bragg at the Chaplin River near Perryville. Artillery fire was heard in Harrodsburg and churches and homes were prepared for use as hospitals.

After the first day of battle, the outnumbered Confederate troops had not held their lines, but had also captured Union positions. Bragg, however, felt that his victory was only temporary and that his troops were certain to be overrun the next day upon the arrival of the Union reinforcements. Bragg retreated to Harrodsburg where he was joined by General E. Kirby Smith and General John Hunt Morgan. Troops were posted on the roads leading to Harrodsburg in anticipation of the resumption of the battle the next day. Before the second engagement occurred, Bragg determined that he could not win and retreated north of the Kentucky River.

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Historic Resources of Mercer County, Kentucky

The citizens of Harrodsburg were left to cope with the consequences of the battle. They buried the dead soldiers and created temporary hospitals. Though no substantial buildings were destroyed in Mercer County during the battle, farmers were called upon to provision the soldiers of both sides with food and horses. Harrodsburg was placed under martial law for the remainder of the war.

The Shaker settlement at Pleasant Hill never fully recovered from the Civil War and its aftermath. Their doctrine of nonviolence made the Shaker community especially vulnerable to the theft and vandalism which plagued the entire county after the war. They could not compete with industrial jobs available after the war and they phased out their once-profitable mail-order seed business in 1873.

Theme: Transportation

The major effect of the war on Mercer County's economy was the loss of southern markets for its agricultural products both during the war and afterwards. The county entered a period of economic stagnation, punctuated by a statewide financial panic in 1873. Few new buildings were built immediately after the war except to replace those which were destroyed by fire.

Mercer County farmers and politicians saw that the river link to the south would have to be supplemented by a more flexible means of transportation which would have access to regional markets. Even before the war, the fluctuating levels of water in the Kentucky River and the high cost of building and maintaining the river locks had fostered a movement to secure rail service for Mercer County.

It was not until 1877, that High Bridge, the bridge over the Kentucky River, was completed by the Cincinnati-Southern Railroad that Mercer County had rail service. Even then, the railroad did not come through Harrodsburg, but served the town through a four-mile spur built in 1878 from a station called Burgin. Burgin became the railhead for the shipment of grain, hemp, livestock, and whiskey produced in Mercer County. Still wishing to have a rail line through Harrodsburg, the merchants and politicians worked with Danville and Lawrenceburg to get a Louisville connection. In 1888, the Louisville and Southern Railroad began operation of a line through Harrodsburg.

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Historic Resources of Mercer County, Kentucky

Theme: Economics

Construction of railroads required considerable local financial commitments. When the railroads were finally in place, Mercer County farmers found often found themselves squeezed between the low prices they could get for their crops and the shipment rates charged by the railroads. Mercer County's wheat and corn had to compete with the crops being produced in the rapidly developing western part of the country. Mercer County land prices declined in value during the third quarter of the nineteenth century and only began to appreciate when farmers switched from the traditional tobacco variety used in snuff, cigars, and pipes to a milder variety used in making cigarettes which had become popular nationally after the Civil War. Businessmen such as Daniel Moore, the builder of Moreland (Me-H-18) had diversified interests in tobacco, railroads, and livestock. The improvements in transportation and the agricultural markets began to stimulate business activity in Harrodsburg. New areas of Harrodsburg such as the Beaumont Avenue District were developed as homes for the businessmen in the expanding downtown. An interest in improving public health through the improvement of municipal utilities occurred during the tenure of Dr. A.J. Price (Me-H- 35) as mayor of Harrodsburg. Dr. Price encouraged the construction of a municipal water and sewer system for Harrodsburg.

PERIOD: 1901-1931Theme: Commemoration

By the early twentieth century, no evidence of the original Fort Harrod remained. Part of the cemetery used by the inhabitants of the fort had been maintained by James Taylor (Me-H-57) and his descendants. The original site of the fort north of the cemetery was destroyed during the excavation for a quarry and the extension of Lexington Avenue in the late nineteenth century.

A national nostalgia for American heritage fostered an interest in Colonial architecture in the early twentieth century. Details from early American buildings were reinterpreted and used on new buildings such as the Harrodsburg Post Office (Me-H-84). During the 1920's, the Rockefeller family founded the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation to plan and execute the return of the town of Williamsburg to its mid-eighteenth century appearance when it was the capital of Virginia. Motivated by a desire to commemorate the lives and deeds of the early settlers of Mercer County, the members of the Pioneer Memorial Society began to work with the Kentucky State Park system to design and build a replica of Fort

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Historic Resources of Mercer County, Kentucky

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Harrod (Me-H-56). Irene Moore, a descendant of James Taylor (Me-H-57) denoted land located south of the original site and including the original pioneer cemetery for the site of the replica of Fort Harrod.

The dimensions and appearance of the replica of the fort were based on archival research and a description of the fort written in 1796 by Van Cleve who passed through Harrodsburg in 1790. The Louisville architectural firm of Nevins, Wexmeyer, and Morgan was hired to design the fort and the contractor was Peter Nolen Wilson, who built the Mercer County Courthouse. Since its completion in 1927, the replica of the fort has become a symbolic of the veneration that the people of early twentieth century Mercer County had for their ancestors, the late eighteenth century farmers who settled the area.

Theme: Engineering

While the reconstruction of Fort Harrod reflected a veneration for the past, the Dix River Dam (Me-174) under construction at the same time reflected advanced technology for the production of electricity. Electric power was first used commercially in Kentucky from 1876 to 1882. In 1884, Louisville issued a contract for lighting a section of the water front. By 1913, a contract was let for the complete electrification of Louisville's major streets. Three hydroelectric plants were constructed in Kentucky between 1926 and 1929. At the time of its completion in 1925, the Dix River Dam was the largest earth and stone dam in existence. During its construction, a temporary town was constructed in the vicinity to house, feed, and entertain the 2000 men who worked on the project. the site includes an intake valve, the dam, and a power house. The dam created Herrington Lake which is approximately 35 miles long and covers 3600 acres. The project was considered so unusual that rail excursions brought tourists from Cincinnati to the Dix River Dam to see it.

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Kentucky

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Page 1

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Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic GroupName Mercer County MRA  
State KENTUCKY

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

Cover Substantive Review

for Keeper

Patrick Andrus 2/8/89

1. Dix River Dam

Substantive Review

Keeper

Return P A 2/10/89**DOE/OWNER OBJECTION**

Attest

2. Adams House

Substantive Review

for

Keeper

Patrick Andrus 2/8/89

Attest

3. Aspen Hall

Substantive Review

for

Keeper

Patrick Andrus 2/8/89

Attest

4. Baldin House

Substantive Review

for

Keeper

Patrick Andrus 2/8/89

Attest

5. Beaumont Avenue Residential District

Substantive Review

for

Keeper

Patrick Andrus 2/8/89

Attest

6. Boise House

Substantive Review

for

Keeper

Patrick Andrus 2/8/89

Attest

7. Bonta House

Substantive Review

for

Keeper

Patrick Andrus 2/8/89

Attest

8. Bowman, Col. John, House

Substantive Review

for

Keeper

Patrick Andrus 2/8/89

Attest

9. Burford Hill

Substantive Review

for

Keeper

Patrick Andrus 2/8/89

Attest

10. Burris House

Substantive Review

Keeper

Patrick Andrus 2/8/89

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Date/Signature

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|-----|----------------------------------|------------------------|--------|-------------------|--------|
| 11. | Cunningham House                 | Substantive Review for | Keeper | Patrick Andrus    | 2/9/89 |
|     |                                  |                        | Attest |                   |        |
| 12. | Curry, Daniel, House             | Substantive Review for | Keeper | Patrick Andrus    | 2/9/89 |
|     |                                  |                        | Attest |                   |        |
| 13. | Dunn, Peter, House               | Substantive Review for | Keeper | Patrick Andrus    | 2/9/89 |
|     |                                  |                        | Attest |                   |        |
| 14. | Elms, The                        | Substantive Review for | Keeper | Patrick Andrus    | 2/9/89 |
|     |                                  |                        | Attest |                   |        |
| 15. | Greystone                        | Substantive Review for | Keeper | Patrick Andrus    | 2/9/89 |
|     |                                  |                        | Attest |                   |        |
| 16. | Gritton, Floyd, House            | Substantive Review for | Keeper | Patrick Andrus    | 2/9/89 |
|     |                                  |                        | Attest |                   |        |
| 17. | Matheny-Taylor House             | Substantive Review for | Keeper | Patrick Andrus    | 2/9/89 |
|     |                                  |                        | Attest |                   |        |
| 18. | McAfee Farm Historic District    | Substantive Review for | Keeper | Patrick W. Andrus | 2/9/89 |
|     |                                  |                        | Attest |                   |        |
| 19. | McGee House                      | Substantive Review for | Keeper | Patrick Andrus    | 2/9/89 |
|     |                                  |                        | Attest |                   |        |
| 20. | Mercer County Jailer's Residence | Substantive Review for | Keeper | Patrick Andrus    | 2/9/89 |
|     |                                  |                        | Attest |                   |        |

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21. Moreland House

~~Substantive Review~~

for Keeper

Patrick Andrews 2/9/89

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

54/22. Morgan, Joseph, House

~~Substantive Review~~

Keeper

return PA 2/9

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

23. Passmore, Benjamin, House

~~Substantive Review~~

for Keeper

Patrick Andrews 2/9/89

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

24. Passmore, Benjamin, Hotel

~~Substantive Review~~

Keeper

Return PA 2/9/89

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

25. Passmore, George, House

~~Substantive Review~~

for Keeper

Patrick Andrews 2/9/89

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

26. Pioneer Memorial State Park

~~Substantive Review~~

for Keeper

Patrick Andrews 2/9/89

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

27. Price, Dr. A.D., House

~~Substantive Review~~

for Keeper

Patrick Andrews 2/9/89

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

28. Roach--Ison House

~~Substantive Review~~

for Keeper

Patrick Andrews 2/9/89

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

29. Smith--Williams House

~~Substantive Review~~

for Keeper

Patrick Andrews 2/9/89

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

30. St. Peters AME Church

~~Substantive Review~~

for Keeper

Patrick Andrews 2/9/89

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

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Thematic Group

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State KENTUCKY

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31. Sutfield House ~~Substantive Review~~ for Keeper Patrick Andrus 2/9/89  
Attest \_\_\_\_\_
32. Tobin House ~~Substantive Review~~ for Keeper Patrick Andrus 2/9/89  
Attest \_\_\_\_\_
33. Wildwood ~~Substantive Review~~ for Keeper Patrick Andrus 2/9/89  
Attest \_\_\_\_\_
- SLN* 34. Williams House ~~Substantive Review~~ Keeper return P.A 2/9/89  
Attest \_\_\_\_\_
35. US Post Office--Harrodsburg *See note below  
2/17/89* ~~Substantive Review~~ for Keeper Patrick Andrus 3/1/89  
Attest \_\_\_\_\_
36. Keeper \_\_\_\_\_  
Attest \_\_\_\_\_
37. Keeper \_\_\_\_\_  
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38. Keeper \_\_\_\_\_  
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39. Keeper \_\_\_\_\_  
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40. Keeper \_\_\_\_\_  
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